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LEARNING TO READ IS WHO YOU ARE

Beth Christian
Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA

David Bloome
The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA

In this article, the authors explore how the social dynamics in a reading and writing event influence "who children are" (e.g., good readers, non-readers, leaders). The authors explore how the presence of English language learners (ELL) affects the distribution of symbolic capital (i.e., who has high status and prestige) in classroom social interaction, thus affecting the social identities available to the participants. The authors look beyond cultural and linguistic mismatch as reasons for which ELL students are often marginalized during literacy events. They argue that the issue lies in addressing the status that ELL students often have within the classroom community in relation to their non-ELL peers.

We are concerned about the social dynamics in classrooms that affect how children become readers and writers. We are specifically concerned about the social dynamics in those classrooms where there may be a small number of students whose native language is not English and who struggle with reading and writing activities as a result. It is no longer the case that only teachers in large cities and certain parts of the country are likely to find students who are English Language Learners (ELL students) in their classrooms; increasingly, teachers in every part of the country are finding ELL students in their classrooms. Given the movement away from separate ESL classrooms and bilingual programs to "pull-out" programs in many schools, teachers can now expect to have at least a few ELL students in their classrooms for the greater part of the school day.

We view the social dynamics that occur in classrooms as key to a child's development as a reader and writer and the development of their *social*

Address correspondence to Beth Christian, 102 Ridgeview Tr., Hendersonville, TN 37075. E-mail: beth.christian@wku.edu

identity as a student, reader, and a writer. This is no less true for ELL students than for other students. Teachers do not simply present learning tasks and knowledge and magically students become readers and writers. Rather, teachers and students together create a "culture" in the classroom that helps students make sense of what is occurring in the classroom, what they are expected to do, what it means, how they are to go about the process of learning, and who they are in the classroom as learners, readers, and writers. We are interested in how the social dynamics of classroom life change as a result of the presence of ELL students and how those social dynamics do and do not provide opportunities for all students to become proficient and strong readers and writers.

For some children, learning to read and write in schools is fun and affirming. Every classroom lesson, worksheet, basal textbook story, and test affirms that they are readers. In some cases, the affirmation is also an affirmation of their standing relative to other students. That is, not only are they readers, but they are better readers than the students in the middle and bottom reading groups or those working in the lower basal readers and leveled readers. Such an affirmation of their position with regard to other students provides them with a sort of status (what we call symbolic capital) that they can use to their advantage. They might receive special privileges from the teacher or their parents; they may get special educational opportunities; and, if they maintain such a status over the tenure of their schooling, they may gain acceptance into more prestigious colleges and be in a better position with regard to economic opportunities.

However, for some children, learning to read is neither fun nor affirming. Classroom tasks may only remind them of their lower status among the students in the classroom and of the disadvantages that such lower status provides. It is common to view such children as lacking the skills or abilities they need to be better readers. A large number of programs have been developed to address such needs, variously focusing on different skills, abilities, attitudes, motivation, etc. Yet, despite the long history of the development and use of such programs, the overall picture of differential success in learning to read and write and the continued gap in achievement between middle-class, white, monolingual English children and children from other cultural backgrounds, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, and linguistic backgrounds continue (Noel, 2000). Such a history suggests a prima facie case that the issue of differential achievement cannot be reduced to a simple provision of more skills and instruction. In our view, part of the issue is the close connection between learning to read and write and social identity.

Given the centrality of learning to read in early elementary schooling and how much importance parents, politicians, community leaders, and the general public place on learning to read, it has become an important factor

in students' social identities. In classrooms and in schools, learning to read is often who you are: how well a child learns to read in comparison to other students provides a social position in a social hierarchy of "becoming readers." That social position is part of the child's social identity. However, learning to read also constitutes "who you are" in another way. The linguistic and cultural resources a child needs to participate in learning-to-read activities may flow easily from home and community to school or not so easily. When it flows easily, children may use their knowledge of language and culture to help them learn to read; when it does not flow easily, children cannot use the knowledge of language and culture they bring to school to help them position themselves well in classroom reading activities. Indeed, for some children, in order to do well in learning-to-read activities, they have to eschew their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and identities and assume those of the dominant culture. As such, learning to read is a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic activity for many students, especially those students who are English language learners. Yet, as we show in this article, it is not just a matter of making language and culture flow easily from home and community to school, but of addressing the lack of symbolic capital that English language learners often have in the classroom community.

SYMBOLIC CAPITAL IN CLASSROOMS

Recent research on the classroom education in the United States of children from non-native English-speaking families and from families whose cultural heritage is different from that of the dominant middle-class has suggested that academic engagement and achievement may be increased when teachers use curricular and pedagogical approaches that build on and are congruent with the children's linguistic and cultural background (Au & Mason, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Lin, 1999; Moll, 1992; Noel, 2000). Such research emphasizes the importance of educators understanding the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students and designing and adapting the curriculum appropriately.

Yet, from both a practical and a theoretical perspective, merely understanding students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and adapting the curriculum may not be sufficient to provide students who are English language learners with appropriate opportunities to learn the language, literacy, and academic subject matter. In our view, the symbolic capital that students assemble plays a mediating role with students' linguistic and cultural background and classroom reading and writing activities. By symbolic capital, we mean the privileged social status and social position that a person may have within a particular situation (cf., Bourdieu, 1994).

Sometimes symbolic capital can be overt and named (such as a student who has been designated as valedictorian or a member of the top reading group); other times, symbolic capital is often subtly acknowledged and implicit. For example, the distribution of questions in a classroom discussion may subtly suggest which students are high achievers and which are not. In a peer-learning group, a child who has control over the resources, such as the crayons, also has symbolic capital because the other students must orient themselves to that child's position and power in order to get the resources needed to complete the task.

As the examples above suggest, symbolic capital is not something that is inherent in an individual; rather, it is the result of social interaction. That is, symbolic capital is socially constructed by how people interact with each other, by the social organization of events, and by how events play out. Symbolic capital is situational. The symbolic capital assigned to a person in one situation may not necessarily carry over into other situations. Thus, rather than conceiving of symbolic capital as a possession or trait, we view symbolic capital as a social process closely aligned with social identity and social status. Symbolic capital is part of the process by which people let each other know who they are, where they stand in relation to one other, and what privileges and constraints they can assume. One way to visualize the relationship of symbolic capital and social interaction is that they influence each other (see Fig. 1). The distribution of

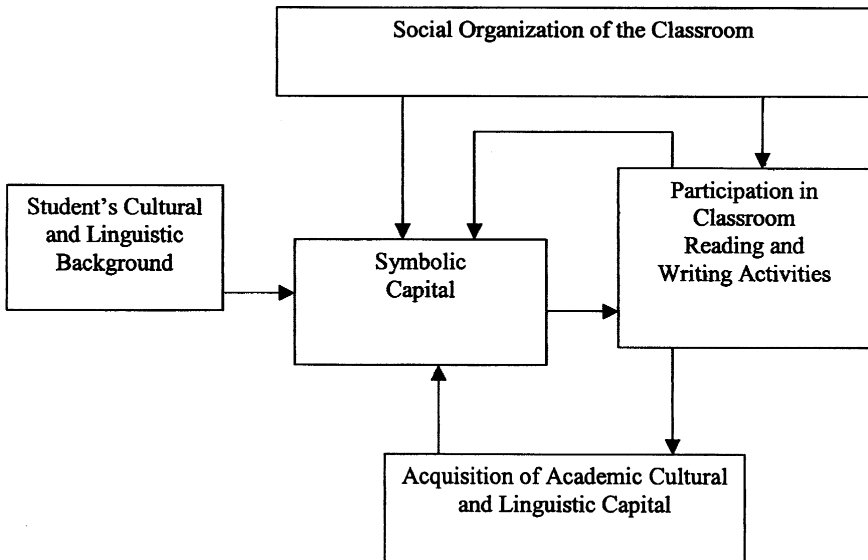

FIGURE 1 Relationship of Symbolic Capital and Social Interaction in the Classroom

symbolic capital influences how people act and react to each other. Conversely, how people act and react to one other influences the distribution of symbolic capital.

Symbolic capital is closely aligned with the social structure of an event. If the social structure is hierarchical, symbolic capital will be hierarchical. For example, if a student is designated by the teacher as the "keeper of the crayons" because the student received an A on a reading test—and other students were denied such a social position because they received lower grades—the symbolic capital associated with being the "keeper of the crayons" would have a hierarchical dimension. If the social structure were not hierarchical (i.e., if everyone in the class were assigned a position that was viewed as equally important and prestigious), then the symbolic capital associated with each social identity would not be organized hierarchically.

Symbolic capital should be viewed in relationship to *cultural capital, linguistic capital*, and *economic capital*. By cultural capital, we are referring to the knowledge held and valued by a particular culture and the ability to engage appropriately and effectively in the social practices that are associated with a particular culture. Here, we use a broad definition of culture to include ethnic cultures, academic cultures, classroom cultures, playground cultures, etc. Having cultural capital within a particular classroom would therefore include knowledge of the classroom and what occurs in the classroom as well as the ability to engage in the events and practices of the classroom (such as morning routines, sharing time, choral reading, etc).

By linguistic capital, we are referring to both knowledge about language (including spoken and written language) as well as the ability to engage in the language practices of the culture or social group. For example, a child who has knowledge of English and who can use English effectively in a classroom discussion to display academic competence is a child who has linguistic capital in that situation. Like symbolic capital, cultural capital and linguistic capital are situated and socially constructed. Having linguistic capital in one situation may not necessarily carry over to another: knowing how to use English and how to participate effectively in a whole class discussion does not necessarily mean that the student will be able to assemble linguistic capital in a two-way bilingual reading group or on the playground.

By economic capital we are referring to one's ownership and control of material resources, wealth, and the means of producing material goods, various commodities, services, etc. Children by themselves rarely have much in the way of economic capital; however, through their parents and families, children vary in terms of economic capital.

It is a feature of symbolic capital, cultural capital, linguistic capital, and economic capital, that they can be exchanged for each other. Parents who

have the economic means may provide a tutor or special learning opportunities for their child or purchase high-status clothes and toys. A child who has linguistic capital in the classroom may be able to use her facility with language to display academic competence and gain a higher social position and status among the students and teacher for symbolic capital. The child might use her symbolic capital to gain access to special educational opportunities (perhaps an accelerated reading program or a higher reading group), which might result in additional cultural capital—and which then might be used to increase her symbolic capital. A child who is assigned the social position of the "keeper of the crayons" might use the privileges of her position (its symbolic capital) to bargain for money or inclusion in a game of dodgeball during recess, or she could give out the best crayons to her friends. Similarly, the keeper of the crayons might use the symbolic capital of the position to call for the teacher's attention, ask the teacher questions, or suggest how a particular instructional activity might be pursued.

As shown in Fig. 1, the social organization of a classroom influences the distribution of symbolic capital. While teachers do have a major influence on the social organization of a classroom and how classroom instructional activities play out, students are also an important influence. For example, a teacher may desire to structure the classroom around cooperation and non-hierarchical social status. The students, however, may bring into the classroom a competitive and hierarchical framework.

Such a framework is widespread in U.S. society and is closely aligned with the ideology of meritocracy, where people receive rewards and privileges based on the merits of their work. Indeed, many companies and corporations have "merit pay," increasing an employee's salary if the employee is deemed to have done either high quality or a large quantity of work. Whether or not the U.S. society is actually a meritocracy is less pertinent here than the assumption of meritocracy as an assumed cultural ideology that permeates U.S. society from sports, to politics, to jobs, to economic wealth, to marriage. The assumption of a meritocracy provides a rationale for the differentiation in salaries, social position and privilege, and quality of life. The assignment of grades in school is also based on the ideology of meritocracy. Thus, it would be expected that many students would bring a framework for participating in classroom activities based on this ideology of meritocracy. Despite the teacher's efforts in both teacher-led and student-led activities, there may be a conflict between the framework the teacher is promoting and that which the students assume, as well as with that which they find to make common sense and be natural.

It is likely that both the teacher and the students will bring to the classroom a shared ideological framework of meritocracy. The point of the

example above is to emphasize the importance of the ideological framework that students bring into the classroom. The teacher is not all-powerful in structuring activities and the assignment, and the assumption of symbolic capital is not solely a matter of teacher–student interaction. Both in teacher-led and peer-group activities, students are active agents in the distribution of symbolic capital. Both teachers and students play important roles in establishing a classroom culture, and both are heavily involved in the assignment and assumption of symbolic capital. With regard to learning to read, it is not merely teachers who influence how ELL students participate in classroom reading instruction activities; both the ELL students and other students are involved in the social dynamics of those events and in the construction of social identities for each other as readers, writers, and learners.

THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF SYMBOLIC CAPITAL IN ONE FIRST-GRADE PEER-GROUP READING ACTIVITY

Given the importance of students' interactions with each other in the distribution of symbolic capital, we now take a close look at one peer-group reading activity. Our purpose is to highlight how students socially construct the distribution of symbolic capital and how the distribution of symbolic capital influences literacy learning opportunities.

In this classroom, the teacher used a combination of teacher-led activities, such as reading groups and whole class discussions, and student peer-group activities. One such peer-group activity was intended to promote students' comprehension of what they read by allowing them to use drawing, artwork, and dramatic reenactment to deepen their reflection of the events of the story. After listening to their first grade teacher read Mercer Meyer's *There's an Alligator under My Bed* (1987), the teacher put the students into groups of three or four and told them that, as a group, they were to collaborate and draw a picture of what was just read. Then, they were to practice acting out the story in their groups. They were to decide in their groups who would play the various characters and what they would do in the skit. The teacher then gave each group a large piece of paper and instructed one child in the group to get his or her crayon box from his or her desk. She told each group where they were to work and that they would have about ten minutes to draw. After about ten minutes, they were to begin practicing their skits that they would later present to the class.

One of the student groups consisted of David, Oscar, Katie, and Michelle. David and Oscar are Latino children who are learning English as a second

language. They are low achievers in terms of reading and language arts, although Oscar does a little better in reading and writing than David. Oscar is rather outspoken while David is shy and soft-spoken. In terms of oral proficiency in English, Oscar and David do quite well. They understand most everything and are able carry on casual conversations with ease. Nevertheless, Oscar and David struggle with academic English, reading, and writing—in fact, this is Oscar's second year in first grade in this classroom. David missed almost a month of school when he went to visit relatives in El Salvador and has been struggling to catch up since he returned. Other students often help him with reading and writing assignments. Michelle is white and Katie is African-American. Both girls are high achievers in language arts and reading. In addition, both girls are very outgoing and outspoken. They volunteer and are often called upon by the teacher to help with classroom activities and routines as well as to respond to questions during whole-class discussions. It is Michelle who brought the crayons for the group to use.

The four students work on the floor with a large sheet of paper and a large box of crayons (see Fig. 2). Michelle draws on the majority of the right side of the page while Katie draws on the majority of the left side of the page. David begins to draw at the very top of the page. His physical position requires him to draw his pictures upside down in relation to

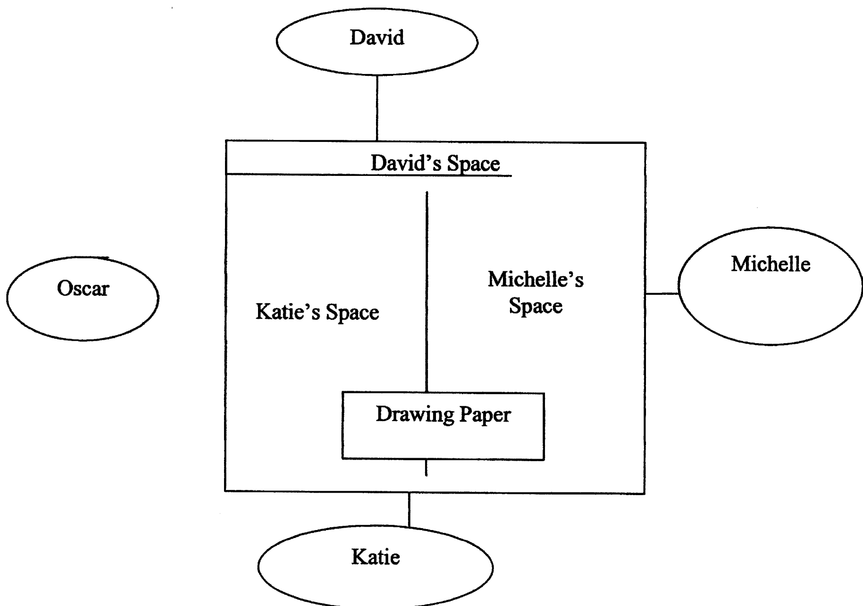

FIGURE 2 Drawing Positions and Drawing Spaces

Michelle's and Katie's drawings. Oscar watches as the others begin to draw. The crayon box is between Michelle and Katie.

Analysis of the Peer-Group Reading Activity

Data analysis builds upon theoretical and methodological constructs from the fields of sociolinguistic ethnography and discourse analysis (e.g., Bloome, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Green & Wallat, 1981). In the analysis of the peer-group reading activity (see Table 1) linguistic cues were used to identify symbolic capital and social identities. In the analysis, we focused upon:

1. how and when symbolic capital was used, gained, and/or acknowledged
2. the social construction of identities (i.e., whether proposed identities were ratified or contested)
3. if and how symbolic capital was related to whether or not proposed identities were ratified or contested.

We have included a brief description of the analysis below. The first column in Table 1 indicates the line number of the transcript. The second column indicates who is speaking (pseudonyms are used for the students). Column 3 contains what the children say to one another (i.e., linguistic cues). Column 4 describes the non-verbal behavior (also considered linguistic cues), such as facial expressions, bodily movements, etc. Columns 5–7 focus upon social construction of identity. Column 5 is marked if a student proposes (identified by P) a certain identity or if a student raises a question (identified by Q) about someone's identity. Column 6 is marked if a student ratifies (R) or acknowledges (A) that proposal or question. Column 7 is marked if the proposal is ignored (I) or contested (C).

For example, in Line 1, Oscar says to Katie, "You have to do the alligator's head." We note in column five that Oscar is attempting to position himself as the teacher and/or an expert on drawing alligators. In Line 3, Katie tells Oscar, "I *know* how to do an alligator," thus contesting his claim for authority. Then she adds, "Don't you think?" which is marked as a question in Column 5. But Column 6 is also marked as she, in a sense, gives Oscar some sort of credibility and ratifies his expert identity by asking his opinion. Column 8 explains columns 5–7 in narrative form and indicates the symbolic capital present. For example, by proposing an expert identity, Oscar also attempts to claim the status or symbolic capital that comes along with being an expert. Column 9 includes comments and explanations of observed behavior based on background information from observations, field notes, and interviews collected by the authors during the six-month ethnographic inquiry of this first-grade classroom.

TABLE 1 Sample from Analysis

Line #	Speaker	Message unit	Nonverbal	Prop../ Ques	Ratify/ Ack.	Contest/ Ignore	Social identities	Comments and interpretations
1.	Oscar	You have to do the alligator's head.	Michelle, David, and Katie are drawing. Oscar is watching Katie. Michelle and Katie are drawing on the majority of the page. David is drawing on the edge of the top of the paper (upside down).	P			Oscar positions himself as the teacher telling Katie what she has to do. Oscar positions himself as the expert on drawing an alligator.	While Michelle, David, and Katie begin to draw, Oscar cannot seem to find space on the paper. David's physical position requires him to draw his pictures upside down. Katie and Michelle dominate the physical space on the paper.
2.	Ms. S	Shhh. Use quiet voices.	Oscar puts his hand under his chin.					The students are getting loud in their groups.
3.	Katie	You . . . I KNOW how to do an alligator,	Katie sounds irritated, stressing "KNOW."	P		C	Katie refuses the identity that Oscar has attempted to claim. Katie positions herself as artist and contests Oscar's expertise.	
4.		don't you think?!		Q	R		Although this appears to be a rhetorical question, Katie may be recognizing Oscar's "expert' identity. Katie confirms Oscar's identity by asking his opinion.	This question is ambiguous in that it could be construed as a rhetorical question although, at the same time, it sounds as if Katie is looking for reassurance.

The Peer-Group Interaction

A few seconds after David, Michelle, and Katie begin to draw, the following interaction occurs:

01 Oscar:	You have to do the alligator's head.
02 Teacher:	Shhh. Use quiet voices. (Oscar puts his hand under his chin.)
03 Katie:	You/I know how to do an alligator,
04 Katie:	don't you think?
05 Oscar:	It don't look like it. (Oscar laughs and continues to watch Katie.)
06 Katie:	Yeah/I know. (Katie laughs, Michelle looks up.)
07 Oscar:	Now do the leg, now do the leg. (David stops drawing, sits up, and looks.)
08 Katie:	I'm doin' the tongue (points to spot on paper) there.
09 Oscar:	What it look like?
10 Katie:	The alligator. (Katie laughs.)
11 David:	Alligator?
12 Michelle:	That's . . . (interrupted by Katie)
13 Katie:	. . . That's the alligator.
14 Oscar:	It's the wrong way. (Oscar points at Katie's picture.)
15 Oscar:	The eye have to be over there.
16 Katie:	Nuh unh/this is the face. (Oscar laughs.)
17 David:	Face? (David smiles.)

At the beginning of this brief interaction, Oscar attempts to create for himself a teacher-like position by telling Katie what she has to do. He also positions himself as the expert on drawing an alligator as if he is an art critic. His tone is serious. Katie contests the social position that Oscar attempted to claim and the authority that the position gave Oscar over her drawing. "I know how to do an alligator" (line 03). Katie then softens the confrontation by qualifying her response, "don't you think?" (line 04).

This conversational move by Katie is complex because the social relationship she is constructing with Oscar is carried also by the tone and by how the message is subsequently interpreted. "[D]on't you think?" can be interpreted as an invitation to join in a sort of self-mocking—a bit of humor. Oscar appears to interpret Katie's move as an invitation to shared and respectful humor and critique (that is, humor and critique that does not usurp her authority over her drawing) because he laughs and then Katie acknowledges the humor and joins in the laughter (line 06).

Oscar's conversational moves in lines 01 through 06 may be interpreted as an attempt to create an interaction space in order to participate in the event and activity. He has no space on the paper to draw and his commentary provides one way to participate. By creating such a conversational space and a role as "art critic," he moves his social position from being a

non-participant to having some social status as a participatory critic. Katie ratifies his art critic identity, laughing as she agrees that her drawing really does not look like an alligator (line 06).

Oscar continues the conversation with Katie, telling her what she must do next ("Now do the leg," line 07). This conversational move is an imperative and is similar to line 01 with regard to claiming social position; he is positioning himself as teacher. Katie again contests Oscar's claim to a teacher identity by negating his direction and stating that she will do the tongue (line 08). Katie's contesting of Oscar's authority is not done explicitly or directly, thus avoiding a direct attack on Oscar's "face".

Oscar then asks Katie "What it look like?" (line 09). It is not clear to what the line refers, but Katie interprets Oscar's comment as if he was asking what she had drawn, perhaps implying that it was drawn so poorly he cannot tell what it is. Katie laughs, again possibly using self-mockery and humor, but she deftly limits intrusion by David and Michelle by interrupting Michelle, taking the turn at talk, and establishing what the drawing is with "That's the alligator" (line 13).

There are complex social constructions of social position in this brief interaction between lines 07 to 13. David and Michelle's comments ratify Oscar's authority to question and critique Katie's drawing and establish a similar authority for themselves. Katie, however, maintains her authority over the drawing and limits the authority of the other students, doing so with humor, self-mockery, and by taking up available conversational space.

Oscar continues to position himself as art critic in line 14 when he tells Katie that her alligator is "the wrong way" and that "They have to be over there." Katie contests Oscar's authority to issue directives by indicating that the face of the alligator is other than where it seemed obvious to Oscar. In so doing, Katie creates humor (Oscar laughs and David smiles) while maintaining her rights to determine how she will draw her alligator. David's comment in line 17, "Face?", validates Oscar's commentary in lines 14 and 15, but his smile, along with Oscar's laughter, ratifies Katie's authority over her drawing.

With regard to symbolic capital, the physical arrangement of the students and the drawing suggests that both David and Oscar are marginalized in this event, both literally and in terms of participation. David has to draw upside down on a top margin, and Oscar has no place to draw. They have no symbolic capital that they can exchange for cultural capital (such as a learning opportunity). In other words, they are not permitted to participate because of their low status in the classroom. Then Oscar shifts his social position from non-participant to participant by commenting on Katie's drawing. Although he is not successful in assuming a social position similar to that of a teacher, he is successful in establishing a social position similar

to an art critic. As such, the symbolic capital he assumes is that of a group member and a critic, someone whose ideas are valued but not to the extent that they provide the authority to issue directives.

As the four students continue working on the paper, they monitor one another's activities. David sees that Michelle is drawing a house and questions her about it.

2-18 David:	Are you drawing a house?
2-19 Katie:	We need to do this. (She reaches for another crayon.)
2-20 Michelle:	Huh/what do you mean? (Spoken in an irritated tone of voice.)
2-21 Oscar:	With the alligator
2-22:?	[undecipherable]
2-23 David:	She's drawin' a house. (David looks at the paper then at Oscar and Katie.)
2-24 Michelle:	Now I'm gonna . . .
2-25 Oscar:	. . . I'm gonna' do a house, too (Oscar interrupts Michelle, and looks at Michelle with an intonation that suggests the statement is a request for permission to draw the house.)
2-26 Katie:	(Moves the crayon box to her left side away from Michelle.)
2-27 Michelle:	That's my box. (Michelle reaches for the box.)
2-28 Katie:	We need to color.
2-29 Michelle:	I know. (Katie tries to get a crayon as Michelle takes it. Michelle holds the box close to her body so that no one else can see inside the box.)
2-30 Katie:	I need pink. (David begins drawing again.)
2-31 Michelle:	Hold on. (His tone is annoyed, angry. Michelle appears to be looking for a pink crayon.)
2-32 Michelle:	Don't break that (Michelle hands Katie the crayon.)
2-33 Oscar:	Can I draw a house? (Oscar sits up on his knees and looks again at Michelle as he poses the question.)
2-34 Katie:	Actually I need green/for/there. (Katie looks for green crayon in box. Oscar sits and looks at Michelle.)
2-35 Michelle:	And then I need a window for a marker. (Michelle gets a marker out of the box.)
2-36 ?:	Hey oh
2-37 Michelle:	You can use this marker if you want.
2-38 Oscar:	I'm gonna/I'm gonna do a house.
2-39 Katie:	There's other markers.
2-40 Katie:	How come you had that only marker? (Oscar stares at the picture.)
2-41 Katie:	You had more.
2-42 Michelle:	I know/I put 'em in my desk.
2-43 Oscar:	I'm/I'm doing a house. (Oscar looks at Michelle. Michelle starts drawing).

2-44 Michelle:	Yea/we don't need a house. (Michelle responds to Oscar without looking up from the paper.)
2-45 Katie:	We don't need another house. (Oscar sits still with his pencil in his hand. He is frowning).
2-46 Michelle:	What?
2-47 Katie:	We don't need another house.
2-48 Michelle:	I'm not draw/I'm not drawing another house.

This second segment of the peer group activity begins with a challenge by David to Michelle about the drawing of a house. In the story read to the class earlier, there was an implied presence of a house, but whether Michelle's house is related to the implied house in the story is not known. By questioning what Michelle is drawing, David assumes the right to question what others are doing. Oscar had questioned Katie's rendition of an alligator earlier so there may already be a precedent in this event for the questioning of one another's drawings.

Michelle responds angrily to David's challenge (line 2-20), "What do you mean?" Michelle's response could be directed to both the content of David's comment and to the implied social position he has assumed in making the challenge. Oscar supports Michelle's decision to draw a house (line 2-21). David continues to seek support from Oscar and Katie to question Michelle's house, but he is unsuccessful. David's failure to challenge Michelle's drawing of a house may be the result of the cultural norm previously established in the group through the interaction of Oscar and Katie in lines 01 to 17. Their exchange suggests that one may comment on a drawing, but one may not direct what others draw.

Oscar, who has not yet drawn on the paper, attempts to gain Michelle's approval to draw a house (line 2-25). He looks at Michelle as if he is asking her for permission as he says, "I'm gonna' do a house, too." He fixes his eyes on Michelle and waits for a response. When she does not respond, Oscar puts his hand over his mouth and frowns. Oscar's seeking of permission from Michelle positions her as the teacher or leader of the group. She has the authority to determine his status as a drawing participant and she can tell him what he can draw. As we noted earlier, Michelle is a publicly acknowledged high-achieving student, and she was selected by the teacher to be the keeper of the crayons. The symbolic capital she has from teacher-led classroom instruction is affirmed by Oscar in the peer group.

Katie, on the other hand, contests Michelle's social position and privilege. She takes the crayon box from Michelle without asking permission and places it between herself and Oscar. The position of "keeper of the crayons" carries with it a great deal of symbolic capital. Only a small group of students are selected by the teacher to be the "keeper of the crayons," and the selection is based on the hierarchy of academic achievement in the

classroom; therefore, being appointed as "keeper of the crayons" is prestigious. But it is also a powerful position because the "keeper of the crayons" determines who gets what color crayons and who gets the good crayons. Coloring is a favorite student activity; it is a way for the students to insert something of being children into the academic work of learning to read. Thus, being the "keeper of the crayons" places one in the position of determining who gets to act out a classroom task in a way associated with play and creative expression and who does not.

The crayons are indeed Michelle's as she brought her box of crayons to the group; therefore, Katie's taking of the crayons is also an invasion of Michelle's personal property and space. Michelle successfully defends her position of keeper of the crayons, hugging them closely to her side. The manner in which she selects a crayon for Katie can be interpreted as a reluctant acknowledgment of Katie's rights to demand particular crayons, but neither David nor Oscar will get crayons from Michelle. They lack the symbolic capital to exchange for material goods (crayons).

Throughout the conversation between Michelle and Katie, Oscar continues to seek approval from Michelle to draw a house. In line 2-33, Oscar sits up on his knees, and this time in the form of a question, asks Michelle if he can draw a house. Michelle, Katie, and David do not respond. That they are aware of his request is evident in lines 2-44 and 2-45. Michelle and Katie respond to Oscar in the most minimal and indirect way, not looking up at him while talking to each other as if he were not there. Oscar's social position as a non-participant is confirmed.

Finally, when the teacher tells the class that they need to finish drawing and start practicing the skit, Oscar begins to draw a house on a very small portion of the upper left side of the page. He draws with his pencil, as the keeper-of-the-crayons has not yet given him a crayon, nor has he attempted to request one. His drawing is small, nearly invisible.

We want to look at one additional brief segment of the peer-group activity. They have progressed a bit on the drawing, David looks at Katie's drawing and tells Katie and the group that the alligator was under the bed.

3-64 David:	The alligator was under the bed.
3-65 Michelle:	(To Katie.) You need do that under the bed Katie (Louder than David's statement and in an authoritative tone.)
3-66 Katie:	Nah. (Continues drawing.)
3-67 David:	I need red.
3-68 Katie:	We could color it out here.
3-69 Katie:	This is the garage right here.
3-70 Michelle:	I just don't know. (Michelle looks at what Katie is drawing.)

3-71 Katie:	[undecipherable] garage/there's two alligators. (Laughs.)
3-72 David:	Hey . . . (Katie begins drawing in David's space.)
3-73 Oscar:	Nooooo. (Oscar reaches for Katie's crayon.)
3-74 Michelle:	Stop it, that's not your side. (David puts his hand over his space. Katie pulls her hand away.)
3-75 Oscar:	Yea/that's right. (David sits with his hand covering his space as the others return to drawing.)

David's question of the location of the alligator involves a connection between the story and their activity. It is, perhaps, the kind of reflection and response to the story that the teacher was hoping might occur, using the text to guide the drawing. In commenting on Katie's alligator, David has taken an authoritative position based on the use of textual evidence. He is claiming the social position of a reader who understands the story and who understands that the drawing is supposed to reflect what happens in the story. In doing so, he aligns himself with the teacher and, in part, uses her authority (the authority of the assigned task) to comment on Katie's drawing. He positions her as someone who has committed an error, and as such is either an errant student or a reader who lacked comprehension of the story. Michelle reiterates what David has said in a louder and more authoritative tone (line 3-65). At the surface level, it may look as if she is ratifying David's claim; however, Michelle's tone and volume as well as the fact that she does not look at or acknowledge David suggest that she is appropriating David's attempt to claim a higher social position and authority for herself.

Katie rejects David and Michelle's authority to evaluate her drawing (line 3-66) and continues what she is doing. She eventually responds to Michelle's comments, and the two of them consult on how to adjust the drawing. They ignore David when he requests a crayon, which he does not receive. David waits and watches as the others draw. In line 3-71, Katie notices that David has also drawn an alligator: "There's two alligators." She laughs as she moves her crayon up to the top of the page to draw something in his space. David's space, as limited and marginal as it is, has been invaded. All that he can do is cover the space with his hands. Oscar and Michelle denounce Katie's action and she withdraws. Michelle exclaims, "Stop it, that's not your side!" What started out as a connection between the story and the drawing is transformed to an invasion of the limited space David occupies.

One interpretation of lines 3-64 to 3-75 is that neither David nor Oscar has any symbolic capital to make claims about the story or reading, or to claim an identity as a reader. They can make no claims to have any space on the paper, obtain crayons, direct or co-direct the activity, or be acknowledged as being present in all but the most minimal ways. They cannot gain access to educational opportunities or the tools needed for learning.

DISCUSSION

The way in which the drawing activity played out would not have changed much, we believe, if the story the teacher read was more culturally relevant to Oscar and David. Nor would the event have been much different if the book was read in both English and Spanish. David and Oscar understood the story, but they were not able to gain access to the opportunity to deepen their understanding and explore additional ways to engage in comprehension. Michelle and Katie controlled access to learning tools, spaces, and opportunities. Moreover, Michelle and Katie maintained that control as a result of the symbolic capital they were able to bring to the event, and as a result of the symbolic capital they were able to assume within the event. Although Oscar and David appeared to have the cultural and linguistic capital to participate in this event, they had difficulty constructing more dominant social identities because they lacked symbolic capital.

This is not to say that Oscar and David did not have symbolic capital simply because they were English Language Learners. Oscar's and David's lack of symbolic capital was influenced by many factors, including their academic standing in the classroom, their reading levels, the distribution of symbolic capital among their peers, among other influences. Thus, we argue that it is important to consider "who children are" when they enter into discursive events and how "who they are" influences what occurs in the event—particularly if learning to read is indeed "who you are." We argue that children enter into discursive events with multiple identities (e.g., boy, girl, African–American, middle-class, Hispanic, "A" student, "at-risk" student, high-level reader, ESL student, etc.) that influence one another as well as the symbolic capital that they bring into events.

We use Gee's institutional-identities (2001) to illustrate how various identities may contribute to the construction of symbolic capital and of social identities. There are some identities in the institution that do not carry status with them, and thus there is no symbolic capital to exchange. Gee refers to institutional-identities (or I-identities) as descriptions of who individuals are within institutions such as businesses, the government, schools, classrooms, etc. (e.g., a salesperson, professor, teacher, or student) and the labels they may receive within those institutions (e.g., a reader, non-reader, a special needs student, an ESL student, "at-risk," etc.).

Findings from the analysis of broader patterns in the data suggest that "ESL student" was an identity that did not carry symbolic capital, while a "good reader" was an identity that carried high status and prestige. Michelle and Katy were indeed "good readers," and in this interaction, they were able to use their identities (that carried high status on the social

hierarchy) to their advantage. Katie and Michelle used their position themselves in dominant ways while positioning David and Oscar in inferior ways maintaining the hierarchical social structure present in the larger classroom, where students who are not of the dominant culture are often marginalized. In brief, various institutional-identities may influence who has or does not have symbolic capital as well as how students are socially positioned (e.g., hierarchically).

It is both sad and ironic that despite their marginalization, David and Oscar showed that they understood the story and the task. Perhaps if they had been given access, they might have displayed their knowledge and accomplishments, thus resulting in their assuming symbolic capital as readers and learners. But given the manner in which events unfolded, there is no visible or public evidence of their competence as readers and learners. In many classrooms, English Language Learners are marginalized and stay on the margins, while students with the "valued" linguistic and cultural capital remain within the margins. Moreover, they remain at the top of the social hierarchy, while students without the valued capital remained at the bottom. Students in this classroom who were not of the dominant culture of the school often enter the classroom at a disadvantage simply because of "who they were" (i.e., their multiple identities) and had further to climb in terms of the hierarchical social structure. They entered into the classroom low on the hierarchy, and classroom interactions often confirmed their position. Researchers must explore classroom interactions beyond cultural and linguistic mismatch as reasons for which students are marginalized, to focus on what cultural and symbolic capital can actually "buy" students or prevent them from "buying," how these transactions affect "who students are," and conversely how "who they are" affects the transactions.

Classroom teachers must examine their own classroom practices to make necessary changes that will improve learning environments for English Language Learners as well as for other students who may lack the necessary cultural, linguistic, and symbolic capital to successfully participate in their classrooms. The findings from this research imply that teachers must begin to ask questions about the political and social constraints on their classroom curricula and practices. However, while curricular policies and procedures as well as societal cultural practices often affect students' status and social identity in the classroom, they are often invisible to teachers and students and/or out of their immediate control.

Examining classroom practices may involve teachers conducting ethnographic inquiry and discourse analysis of classroom interactions occurring in their own classrooms. In addition, teachers may begin to examine and reflect upon beliefs about language, power, race, and literacy. Finally, teachers may begin to question and problematize assumptions about what counts as reading and academic success in their own classrooms, thereby

developing a greater understanding of who has status in the classroom and who does not.

Teachers need to examine and dissect the general practices that occur in their classrooms in order to determine how the practices affect students. Teachers typically implement practices that they feel will achieve the objectives outlined by the school as well as their own goals. However, they often get bogged down with pressures from both standardized testing and the expectations of the school and the dominant society to stop and look at how what happens their classrooms affects their students and perpetuates unequal social structures. Teachers need to look at what cultural and linguistic capital are of value in their classroom practices and how they need to adjust the practices so students will not be marginalized.

The analysis of one's own practices is the difficult part, but teachers may do simple things in order to improve the learning environments of ELL students. Teachers should also encourage and help students as they learn the culture of the classroom and of the dominant culture so they may interact successfully in the classroom and in larger society. While we do not argue that children should learn the classroom culture, it should not be the *only* way they can gain symbolic capital. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to gain recognition for their differences as well as their similarities, for it appears to be recognition that affords them symbolic capital. Teachers should stress the uniqueness of each student. Teachers should celebrate the various forms of capital that students bring into the classroom that are different from the mainstream culture and use them as a resource. When the cultural capital of an ELL student is used as a resource, the student has a better prospect for exchanging that cultural capital for symbolic capital.

Providing students with opportunities to learn to read is not simply a matter of assigning tasks and monitoring progress. It is important to identify how students gain access to opportunities and the tools needed for learning. Teachers must create situations that provide all students with the symbolic capital necessary to gain access. Creating situations that allow for all students to gain access may involve creating learning opportunities in which all students succeed and are recognized for their success. It also may involve explicity discussing with students the ways in which they may unknowingly marginalize one another.

However, we focused on a peer-group reading activity in order to make clear that the distribution of symbolic capital and its influence on social identities and learning opportunities is not merely a matter of teacher behavior. Teachers do not, by themselves, create the social structure of the classroom, nor do they unilaterally establish the classroom culture or community. Yet, to the extent that teachers are aware of the powerful influence of symbolic capital, they will be better able to address the social dynamics of peer groups and the norms of the classroom culture.

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