

Theories and Practices of Antioppressive Education

In an attempt to address the myriad ways in which racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression play out in schools, educators and educational researchers have engaged in two types of projects: understanding the dynamics of oppression and suggesting ways to work against it. Whether working from feminist, critical, multicultural, queer, or other perspectives, they seem to agree that oppression is a dynamic in which certain ways of being (or, having certain identifications) are privileged in society while others are marginalized. They disagree, however, on the specific cause or nature of oppression, and on the curricula, pedagogies, and educational policies needed to bring about change. Collectively, they point to what I see as four ways to conceptualize and work against oppression: education for the Other, education about the Other, education that is critical of privileging and Othering, and education that changes students and society. Of course, many educators and researchers blend and modify these four approaches, including the thinkers I cite in each category, but I use this categorization to help me highlight the primary strands of thought in this field of study.

In this chapter, I examine each approach in terms of its conceptualiza-

tion of oppression, its implications for bringing about change, and its strengths and weaknesses. I argue that although educators have come a long way in detailing approaches that address different forms and different aspects of oppression, they need to make more use of feminist and queer readings of poststructuralism and psychoanalysis in order to address ways that oppression plays out differently in different situations. In addition to bringing poststructuralist and psychoanalytic perspectives into the first three approaches, I devote significant attention to them in the fourth approach, where I also explore their implications for instruction in the “core” disciplines of K–12 schools (social studies, English, mathematics, and science). Broadening the ways we conceptualize the dynamics of oppression, the processes of teaching and learning, and even the purposes of schooling is necessary when working against the many forms of oppression that play out in the lives of students. Doing so requires not only using an amalgam of these approaches (which many educators already do), but also “looking beyond” the field to explore the possibilities of theories that remain marginalized in educational research.

Before turning to my analysis, I should explain some of my terminology. I use the term *Other* to refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized, denigrated, or violated (i.e., *Othered*) in society, including students of color, students from under- or unemployed families, students who are female, or male but not stereotypically “masculine,” and students who are or are perceived to be queer. They are often defined in opposition to groups traditionally favored, normalized, or privileged in society, and as such, are defined as *other than* the idealized norm. Although my analysis focuses on only four forms of oppression, I believe it extends to other forms of oppression and to other traditionally marginalized groups, such as students with disabilities, students with limited or no English-language proficiency, and students from non-Christian religious backgrounds. Future research should further explore these connections.

Education for the Other

What is Oppression?

The first approach to addressing oppression focuses on improving the experiences of students who are *Othered* or in some way oppressed in and

by mainstream society. Researchers taking this approach have conceptualized oppression in schools in two ways. First, schools are spaces where the Other is treated in harmful ways. Sometimes the harm results from actions by peers or even by teachers and staff. For example, numerous researchers have documented the discrimination, harassment, physical and verbal violence, exclusion, and isolation experienced by female students (Kenway & Willis, 1998), by queer students or students perceived to be queer (P. Gibson, 1989), and by students of color, such as Asian American students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). Sometimes, however, the harm results from inaction by educators, administrators, and politicians. For example, a number of researchers have documented the shocking, shameful, and substandard conditions, such as insufficient instructional resources and unsafe buildings and classrooms, of many urban schools serving economically poorer students and students of color (Kozol, 1991), while others have pointed to the lack of attention female students receive by teachers who simultaneously give too much of their attention to disruptive male students (Orenstein, 1994). The first way, then, that researchers have illustrated oppression is by pointing to the recognizably harmful ways in which only certain students are treated in and by schools—in other words, to the external ways in which Otherness is marginalized.

Oppression, however, is not always easy to recognize. The second way that researchers have conceptualized oppression is by looking at assumptions about and expectations for the Other—especially those held by educators—that influence how the Other is treated. In particular, they look at the internal ways of thinking, feeling, and valuing that justify, prompt, and get played out (and even reinforced) in the harmful treatment of the Other. Sometimes these dispositions, both conscious and unconscious, are about who the Other is, as is the case with racial and ethnic prejudices and stereotypes that influence how teachers treat their students of color (L. S. Miller, 1995), or sexist ideologies and stereotypes that influence how teachers differently treat their female and male students and how students treat one another (Kenway & Willis, 1998; Mac an Ghail, 1994). Sometimes these dispositions are about who the Other should be, as is the case with assimilationist beliefs that students of color should conform to the mainstream culture and become more like middle-class White Americans (L. S. Miller, 1995). And sometimes these dispositions are about who the privileged must be in order *not* to be the Other, as is the case with sexist and heterosexist

assertions that all boys should exhibit hegemonic masculinity in order to be "real" men (Askew & Ross, 1988).

Students have responded in a variety of ways to these oppressive treatments and dispositions. Some have "overcompensated" by hyperperforming in academic, extracurricular, and social activities (Friend, 1993); some have accommodated enough to succeed academically but have maintained a sense of connection to their ethnic culture and community (M. Gibson, 1988); some have resisted the dominant values and norms of school and society (Fordham, 1996; Willis, 1977); some have experienced an array of "hidden injuries," such as the psychological harm of internalizing or even resisting stereotypes (Osajima, 1993); and some have endured depression and turned violence onto themselves by abusing drugs, starving and scarring their bodies, and even attempting or committing suicide (Orenstein, 1994; Uribe & Harbeck, 1992). Thus, to the onlooker, some of these students "succeed" in school, whereas others are marginalized, fail, and drop out, while still others exhibit no signs that distinguish them from the majority of the student body. But despite the apparent differences between those students who "succeed" and those who "fail" or simply fail to distinguish themselves, all experience oppression.

Bringing About Change

Researchers applying this first approach to antioppressive education have suggested two ways in which to address oppression. Responding to the notion that schools are "harmful spaces," many researchers have argued that schools need to be and to provide helpful spaces for all students, especially for those students targeted by the forms of oppression described above. These "spaces" have been conceptualized on two levels. On one level, the entire school needs to be a space that is *for* students, and in particular, that welcomes, educates, and addresses the needs of the Other. For example, the school needs to be a safe space where the Other will not be harmed verbally, physically, institutionally, or culturally (Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1992). The school needs to be an affirming space where Otherness is embraced, where normalcy (cultural or sexual) is not presumed, where students will have an audience for their Othered voices, and where the Other will have role models (Asante, 1991; Malinowitz, 1995). The school also needs to be a financially and materially sound space where buildings are safe, instruc-

tional materials are available, and programs and personnel are sufficiently funded.

On another level, the school needs to provide separate spaces where students who face different forms of oppression can go for help, support, advocacy, resources, and so forth. For example, the school needs to provide therapeutic spaces where harmed students can go in order to work through their trauma, such as that resulting from harassment or assault; to receive the affirmation provided by support groups; and to come to know and accept who they are by learning about their differences (Crystal, 1989; Reynolds & Koski, 1995). The school also needs to provide supportive spaces where the Other can receive advocacy, such as that provided by teachers willing to serve on committees that address sexual discrimination and harassment and to signify their advocacy by, for instance, putting pink triangles on their classroom doors (Kenway & Willis, 1998). Student alliances that engage in political action, such as gay-straight alliances (Woog, 1995) and Asian American student organizations (S. J. Lee, 1996), should also occupy such spaces. Finally, the school needs empowering spaces where the Other can find resources and tools to challenge oppression themselves, such as informational pamphlets by various organizations, and a wide variety of literature in libraries and resource rooms (see, for example, the lists of queer resources in Besner & Spungin, 1995; Committee on Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Issues, 1997; Unks, 1995b). Many have even argued that schools should be, or at least provide, learning spaces exclusively for the Other, such as single-sex schools or classrooms (Salomone, 1997).

In response to the harmful dispositions of teachers, researchers have argued that educators need to acknowledge the diversity among their students, as well as embrace these differences and treat their students as raced, gendered, sexual, and classed individuals. For example, researchers suggest that rather than assume that students of color are intellectually inferior to White American students or culturally deficient, educators could incorporate the students' home cultures into their classrooms and pedagogies, teaching in a "culturally sensitive" or "culturally relevant" way (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Phillips, 1983; Sheets, 1995; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993), or even teaching students about the "culture of power" so that they will know what it takes to succeed in mainstream schools and society (Delpit, 1988). Rather than employ traditional and, as many have argued, masculinist pedagogies that tend to benefit boys and marginalize girls (as in teacher-cen-

tered lectures or competitive debates where teaching/learning is rational, abstract, and detached from personal experience), educators could teach in ways that are equitable (American Association of University Women, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994), are traditionally “feminine”—such as by personally “connecting” and constructing knowledge *with* their students (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986)—or are sensitive to the differences between how boys and girls think and evaluate (Gilligan, 1982). Furthermore, educators could teach in a way that challenges the sexism—and concomitant heterosexism (Epstein, 1997)—prevalent among boys (Connell, 1997) and young men (Sanday, 1990).

Concerning queer students, rather than assume that all students are heterosexual or sexually “innocent”—which is not to say that they are asexual, but rather, that their heterosexuality is unstable (Watney, 1991)—and for that matter, that students can, should, or do leave their sexuality outside of school, educators could acknowledge and address the fact that students do bring sexuality into schools for a variety of reasons, such as to resist norms (Walkerdine, 1990) and to denigrate Others (Epstein & Johnson, 1998), and that students are not all heterosexual (some are queer, some are questioning). Finally, rather than assume that a student’s class background or community has no bearing on how he engages with schooling, educators could acknowledge the realities of day-to-day life that can hinder one’s ability to learn—as J. Alleyne Johnson (1997) did when she addressed the death of a classmate in an inner-city school—and could draw from the student’s own knowledge, experiences, and outlooks; as Paul Sylvester (1997) did when he transformed his classroom of predominantly working-class students of color into a “minisociety” in which students ran their own businesses.

In short, these studies urge educators not to ignore the differences in their students’ identities, and not to assume that their students are “normal” (and expect them to have normative, privileged identities) or neutral, in other words, without race, sex, and so forth (which is often read as “normal” anyway). Rather, educators could work to learn about, acknowledge, and affirm differences and tailor their teaching to the specifics of their student population.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of this approach is that it calls on educators to recognize that there is great diversity among the student population, and, more

importantly, that the majority of students—namely, all those who are not White American, male, hegemonically masculine, heterosexual, and middle-class or wealthy—are marginalized and harmed by various forms of oppression in schools. Educators have a responsibility to make schools into places that are for, and that attempt to teach, all their students. To fail to work against the various forms of oppression is to be complicit with them.

However, educators cannot use only this approach, as it has at least three limitations. First, by focusing on individual prejudice, cultural difference, and the interpersonal discriminatory treatment of the Other, educators fail to attend to other causes of oppression as well as other signs of oppression (McCarthy, 1993). Oppression consists not only of the marginalizing of the Other; it also consists of the privileging of the “normal.” By focusing on the negative experiences of the Other this approach implies that the Other is the problem: without the Other, schools would not be oppressing anyone. Furthermore, this approach has little to say to schools without populations of traditionally marginalized groups of students (such as schools with White American, middle-class enrollments with no gender disparities in grades and no “out” queer students). Yet, as the remaining approaches will soon reveal, since the dynamics of oppression are not confined to the ways in which certain students are treated by educators and other students, disrupting oppression requires more than preventing harmful interpersonal interactions.

Second, in order to teach for the Other, educators need to define the Other, but the process of doing so is both difficult and problematic. After all, identities and characteristics of groups are difficult to define, since the boundaries of groups are constantly shifting and contested, which means that any attempt to describe a group can simultaneously function to prescribe what it means to belong to that group. For example, safe spaces, supportive programs, and other resources often seem to target only a portion of a particular group, raising the question, Who is the Other that these resources are for? If these resources target homophobia, are they only for students who identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual, and perhaps those who are questioning their identities as well? What about students harassed because they are *perceived* to be gay/lesbian/bisexual based on their gender expression, or children of gay/lesbian/bisexual parents? They are all harmed by homophobia, and they all deserve support, but one could argue that they need different kinds of support. Similarly, pedagogies seem to

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target only subpopulations of a particular group, raising the question, what does it mean to tailor a pedagogy to a particular group? Does teaching in traditionally "feminine" ways reinforce the binaries of masculine/male and feminine/female? Does empowering girls to enter nontraditional fields challenge gender inequities even while reinforcing gender binaries? What about people who do not fit the normative categories of "boy" and "girl" (Bornstein, 1994; Chase, 1998)? A pedagogy tailored to address, in this case, gender inequities is not necessarily able simultaneously to address ways that the gender categories themselves are oppressive. In fact, pedagogies and resources that target a particular group or identity often fail to address students who are marginalized on the basis of more than one identity, such as multicultural curricula and resource centers that challenge racism but silence queer sexualities.

The situated nature of oppression (whereby oppression plays out differently for different people in different contexts) and the multiple and intersecting identities of students make difficult any antioppressive effort that revolves around only one identity and only one form of oppression. Perhaps what is needed, then, are efforts that explicitly attempt to address multiple oppressions and multiple identities, and that keep goals and boundaries fluid and situated. In other words, what is produced or practiced as a safe space, a supportive program, a feminist pedagogy, or a culturally relevant pedagogy cannot be a strategy that claims to be the solution for all people at all times, but is rather a product or practice that is constantly being contested and redefined. Rather than search for a *strategy that works*, I urge educators to address the articulated and known needs and individuality of the students, while constantly *looking to the margins* to find students who are being missed and needs that have yet to be articulated. Educators could create safe spaces based on what they see is needed right now, but constantly re-create the spaces by asking, Whom does this space harm or exclude? They could create supportive programs, but constantly re-create the programs by asking, What practices does this program foreclose and make unthinkable? They could engage in equitable and relevant pedagogies, but constantly rethink their pedagogies by asking, Whom does this pedagogy miss or silence? Without constantly complicating the very definition of the Other, an education for the Other will not be able to address the ways it always and already misses some Others.

A third weakness of this approach is its assumption that educators can

accurately assess the needs of their students, especially their Othered students. As I will later argue, teaching involves a great degree of unknowability. Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997), for example, points out that there is always a “space between” the teacher/teaching and learner/learning, between, for instance, who the teacher thinks the students are and who they actually are, or between what the teacher teaches and what the students learn. What does it mean, then, to give students what they need if we acknowledge that we cannot know what they need and whether our efforts are received by students in the ways that we want them to be received? This is not to say that educators should not try to teach, but that the very notion of what it means to teach needs to change. I will discuss this factor of unknowability when I turn to the fourth approach to working against oppression. For now, my point is that the first approach is necessary to work against the harmful effects of oppression, but in helping only the Other (and in presuming to know the Other), it alone is not enough.

Education about the Other

What is Oppression?

Turning from interpersonal interactions to the school curriculum, some researchers have attempted to work against oppression by focusing on what all students—privileged and marginalized—know and should know about the Other. Given that knowledge can lead to oppressive as well as antioppressive actions (as described above), and given that a primary goal of schooling is to teach and learn more knowledge, these researchers suggest that antioppressive knowledge is central to challenging oppressions in school.

Researchers have pointed to two kinds of oppressive knowledges. The first kind of knowledge is the knowledge about (only) what society defines as “normal” (the way that things generally are) as well as what is normative (the way that things ought to be). In this case, Otherness is known only by inference, often in contrast to the norm. Such partial (i.e., incomplete) knowledge often leads to misconceptions. For example, learning that White New England settlers and their descendants are the “authentic” Americans implies that people of color are not real Americans (see Giroux, 1997, for a discussion of Whiteness and racial “coding”). Learning that normal and

moral human beings fall in love with, marry, and procreate with members of the "opposite" sex implies that same-sex attraction is an illness, a sin, and/or a crime (Sears, 1987). Learning that there are exactly two genders and that members of each gender exhibit only certain behaviors, appearances, feelings, and occupations implies that anyone who deviates has an unnatural or inappropriate gender (Chase, 1998; Connell, 1987). Schools often contribute to this partial knowledge through the selection of topics for the curriculum: U.S. history textbooks, for instance, routinely celebrate industrial inventors but include little if any discussion of labor exploitation (Anyon, 1979).

The second kind of knowledge encourages a distorted and misleading understanding of the Other that is based on stereotypes and myths. Students learn or acquire this form of partial (i.e., biased) knowledge both outside and inside of school. Outside of school, for example, students learn about queers from sensationalist and stereotypical accounts in the media and popular culture (Lipkin, 1995); they learn about Asian American men and women from exoticized portrayals in films and television (Okhiro, 1994); and they learn about the "proper" roles for girls or women and boys or men from their families, their communities, the popular press, and so forth (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; McRobbie, 1978; Willis, 1977). But even inside school, students learn little that challenges these stereotypes and misrepresentations. For example, students learn little if anything about the gay liberation movement in history textbooks (Lipkin, 1995); they see few portrayals of queers in health textbooks, and many of these only in the context of sexually transmitted disease (Whatley, 1992); they hear and/or engage in few discussions about queers, except when making jokes or disparaging comments, and since these often go unchallenged by the teacher, they consequently learn that it is acceptable to denigrate queers (Unks, 1995a); boys in particular learn that normalcy does not include queer sexualities (Epstein, 1997; Mac an Ghail, 1994).

In short, researchers have suggested that the "knowledge" many students have about the Other is either incomplete because of exclusion, invisibility, and silence, or distorted because of disparagement, denigration, and marginalization. What makes these partial knowledges so problematic is that they are often taught through the informal or "hidden" curriculum (Jackson, 1968), which means that, because they are taught indirectly, pervasively, and often unintentionally, they can carry more educational significance than the official curriculum (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hanson, 1993).

Bringing About Change

Researchers have offered two complementary ways to combat these two harmful forms of knowledge. They have suggested that curriculum be expanded to include specific units on the Other, such as curricular units on labor history and resistance (Apple, 1995); feminist scholarship, or any of a number of fields in women's studies (Schmitz, Rosenfelt, Butler, & Guy-Sheftall, 1995); literature by and/or about queers (Sumara, 1993) or the representation of queers in films (Russo, 1989); and various topics in Asian American studies (Hune, 1995) and ethnic studies (S. Chan, 1995). Furthermore, rather than limit their lessons about the Other to once or twice a year when this topic is exclusively addressed, they have suggested that educators integrate lessons and topics about the Other throughout the curriculum. For example, educators might teach about queer resistance movements in class discussions of the civil rights movements of the 1960s, or of the impact of changing the boundaries of voting districts in local elections (which helped activist Harvey Milk get elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the 1980s), or of the grassroots mobilization around the AIDS epidemic and the AIDS Memorial Quilt. More routine opportunities to integrate diversity include the wording of math problems; lists that suggest possible topics to cover for science research projects; discussions of the personal lives of historical figures, authors, political leaders, and celebrities; and the use of guest speakers (Loutzenheiser, 1997).

Such integration can work against the notion that teaching and learning about the Other can be achieved with a day's lesson, say, on Native Americans, and then another on the physically disabled. In addition, the movement away from discrete lessons about the other can work against the tendency to treat different groups as mutually exclusive. Such an approach enables educators to address the intersections of these different identities and their attendant forms of oppression, by, for instance, examining queer themes in ethnic literature (Athanases, 1996); queer sexualities in communities of color (Sears, 1995; Wilson, 1996); and issues of class, race, and sexuality in feminist movements and feminist spaces (Anzaldúa, 1987; Maher & Tetreault, 1997; Schmitz et al., 1995).

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of this approach is that it teaches all students, not just the Othered students, as it calls on educators to enrich all students' under-

standing of different ways of being. By increasing students' knowledge of the Other, and perhaps helping students see similarities between groups, this approach challenges oppression by aiming to develop in students an empathy for the Other (Britzman, 1998a). This approach also attempts to normalize differences and Otherness by encouraging students to think of and treat other ways of being as just as "normal" and acceptable as normative ways of being.

Like the first approach, however, this second approach does not always bring about change unproblematically. There are at least three reasons for this. First, teaching about the Other could present a dominant narrative of the Other's experience that might be read by students as, for instance, *the* queer experience, or *the* Latino/a experience. Otherness might become essentialized and remain different from the norm. Second, teaching about the Other often positions the Other as the expert, as is the case when students of color are asked to explain the African American or some other "minority" perspective (Fuss, 1989; hooks, 1994). Such a situation reinforces the social, cultural, and even intellectual space or division between the norm and the Other. Third, the goals of teaching about the Other and working against partial knowledge are based on the modernist goal of having full knowledge, of seeing truth, of finding utopia. However, many researchers have argued that the modernist desire for full knowledge is misguided since partial (or, "situated") knowledge is the only form of knowledge that is possible (Haraway, 1988). Furthermore, practically speaking, there is only so much time in the school year, and it is literally impossible to teach adequately about every culture and every identity, especially given the multiplicity of experiences within any cultural community (for example, a straight Jewish woman's experiences often differ significantly from a straight Jewish man's experiences).

All of this is not to say that educators should avoid teaching about the Other and amplifying voices of the Other. Rather, we could reconsider the *uses* of such lessons. Learning about and hearing the Other could be undertaken not to fill a gap in knowledge (as if ignorance about the Other were the only problem), but to disrupt the knowledge that is already there (since the harmful/partial knowledges that an individual already has are what need to change) (Luhmann, 1998). As I will argue further on, changing oppression requires *disruptive* knowledge, not simply more knowledge. Students can learn that what is already known or is becoming known can never tell the

whole story, especially since there is always diversity in a group, and one story, lesson, or voice can never represent all. In fact, students can learn that the desire for final knowledge is itself problematic. Learning is about disruption and opening up to further learning, not closure and satisfaction.

To put it another way, lessons about the Other should not aim to tell students the "accurate" portrayal of the Other. Rather, such lessons could be treated as both catalysts and resources for students to use as they learn more. Disruptive knowledge, in other words, is not an end in itself, but a means toward the always shifting goal of learning more. For example, novels from writers of color have traditionally been used to teach students about different cultures, or to give students entry into different cultural experiences (O'Neill, 1993). The problem with such a use of novels comes when students believe that, after "understanding" the novel, they will "understand" the represented culture or group. Yet every novel has silences and every novel privileges certain ideologies over others; every novel, in other words, provides only a partial perspective. Therefore, using novels to learn the truth about others is problematic. Rather than ask, What does this novel tell us about, say, Native Hawaiians? teachers might ask, What questions does this novel raise about Native Hawaiians? Which stereotypes of Native Hawaiians does this novel reinforce, and which ones does it challenge? What is not said in this book about being Native Hawaiian, and how do those silences make possible and impossible different ways of thinking about Native Hawaiian peoples and experiences? The value of lessons about the Other comes not in the truth it gives us about the Other, but in the pedagogical and political uses to which the resulting (disruptive) knowledge can be put.

I should note, however, that even when such questions are asked there are significant limitations inherent in the second approach to antioppressive education. The assumption that information and knowledge lead to empathy does not account for times when feelings do not reflect intention, and for that matter, when neither feelings nor intention gets played out in behavior. And even if empathy were to be achieved, it could be argued that it might simply reinforce the binary of "us" and "them"; for, as argued in chapter 1, the expectation that information about the Other leads to empathy is often based on the assumption that learning about "them" helps students see that "they" are like "us," and therefore does not disrupt ways that students see themselves (Britzman, 1998a). Especially for traditionally

privileged students, teaching about the Other does not necessarily force a separation of their sense of self from a sense of normalcy; and it does not necessarily illuminate, critique, or transform the processes by which the other is differentiated from and subordinated to the norm. This is not to say that empathy has no social value. On the contrary, I believe that students need to have empathy for others, and especially for Others, and that pedagogies that aim to cultivate such a sensitivity are important components of antioppressive education. However, since the roots of oppression do not reside solely in the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals, challenges to oppression need to encompass more than empathy.

Like the first approach, this second approach to challenging oppression works against the marginalization, denigration, and harm of the Other. However, while such efforts do help the Other, they do not necessarily bring about structural and systemic change, redefine normalcy, and disrupt processes that differentiate the Other from the privileged. In addition to addressing Otherness, we need to make visible and work against the privilege and normalization of certain groups and identities. The next two approaches help us do just that.

Education that is Critical of Privileging and Othering

What is Oppression?

Many researchers have argued that understanding oppression requires examining more than one's dispositions toward, treatment of, and knowledge about the Other. They assert that educators and students need to examine not only how some groups and identities are Othered in society, but also how some groups are privileged, as well as how this dual process is legitimized and maintained by social structures and competing ideologies. Schools, after all, are part of society, and understanding oppression in schools requires examining the relationship between schools and other social institutions and cultural ideas (Stambach, 1999). For example, understanding the marginalization of female students (and faculty) requires looking not only at sexist interactions and cultures, but also at employment structures and curricular ideologies that favor males (Luke & Gore, 1992). Similarly, understanding social and economic reproduction and oppression on the basis of class requires looking at structural factors—in particu-

lar, at the imperatives and contradictions of capitalism—to see how such things as the commodification of culture, the paradoxical nature of working-class resistance, and the technical control of teachers all contribute to the legitimization and maintenance of the existing socioeconomic order (Apple, 1995). Understanding the underachievement of Hmong American women in higher education requires looking not only at cultural differences, but also at “economic, racial, and other structural barriers to educational persistence and success” (S. J. Lee, 1997). Similarly, understanding the oppression of queer students requires moving beyond an emphasis on homophobia and individual fear, to consider heterosexism (“heteronormativity”) and how the social demands of being “normal” are what help to produce queer-based oppression (Britzman, 1998a).

Researchers have also noted that schools do not stand outside of these structures and ideologies, innocent of the dynamics of oppression, but are institutions or “apparatuses” that transmit “ruling ideologies” (Althusser, 1971), maintain “hegemony” (Gramsci, 1971), and reproduce existing social order. Researchers have argued that schools and other social institutions serve two functions: they privilege certain groups and identities in society while marginalizing others, and they legitimize this social order by couching it in the language of “normalcy” and “common sense.” Thus, the role of the school in working against oppression must involve not only a critique of structural and ideological forces, but also a movement against its own contributions to oppression.

Bringing About Change

Researchers applying the third approach to working against oppression advocate a *critique and transformation* of oppression. In particular, they suggest that we teach a critical awareness of oppressive structures and ideologies, and strategies to change them.

This process begins with more knowledge, and not knowledge about the Other, but knowledge about oppression. As Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995b) argues, students need to be able to “recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). Developing this critical awareness requires learning that that which society defines as “normal” is a social and contested construct (Apple, 1995) that both regulates who we are supposed to be and denigrates whoever fails to conform to “proper” or “normal” roles (Greene, 1996). Simultaneously, developing this critical consciousness

requires *unlearning* or critiquing what was previously learned to be “normal” and normative (Britzman, 1998a), especially when what we previously learned helps to mask the privileging and Othering of different identities: examples include notions that being White makes a person “authentically American,” or being heterosexual makes a person moral. In other words, teaching such critical thinking involves making visible the privilege of certain identities over others, and the process by which this privilege is masked. This process of learning about the dynamics of oppression also involves learning about oneself. Students can learn how their identities correspond to both the privileged and Othered identities about which they are learning, and they can learn how they often unknowingly can be complicit with and even contribute to these forms of oppression when they participate in commonsense practices that privilege certain identities. Developing this critical perspective can happen when teachers practice what Maher and Tetreault (1994) call a “pedagogy of positionality” that engages both students and teacher in recognizing and critiquing how we are positioned and how we position others in social structures.

But this approach does not stop there. As I argued above, “critical” education involves both the critique *and transformation* of structural oppression (Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Knowledge about oppression is but the first step of a larger process. Also necessary are thinking skills that students can use to formulate effective plans of action. Ellsworth (1992) describes the assumptions underlying critical pedagogy as “the teaching of analytic and critical skills for judging the truth and merit of propositions, and the interrogation and selective appropriation of potentially transformative moments in the dominant culture” (p. 96). When students have knowledge about oppression as well as critical thinking skills, they will be “empowered” to challenge oppression. As Paulo Freire (1995)—whose work on “liberatory education” has become the foundation of “critical pedagogy”—and feminist researchers influenced by him (hooks, 1994; Weiler, 1991) have argued, critical education or “consciousness raising” (what Freire calls *conscientização*) entails learning “to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, *and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality*” (Freire, 1995, p. 17; my emphasis). Similarly, Maher and Tetreault (1994) have argued that “if the classroom setting can help students to understand the workings of positional dynamics in their lives, . . . then they can begin to challenge them and to create change” (p. 203). Critical education, in other

words, teaches about oppression, but also teaches what it means to act against oppression and work toward change. In fact, teaching and learning about oppression take place only through social action; learning happens when acting in the world, and critical learning happens when acting critically in the world (Freire, 1995). This emphasis on both knowledge and action is characteristic not only of many critical and feminist pedagogies (such as those listed above), but also of queer (Malinowitz, 1995) and multicultural pedagogies (such as that suggested by McLaren, 1994, who advocates a "critical and resistance multiculturalism," and by Sleeter & Grant, 1987, who advocate a "social reconstructionist" multiculturalism).

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strength of this particular approach is that it calls on educators not only to teach about oppression but also to try to change society. It is important for students to develop the knowledge and thinking skills necessary to understand the processes of Othering and normalizing, as well as their own complicity in these processes. These understandings can lead not only to empathy for the Other, but also to the ability and the will to resist oppressive ideologies and change social structures.

There are, however, several difficulties with this approach. First, the notion that oppression is structural in nature implies that oppression has the same general effect on people. My critique does not deny that members of any particular group share common experiences with oppression, or that certain groups historically have been subject to the same general form of oppression. However, because all individuals have multiple identities, members of the same group will have different experiences with oppression. Structural explanations cannot account for this diversity and particularity. Experiences with oppression involve many contradictions (Apple, 1995). For example, in her research on nursery classrooms, Valerie Walkerdine (1990) has argued that females who at one moment were able to exert power over males, at another were rendered powerless by them, because in each situation a different discourse was being cited. In other words, in each situation, a different discourse or way of thinking was being implicitly referred to, called up, and worked within, and this "citation" of different discourses gave actions and words different meanings in the different contexts. So, in one context, several female students were able to control the toys and limit the activity of the boys while playing "house" by

citing the discourse of domestic labor (woman as housekeeper). In another context, several male students engaged in a particularly sexist and demeaning conversation with the female teacher, and the teacher excused their behavior by citing the discourse of normal childhood sexuality (boys will be boys) even though the boys were citing the discourse of woman as sexual object (Middleton, 1997). Such fluidity of identity and power relations cannot be explained by patriarchal structures that position males over females (and teachers over students). A framework that allows for a more situated understanding of oppression is needed.

Second, the goals of consciousness-raising and empowerment assume that knowledge, understanding, and critique lead to personal action and social transformation. However, awareness does not necessarily lead to action and transformation. A student may learn all the knowledge and skills theoretically needed to engage in subversive political action, but may not choose to act any differently than before. Consider Deborah Britzman's (1998a) argument that all learning involves an unlearning. If the unlearning involved in learning the necessary knowledge and skills leads the student into a state of "crisis" or paralysis (such as feeling emotionally upset), the student will first need to work through the crisis before being able to act (Kumashiro, 1999a). I will explain the notion of crisis in more detail in the next section, but my point here is that rather than leading to a desire for change, crisis can sometimes lead to more entrenched resistance. In addition, as I argued earlier, teachers can never really know whether students learned what they were trying to teach, or how students will be moved by whatever they do learn. The goal that students will first learn and then act "critically" is difficult to achieve when there is much that the teacher cannot and does not know and control.

The recognition that they can neither know what students learn nor control how students act based on what they learn leads many teachers to feel paralyzed. After all, educators are often trained to delineate what we want students to understand, plan a lesson to get them there, and then assess whether they indeed came to this understanding. The recognition that teaching involves much that cannot be known or controlled may seem disconcerting, but according to Ellsworth (1997), it has significant promise for antioppressive education and for radically different models of what it means to teach. Rather than try to get students to think and act in a particular way, to repeat what is being taught or already known, Ellsworth urges

educators to teach students always to reflect critically on what is being taught and learned, to think critically even about critical theories and critical pedagogies, and to go where not even critical educators could have predicted. Such an unpredictable and uncontrollable goal is not unlike what I described in the previous approach as a way to work against the essentialization that so frequently occurs when teaching and learning about the Other—both involve *looking beyond*. Critical pedagogy needs to move away from saying that students need *this* or *my* critical perspective since such an approach merely replaces one (socially hegemonic) framework for seeing the world with another (academically hegemonic) one. Rather than aim for *understanding* of some critical perspective, antioppressive pedagogy should aim for *effect* by having students engage with relevant aspects of critical theory and extend its terms of analysis to their own lives, but then critique it for what it overlooks or forecloses. As with any pedagogy, critical pedagogy can be understood as making some insights and changes possible and making others impossible.

One of the unspoken assumptions of critical pedagogy raises the third difficulty in this third approach to antioppressive education: its goal of consciousness-raising puts into play a modernist and rationalist approach to challenging oppression that is actually harmful to students who are traditionally marginalized in society. As Ellsworth (1992) argues, the “key assumptions, goals and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy . . . are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination” (p. 91). In particular, the rationalist approach to consciousness-raising assumes that reason and reason alone is what leads to understanding. However, rational detachment is impossible: our identities, experiences, privileges, investments, and so forth always influence how we think and perceive, what we know and do not know. To accept the possibility of such detachment is really to perpetuate a mythical norm that assumes a White, heterosexual, male perspective. Those who are traditionally marginalized remain outsiders, called upon as “experts” to speak with their own voices and educate the norm, only to be deemed not rational because they speak from a visible (or nondominant) standpoint. Furthermore, the life experiences of traditionally marginalized students can bring a historical and personal connection to lessons on oppression that those who fit the mythical norm typically do not have. Personal experiences as people not privileged on the basis of, say, race can exceed the expectations of a pedagogy that

relies on rationality and that represses other ways of knowing and relating. Such lessons serve to "Otherize" students who cannot be engaged by a pedagogy that presumes to address the mythical norm. What this means is that critical pedagogy is helpful for challenging oppression but itself needs to be treated critically.

Education that Changes Students and Society

What is Oppression?

In response to these limitations, some researchers have turned to post-structuralist theories of discourse to help formulate different conceptualizations of oppression (Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jimenez-Muñoz, & Lamash, 1993; Butler, 1997; Davies, 1989; Kumashiro, 1999a, 1999b; McKay & Wong, 1996; Talburt, 2000). As I discussed in the previous section, Walkerdine's (1990) study on nursery classrooms suggests that oppression and harm are produced not merely by the actions and intentions of individuals or by the imperatives of social structures. Rather, oppression is produced by discourse, and in particular, is produced when certain discourses (especially ways of thinking that privilege certain identities and marginalize others) are cited over and over. Such citational processes serve to reproduce these hierarchies and their harmful effects in society.

To illustrate this notion of citation, we can look at the "model minority" stereotype of Asian American students, which says that they are all smart and hardworking "academic superstars" (S. J. Lee, 1996). As I have discussed above, researchers have explained the harmfulness of stereotypes as being a result of individual prejudice and discrimination (L. S. Miller, 1995) or of a White-dominated racial order that claims to be meritocratic and nonracist by pointing to the "success" of "model" minorities (Osajima, 1988). They have argued that the power of a stereotype to harm either exists inherently in the stereotype (so that an individual using a stereotype is like an individual wielding a weapon) or derives from social structures and ideologies (so that using a stereotype is like assisting in the maintenance of systemic racism). They have also argued that this stereotype has tangible consequences in that it may cause differential treatment of students by teachers and even psychological harm (Crystal, 1989; S. J. Lee, 1996;

Osajima, 1993). These theories imply that challenging oppression involves either prohibiting individual acts of oppression—from stereotypes to hate speech (Butler, 1997)—or dismantling structural forms of oppression (through critical pedagogy).

Poststructuralism offers a different view. As I have argued elsewhere (Kumashiro, 1999b), the reason that voicing a stereotype or assuming it to be true can cause harm is because every such use cites past oppressive uses of that stereotype, especially the history of how that stereotype has been used within a particular community of people (Butler, 1997). For example, if someone were to tell me that I should be a better student because I am an Asian American, it is possible for me to conclude that the speaker is making racist assumptions about me because I have heard other people talk about and generalize about Asian Americans in similar ways before. The speaker's words could have racist meaning to me because I am able to read them as constituting part of the history of how the model-minority stereotype has been and is being used in the mainstream United States. If I believed that the speaker was judging me based on this stereotype and I valued the speaker's judgment, the speaker's words could then produce in me feelings of failure or abnormality. And the effect of this stereotype could extend beyond emotions and self-identity if the stereotype were believed by people in affirmative-action offices and advisory commissions on race, which have often failed and continue to fail to address racial inequities experienced by Asian Americans. What is significant, here, is that in each of these situations, the discourse of model-minority Asian Americans keeps getting cited, keeps getting repeated, not only reinsisting that Asian Americans are "like this," but also reproducing the power to marginalize and harm Asian Americans.

Indeed, oppression itself can be seen as the repetition, throughout many levels of society, of harmful citational practices. In the above examples, the association between "Asianness" and "success" (i.e., the process in which Asianness cites successfulness) gets repeated over and over. In U.S. society, there are many other associations that characterize oppression: Whiteness and authenticity, femaleness and weakness, heterosexuality and normalcy, queer sexualities and sinfulness, limited English-language proficiency and lack of intelligence, to name just a few. What is harmful is when we have to live through the repetition of these histories, which we do constantly through interpersonal conversations and interactions; institu-

tional, economic, and legal imperatives; and moral and religious doctrines.

Of course, the meaning and effects of stereotypes do change in different contexts and over time. This is perhaps most easily illustrated when examining the relationship between two different forms of oppression, and we can do that by turning to research on queer Asian American males. What is helpful in this discussion is another poststructural concept: *supplementation*, which means to cite, but also to add something new in the process (Crowley, 1989). Research on queer Asian American males reveals that the forms of oppression they experience in traditionally marginalized communities are both similar to and different from those in mainstream society (Kumashiro, 1999b). In Asian American communities, queer Asian American males often experience a form of heterosexism that cites the heterosexism in mainstream society. However, in addition to defining queer sexuality as abnormal and sinful, Asian America often assigns it a racial marker: heterosexuality is marked as an Asian virtue, queerness as a "white disease." In queer communities, queer Asian American males often experience a form of racism that cites the racism (i.e., "orientalism") of mainstream society that ascribes a deviant femininity to Asian American men. However, rather than define the feminized Asian American male as sexually undesirable, many queers consider him "exotic" and, thus, sexually hyper-desirable. The racialized heterosexism in Asian American communities and the queered racism in queer communities exemplify how oppression can acquire different meanings and effects in different contexts even while continuing to cite and repeat aspects of its own history.

The notions of citation and supplementation help us understand ways in which oppression is multiple, interconnected, and ever-changing. Not surprisingly, they also help us think differently about what it means to change oppression. As already noted, some researchers argue that people often associate certain identities with certain attributes because over time those associations have been repeated and thus naturalized. Therefore, in contrast to prohibiting harmful words and actions, or to developing a critical awareness of harmful structures and ideologies, they have argued that change requires becoming involved in altering the citational practices that constitute these associations (Butler, 1997; Kumashiro, 1999a; Talburt, 2000). They suggest that the prohibition and/or the critical awareness of the repetition of harmful associations/histories do not necessarily change them. What does is a particular kind of labor. When activists labor to sup-

plement harmful associations they are participating in altering them and are constituting a reworked history. When enough members of a community participate in this kind of labor, the meanings and effects of different identities and identifications change. One example of this kind of change is the ongoing work among queers to disrupt the harmfulness of the term *queer*. Mainstream society often defines heterosexuality as “normal” while treating queer sexualities as illnesses, but more and more queers are working to supplement the term *queer* by continuing to cite its deviation from the norm while adding an insistence that normalcy itself is problematic, or at least, that not being heteronormal does not make queerness akin to a crime or an illness. More than merely psychological, this change has contributed to changes in how more and more legal entities, medical establishments, religious organizations, and academic institutions treat queers.

Bringing About Change

Thus far in this chapter, I have suggested ways in which poststructuralist concepts can help address some of the weaknesses of the first three approaches to antioppressive education. These concepts included ways in which identities are shifting, ways in which knowledge is partial, and ways in which oppression is citationally produced. As I have introduced such concepts, I have also drawn on closely related concepts from another theoretical framework—namely, psychoanalysis—to develop such notions as the space between teacher and learner, the connection between knowledge and ignorance, and the crisis involved in learning and unlearning. In what follows, I will expand on these concepts as I more fully develop this fourth approach to antioppressive education. Like other researchers (e.g., Britzman, 1998a, 1998b; Ellsworth, 1997; Felman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998; Pitt, 1998; Talburt, 2000) I draw on the combined body of research that I call recent feminist and queer readings of poststructuralism and psychoanalysis. These theories tend to be quite abstract, and therefore, I will discuss them as they apply to the “core” disciplines (social studies, English, mathematics, and science) of K–12 schools, focusing on three themes: a problem of resistance, a curriculum of partiality, and a pedagogy of crisis. I should note that I make substantial reference to my preceding discussion of the first three approaches as a way to show how poststructuralism and psychoanalysis take antioppressive educational theory in new directions. I should also note the reason that I devote substantial time to this fourth

approach and to concrete classroom examples is because these theories will be central to my analyses in the following chapters.

A Problem of Resistance. Curriculums in the core disciplines often perpetuate oppressive knowledges. For example, when U.S. history curriculums focus on political leaders, military conflicts, and industrial inventors, they are including the voices, experiences, and perspectives of only some in society, especially those with racial, economic, and/or gender privilege. Left silenced or pushed to the margins are such topics as immigration, the gendered division of labor, and civil rights movements, all of which have the potential to reveal the roles that the Othered in society have played in U.S. history (Anyon, 1979; Asante, 1991; Lipkin, 1995; Minnich, 1990). Compounding matters is the recognition that the structure of history curriculums, not just their content, is problematic. More and more historians are arguing that signs that the author wrote the text and constructed a particular version of history belong in written accounts of history (Cronon, 1992). However, many history textbooks continue to silence the narrative or authorial voice (Paxton, 1999), implying that the account being told is objective and impartial (Richardson, 1997) and that "history" consists of facts, not readings or interpretations of events, despite that any telling of history involves selectively including and excluding materials (Paxton, 1999).

Similarly, many science classrooms purport to be teaching a "neutral" subject despite its oppressive history. For example, what many have come to call "real" science is only the science that originated in the Western (or White) world (Harding, 1994). Until fairly recently, only men were considered capable of thinking scientifically (Battersby, 1989). Depending on what it asks (or chooses not to ask), publicizes (or chooses not to publicize), and finds (or lacks the resources and authority to find), science can politically and materially benefit some populations more than others (Harding, 1994). This happened with the AIDS epidemic when the science community refused to devote significant time and resources until the "problem" changed from an African/Haitian/gay disease to a virus that could spread to mainstream America (Treichler, 1988). Science can normalize only certain ways of being, as when it talks about sex/gender in dichotomous terms, thus reinforcing the notion that there are only males and females and nothing else, despite that significant numbers of human beings and other living beings in the natural world are intersexed (Kessler, 1998; Letts, 1999). Even

progressive educators help maintain the privileging of certain groups in society when they require that students think “scientifically,” objectively, and rationally (Ellsworth, 1992).

Mathematics is no different. Historically, mathematics has served as a tool of colonialism and imperialism (Bishop, 1990), which should not be surprising given that mathematics has an underlying “logic of control”: mathematizing and quantifying nature and time and space are ways for humans to control not only nature, but also society, since defining “reason” as, in part, the ability to think “mathematically” allows certain people (i.e., the “mathematical” ones) to extend their control over others (Fleener, 1999). Furthermore, mathematics often purports to be a transparent language—one free of the ambiguity of spoken language and that therefore gives unmediated access to the world—even though no language is transparent (Shulman, 1996). Not only is any language encoded with culturally specific and gendered meanings (Shulman, 1994), but so too do people understand and use the languages of mathematics differently depending on the cultural context or situation (Bishop, 1994; Powell & Frankenstein, 1997). Therefore, indirectly, teaching only certain forms or languages of mathematics is a way of teaching only certain cultural norms and values (Shulman, 1994) and only certain ways of making sense of the world (Macedo, 1991).

Perhaps most commonly critiqued for teaching partial materials are English classrooms that insist on teaching the “canon.” Biases based on class, race, gender, sexuality, and other social markers often play out in the curriculum when the authors and characters of the literature being read consist primarily of middle-class or wealthy White, male, heterosexuals (Palumbo-Liu, 1995; Schmitz et al., 1995; Sumara, 1993). By learning about only certain groups and perspectives in society, students are not learning about alternative perspectives and the contributions, experiences, and identities of those Othered, and by not learning such knowledge, students are not troubling the (mis)knowledge they already have.

In response, many educators have called for diversity and an inclusive, multicultural curriculum as a way to learn about the Other, and to affirm differences. (Educators have also called for critical awareness of these problems within the disciplines, and I will discuss this later in the chapter.) Unfortunately, educators often stop after “adding on” differences as if adding, say, *women* here and *Jews* there solves the problem. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, there are a number of problems with adding differ-

ences to the curriculum, not the least of which is the recognition that the very act of naming and including difference could operate in contradictory ways. What does it mean to add Latinos/as, queers, or the working poor? In fact, what does it mean to “be” any of the things being added? Who counts as the “different”?

By adding, say, Black Americans, do we expect their voices to “speak” to racial differences (hooks, 1994)? If so, are we adding only those people whose difference is specifically and only their race (and not also, say, their gender, sexuality, or disability) and, in the process, ignoring what it means for Black American women or Black American queers or disabled Black Americans also to be Black (but to be Black in perhaps a different way)? Does Blackness, in other words, take on normative (or, regulatory) qualities within the inclusive curriculum just as it has within Black liberation movements (Cohen, 1996)? Activists at the intersections of oppressions have long argued that, ironically, identity-based activist movements function just as mainstream society does in excluding its own margins (Powell, 1999), such as feminist movements and women who are of color (McKay, 1993), antiracist movements and people of color who are queer (Conerly, 1996), or queer rights movements and queers who are female (Blackwood & Wieringa, 1999). Adding difference is problematic when the difference is itself normative.

Yet, *difference* always exceeds singular categories since identities are already multiple and intersected. For example, what it means to be a woman is already racially normative (Higginbotham, 1992), just as what it means to be masculine is already heterosexually normative (Kimmel, 1994). Similarly, racial identities such as those of Asian Americans are already gendered, as with orientalist stereotypes of Asian Americans in the mainstream U.S. imagination (Okimiro, 1994), and are already heterosexualized, as when Asian American communities reify “traditional Asian values” that are centered on heterosexist familial roles (Kumashiro, 1999b). It is a problem, then, to speak of identities always and only in their separate(d) incarnations, which not only denies ways in which identities are already intersected, but more importantly, masks ways in which certain identities are already privileged. Treating identity as singular allows only certain identities to count as authentic or to matter when learning about what it means to be of that group. This should not be surprising given that identities have meaning only because they are defined in opposition to an Other (Butler,

1993). Authenticity requires the existence of the nonauthentic: to say *who we are* and *what we are focusing on* is simultaneously to say *who we are not* and *what we are not focusing on*. The naming of difference, then, whether in activist communities or inclusive curricula, can serve less to describe who a group is, and more to prescribe who a group ought to be.

Furthermore, the focus on difference fails to change that which is not different—namely, the norm. As argued earlier, although a curriculum that aims for inclusion may succeed in teaching that the Other is as normal or important as the norm, it does not necessarily change the very definition of “normal” and ways in which we traditionally see ourselves as such. In other words, adding difference does not really change teaching and learning practices that affirm our sense of normalcy. And perhaps this is exactly why schools continue to teach in oppressive ways; perhaps we desire teaching and learning through normalized lenses (Doll, 1998; Morris, 1998). Perhaps we desire teaching and learning in ways that affirm and confirm our sense that *what we have come to believe is normal or commonsensical in society* is really the way things are and are supposed to be. After all, imagine the alternative: imagine constantly learning that “what is normal” and “who we are” are really social constructs maintained only through the Othering, marginalization, or silencing of other possible worlds and selves. Imagine constantly learning, in other words, of our own complicity with oppression.

My point here is that perhaps we resist antioppressive practices because they trouble how we think and feel about not only the Other but also ourselves. A good example is the refusal of many academics to engage with queer theory. As Diana Fuss (1991) tells us, since the definition of *straight* requires the existence of *queer*, and since the privileging of heterosexuality requires the Othering of other sexualities, any effort to change what it means to be queer requires simultaneously changing the meanings and values we place on being straight. So, too, with all other binaried identities. Our desire to teach and learn about the Other in traditional ways is a desire to maintain some sense of identity and normalcy, and to affirm the belief that we are not contributing to oppression. Therefore, difference is not merely something we have yet to learn, but something that we desire not to learn, something we at least subconsciously resist (Britzman, 1998a; Luhmann, 1998). We resist learning what will disrupt the frameworks we traditionally use to make sense of the world and ourselves.

The problem with schools, then, is not merely that only certain voices

are included. Since we can never hear all voices, such a view of the “problem” of curriculum leads either to a false sense of hope that the inclusion of a representative selection of voices will solve it, or to a sense of despair of ever rectifying it. We need to acknowledge that there is a reason certain voices are silenced in the first place (Scott, 1993). We need to acknowledge that the desire to continue teaching the disciplines as they have traditionally been taught is a desire to maintain the privilege of certain identities, world-views, and social relations. And we need to acknowledge that trying to “solve” the problem by adding differences can comply with oppression if we define differences in problematic ways and then add them to a framework where the same identities remain privileged.

A Curriculum of Partiality. Given the problems with traditional practices of inclusion, and given the impossibility of fully including all differences and voices, some researchers have suggested a different way to think about inclusion and curricular change. The emphasis, here, is less on what each voice teaches directly, and more on what the collection of voices teaches indirectly.

Any assembly of voices indirectly tells an underlying story, one that will always exceed what the individual voices say explicitly. And the story then frames how we make sense of what it is we are learning, and of how it is our learnings relate to what we already know and to who we think we are. Some stories reinforce dominant frameworks for thinking about and acting in the world, others challenge them, and still others do both. Thus, stories always have political effects (Richardson, 1997). The inclusion of more and different voices will tell not a “truer” story, but a different one, one with different political implications (Scott, 1993). When we desire to include the same voices, or to include different voices in ways that differences have traditionally been added on, we are desiring (subconsciously or not) to continue using the same stories to make sense of the world. Ironically, because these stories are the ones that define normalcy, we often desire exactly what is harmful to ourselves.

It is easy to add difference to the curriculum in a way that complies with oppression. For example, in English classrooms, Gayatri Spivak (1990) tells us that the inclusion of “ethnic literature” into the curricula can reflect an objectification of difference, where writers and literary critics of color, by making people of color into objects of (new) investigations, ironically contribute to a “new orientalism” or new form of colonialism. In fact, histori-

cally, the formation of “ethnic canons” arguably reflects a commodification of difference, a creation of a type of currency in political correctness, since calls for inclusion grew as much out of the desire for change as the desire to appease the discontented (Palumbo-Liu, 1995). Capitalist structures and colonialist ideologies do permeate English curricula and can constitute its underlying “story.”

Similarly, oppressive stories often permeate social studies curriculums. For example, often absent from lessons on what many call the Second World War are any discussion of the role women played in transforming the workforce in the United States; of the persecution of queers in Nazi Germany alongside Jews and other targeted groups; and of the forced relocation of Japanese Americans, many of them U.S. citizens, to internment camps primarily in the western United States. Such a unit indirectly tells a certain story about the war: The Nazis were evil for persecuting the innocent Jews, the United States was the force of good in the face of this evil, the men in the United States helped save the world, and women/queers/Japanese Americans were not heroes, victims, or otherwise part of this event. Were a teacher to try to cover more perspectives, the unit could expand to include women’s, queers’, and Japanese Americans’ voices. But if the expansion rests at saying “these other groups were also there, and now we have the full story,” such a move does not really change “the story”—at least not the story of the United States.

However, it is possible to include differences in ways that change the underlying story and the implications of the story for thinking, identifying, and acting in oppressive and/or anti-oppressive ways. Rather than perpetuate a story of the United States as a force of good (along with the implication that the nation is a big brother to the world, a place of freedom and righteousness, a meritocracy), the unit can include voices in ways that teach about the U.S. perpetuation of racism and homophobia (as when the nation freed Jews, but put queers right back into prisons), and perhaps tell a story of how the United States acted in contradictory ways. Rather than a story that privileges men, the unit can include voices in ways that tell a story of how patriarchal divisions of labor both influenced and were influenced by the war. The inclusive curriculum, in other words, can not only tell more about women, queers, and Japanese Americans; it can also change narratives of the United States’ role in simultaneously challenging and contributing to various oppressions. Were the curriculum also to include the

contradictory voices within these different groups, the underlying stories could change in yet other ways. Such an insight can lead students to ask such questions as, What story about the United States does the presence of these voices and the absence of others tell us? When we add different voices, how does the story change? What knowledges and identities and practices do different configurations of voices make possible? Which stories justify the status quo? Which stories challenge the marginalization of certain groups and identities in society? As students learn about differences, they can also constantly reflect on ways in which *what they learn* makes different knowledges, identities, and practices possible.

The same applies to math and science curriculums. Just as there are social and political reasons why history consists of only what we have come to call history, so too is there a reason why mathematics and science consist of only what we have come to call mathematics and science (Harding, 1994). This is not to say that what we now know in mathematics and science has not been immensely helpful in improving our lives, but just as there is much more to learn within what we call (Western) mathematics and science, so too are there alternative ways to know and act in the world through other mathematics and sciences. If science and mathematics classrooms have traditionally taught in only certain contexts and attempted to answer only certain questions, then students can be invited to learn sciences and maths in different contexts (Frankenstein & Powell, 1994), and use sciences and maths to answer different kinds of questions and solve different kinds of problems, especially problems relevant to their own lives and communities (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). They can even use sciences and maths to (con)test prior scientific/mathematical findings that have been used to privilege and marginalize different groups, such as findings that perpetuate stereotypes. Also, if science and mathematics classrooms are centered on approaches that claim universality despite their necessary partiality, then students might critically respond by exploring alternative approaches, such as approaches that explore chaos and contradiction and the impossibility of totality (Fleener, 1999). Students can seek not an understanding of *what science and math are*, but an exploration of *what different approaches to math and science make possible and impossible in terms of understanding the world and addressing different problems*.

To put it another way, mathematics and sciences can be taught in ways that constantly look beyond what is being learned and already known. As

with teaching social studies, educators can approach the teaching of math and science in paradoxical ways: simultaneously learning and using knowledge to complicate current worldviews, identities, and practices while critiquing and troubling that knowledge by questioning the ways we teach and learn it, the perspectives and practices made possible and impossible, and the ways it contributes to or challenges oppression. Educators can teach students to be not only mathematicians and scientists, but also math critics and science critics (Harding, 1994), just as we teach students to be social critics (not only sociologists and historians) and literary critics (not only readers and writers).

In English classrooms, since curriculums often face problems with the politics of representation (and the difficulties of inclusion), students can learn to read texts in critical ways. As I discussed earlier in the chapter, including different literatures can be problematic if students read texts as merely a means of getting to know differences. Any given text will reflect the realities of some people but miss those of others; will represent the voices of some groups but silence those of others; and as a result will challenge some stereotypes while reinforcing others. Even texts used to tell "representative" stories are problematic when we expect that they actually "tell" us about difference. As I argued in chapter 1, texts are never transparent media that give us access or entry to a different reality, and are only partial representations of what it is they tell us about. There is always a difference between the text or telling and the object of the telling. In fact, using texts as ways to know difference is problematic when we acknowledge not merely that texts have silences, but that they have *necessary* silences. Just as I earlier argued that identities have meaning because of what they are *not* (i.e., whom they exclude), so too do texts have meaning because of what they leave unsaid (Marshall, 1992). The unsaid is what gives the said its meaning. U.S. literature, for example, never has to explicitly privilege Whiteness since what is unspoken (though still present), namely, the "Black shadow," does much to accomplish this task (Morrison, 1992). Yet, conventional readings of texts, such as readings that look at universal meanings (such as their themes, the intentions of the writer, and the development of the characters) or that look at personal connections to the texts (such as similarities between the reader and the character, and the reader's opinions about how the story could have ended differently) treat what is said in the text as its reality, as the embedded "meaning" of the text (O'Neill, 1993). Such read-

ings fail to treat as central to their analysis what is unsaid (as well as what we *do not want* to have said), how both the said and the unsaid constitute the underlying story, and how the effects of that story are often hegemonic.

Just as social studies, science, and mathematics curricula need to look beyond what is being represented, so too do English curricula. In particular, since different ways of reading texts have different effects, students can learn to read texts in multiple and antioppressive ways. This can be done on two levels. First, students can learn to read for silences and the effects of those silences on the "meaning" of a text (Ellsworth, 1997). For example, they can ask, "what is not said in this novel about, say, queer youth, and how do those silences make possible and impossible different ways of thinking about queer youth, about homophobia, about the reader's own sexual identities, and about change?" Educators can teach that the partiality of texts is exactly what makes texts useful for antioppressive education. Second, students can learn to examine their desire to read in particular ways and their resistance to reading in other ways, and can do so with the understanding that some reading practices are desired because they are more comforting (though more oppressive) than others (Morris, 1998). For example, they can ask, What are different ways to read this text, what different knowledges about the Other does each reading give, and—perhaps most importantly—why do we traditionally learn to read about the Other in only certain ways?

Antioppressive education is not something that happens when the curriculum is no longer partial. Rather, it happens when critical questions, such as those described above, are being asked about the partial curriculum. It is not a curriculum that is fully inclusive or that centers on critical texts. Rather, it is a process of looking beyond the curriculum. It is a process of troubling the official knowledge in the disciplines (Apple, 1993). It is a process of explicitly trying to read against common sense. And perhaps that is why this process is so difficult. Official or commonsense ways of thinking about the disciplines and the world have traditionally influenced our identities and life experiences (Sumara & Davis, 1998), and we are often invested in maintaining these practices. We often resist antioppressive change.

A Pedagogy of Crisis. Antioppressive education that aims to change students and society cannot do so without addressing the ways students and society resist change. As I discussed in the previous section, we do not often desire learning about our own complicity with oppression, and when we do

learn such things, the process is rarely easy and cannot always be done rationally (Ellsworth, 1997; Felman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998; Pitt, 1998). Learning that *the very ways in which we think and do things is not only partial but oppressive* involves troubling or "unlearning" (Britzman, 1998a) what we have already learned, and this can be quite an emotionally discomfoting process, a form of "crisis" (Felman, 1995). In particular, it can lead students into what I call a *paradoxical condition of learning and unlearning* (Kumashiro, 1999a) in which students are both unstuck (i.e., distanced from the ways they have always thought, no longer so complicit with oppression) and stuck (i.e., intellectually paralyzed and needing to work through their emotions and thoughts before moving on with the more academic part of the lesson). Such a paradoxical, discomfoting condition can lead students to resist further learning and unlearning and therefore may be seen by educators as something to avoid. Yet education is not something that involves comfortably repeating what we already learned or affirming what we already know. Rather, education involves learning something that disrupts our commonsense view of the world. The crisis that results from unlearning, then, is a necessary and desirable part of antioppressive education. Desiring to learn involves desiring difference and overcoming our resistance to discomfort.

Consequently, educators need to create a space in their curriculums in which students can work through crisis. Shoshana Felman (1995) discusses how her students worked through a crisis they experienced by giving testimonies (self-reflections and analyses) of their experiences of the crisis. She argues that teaching and learning really take place only through entering and working through crisis, since it is this process that moves a student from being stuck and into a different intellectual, emotional, and political space. In noting that both teaching and psychoanalysis involve "liv[ing] through a crisis," Felman explains that both "are called upon to be *performative*, and not just *cognitive*, insofar as they both strive to produce and to enable, *change*. Both . . . are interested not merely in new information, but, primarily, in the capacity of their recipients to *transform themselves* in function of the newness of that information" (p. 56; emphasis in the original). How so? In revisiting the crisis through testimony, students are not merely repeating the crisis but are supplementing it, giving it new readings, new meanings, and associations with different emotions. They are, in the words of the poststructuralist concepts I described earlier, *laboring to*

alter citational histories as a way to work through crisis and bring about change.

Ideally, what results from working through crisis is a change in the relationship students see between themselves and the binary of normalcy/Otherness. As Britzman (1998a) argues, efforts to challenge oppression need to involve changing ourselves, rethinking who we are by seeing the Other as an "equal" but on different terms. It should not be the case that "one looks for one's own image in the other, and hence invests in knowledge as self-reflection and affirmation" but that "in the process of coming to know, one invests in the rethinking of the self as an effect of, and condition for, encountering the other as an equal" (p. 81). Thus, in addition to self-reflection (in which they ask how they are implicated in the dynamics of oppression), students can engage in self-reflexivity (in which they bring this knowledge to bear on their own senses of self). To put it another way, schools can encourage students to "queer" their understandings of themselves. By this, I do not mean that we should define everyone as the Other, or think that the norm is no different than the Other, but deconstruct the norm/Other binary. We might look, for example, at how our sense of normalcy needs, even as it negates, the Other, as heterosexuality does the homosexual Other (Fuss, 1991) or literary Whiteness, the Black shadow (Morrison, 1992). Or, we might look at how the normal is dangerously close to the perverse, as homosociality (same-gender socializing) is to homosexuality, a closeness that causes "homosexual panic" (Sedgwick, 1991). And then we might ask, How does this knowledge come to bear on my sense of self? By changing how we read normalcy and Otherness, we can change how we read Others and ourselves.

Examples of learning through crisis are perhaps most easily foreseeable in social studies classrooms that focus specifically on issues of social difference and oppression. Lessons that critique, for example, the harmfulness of stereotypes and the invisible histories of institutionalized oppression can involve revealing our own privileges, confronting our own prejudices, and acknowledging the harmfulness of practices that unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes or are complicit with institutionalized oppression. Unfortunately, what happens in classrooms often is not crisis and change, but rather repetition and comfort for both student and teacher, as when students understand difference in commonsense ways or when teachers strive to develop in students knowledges and practices that mirror their own.

This is the case not only in social studies classrooms. In English classrooms, for instance, essays are often assigned to allow students to show who they are or what they know. The problem is that, as with research and literary texts, the writings of students are never transparent representations of, in this case, their minds and souls. All texts, and words themselves, are partial. And even if they are not partial, the use of writings as demonstrative or representative of who the students are or what they know limits the potential of the writing process to bring about antioppressive change in the writer (and, arguably, in the reader as well). As Laurel Richardson (1997) suggests, writing can be not only representative, but also performative, whereby the process of writing brings about difference in the writer. In many English classes, instructors assign essays in which students are to explain the theories covered in class, synthesize the readings, critique the readings, or connect the readings to the students' lives or observations. For such assignments, the standards for evaluation are often signs of repetition: students are expected to repeat the main points of the readings, critique them with support from other writings, or make connections to their personal lives that draw on frameworks they have earlier used to make sense of their lives or observations. In addition to the *content* of the essay, repetition is often required in the *structure* of the essay: essays are considered "academic" when they reference other writings and invoke the authority of someone who spoke earlier (Zenger, 1999), and are considered "well written" when they adhere to already existing models of what is "good academic writing." By learning to be "good writers," students are necessarily being constructed into subjects that were predetermined by "standards" in academia. In saying this, I do not advocate abandoning all academic essay writing, since different types of writing assignments accomplish different things. However, I do suggest interrupting the privilege of certain ways of writing by troubling what we say it means to write well. Writing will not be antioppressive if it is always forced to repeat and adhere to partial stories or frameworks of what it means to learn or to write well.

This applies even to assignments that ask students to reflect solely on their own lives. Janet Miller (1998) critiques the ways many educators assign autobiographies in their classrooms, noting that "telling one's story" not only presumes a rational development of a singular subject from ignorance to enlightenment, but also privileges the developmental model as *the* story, making other stories unthinkable and untellable. Such a modernist

use of autobiography merely repeats stories already told, “reinscribes already normalized identity categories,” and forecloses the possibility of seeing oneself in ways neither the student nor the teacher could have predicted. Miller argues that autobiography should engage not in repetition, but in resignification and making one’s story unfamiliar and unnatural to both the student and the teacher. Can we imagine an assignment in which teachers ask students to write in ways that trouble familiar stories? Can we imagine an assignment in which the product is less important than the process? Can we imagine an assignment in which students are helped to resist repeating their own as well as their teachers’ knowledges, identities, and practices, and to engage in the discomfiting process of resignifying knowledges, identities, and practices (which might be possible when rereading one’s life through different “lenses”)? Writing, like reading, can be about changing “who we are” and “how things are” but such a move cannot come about if we insist on repeating the same stories of what it means to *do* a writing assignment or to *be* an English student.

So, too, with mathematics and sciences. One commonsense view of when a student has “learned” math and science is when “the foundations have become ‘obvious’ and disappeared from view; one is able to take the basic axioms for granted and use them correctly and unselfconsciously” (Shulman, 1996, p. 449). In other words, students have learned math and science when they have begun to think in ways consistent with the tradition of mathematics and science. Not surprisingly, given the colonialist, patriarchal, Eurocentric, and heterosexist nature of (Western) mathematics and science, commonsense definitions of good teaching and effective math and science education that center on such views of learning math and science actually hinder efforts toward equity in education (Secada, 1995). Teaching in commonsense ways cannot help but maintain social inequities. This is not to say that we should abandon all instruction in how we currently “do” math and science, but I do suggest interrupting the privilege of current ways of doing. At the very least, educators can recognize that different communities and cultural groups develop different practices for working with numbers and thinking numerically—not only cultural groups around the world, but also within the United States, including ethnic communities, children in different age groups, and professional groups (D’Ambrosio, 1985; Nelson-Barber & Estrin, 1995). The “numeracy” (Street, 2000) being taught in mathematics and science classrooms, then, is only one of many

approaches to calculating, solving, predicting, modeling, and so forth. Antioppressive mathematics and science classrooms can teach in ways that draw on Lisa Delpit's (1986, 1988) theory of the culture of power: teachers need to learn about and build from their students' own cultural proficiencies in order to make connections between ways the students are already numerate and ways they need to be numerate to succeed in mainstream schools and society.

If educators are to contest the proper domains of math and science and to critique the ways their classrooms are already complicit with oppression, then it seems contradictory to require that all students acquire certain standards of knowledge about and skills within these fields, especially given that our knowledge is always partial. Meeting standards is, like some forms of essay writing, a practice of repetition, one that closes off the possibilities of learning what has yet to be known by both student and teacher. Furthermore, the use of standards assumes that teachers can know and control the processes of teaching and learning. Yet, as Ellsworth (1997) tells us, teaching involves a great deal of unknowability. We cannot fully know who our students are, we cannot control what they learn, we cannot know with certainty what it is they actually learn, and we cannot even be certain that what we want them to learn is what is in their best interest to learn. To acknowledge the unknowability of teaching is to acknowledge that teachers cannot say ahead of time what we want students to learn, what we will do to get them there, and how we will then determine if they got there—which is a popular format for lesson planning. Education cannot only be about requiring that students learn what we traditionally or currently consider to be the important knowledges and skills in the disciplines.

In fact, not even antioppressive approaches to education should predetermine what students need to know or be able to do, since theories and practices of antioppressive education are as partial and uncontrollable as any other theory and practice. Ellsworth (1997) has argued that teachers addressing their students are not unlike a film addressing its audience, for

no matter how much the film's mode of address tries to construct a fixed and coherent position within knowledge, gender, race, sexuality, from which the film "should" be read; actual viewers have always read films against their modes of address, and "answered" films from places different from the ones that the films speaks to. (p. 31)

Working against oppression, therefore, cannot be about advocating strategies that are always supposed to bring about the desired effect. Consider, for example, Didi Khayatt's (1997) discussion of the role queer teachers play in challenging heterosexism and homophobia. Critiquing the notion that queer teachers "should" come out, she points to the different, contradictory ways that students—queer and straight—can read that supposedly empowering act. She does not tell educators *not* to come out, but argues against making the common assumption that that act has the same meaning to all students. Strategies to bring about change must be situated, and must recognize that teaching involves unknowability and that learning involves multiple ways of reading.

This does not mean that educators are powerless to name goals or to engage in practices that work toward those goals. I am committed to challenging oppression in schools, and am focusing this entire book on exploring different approaches to doing so. However, I do believe that we need to resist believing that we know what it means to do antioppressive education effectively or unproblematically. The unknowability involved in teaching requires that even antioppressive educators must constantly trouble our own practices and look beyond what we already know.

Strengths and Weaknesses

I have argued throughout this chapter that the context-specific and complex natures of oppression make problematic any attempt to articulate a single strategy that works for all teachers, with all students, in all situations. Although poststructuralism does not offer *the* one answer, it is helpful in complicating the first three approaches to antioppressive education and in developing a complementary fourth approach. In particular, poststructuralism suggests curricular and pedagogical reforms that help to address the complexities of antioppressive education by developing such notions as partiality, resistance, crisis, and unknowability as they apply to teaching and learning. Perhaps the most significant contribution poststructuralism makes is its insistence that the very ways in which we think are framed not only by what is said, but also by what is not said (Marshall, 1992). Critical theorists made this explicit in their analysis of school curriculum and the "hidden" curriculum. But the same applies to the field of educational theory itself, raising the question, Are notions of "oppression," "education," "teaching," and "learning" framed by theories, disciplines, and perspec-

tives that make only certain ways of thinking possible, only certain kinds of questions askable? Ellsworth (1997) argues that the field of educational research has tried to address oppression by conducting research primarily within the social science disciplines and by theorizing primarily within "critical" frameworks. Drawing on the humanities (film studies, in particular), she argues for radically different ways of thinking about antioppressive education.

Ironically, this insight from poststructuralism reveals a limitation of this fourth approach to antioppressive education, namely, that many more perspectives remain underexplored and that this fourth approach alone is not enough. Poststructuralism and psychoanalysis themselves grew out of the histories of thought in Western Europe that continue to dominate educational theorizing in the United States. Very little research and theorizing has drawn on the histories of thought in, say, Asia, Africa, or the indigenous Americas, and future research needs to examine the different insights and possibilities for antioppressive education that they make possible.

The conceptualization of antioppressive education embodied by this fourth approach also raises at least four ethical questions that warrant more discussion among educators committed to social justice. First, is it ethical to intentionally and constantly lead a student into crisis? The fourth approach suggests that allowing students to continue living through the repetition of comforting norms, identities, knowledges, and practices is tantamount to perpetuating the oppressive status quo, which means that *not* teaching and learning through crisis is what is unethical. However, what results is a vision of social justice premised on constantly working through crisis. Could such a situation lead to a life with little feelings of hope or even peacefulness?

Second, are all experiences with crisis antioppressive? While asserting that learning takes place "only through crisis," the fourth approach also suggests that the form, context, and degree of crisis, along with how students work through it, can all determine whether or not a particular experience actually brings about antioppressive change. Students are all in different places, living through different forms of repetition, and open to different kinds of change. What will disrupt repetition with one student may not work with another, and what may invite one student to explore alternative ways of identifying, thinking, and acting may incite another to express greater resistance. Not even the notion of learning through crisis, then, can be standardized and applied to all students without itself becoming an

approach to teaching that presumes to know more than it knows and prescribes what it can never prescribe. Students learn through crisis differently, and benefit from different experiences with crisis. More research on different types of experiences with crisis is needed.

Third, does working through crisis involve invading a student's privacy? It is certainly possible for teachers to ask students to critically reflect on their own lives, explore alternative ways to think about and act in the world, and work through "stuck" places in ways that do not require public disclosure and/or exhibition. And perhaps teachers need to do so, since requiring that students bear all presumes that any disclosure or exhibition can actually re-present the students' thoughts, feelings, complicities, histories, and movements in ways that unproblematically communicate them to an audience, which, as I argued in chapter 1, is impossible. However, not much has been written about how to have students work through crisis without forcing them to disclose and perform themselves in ways that invade privacy and belie the partiality of any representation of that process.

Fourth, do all forms of repetition constitute oppression, and do all resignifications constitute antioppressive change? The notion that oppression consists (at least in part) of repetition does not mean that all repetition is harmful. Repetition can lead to feelings of comfort and security, an affirmation of identity and knowledge, and a stabilization of traditions, meanings, and institutional practices; while such processes can help to perpetuate an oppressive status quo, they can also create viable alternatives to the norm. What is harmful, then, is not repetition per se; what is harmful is when repetition contributes to the production and reproduction of oppressive dynamics in schools and society. Similarly, not all changes are antioppressive. Disrupting repetition can lead to other forms of oppression. Further research is needed to clarify these distinctions as they pertain to classroom experiences.

Looking to Activism

As I call on educators to make use of an amalgam of the four approaches outlined in this chapter, and as I call on researchers to explore more implications of traditionally marginalized or yet-unexplored perspectives on antioppressive education, I acknowledge that engaging in such efforts pre-

supposes a commitment on the part of educators and researchers to subversive views of the purposes of education, of the roles and responsibilities of teachers, and of how we want students and society to change. I also acknowledge that, even with this commitment, the difficulties in implementing changes in our present educational system and in today's political climate are substantial. Yet, I believe this chapter shows that more and more educators are educating themselves of the dire need to engage in antioppressive education, and that more and more educators are making a positive difference in the lives of their students. I expect this trend to continue, and hope that this chapter helps in this effort.

In the remaining chapters, I aim to bring into the field of antioppressive educational research another body of underexplored perspectives—namely, those of queer activists working against multiple forms of oppression. I am interested in seeing how their stories and insights come to bear on these four approaches to antioppressive education. Do they complicate these approaches? Do they suggest different ways to conceptualize and work against oppression? Do they trouble the very meaning of antioppressive education that I have thus far developed?

VIGNETTE 2

SAM: We don't teach our students to think. Our public schools don't do that. We don't give our students a chance to problem-solve and think for themselves.

KEVIN: What do you think we're doing in public schools instead?

SAM: We're asking everybody to color within the lines. We want them to reach standards. That's the whole thing right now is, "How can we get everyone up to a certain standard?" Well, the only way to do that is to have everything extremely curriculum based, where it's exposure-memorization-recall type of model. And then only the very high functioning will be allowed to go on and problem solve. Because if you look at our AP classes in high school, actually some of them are not as hard as your regular classes because the student is allowed to do more independent thinking instead of, "you must learn exactly what I'm teaching you, and give it back to me."

KEVIN: Can you talk more about how learning involves crisis and emotion, based on your experiences?

SAM: [pause] I think that—boy—a lot of things. When you suddenly opened up this whole new way of thinking to a student, they don't have any place to go with it.

KEVIN: What do you mean by that?

SAM: Well, if you brought up a lot of emotional feelings by talking about stereotypes and some of the things we were talking about—mistreatment—how would that student in the grade school, secondary type of school—how would they deal with that? We divide school up into these fifty-minute slots, each one is for a different subject, and you're faced with twenty-some students, and who do they continue that crying or confusion with? When can they connect? I mean it goes back to connecting with somebody. Because how would you then come back? You know, it takes a while. This stuff has to sink in. When we present workshops, the participants usually leave kind of like this [*Sam's face expresses a sense of being overwhelmed*]. And they need to go home and think and be able to reconnect. You know, we often say we have to do

some kind of follow-up because otherwise people will just be blown away, and we have to bring them back, and let them go through it. So I'm thinking that that's something that's definitely lacking in education. It's like we don't have time for the process, the natural process to occur. And the questioning. We also don't—I'm probably going off in the wrong way—but I'm thinking we don't allow students to question, to ask questions. We don't even teach students how to ask questions, or to question. Because that's not part of our public schools, it's not what we've done. So when you do this, they can't have time to question. And that's also coming back to, "Am I free to ask this, teaching some of these deeper questions, to understand?" And I think that can become a crisis. And I think sometimes, you know, just from talking to other teachers who bring up really different—quote—"subjects"? I often hear that kids just shut down, they would not discuss this. And that was it. They would then avoid that teacher. Other students would be, you know, miraculously changed and want more. And be really probing. I mean how many students can go home and talk to their families about it? I mean that's a whole other thing that we're not talking about. And I think that's really missing.

KEVIN: What do you think the solution could be?

SAM: Well, a lot of schools are talking about the block system, which would allow more time for discourse. Because it would be fewer classes and longer times to be together. And I think teachers are like, "Oh my God, what would I think of to do all that time?" But maybe there would be more discussion. I mean we still use the lecture format in schools. And, I think also having a chance to share with your peers, you know, more small group opportunities, or to do projects together. I was just thinking of this thing that just happened. There's a student in my school who's your typical upper-middle-class, flawless young woman, you know, just pretty and sweet and popular and big house and the perfect family type of thing. And she came to me because another teacher said, "Go to [Sam]," because she needed her community service project and I can usually think of stuff for kids, even though I don't know the kids. So I got her involved in this, I had been wanting to do this project, maybe I told you about it, for the Jamaican school that I had visited in Spring Break, I went to a school.

KEVIN: Oh, right.

SAM: And I decided that, since they have absolutely nothing, that would be a project that I could do with my friends, and just collect school supplies and books and help them start a school library. So I was like, okay, I'll just throw this out to this, you know—[*makes a high-pitched squeal*]-type of kid. And, she really took to it. And I think part of it, now that I'm seeing the whole picture, because I met her mom and I've talked to her dad and I've gone to her house, I realized that Mom kind of jumped on to the bandwagon and channeled her and got ideas about how to make this project really big. Dad got involved, he's an exec at [a clothing company], he asked [the company] to pay for all the shipping for all the stuff and they said yes. Dad's been pulled in. Mom turns out to be a freelance journalist. She wants to do a story about it. She's encouraging her daughter, you know, "This is an opportunity." The daughter, when we were together, sorting through stuff, I showed her all the pictures of the kids and you know, it started. "Oh my God! Jamaica's more than these all-inclusive resorts! These are kids." She'd ask me these questions, she'd pick up something that we'd collected, "Do you think that they could use this? Would they be interested in this?" And she was starting to move to a poor, you know, very poor, poor community. The kids have nothing, it's so far removed from her life. How would she ever have a chance to know what that was like? But she was starting to figure it out. And it's really helped me make a connection because I have a tendency, as you noted in there before that, okay, the White kids, the middle-class kids, you know, you kind of do them a disservice by using them as like, "Well, I don't have to reach out to them, they got it." Which is so wrong.

KEVIN: Before, you said some students resist learning about these kinds of things. How do you think we can overcome that? What has been helpful for you?

SAM: I think it's trust. I think it's trusting that teacher. Students get angry when you tell them something about their culture, about their family, or about how people relate to others. It's so threatening if you point out that that's very racist or that's hurtful. And then they're just like, Oh my God, that's so scary, you know, and so I'm just going to be angry, I'm just going to be mad. But if you've got that trust and that basic relationship, they're going to come back. And you know, it may not happen right away. They may be really angry. And I guess I have this ideal situ-

ation because I'm with my kids for four years, and I see them grow. And, with the boys, it's usually junior year that they really start to change. And they'll come back and they'll bring up something that we talked about maybe freshman year, something I brought up. But then they're able to see it. Or then they've separated it. Another thing I see—oh my God, more with boys than with girls—they start to separate and they start to get their own values away from Mom and Dad. And they'll come back to me and say, "my dad is such a racist, I could never feel the way he does, and now I'm finally able to talk about it and realize I'm going this way." And you know, and it's so wonderful, and I'm like, "well, that's what school's supposed to be about. School's supposed to help you become a person, not just echo what your parents want us to teach." And you know, that's what I always say to my students: You're going to be exposed to all this stuff and a lot of it is going to be scary because it's going to be different than what you hear at home at the dinner table. Then you've got to take it on, and decide what you want to keep and what you want to throw away. I'm not telling you you have to believe in the theory of evolution, but you've got to at least know about, know it's there, then you've got to sit down and decide. And that is so scary for kids. Especially for low-functioning or middle-functioning, you know? But I do think trust, trust in that teacher, that, Well, they're a good person or they care about me, so she can't be, you know, misleading me. I may not accept everything or I may not do everything she wants, but I know she's a good person, and I trust her. Kids don't trust adults. You know, basically they hate a lot of teachers because they screw them over all the time with the grading system and different ways that they expect them to live up to norms.

KEVIN: When you said someone came back to you as a junior, it made me think, Sometimes we have to wait three years. That's a long time!

SAM: I know. Isn't it amazing? But I've noticed that with my own children. If they have an incredible experience, they may not talk about it, and then all of a sudden one day they're like, "You know, when I did this, or climbed this mountain, or this happened?" and I'm like, "I can't believe, that was six months ago and you're just telling me?" But it's the process time.

KEVIN: Maybe it's how they revisit it in their own minds.

SAM: Yeah. And so how do we allow for that in schools? We really don't.

