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Cultural Capital And English Language Learner Educational Outcomes

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CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER EDUCATIONAL

OUTCOMES

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Arguably, cultural capital is a critical component of student success for without it, students who are capable but yet still struggling to be successful academically are not fully supported. Cultural capital theory, developed by Bourdieu (1986), made it possible to explain the unequal academic achievement between students of different socioeconomic classes. Possessing either a high or low level of cultural capital has a tremendous impact on the educational outcomes of a student. Throughout this project, I will be addressing the following question: *How can teachers be informed about cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes?* I will analyze cultural capital from a variety of angles and develop a resource to assist teachers in employing culturally responsive and academically rich education for their English Language Learners (ELLs) in order to build and strengthen cultural capital within their students.

Bourdieu (1986), the creator of *cultural capital*, defines it as, "a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success…to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes" (p. 82). Understanding what cultural capital truly is allows teachers to better support their learners. Cultural capital encompasses "societally valued knowledge of 'high brow' culture and cultural cues, [and] is more likely to be manifested in families of high socioeconomic status…[which] translates into a greater likelihood of educational success" (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999, p. 159). By defining cultural capital, it allows us to examine how social inequality appears within the confines of educational settings. Throughout my work, I

will be focused on the educational realm of cultural capital and how it impacts ELL students' ability to be successful.

Cultural capital is more than a hypothesis that allows for an explanation of the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes. By attempting to better understand cultural capital, it allows us to see the gaps and acknowledge areas of needed improvement. This new knowledge should inspire the creation of resources and new teaching strategies for English Language (EL) teachers that can be implemented in their classrooms and schools. While this project may only serve as one accessible resource for teachers, I hope that it sparks the interest of others, which in turn would lead to the development of more research and eventually a wider selection of resources.

Rationale

My initial interest in this topic started about three years ago when I was in my first year of graduate school at Winona State University, but I was only able to scratch the surface on an intriguing topic during that time. Prior to this experience, I had never heard the term cultural capital used in education, and I certainly was not sure how it would impact students' educational outcomes. Now, I believe that having a strong understanding of what constitutes cultural capital and developing a solid foundation of resources to better inform teachers is crucial with today's diverse ELL population in the United States. Many ELL students deal with inequality in their various classroom situations.

Social equality may feel like a gigantic undertaking. But, by increasing cultural capital in our ELL students, we are demonstrating the importance of appreciating not only their linguistic and cultural backgrounds presently, but also where these

circumstances will take them in the future. Culturally responsive teaching increases cultural capital in students as it responds to, encompasses, and celebrates the cultures of all students--not just those of higher socio-economic status or the most prevalent student population backgrounds (Lee, 2012).

Ideally, learners will feel welcomed when they enter their classrooms. Teachers should be creating an environment that increases the cultural capital of our students by appreciating their morals, values, and cultural belief systems. This type of accepting learning environment allows for increased student engagement and ultimately better access to process content effectively, which in turn leads to more positive educational outcomes (Lee, 2012). Many educators may not realize the impact cultural capital holds over students educational success, but research would suggest that lower levels of linguistic and cultural competence creates a huge learning barrier for ELLs (Dumais, 2002). I recognize that teachers are required to continually multitask and take on more responsibilities; however, I hope that this project will serve as a quick reference and user-friendly resource for busy teachers in a variety of educational settings.

Overview

Cultural capital and educational outcomes are two terms that were not frequently referenced together in the educational world until the late 90s and early 2000s, and yet there is a significant correlation between the two. Dumais' (2002) research suggests the following regarding cultural capital:

Cultural capital is comprised of "linguistic and cultural competence" and a broad knowledge of culture that belongs to members of the upper classes and is found

much less frequently among the lower classes. Differences in cultural capital are

reinforced by an educational system that prefers these styles. (p. 44-45)

Students who come from other countries and have varied levels of linguistic and cultural

competence are already at a disadvantage upon entering school in the United States.

As Dumais defines cultural capital, linguistic and cultural competence are two

major components within that definition. Therefore, it is important to include clear

definitions of these terms as well. *Linguistic competence* is a system of knowledge that is

possessed by native speakers regardless of their language. It ultimately refers to what a

learner knows about a language (Dumais, 2002). Consequently, linguistic competence is

frequently much greater in native speakers of a language than their ELL counterparts.

Cultural competence also plays a large role in a student's repertoire of cultural capital.

The term *cultural competence* encompasses an individual's knowledge about a set of

values, principles, and beliefs, in this case, that are prominent in the mainstream

community (Dumais, 2002). ELL students have cultural competence, but because their

values, principles, and beliefs are not prominent or preferred in their educational setting,

schools are inherently lessening the value of their capital. Both of these terms are key

contributors to the meaning of cultural capital and, therefore, have an impact on ELL

students' overall educational outcomes.

Additionally, the term *educational setting* should also be defined for the purpose

of this project. In this instance, I am referring to education settings where formal learning

and language instruction take place. This is not strictly limited to but includes

elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as higher education settings such as

colleges and universities. This study will also consider adult basic education (ABE)

courses an educational setting because formal, structured learning takes place within a classroom. Regardless of the specific educational setting, my goal is to discover how to best inform teachers about cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes. I believe that cultural capital can increase and/or decrease at any age and thus have not limited my project audience to teachers of a specific student age range. Ultimately, I hope that my project will serve as a resource for all teachers regardless of the students' ages, so long as the teaching takes place in an educational setting.

In addition to defining cultural capital and educational setting, it is critical to define *educational outcomes* and to demonstrate ways in which educational success could be assessed. *Educational outcomes* are defined as the positive and/or negative results that occur throughout a learner's education. These outcomes could include quantifiable measurements, such as enrollment in additional coursework, grades, retention rate, and graduation. Conversely, failed courses, poor grades, and dropout rates would be referred to as negative educational outcomes (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015).

Increasing cultural capital is important for all learners. However, specifically ELLs would benefit substantially from increased cultural capital. It is one factor that contributes to educational success, and yet it is significant because it is controlled by those surrounding the learner and not the learner themselves. Research on cultural capital suggests that learner's possess varying amounts of cultural capital and those who achieve higher levels of educational success are likely to possess more cultural capital than those learners who are less academically successful (Dumais & Ward, 2010). Schools are said to promote a particular set of linguistic structures and patterns as favorable (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Jæger, 2009; Sullivan, 2001). Learners who are more familiar with these

social requirements often obtain higher achievement scores. Unfortunately for ELLs, they come from varied cultural backgrounds and their cultures may not be valued or preferred in some educational settings within the United States.

Many EL teachers do their best to make each student feel like a part of the classroom, the school, and their community. However, when educational settings already have a preferred set of linguistic and cultural norms or expectations, teachers may have a difficult time proving to students that their home culture, language, and learning styles are as valued as their mainstream peers. Through my research, I am hoping to create and develop a resource to inform teachers on the impact cultural capital has on students' educational outcomes. One portion of this resource will provide activities to demonstrate to students that teachers honor their morals, values, and cultural belief systems.

Conclusion

Cultural capital has become more widely researched in the last twenty years, but there seems to be a disconnect between what the research has discovered and what resources are available to teachers. By increasing the amount of cultural capital our students possess, we can better equip them with the tools and skills that they need to be academically successful. This statement holds true regardless of student age or educational setting. My research question is: *How can teachers be informed about cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes?* The purpose of this project is to bridge the gap between what research states and what teachers have access to. I aim to create a user-friendly resource for teachers to inform them of the impact cultural capital has on their students' educational outcomes and easy ways they can help their students possess more capital.

Cultural capital theory originated in the late 1980s, but most research did not emerge until the early 2000s. Although there is a solid foundation of research on the topic in the field, minimal resource development has followed. The research covers a wide variety of subtopics in regards to cultural capital and the impact it has on learners. Most predominantly, research has focused on education and student success. But, research has also highlighted inequality within educational settings and analyzed how cultural capital is passed down from parents. The literature review in Chapter Two will showcase these subtopics. Ultimately, I will pull together a selection of resources to present a clear and supported definition of cultural capital. Chapter Three will focus in on the audience, content, location, timeframe, and purpose of my project. Additionally, I will provide insight on the topic from varied perspectives to support the creation of a guide for teachers. Then, in Chapter Four I will reflect on my capstone experience and findings.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In approximately the last twenty years, there has been an increased interest and popularity in the concept of cultural capital. While once simply a term used to define a theoretical hypothesis that made it possible to explain the variation in students' educational success as it relates to social class, cultural capital research has made significant headway. Generally, this chapter will provide support in answering my overarching capstone question: *How can teachers be informed about cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes?* The chapter examines how cultural capital is developed, the role of cultural capital within education, and how students' cultural capital is influenced by society.

Cultural Capital Development

Many studies have shown that levels of cultural capital can vary and that it may be influenced in both a positive or negative way regardless of age (Jæger, 2009; Lareau, 1987, 1989; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Peterson & Heywood, 2007; Sullivan, 2001). Specifically, Lareau (1989) observed, "the language, texts, structures, and organization of schooling were closer to the home experiences of middle-class children than those of working-class children" (as cited in Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 519-520). Organizations are inherently biased. Furthermore, research on the concept of cultural capital has presented striking statistics on the role that parents play in their child's cultural capital development.

A study by Coleman (1988) "paid much attention to the role of families in providing social capital, identifying parental socio-economic status, knowledge of

English, and length of residence in the United States as the main indicators of social

capital" (as cited in Peterson & Heywood, 2007, p. 520). Evidently, levels of cultural

capital are significantly influenced by a number of family contributions. Additionally,

Grenfell and James (1998) and Robbins (2000) state, "Cultural capital for parents related

to the educational system exists in three forms: personal dispositions, attitudes, and

knowledge gained from experience; connections to educational-related objects (e.g.,

books, computers, academic credentials), and connections to education-related

institutions (e.g., schools, universities)" (as cited in Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 197). Lee and

Bowen (2006) go on to explain that different levels of parent involvement may

potentially reflect different levels of cultural capital thus confirming how dispositions and

connections ultimately influence these parents' children as well. To summarize this point,

a study by Jæger (2009), "shows that indicators of both how much cultural capital parents

have and how they use it have independent effects on children's cultural capital

accumulation and subsequent schooling decisions" (p. 1966).

Interestingly, Sullivan (2001) discovered "that parental cultural capital is strongly

associated with parental social class and with parental qualifications. These associations

back Bourdieu's view that cultural capital is unequally distributed according to social

class and education" (p. 21). Sullivan (2001) again states, "Therefore, it seems that

cultural capital is one mechanism through which higher-class families ensure educational

advantage for their children" (p. 24). Other studies on inequality and educational

outcomes support these claims (Barone, 2006; Bourdieu, 1979; Bourdieu & Passeron,

1979; Brown, 1995; Passeron, 1970; Prieur & Savage, 2011; Roscigno & Ainsworth-

Darnell, 1999; Tramonte & Willms, 2009; Weininger & Lareau, 2007). Grenfell and

James (1998) present the idea that those who have lower levels of cultural capital experience limitations that ultimately result in unequal access to educational opportunities. Similar to how "economic capital represents the power to purchase products, cultural capital for parents...represents the power to promote" the overall quality of their children's education (as cited in Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 198). This is exemplified by McNeal (1999) who affirms; "the cultural capital possessed by affluent European American families magnifies the effects of parents' involvement on their children's achievement at school" (as cited in Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 195).

English Language teachers can adjust to parental variations in educational involvement by first acknowledging these differences and then teaching to account for these differences. Parental involvement can be "identified as a possible strategy for reducing the achievement gap…[It] may include attending parent-teacher conferences, attending programs featuring students, and engaging in volunteer activities" (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 194). Additionally, at home, this may be in the form of homework help, discussions about assignments and experiences, or even structuring educational activities for children at home (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Conversely, in the case of many parents of ELLs, they are often working two-plus jobs and are timely unable to attend school events/functions or to participate fully in their child's educational experiences.

Parents who are working more than the average 40 hours/week may not have the time to provide support at home. An assumption should not be made that this means parents from busier households are not invested in their child's education. Additionally, there is a chance that these parents hold the teacher responsible for schoolwork and that it is not a household responsibility. Cultural variations in teacher and school expectations

may very well explain differences in parent involvement. Lareau (1987) states, "In the working-class community, parents turned over the responsibility for education to the teacher. Just as they depended on doctors to heal their children, they depended on teachers to educate them" (p. 81). Lareau (1987) continues to explain, "In the middle-class community, however, parents saw education as a shared enterprise and scrutinized, monitored, and supplemented the school experience of their children" (p. 81). Overall, this not only clearly demonstrates cultural differences amongst parents, but it also shows how children view their parents' role(s) within their learning and educational experiences and potentially, beyond that, impacts the goals they set for themselves.

On the other hand, Fan (2001), Fan and Chen (2001), and Feuerstein (2000) "have found that parents' attitudes (e.g., their educational expectations and aspirations for their children" are associated with academic achievement" (as cited in Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 195). While cultural variations in expectations may account for some of the impact that cultural capital has on students' educational success, it may also be that parents of ELLs have lower expectations for their children – a feeling that may stem from language learning challenges they have faced personally. For this reason, "Increasing parental participation in education has become a priority for educators, who believe it promotes educational achievement" (as cited in Lareau, 1987, p. 73).

Additionally, in some instances, teachers are unintentionally supporting societal norms in the way they present, teach, and assess subject matter, which is "based on a structure that presumed parents would help children at home" (Lareau, 1987, p. 77). Some examples include reading, studying for spelling tests, and/or constructing projects. Moreover, for parents whose first language is not English and/or who have limited/no

formal education, they may not have the required language skills to help their child. Likewise, even those parents who do have basic language skills may not be familiar with the type of activities or learning that their children's teachers are implementing. This, ultimately, impacts students' abilities to be as academically successful as their peers who are able to receive support at home.

Lareau (1987) found "working-class parents had poor educational skills, relatively lower occupational prestige than teachers, and limited time and disposable income to supplement and intervene in their children's schooling" (p. 81). Conversely, many middle-class parents had the opposite – educational and/or occupational skills that exceeded those of the teacher, a surplus of economic resources to meet their child's educational needs, and were significantly more involved academically. This finding shines light on why the basic competencies are so important. These skills carry over and are a continuation of inequality and unequal opportunities within society that impact the children of parents' who find themselves in less than ideal situations. In particular, "middle-class culture provides parents with more information about schooling and also builds social networks among parents" to make school feel like an inclusive community and safe space (Lareau, 1987, p. 82). From a young age, this teaches the "norm" for children as to how invested parents should be in their child's education. This expectation is encompassed in cultural competence, which is in turn, a part of cultural capital. For students whose parents do not pass this community built "norm" down to their children only further encourages the ongoing concerns associated with lower levels of cultural capital for students.

Education

  Cultural capital. Bourdieu's research on cultural capital, a term, which was initially coined in 1986, has continued to be a central point of reference for additional exploration on the subject matter. Bourdieu distinguishes among three forms of cultural capital: objectified, institutionalized, and embodied. These distinctions have allowed educators to expand on cultural capital from its original form through further research. Bourdieu defines *objectified cultural capital* as the objects that require special cultural abilities to appreciate, such as works of art. *Institutionalized cultural capital* refers to educational credentials and the credentialing system. Furthermore, *embodied cultural capital* is the ability to appreciate and understand cultural goods (as cited in Dumais, 2002).

  Additionally, Swartz (1997) described *embodied* cultural as "the ensemble of cultivated dispositions that are internalized by the individual through socialization and that constitute schemes of appreciation and understanding" (as cited in Dumais & Ward, 2010, p. 247). Objectified cultural capital refers to "material objects, such as paintings, which require embodied cultural capital to appreciate" (Dumais & Ward, 2010, p. 247). Moreover, in agreement with Bourdieu, Swartz (1997) defines institutionalized cultural capital as academic qualifications (as cited in Dumais & Ward, 2010).

  Dumais (2002) expands on Bourdieu's definition to include two major components of cultural capital: linguistic and cultural competence. Correspondingly, linguistic competence is the system of knowledge that native speakers possess in relation to their language, whereas cultural competence is an individual's knowledge of a culture's set values, principles, and beliefs. Ultimately, both linguistic and cultural

competencies are much greater for native speakers than they are for ELLs. These competencies are both key contributors to a student's educational success (Dumais, 2002; Dumais & Ward, 2010; Jæger, 2009).

Sullivan (2001) states, "since the term cultural capital implies an analogy with economic capital, and therefore, a return. The return on cultural capital takes the form of educational credentials and, ultimately, occupational success" (p. 8). Lamont and Lareau (1988) convey, "cultural capital serves an important role as a vehicle enabling individuals with knowledge of institutionalized high-status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods, and credentials) to exclude others from advantaged social positions or high-status groups" (as cited in Jæger, 2009, p. 1946). Therefore, in order to promote educational success for our ELLs, we must increase the level of cultural capital that our students possess.

DiMaggio (1982) and Lareau (2000) argue, "cultural capital is more common among members of the upper class; moreover, many studies have shown that possession and activation of cultural capital are associated with positive educational outcomes, such as higher grades or a customized educational experience" (as cited in Dumais & Ward, 2010, p. 246). Bourdieu explains that "cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society...especially the ability to understand and use "educated" language….The possession of cultural capital varies with social class, yet the education system assumes the possession of cultural capital" (as cited in Sullivan, 2001, p. 3). Educational success, as measured by schools, requires that ELLs possess levels of cultural capital similar to their peers. Unfortunately, this makes the assumption that student success is equally attainable by all students regardless of their cultural or

linguistic backgrounds. Jæger (2009) explains how "possessing much cultural capital increases the likelihood of receiving preferential treatment by teachers, getting higher grades, and generally performing better in the educational system" (p. 1946). Therefore, Jæger (2009) confirms that children from preferred cultural "backgrounds have more cultural capital than children from less advantaged backgrounds and they are thus better equipped to understand the 'rules of the game'" (p. 1946).

In the educational system, while it appears that students are rewarded for their talents and successes, Bourdieu believes they are being rewarded for their cultural capital (as cited in Dumais & Ward, 2010). This raises issues for a majority of ELLs, as they tend to possess significantly lower levels of cultural capital; and therefore, may encounter fewer rewards for their natural academic talents. Generally, *student success* is used as a catch all for areas where students succeed in school. However, it is important to more clearly define student success as it relates to cultural capital.

Student success measured. According to Kuh et al. (2006), student success is defined as "academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational outcomes, and post-college performance" (as cited in York et al., 2015, p. 4). Although some of these components may be more challenging to measure, it provides a basic structure for what constitutes student success. Academic achievement, specifically, is frequently measured by course grades and overall GPA. York et al. (2015) found this to be unsurprising since these methods of measurement are most readily available for schools, institutions, and other educational settings. They further explain, "the accomplishment of learning objectives and the acquisition of skills

and competencies can be measured at the course, program, and institutional level" (p. 7). Ultimately, this makes this type of measurement the most accessible for educators.

Cultural capital and education. Amongst the research, cultural capital, as previously defined, has frequently been identified as a significant contributor to educational outcomes (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Jæger, 2009; Prieur & Savage, 2011; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Sullivan, 2001; Tramonte & Willms, 2009; Weininger & Lareau, 2007). The purpose of discussing cultural capital is to provide a solid foundation of knowledge in order to prepare educators for an analysis on cultural capital and its impact on education. Lee (2012) expresses, "students from immigrant families are diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, religion, language background, English proficiency, immigration status, and social class. These differences make a profound difference in how they negotiate schooling" (p. 66). If school systems are unable to accommodate and appreciate these diverse differences, ELLs will continue to be at a disadvantage from their mainstream peers. Swidler (1986) and Lareau (1989) suggest, "individuals possess different amounts of cultural capital which explains why some students meet school standards, are accepted at college, and finally achieve higher levels of education, and why other students do not" (as cited in Tramonte & Willms, 2009, p. 201). Without further consideration, this could remain an area of concern for teachers and school personnel.

Schools often question why ELLs who have been in the United States for an extended period of time are still having difficulty navigating the school system and their education. Sadly, schools require that students have the ability to automatically increase their cultural capital upon entering a new educational setting. Without support and an

ongoing effort from schools and educators, ELLs will very likely continue to struggle academically as they transition from little/no formal schooling to the rigor of many United States educational institutions. Lee (2012) suggests, the educational challenges that these students experience are a result of unrecognized and underappreciated cultural and linguistic differences. It is important to view these differences as just that, differences, opposed to cultural deficits. If educators are able to acknowledge and incorporate diverse cultural and linguistic components into their classroom, their students are more likely to experience success.

Unfortunately, educators often view immigrant cultures and backgrounds as a disadvantage and barrier to academic success. These ideas do not encourage educators to incorporate different cultures or appreciate different learning styles within their classroom. Research on newcomer immigrant students has found that about 6% of newcomer immigrant students have experienced limited or interrupted formal education in their home countries, which significantly impacts their ability to learn and adapt to the hidden curriculum in schools upon arrival (Lee, 2012). Regardless of educational setting, teachers should be able to equip students with the skills and tools they need to achieve academic success and not view limited or interrupted formal education as a barrier.

Lee (2012) contends that ELL students need four to seven years to develop a level of academic English similar to their mainstream peers, but without explicit instruction on how schools operate, tasks and activities are completed, goals are satisfied, and success is obtained, ELLs are not prepared to succeed in a new learning environment, especially as it relates to their academics. Sullivan (2001) states, "of course, *some* lower-class individuals will succeed in the educational system, but, rather than challenging the

system, this will strengthen it by contributing to the appearance of meritocracy" (p. 4). English language learners are adjusting to a variety of life changes upon entering the states, in addition to starting school in a new location where very little feels familiar. Even for mainstream students, enrolling at a new school is an enormous stressor.

Finn and Rock (1997) have discovered that a "sense of belonging at school is considered a key component of the broader construct, student engagement, which is related to several schooling outcomes, including academic achievement" (as cited in Tramonte & Willms, 2009, p. 203). Lamont and Lareau (1988) further explore student perceptions of school and found that children from higher socioeconomic status families are already familiar with the social dispositions of school and are able to adapt to school quite quickly. Additionally, their life experiences at home enable them to pursue academic achievement (as cited in Tramonte & Willms, 2009). Historically, ELLs have had varied home lives from that of their white upper-middle class counterparts. Cultural and social resources vary for each individual and yet "cultural and social resources are the necessary 'passwords' to succeed in the selection process for elite status" (Tramonte & Willms, 2009, p. 202). Essentially, in order to be successful academically, and later occupationally, these resources are imperative.

Teacher solutions. Too often, educators believe that ELLs cannot access academic tasks until they are proficient in English instead of providing them structured and scaffolded tasks that allow them the opportunity to develop critical and independent thinking skills. This belief is inaccurate; in fact, ELLs will develop critical thinking, brainstorming, problem solving, and many other skills through appropriately developed and scaffolded tasks that provide language support. Increasing student engagement is

vital in also increasing student levels of cultural capital. Cultural capital, which is most commonly represented as the linguistic and cultural competence that a student possesses, is increased through actively implementing strategies and activities that emphasize a students' background. Moreover, Lee (2012) highlights the importance of "drawing on students' cultures, native languages, identities, and communities in promoting high academic engagement and achievement" (p. 67). Tramonte and Willms (2009) conclude, "although peers and parents undoubtedly play a strong role in shaping educational and occupational aspirations,...schools also play a prominent role" (p. 203). Because it has been shown that schools influence students' educational and occupational goals, teachers and institutions have an opportunity to develop and encourage the use of supplemental resources that are not represented in the curriculum, to minimize the gap.

Dumais and Ward (2010) explain, "children possessing cultural capital–mainly students from upper-middle-class backgrounds–may receive more attention from teachers, better grades, and more encouragement to pursue higher education than students from more modest backgrounds" (p. 247). This statement demonstrates the outstanding toll that inequality plays within educational settings on many ELLs educational outcomes. Consequently, a handful of European countries are implementing mass systems of higher education. Brown (1995) describes how this change has opened new opportunities for the working-class and ethnic minority students to gain graduate qualifications. Cultural capital may be a newer area of exploration than studies on race and education. However, Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) indicate, "conceived of as a mediating factor between social origins and educational outcomes, cultural capital is a useful conceptual extension of how social inequality is reproduced" (p. 159).

Inequality

  Inequality. Inequality has been a prevalent issue for a substantial period of time. Whether direct or indirect forms of inequality, in some regard, most people have experienced some form of separation, segregation, or alienation. Prieur and Savage (2011) explored racial oppression and stated, "we can nonetheless continue to see cultural oppositions and tensions amongst the population that can still be identified as forms of cultural capital" (p. 567). Due to English Language Learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, these students face varied levels of cultural oppositions within their educational setting. Crompton and Brown (1994) further explain, the "criteria of exclusion involve[s] the direct transmission of advantage to other group members on the basis of...race, class or gender" (as cited in Brown, 1995, p. 31). Additionally, Crompton and Brown (1994) argue, "the rules of exclusion are not based upon the specific attributes of individuals but the generalised attributes of social collectivities (that is, foreigners)" (as cited in Brown, 1995, p. 31). This claim would suggest that cultural capital then directly influences ELLs and their ability to navigate the education system.

  Moreover, Prieur and Savage (2011) argue that their studies on racial oppression have revealed "how cultural and economic capitals operate to create complex patterns of social differentiation that are linked to fundamental processes of social stratification and inequality" (p. 568). Student levels of cultural capital are closely tied to social inequality and the effect it has on their opportunity of achieving academic success. Consequently, Prieur and Savage (2011) also state, it is "not justified to dismiss the existence of cultural capital…[which would] serve to exclude them from the educational system and thereby

also from money and power" (p. 578). Cultural capital possession influences students' educational outcomes, but it also has lasting effects on a learner's place in society.

Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) express, "although lower- and working-class children may...acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in school, they are less likely to achieve the same 'natural familiarity' that middle- and upper-class students have and thus are more likely to fail academically" (p. 159). This statement is significant because it exemplifies the importance of supporting ELLs in possessing higher levels of cultural capital. Without increased cultural capital, they may acquire similar knowledge and skills as their mainstream peers, and yet still not be as successful.

Halsey (1980), as well as Marshall and Swift (1993) noted, "educational opportunities, job selection and rates of social mobility have been used as measures of social justice" (as cited in Brown, 1995, p. 29). Brown (1995) further explains the connection between education and occupational stratification:

> The changing relationship...should be understood in terms of group conflict over scarce resources (credentials, income, occupational status). This is because the middle classes have been increasingly dependent upon access to professional occupations as a means of reproducing social status and privileged life-styles between the generations. (p. 31)

This is significant because as this relationship persists over time, those living below the middle-class have been disadvantaged. The access to and rates of social mobility have consistently put a majority of immigrant and refugee families below middle-class, which would suggest that ELLs are more likely to have limited access to advanced educational or occupational credentials, income, and status. Likewise, Jenkins (1985) and Fevre

(1992) state, "these processes do not take place in a social vacuum...they are dependent upon social differences in academic performance...which [explains why] even with the same qualifications and work experience, black or female job-seekers are disadvantaged" (as cited in Brown, 1995, p. 32). This statement, evidently, would apply to any minority group, including ELLs, who do not possess the desired qualifications. Inequality within society plays a large role in determining if academic success is enough for minority students to experience the same levels of advancement as those who are considered middle- or high-class and privileged.

   Inequality in education. Tramonte and Willms (2009) express, "Dominant status groups hold economic, political, and symbolic power, and their success depends on the use of their social and cultural capital in strategic ways" (p. 200). Possession of less cultural capital hinders the amount of economic, political, and symbolic power that students can hold. If students of the working-class do not have the opportunity to possess the same level of capital, their likelihood of success lessens. In this instance, inequality influences students' cultural capital, which alters their educational outcomes.

   Weininger and Lareau (2007) have also explored inequality as it relates to cultural capital and student success. They state, "because the school system transforms 'inherited' cultural capital into 'scholastic' cultural capital, the latter is predisposed to appear as an individual 'achievement'" (p. 2). Subsequently, Hart and Risley (1999) and Lareau (2003) have proven that middle-class children score higher on standardized tests measuring verbal skills (as cited in Weininger & Lareau, 2007). Nevertheless, these test scores are not interpreted based on a students level of cultural capital or familiarity with school procedures, but rather viewed as natural talent.

Unfortunately, inequality and its influence within the educational system is often overlooked or ignored. Weininger and Lareau (2007) believe, "the educational systems of modern societies tend to channel individuals towards class destinations that largely...mirror their class origins...They tend to...accept this outcome, both from those who are most privileged by it and those who [it disfavors]" (p. 2). Moreover, if as educators, we intentionally or unintentionally channel our students towards educational outcomes based on their class origins, we are continuing to follow the status quo and are limiting the future educational opportunities that our students may have.

Brown (1995) argues, "as access to cultural capital in the form of scarce credentials and charismatic qualities come to depend upon market power, the education system can do little to improve the prospects of disadvantaged students" (p. 44). This presents in opposition to a majority of the other research and my projects intended use. The purpose of my project is to assist teachers in increasing levels of cultural capital in their students; so all students have the opportunity to participate equally within society. Additionally, this resource will serve as a tool to build upon linguistic and cultural competence that students, particularly ELLs, may be lacking.

Explanation of inequalities in learning outcomes. Evidently, inequalities within educational settings impact student-learning outcomes. Barone (2006) presents the belief that we can assume "what really matters for educational and occupational achievement is learning a set of basic cognitive abilities and progressively developing them into more specific technical skills" (p. 1041). While this may be accurate, what is significant as it relates to cultural capital is that schools present students of lower socioeconomic status with a disadvantage upon entering, and therefore these learners have more learning and

developing to do than that of their peers. Moreover, Barone (2006), Bourdieu (1979), and Passeron (1970) suggest that intelligent students from lower-class may actually, to some degree, learn the conventions possessed by the middle-class. They state, "they can manage them [conventions] or...run the risk of facing educational failure, no matter how clever and talented they are. Therefore,...the working class who 'survive' this cultural selection have necessarily reduced their disadvantage from the middle-class students" (p. 1043). By increasing levels of cultural capital in our students, we are intentionally and consciously supporting lower-class students without placing a higher value on middle-class conventions.

Lareau and Weininger (2008) discovered in a recent qualitative study on the college application process that "parents' conceptions of how involved they should be in the process served as cultural capital, with students with more involved parents being more likely to have a successful application and enrollment experience" (as cited in Dumais & Ward, 2010, p. 250). This example serves to demonstrate the importance of parental involvement in their child's learning experiences, both inside and outside of school. Unfortunately, parents of the working-class are often less involved due to occupational restrictions. Therefore, as stated by Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), "given the political and dynamic nature of the concept and prior work on classroom and school processes," inequality is structured into schools (p. 161). As EL teachers, we need to educate our co-workers, implement strategies that are accessible to all students, and raise awareness of the integrated inequality within schools.

Race in schools. Racial inequality has been a long-standing issue in the United States. Evidently, these challenges have seeped into society and are influencing our

youth. Today, more than ever, children interact with each other in some form of educational setting for nearly two-thirds of every year. Inequality within schools has drawn increased attention in recent years, highlighting the importance of equitable education for all students. Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) completed an interesting study on race, specifically between whites and blacks within schools. However, their findings are comparable to school settings that accommodate a large population of students who identify as white, black, and/or other ethnic backgrounds, predominantly minority groups. Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) suggest a decline in racial differences amongst cultures. However, they measured racial differences in culture and found, "a positive but modest impact on how racial inequality in school has changed." They further explain, "this effect arises more from a relative decline in the cultural resources of Whites than from an improvement in the cultural resources of Blacks" (p. 32). This finding supports the vital need to increase cultural capital in our students, as ELLs are predominately of the racial minority. It also demonstrates that all students benefit from an increase in capital.

Subsequently, Blake (1981), Lareau (1989), Mercy and Steelman (1982), and Teachman (1987) bring forward that "household educational resources (such as books, computers, and newspapers) are particularly essential for shaping orientations to school and levels of achievement and attainment" (as cited in Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999, p. 159). Many parents are eager to enroll their child in school upon entering the United States; however, in some cases, financially, they may not be able to afford household educational resources. This can have a negative impact on a learner's level of achievement and attainment.

Nowadays, a majority of school districts provide iPads for students. Additionally, assignments and assessments are frequently offered online. While this can positively impact teacher lesson planning and cut down on the use of paper in schools, it is significant to note that many ELL students go home and have no access to wireless internet, essentially making their assignments or assessments inaccessible until they return to school. This, ultimately, ensures that learning stops when school ends and inhibits this student populations' ability to pursue and foster their learning from home.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) state, "At the same time, the *field* of micropolitical evaluation may take on a more institutionalized character through *relegation*–that is, the placement of those with less-valued cultural resources in less desirable positions where the return for educational investment is diminished" (as cited in Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999, p. 161). Arguably, tracking students is a clear example of such a relegatory process, at least within the confines of education, which would suggest that students could only advance marginally from where they began. Regrettably, students who are in less than favorable situations initially often do not have the opportunity to advance academically. Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) argue that, "socialization into high-status culture appears to have a strong effect on educational attainment" (p. 24). If we can increase levels of cultural capital in our students, it may alleviate some of the pressures to socialize with high-status culture and offer a sense of freedom to explore their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Furthermore, Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) believe, "If cultural capital is predicted, in part, on the social position of its possessor and consequential micropolitical processes, the subordinate racial status of blacks may limit their ability to

convert cultural capital and educational resources into academic success" (p. 161).

Subsequently, these findings could apply to English Language Learners too. Basically,

there are intersections that some ELLs may share with marginalized minority groups such

as: socio-economic class, unfamiliarity with the dominant culture, different

communication styles, etc. The cultural and linguistic values of ELLs are frequently less

valued than those of their mainstream, higher-socioeconomic class peers. Repeatedly,

society struggles to support equitable educational opportunities.

   Inequality and how it influences cultural capital. Kalmijn and Kraaykamp

(1996) have expressed how inequality influences cultural capital in young learners:

> Children who are exposed to cultural capital may be better prepared to master
>
> academic material, may develop a greater taste for learning abstract and
>
> intellectual concepts, and may be favored by teachers over children who have less
>
> cultural capital. A lack of cultural capital may discourage students to stay in
>
> school (self-selection), may hamper their accomplishments while in school
>
> (indirect exclusion), or may lead to a lack of recognition from teachers (teacher
>
> selection). (p. 24)

Students who are discouraged by lack of educational success may need to develop a

stronger sense of cultural capital. The concept of cultural capital supports strengthening a

learner's cultural competence. As previously mentioned, cultural competence

encompasses a learner's comprehension regarding a set of values, principles, and beliefs

that are most prominent in their surrounding community. A lack of educational resources

can also lead to a decrease in cultural capital, which ultimately influences a learner's

level of educational success. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) state that their

"analyses indicate that cultural and educational resources and racial gaps in these attributes vary significantly as a function of family background" and have found "strong and positive effects on both GPAs and standardized achievement" (p. 171). This highlights the significant role that inequality plays on cultural capital development.

Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) also discuss how "lower educational performance among black students, because of contemporary inequalities in SES [socioeconomic status], should be at least partially a function of lower cultural capital and limited educational resources at home" (p. 160-161). In addition, a study "reveals disparate racial patterns…[and] Black students are, on average, less likely to go on cultural trips and to participate in extracurricular cultural classes and have significantly less in the way of household educational resources than do their White counterparts" (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999, p. 165). These findings are easily applicable to ELLs educational experiences as well, especially those who fall into similar socioeconomic status families. Unfortunately, many of these students participate in fewer school trips and extracurricular activities at school and consequently have lower levels of cultural capital.

Additional studies found that even after enrolling in college, students with lower levels of cultural capital had difficulties. Hsiao (1992) explains that in addition to the typical transition and adaptation to college life, first-generation students, which typically includes ELLs, found learning a new culture involved much more adjustment including adjusting to a particular style of dress, vocabulary, taste in music, etc. (as cited in Dumais & Ward, 2010). These preferences are more closely aligned with those of the predominant societal culture than the capital possessed by non-first-generation students.

Conclusion

Overall, cultural capital encompasses a learners' linguistic and cultural competence. Linguistic competence is the system of knowledge that a learner has in relation to how language operates; and cultural competence explains their knowledge of the preferred culture's set values, principles, and beliefs. These competencies are viewed as a vehicle for advancement within education. Additionally, a level of familiarity with the preferred culture benefits the learner. Within educational settings, success is frequently measured by students' academic achievements. However, students' ethnic and racial backgrounds, as well as their religion, language background, English proficiency, immigration status, and social class, may all influence how a student negotiates their position within their school. Commonly, a lack of previous formal education will inhibit an ELLs ability to navigate the school system with success.

Educators must incorporate and appreciate a variety of cultures and learning styles within their classroom. ELLs, specifically, need extra support during this particularly challenging time of transition. Unfortunately, persistent inequality within society also undoubtedly plays a role in the development of cultural capital for these learners. Higher levels of cultural capital enable students to be better prepared to master academic material and develop the skills required to have access to deeper level thinking. Ultimately, cultural capital represents the power to promote growth and/or movement within the education system, but also additionally within society.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

In order to best serve our students, by promoting growth through learning, I developed a reference guide for English Language teachers. This guide is adaptable amongst a variety of educational settings. The project is broken down into sections based on age including grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and ABE (Adult Basic Education). The main purpose of my research was to determine: *How can teachers be informed about cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes?* Through the application of my research findings, I created a guide encompassing activities that are heavily focused on increasing levels of cultural capital in our students, but is yet adaptable to a range of EL teachers' classroom needs and therefore widely accessible.

Who

In most cases, I presume the participants will have a teaching license through the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), or hold a teaching license in another state and meet MDE's requirements to teach within the state. The Minnesota Department of Education has high standards for teacher applicants including, but not limited to, a variation in tier applications, which include tier one through tier four. These tier distinctions went into effect on October 27th, 2018 and influence teacher roles and permissions (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board, 2018). As it relates to my project, a teachers tier level is not significant, just that they have an educational background in teaching.

Where

Within my literature review, I was intentional not to focus too heavily on one educational setting. I aimed to provide a variety of settings in which cultural capital had

previously been researched. Luckily, this included both higher and lower-socioeconomic status schools. The guide I created is educational setting-friendly meaning that it is adaptable to fit teacher and student needs regardless of the location. However, of note, per the parameters of my literature review, the setting must be a place in which a teacher fosters learning for students. Additionally, although cultural capital is an important component to educational success for all students, based on my literature review findings, this guide will be primarily helpful in an EL setting or setting where students come from working-class families. Within Minnesota, this project will predominantly serve the greater Twin Cities area, as the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public School districts are home to a large population of EL and working-class families and learners.

According to Minnesota Report Card, a database that analyzes student demographic information for the entire state on an annual basis, Saint Paul and Minneapolis school districts are largely represented by students of color, working-class families, and diverse cultural and language backgrounds (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). In Saint Paul, 26.9% of students are reported as Black or African American and 31.7% as Asian. These two ethnic populations account for nearly 60% of Saint Paul schools student population. Additionally, 30% of the district's students are English Language Learners and nearly 68% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Minneapolis sees similar statistics, where the two largest ethnic backgrounds are Black or African American (36.2%) and White (34.2%). Strikingly, even with a large percentage of White students, which too often leads to an assumption of higher-class, the Minneapolis school district still enrolls 21.6% of their students as ELLs and nearly 60%

of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. These statistics alone provide support for developing a guide to increase levels of cultural capital for this student population.

Additionally, I envision this guide being used in a setting that promotes equity. The possession of cultural capital influences students' likelihood of academic success. Therefore, I would find it appropriate to be used in a setting where teachers are aiming to provide equitable learning opportunities to all their students, but specifically ELLs who, generally, inherently possess lower levels of cultural capital than their mainstream peers. Ultimately, I believe that increased levels of cultural capital is a benefit for all students whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are those of which are not preferred by society.

What

This section provides an initial outline of what the guide looks like. I produced an electronic version of a printable PDF, so that it is accessible in both formats, as well as easy to share as an attachment or printed version. *Research-based web design and usability guidelines,* a guide developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. General Services Administration (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA), provides some guidelines on how to create a useful resource.

First, the usability guidelines suggest providing useful content that is relevant and appropriate for the audience, as well as ensure that the content is organized in such a way that makes sense to your users. The PDF guide is divided into three major sections: introduction, activities by age, and an appendix with any necessary activity handouts. One way I have ensured that the information is appropriately organized is by dividing the activities by age. That way, for example, an elementary EL teacher is not required to sift through the content developed for another age group.

Moreover, the usability guide suggests reducing the user's workload. This will be accomplished by utilizing bookmarks within the PDF. If a user is looking at the Table of Contents and wants to jump to a section towards the bottom of the document, they will be able to click the appropriate heading and the document will take them directly to the correct page (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA). This reduces the amount of time a user will need to spend scrolling through the PDF.

Additional considerations include formatting the information for reading and printing, as well as developing pages that will print appropriately. The formatting and developing of pages correlate quite closely, as it is essential to develop pages that fit a standard PDF and then are printed accurately. Furthermore, it is necessary to use at least 12-point font, so the average person can read the material presented (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA).

The first section includes answers to important questions such as: What is cultural capital? How does cultural capital influence students' educational outcomes? And lastly, what can *you* do to increase levels of cultural capital in your students? Obviously, many of these questions required more than a one-page response and therefore, some responses carried over onto additional pages in the guide. However, I made a strong effort to only provide high-level, critical information in order to avoid cluttered displays of information (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA). This section primarily serves as an introduction to the term, material from the literature review as appropriate, and answers to some prominent questions for teachers. I intentionally avoided clutter to make sure the most essential information is readily available. Section one also provides an explanation for the theory and rationale behind the development of my guide. I want the guide to be easy-to-read,

quick to navigate, and visually appealing, so that it attracts a large audience of teachers, and therefore; it will assist in increasing cultural capital for a large population of English Language Learners.

Next, the second section of this resource encompasses adaptable activities, for a variety of age groups, of which the activities vary in length. Age groups have been divided into: elementary (K-5), middle (6-8), high (9-12), and Adult Basic Education (ABE). Activities intentionally vary in length, so that they can be used in a variety of educational settings. Whether the teacher is looking for an introductory activity that increases cultural capital, a lesson closure, or simply has some extra time between activities, classes, etc. The usability guide places emphasis on putting important items at the top of the list (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA). This will be incorporated into the PDF guide by assuring that directions, estimated time, and how to group students for each activity is always easily accessible at the top. In some cases, this may be a determining factor for whether a specific activity can be utilized at a particular time.

Furthermore, the usability guide promotes using simple background images, so the background does not disrupt the foreground text (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA). In order to successfully create a guide that is easy-to-read and visually appealing, I carefully considered each background and image selection as not to make it difficult for users. Another consideration for ease of use is to avoid jargon and instead use familiar words (U.S. Dep. of HHS & U.S. GSA). Where jargon is frequently used within the introductory section, I determined that it was necessary and then defined it clearly and explicitly to the user.

When

This resource was developed to be utilized in many different ways. It encompasses shorter, lesson starter activities, as well as longer, more-developed activities that can be adapted based on the educational setting or linguistic and cultural backgrounds the students bring to the classroom. Although this guide includes a variety of activities, it attempts to remain unbiased and/or not aimed towards a particular ethnic group, and therefor; teachers may need to make slight adjustments in order to meet their learners' needs. Overall, the idea is to provide enough structure to support teachers in increasing levels of cultural capital in their students, but also create a guide that is flexible and adaptable based on the students' backgrounds and needs.

Consequently, many of the activities that are included will take approximately fifteen minutes, so that they may be used at the beginning or end of a lesson, as well as to fill extra class time as needed. Of note, the initial implementation of any of these activities will likely take longer as students may need to be instructed on the 'how-to' before the activity is comprehensible. However, that is not to say that these activities will not become more efficient with experience.

Additionally, a portion of this guide includes an introduction and closing that will be educational for EL teachers and teachers alike. It includes a highlighted version of what is presented in my literature review surrounding the topic to support a better understanding of cultural capital in such a way that ultimately benefits the students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Overview

Throughout my capstone, I have focused on cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes. This chapter briefly summarizes my literature review, as well as presents what I have learned throughout this process as both a researcher and writer. Additionally, the chapter will consist of possible implications of my project and some limitations. Lastly, it will consider in what ways the project is a benefit to the teaching profession. My capstone project consistently revolved around addressing the research question: *How can teachers be informed about cultural capital and its impact on students' educational outcomes?*

Bourdieu first defined the term cultural capital in 1986. His definition provided an explanation for the apparent unequal academic achievement between students of different socioeconomic classes. As research on cultural capital further developed, its definition has expanded too. Today, cultural capital also encompasses linguistic and cultural competence. Dumais (2002) defines linguistic competence as the system of knowledge that is possessed by native speakers of a language. It inherently encompasses what a learner knows about the language. Cultural competence is, then, an individual's knowledge about a set of values, principles, and beliefs (Dumais, 2002). These competencies together create cultural capital.

In the case of English Language Learners (ELLs), their possession of cultural capital is less than that of their mainstream, white counterparts as it relates to English. Although they possess high levels of cultural capital pertaining to their native language

and culture, educational settings in the United States predominantly showcase linguistic and cultural competence that mirrors that of traditional, native English speaking, middle to high-class individuals and families. Inadvertently, creating a barrier to academic success for ELLs as they enter schools in the United States.

Literature Review

The literature review surprisingly was my favorite part of this project. I learned to love researching, reading, and learning. This was no easy task, but I found enjoyment in knowing that my work would positively build upon the work of many other inspiring authors. The research on cultural capital has skyrocketed in the last two decades. In the late 90s, the term had just entered the educational realm and was used to define the unequal academic achievement between students of different socioeconomic classes. In its early stages, research on cultural capital primarily focused on identifying the gap and began discussing its implications on learners.

In the last two decades, cultural capital research has focused more heavily on the impact that cultural capital has on students, and has also acknowledged that a student's level of cultural capital can increase and decrease. This research has allowed teachers and other educators to consider the role of cultural capital in education and in the classroom. Dumais (2002), Lee (2012), Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999), and Sullivan (2001) have published strong pieces of work as it relates to a learners' possession of cultural capital and how it can change positively and/or negatively over time.

Cultural capital is not a stagnant quality that does not change once obtained. It is fluid, and increasing and decreasing as learners have new experiences, particularly educational experiences. For this reason, teachers have an opportunity to increase cultural

capital in our ELL students. By doing so, we are demonstrating the importance of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Lee (2012) suggests that for teachers to better assist ELLs, we must draw on their native culture and language, as well as appreciate their identities and communities. Other researchers on cultural capital suggest a similar approach (Jæger, 2009; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996).

Future Growth

In many ways research on related topics could expand for a lifetime. My project focuses on education, race, inequality, and cultural capital. I believe that research on these topics is ever-changing and as our communities change and schools adjust, the space for growth and future research will only continue to broaden. Personally, I hope to see continued studies on the impact of cultural capital on students' academic achievement. I hope that future research solidifies and builds upon the research I have done. Some expanded areas of study might include focusing on the role cultural capital plays for a particular group of students or for students in a particular educational setting, whereas much of my research addresses capital from a wider lens. Additionally, it would be helpful to more closely consider the role of the teacher as it relates to cultural capital and their learners. This focus area surrounding cultural capital is currently absent.

In the United States, children spend a substantial amount of their childhood in school. Teachers are often a constant in a seemingly ever-changing time of trial and error, growth, and development. It would be an asset to the field if research specifically analyzed the role that teachers play in the development of cultural capital, as well as ways that teachers and educators can positively impact both young and adult English Language Learners.

Use of the Project

In my experience, teachers love to share resources. It is an excellent way to try new things, manage time, keep students engaged, and see what types of strategies and activities work best for your learners. In part, I believe this activity resource will share itself. The resource I have created is free and available in an electronic PDF version for anyone, but specifically designed for those teaching K-12 and/or ABE. This makes the guide widely accessible and available to a large number of educators. Although I am not currently teaching, I hope to one day use this resource with my students. I have poured hours of thoughtful work and heart into this resource because I wanted it to be worthwhile.

One way in which I see this project being shared is simply by sending it to a few of my friends that teach. Word travels fast in schools and I anticipate that this resource will be appreciated by those who are teaching a diverse group of students and are looking for some efficient yet successful ways to increase levels of cultural capital within their students.

Limitations of the Project

Increasing a student's possession of cultural capital is possible with the right support through the use of well-developed resources. However, one limitation of this project could be that each activity was created to be completed within a set time limit. Although this can also be viewed as a positive aspect of the project as it provides a level of structure, it also lessens each activity's level of flexibility.

Another project limitation could be that it was designed specifically with English Language Learners in mind. Although many of these activities are accessible and usable

with a wide range of learners, they predominantly serve as a tool to increase cultural

capital for ELLs who often have lower levels of capital than their peers. This resource

includes activities that can be used in nearly every classroom; however, the intended

purpose is to be a resource that supports cultural capital for ELLs in the United States.

Asset to the Profession

Teachers are often people who want the best for others. They seek to teach their

students how to navigate the world, learn new skills, and become the best version of

themselves. Within this project, I have utilized my knowledge of the topic and my

passion for teaching to create a quality resource. I find that the resources built from a

place of passion are some of the best. They inspire others. In this way, my project is an

asset to the profession.

Additionally, my project benefits the profession by offering classroom activities

that vary in length and were developed for K-12, as well as adult basic education.

Activities range from approximately 15-30 minutes and differ in the number of materials

required making it extremely flexible and convenient for busy teachers. By reaching a

large target student audience, the project has the ability to be widely used and adapted for

a considerable number of students by teachers and educators.

Learnings

During the capstone process, I have learned a great deal about what it means to be

a researcher and a writer. In many of my previous educational experiences, I have had to

research a topic and create an academic piece of writing, and yet, this experience was

incomparable. The sheer number of hours that I have committed to this process is unlike

any other academic piece of work that I have produced. Throughout this process, in addition to growing as a researcher, I discovered that I was evolving as a writer too.

As a researcher, I became more proficient in searching smarter and digging deeper. I utilized many of the search features provided in most search engines to eliminate poor quality articles and to place restrictions on time frames to determine that the research I was choosing was relevant and not outdated. I also began to recognize names of authors that were commonly publishing research surrounding cultural capital. I was then able to find the names of these authors across various pieces of work. This skill allowed me the ability to dig deeper by reading articles that they had previously been cited in or work of others they had cited in their own work.

As a writer, I learned how to prioritize my time, manage my workload, and to appreciate discipline when my motivation was low. I knew as this semester approached that I would likely be the busiest I had ever been as a full-time employee and as a student. The days have felt like they have been on repeat for many weeks, but this project reminded me that dreams take work (a lot of it). Completing this project has been a long time educational goal of mine and I will cherish the lessons and skills it has taught me along the way.

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