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Untapped Resources: Students at Risk of Becoming Long Term English Learners and Identity

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Untapped Resources: Students at Risk of Becoming Long Term English Learners and Identity

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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in

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by

Jennifer Lynn Canillas

June 2018

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all of my English learner students, whose courage inspired me daily to become a more effective teacher and a better human being.
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

 Untapped Resources: Students at Risk of Becoming Long Term English Learners and Identity

 by

 Jennifer Lynn Canillas

 Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education
 University of California, Riverside, June 2018
 Dr. Begoña Echeverría, Chairperson

 When students learning English cannot successfully master the knowledge and skills required to perform the academic tasks necessary to advance to the next proficiency level, their academic achievement suffers and they cannot move on to more advanced classes; they remain in English language development programs for the long term. The official classification “Long Term English Learner” (LTEL) was recently recognized in both policy and research literature. In order to avoid the creation of Long Term English Learners, it is necessary to study students who are, as the State of California says, “at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners,” to ascertain how to help them reach and maintain the expected trajectory for proficiency in English and prevent a new generation of LTEL. The goal of this qualitative case study was to counter deficit-informed research on what language minority students lack by highlighting the abundant, yet unrecognized resources English learners bring to school and use as funds of identity. The participants were students and educators at a small public charter school, including ten English learners in grades four and five, three teachers, and one school administrator. For this
case study, I asked each of the ten focal students to complete art projects, and I conducted interviews with focal students, their teachers, and the school principal. I used identity as an analytical lens to examine the cultural and linguistic resources students possess and use as funds of identity. The results of the study indicate that familial resources constitute the most influential funds of identity in students’ lives, followed by what I have termed “Spiritual Capital,” or spiritual resources that contributed to students’ identities, sense of well-being, and motivation, as an unexpected finding. In addition, students’ linguistic resources were depleted and deemed irrelevant by adults to the current school context, and students’ main orientation toward school involved social connections to friends rather than academics. This study implies the need for further research on facilitating connections between students’ linguistic resources and English literacy practices, and investigating ways that spiritual resources support students’ academics and social-emotional well-being and motivation.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the cool of the early morning, young children gather outside of school on the blacktop to find their place by grade level on the painted white lines, pausing intermittently to converse with friends along the way. Exchanges occur mostly in English, laced with smatterings of Spanish. All at once, children turn to face the school, where a small outdoor public address system stands beside the American flag, as a student lifts the microphone to her lips and leads hundreds of peers in the Pledge of Allegiance and then, the school credo:

We are responsible, respectful, safe, and kind.
We take care of ourselves, but keep others in mind.
We make smart choices and aspire to be our best.
We are scholars, leaders, and strive for success.

The school credo, a daily call to excellence in self-discipline and scholarship, serves to unify the school body and set the tone for the school day. With one voice, children declare aloud their commitment to ideals of behavior toward themselves and others in order to facilitate an atmosphere of serious academic pursuit; thus, they become “scholars” who “make smart choices” and “strive for success.” Every adult on campus consistently reinforces this academic identity by referring to and addressing the children directly as “scholars” instead of students. As the scholars follow their teachers into the building, conversations continue and flow seamlessly, again, mainly in English, but featuring occasional splashes of Spanish vocabulary.

Navigating the world of school, peers, and curriculum poses difficulties for many students, but students who speak a language other than English as their native language face especially complex academic and social challenges as they attempt to learn content
through the medium of English. Some appear able to overcome the challenges while others seem to reach a point and flounder, falling further and further behind each year. To gain insight into these issues, my study explores how students who speak a language other than English at home see themselves as students, and examines the extent to which they perceive home language and culture as resources in school and for their aspirations for the future.

**Background**

An English learner is “a student who is in the process of acquiring English and has a first language other than or in addition to English” (Zacarian, 2012, p. 6). In 2009 students identified as English learners were the fastest growing group of students in U.S. schools; this number represents an increase of over sixty percent in the last decade, and by 2030 is expected to reach 25% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011; Olsen, 2014). In California, there were 1.3 million English learners enrolled in K-12 schools during the 2016-2017 school year, or 21.4% of total students, with the majority, or 72%, of California’s EL students enrolled in the elementary grades from kindergarten through sixth (California Department of Education, 2017). Across the U.S., Spanish is by far the most common primary language for EL students and their families (Pandya, McHugh, & Batalova, 2011). Spanish-speaking EL made up the vast majority of California’s EL group at 83%, far ahead of the next highest group, Vietnamese, at two percent (California Department of Education, 2017). In contrast to common assumptions positing that students learning English as a second or additional
language have recently emigrated from other countries, more than 75% of elementary-aged EL were born in the United States (Pandya, et. al, 2011).

Despite decades of categorical funding initiatives, an achievement gap persists between language minority students and their English-speaking peers. A large percentage of English learners continue to be disproportionately underperforming academically and lag behind others on standardized accountability measures (August, Shanahan, & Escamilla, 2009; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Kim & Herman, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010). The Nation’s Report Card for 2015 indicated only eight percent of fourth grade English Learners scored at or above proficient in English language arts while fourteen percent scored at or above proficient in math; eighth grade results showed even lower achievement with only four percent of EL scoring at or above proficient in English Language Arts and only six percent in math (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). These dismal assessment results in reading and math scores for English learners were significantly lower than for other groups, showing virtually no improvement from the previous test administration in 2013 and have, in fact, changed very little since 2005.

English learners who experience academic difficulties often suffer lack of progress toward proficiency in English, becoming “stuck” for years at the same level of English language development (Flores, Painter, & Pachon, 2009; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010). Programs for English learners in public schools in California utilize the state-adopted California English Language Development Standards (ELD) to determine students’ progress in English language skills (California Department of
Education, 2014). California’s ELD Standards outline three main levels of proficiency in English: Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging. Each of these three proficiency level descriptors (PLD) describes what a student knows and is able to do at a particular level of English language development. The Emerging level describes what a beginning learner of English can do, while Expanding represents an intermediate level of language development, and “the ‘bridge’ alluded to is the transition to full engagement in grade-level academic tasks and activities in a variety of subject areas without the need for specialized ELD instruction” (California Department of Education, 2014, p. 19).

In conjunction with the PLDs, the California ELD Standards outline in detail the knowledge, skills, and abilities in four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that students are expected to exhibit upon exit from each proficiency level. Students at the intermediate level of proficiency, called Expanding, reportedly “can engage in complex, cognitively demanding social and academic activities requiring language when provided moderate linguistic support” (California Department of Education, 2014, p. 20). The standards and PLDs were designed to provide “valuable information that can be used for determining meaningful performance distinctions based on assessment results” (California Department of Education, 2014, p. 18). However, when students learning English cannot successfully master the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the academic tasks necessary to advance to the next proficiency level, their academic achievement suffers and they cannot move on to more advanced or mainstream classes; they remain in English language development programs for the long term (Kim, 2011; Olsen, 2010; Valdés, 2001).
In addition to unsatisfactory academic outcomes, many of these students suffer social and psychological consequences resulting from less than successful school experiences. The longer an EL remains in settings focused purely on English language development, the more likely he or she is to suffer poor socio-emotional outcomes (Castro-Olivo, Preciado, Sanford, & Perry, 2011).

Having less than proficient skills in academic English, many are reluctant to participate in mainstream subject area classes. Their limited academic vocabulary and literacy skills impede their understanding of critical content, and they develop habits of non-participation. They may stay silent for large parts of the school day, exhibiting decreased resiliency, withdrawn behaviors, and lower levels of self-confidence and ethnic pride; these perpetual patterns of school disengagement contribute to a drop out rate estimated at four times the average (Castro-Olivo et al., 2011; Kim, 2011; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2014).

The pervasive gap in achievement and its effects on EL students have been the focus of a plethora of research studies aimed at identifying factors offering some sort of explanatory power (Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005; Goldenberg, 2008); however, efforts to improve academic outcomes for EL students remain hampered by ongoing policy debate and differing recommendations regarding best practices for educating EL students (Flores, Painter, & Pachon, 2009; Kim & Herman, 2009). In addition, many research reports treat the EL subgroup as a uniform whole, failing to recognize the diversity within the group, namely the group of EL comprised of those that remain in English language development programs for long
periods of time (Callahan, 2005; Menken, & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Thompson, 2015).

The little information that has emerged regarding English learners who stagnate in language development programs paints a dreary picture of the schooling these students experience on a daily basis and describes a set of disconcerting academic characteristics. Valdés’ (2001) study of four middle school students’ experiences during their first two years in U.S. schools highlighted the social and linguistic separation that occurred when English-learning students were relegated to classes for English as a Second Language (ESL) year after year. The only model of English proficiency for students in these classes was the teacher; students could not reap the benefits of interactions with English speaking peers that would have supported their speedy acquisition of English. Therefore, they did not develop the knowledge and skills necessary to move to more advanced classes (Valdés, 2001).

Valdés found one exception when Manolo, one of the focus students, transferred to a mainly Anglo middle school in an affluent part of town. The staff and teachers at J.F.K. Middle School held high expectations for non-English speaking students as bright and well educated, and placed them in fast-paced English language development classes and mainstream classes with tutors to help them. While Manolo made excellent progress in English, he struggled and lost confidence in some classes such as algebra because he did not have the appropriate background in the content (Valdés, 2001).

Nearly a decade later, Olsen found continued practices of segregation in her 2010 study of almost forty school districts in urban, suburban, and rural settings in California.
She described ways in which students experienced social segregation and linguistic isolation due to placement in the same ELD classes year after year with students who were at beginning stages of learning English. This practice precluded English learners from opportunities to learn during interactions with native English speakers and relegated them to classrooms where the teacher constitutes the only English-speaking model (Olsen, 2010). She reported that 59% of all secondary EL students in California could be considered “long-term” English learners. These students performed an average of two to three years below grade level, and only two percent were enrolled in classes that would prepare them to enter a four-year university.

In New York, another state with large numbers of EL students, Menken and Kleyn (2010) reviewed the academic achievement and educational histories of secondary English learners in New York City schools. They found that one-third of secondary English learners had been in the language development program for several years and experienced similar conditions with averages below grade level. The English learners in their study also presented histories of inconsistent placements in “weak” forms of bilingual education or classes where they did not receive any additional support for developing academic literacy in English. In these classes, undemanding curriculum and low expectations from teachers contributed to low academic achievement. Students moved in and out of placements in different programs, causing inconsistency and fragmentation of curriculum and learning. This resulted in low GPAs and higher drop out rates for English learners. These studies represent the genesis of an emerging body of research literature on long term English learners.
As awareness of the unique characteristics and needs of this subgroup within a
subgroup breached the research horizon, politicians began taking an interest in
identifying and addressing the needs of these long term English learners. The official
classification “Long Term English Learner” (LTEL) was recently recognized in both
policy and research literature. In 2012, the Representative Assembly of the National
Education Association adopted the following proclamation in New Business Item 50:
“NEA will work with partner organizations to highlight best practices that meet the
unique educational needs of Long Term English Learners, through NEA’s existing social
network and other electronic media. Long Term English Learners are students who have
remained Limited English Proficient for six or more years” (NEA, 2013, p. 383). In the
same year, California became the first state to pass legislation specifically defining LTEL
when members of the California State Assembly passed Assembly Bill 2193 containing
formal definitions of both a long-term English learner and students at risk of becoming a
LTEL. The following definitions were added to California Education Code:

(a) “Long Term English Learner” means an English learner who is enrolled in any
of grades 6-12, inclusive, has been enrolled in schools in the United States for
more than six years, has remained at the same English language proficiency level
for two or more consecutive years as determined by the English language
development test identified or developed pursuant to Section 60810, or any
successor test, and scores far below basic or below basic on the English language
arts standards-based achievement test administered pursuant to Section 60640, or
any successor test.

(b) “English learner at risk of becoming a long-term English learner” means an
English learner who is enrolled in any of grades 5 to 11, inclusive, in schools in
the United States for four years, scores at the intermediate level or below on the
English language development test identified or developed pursuant to Section
60810, or any successor test, and scores in the fourth year at the below basic or far
below basic level on the English language-arts standards-based achievement test
administered pursuant to Section 60640, or any successor test (p.1-2).
This piece of legislation not only formalizes the LTEL group as a focus of efforts to improve education and raise student achievement for this population, but goes a step further by providing the foresight to consider students’ needs before they are considered long term English learners. By establishing criteria for identifying students who are not yet LTEL, this legislation establishes the vital need for research on how to help those students who are on the cusp of becoming long term EL students. While the limited body of research that does exist on Long Term English Learners provides valuable information on their academic achievement (or lack thereof) and of the characteristics often seen in this population, the old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is apropos to the situation. In order to avoid the creation of Long Term English Learners, it is necessary to study students who are, as the State of California says, “at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners,” to ascertain how to help them reach and maintain the expected trajectory for proficiency in English and prevent a new generation of LTEL. The expectation, according to experts in second language acquisition, is that students beginning to learn English as a second or additional language will reach proficiency close to that of native speaking peers in as little as four to seven years (Cummins, 2000; Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000). However, as a result of spending years in schooling conditions with little to no language support, leaving gaps in English learners’ language development, they are unable to reach proficiency in English and veer from that expected trajectory, leading to further deficits in their academic knowledge. My
study focuses on these students before they meet the criteria to be labeled Long Term English Learners to learn more about the best ways to help them succeed in school.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The question of how can schools improve the ways they serve this group of English learners remains unanswered. I was unable to find research that focuses specifically on those “at risk of becoming Long Term English learners.” A careful analysis of the schooling experiences of EL students on the brink of becoming Long Term English Learners is necessary to developing an understanding of how schools can more effectively address their educational needs and provide opportunities for future academic success. Therefore, I chose to focus specifically on this group of EL students to investigate in detail their perspectives on school and ways in which they relate to the school environment, their teachers, and each other.

Long Term English Learners differ from English learners who make progress on the expected trajectory for language development and academic achievement. Their skills in English fossilize at a level that prevents them from accessing rigorous academic content, and they fall further behind each year in school. Several researchers argue that customary research methods have often failed to capture the complexity of issues in the larger ecology in the lives of students classified as English learners. Several researchers have pointed out that many prior studies enlisted a deficit perspective and focused on what students lacked in terms of resources -- cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, academic, and other rather than considering how identity, historical experiences, and perceptions of school opportunities affect school performance (Gutiérrez & Orellana,
Taking into consideration the larger school context and how students perceive that context, allows for a more holistic picture of the schooling experiences of these English learners.

My study examines students’ linguistic and cultural resources through a study of their self-perceptions, their interactions in school and their future aspirations. The concept of identity in particular can function as an analytic tool to help us understand schools and society; when learners engage in literacy practices or invest in a second language, they are also engaged in acts of identity, allowing them to reevaluate their opportunities for the future (Gee, 2000-2001). My study offers an alternative perspective that privileges student’ voices and where identity functions as the analytic lens for examining the following research questions:

• What funds of identity (linguistic and cultural resources) do students at risk of becoming LTEL bring to the school? To what extent do students use them to construct or perform identities in school?

• In what ways do school policies and discourse shape the identities of students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners?

• How does peer school culture shape identities of students at risk of becoming LTEL?

**Overview of the Dissertation**

In the first part of Chapter Two I lay out the theory that guided my study, analysis, and presentation of findings. I start with the theoretical frameworks of the social nature of learning (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), identity (Gee, 2000-2001) and cultural and
linguistic resources (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Yosso, 2003) in order to prepare the reader for theoretical conceptualizations that follow as part of studies in the literature review and later data analysis.

The literature review situates my study in research literature regarding language minority students’ academic achievement and studies involving students’ cultural resources and identity. Beginning with research on the subtractive effect of schooling on English learners by Valenzuela (1999) and Valdés (2001), I expand the review to the seminal studies on students who remain in English learning programs for far too long, or Long Term English Learners by Menken and Klein (2010) and Olsen (2010).

Chapter Three introduces the context for my study, including details about my research site and participants, the types of data I collected, and methods I used to analyze data to draw conclusions about the linguistic and cultural resources that language minority students that students called English learners use as funds of identity.

Chapters Four and Five detail the funds of identity I found in students’ artwork and other data sources. These chapters include pictures students’ art projects, tables of detected funds of identity, and explanations for my discovery and interpretation of data.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I present the major and unexpected findings from my study, offer my recommendations for practitioners, and take up the implications of my findings for future research.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Just as there are three legs to support a stool, three areas of theoretical concepts provide a sturdy framework for my study, analysis, and presentation of findings. Because my study focuses on students and schools, theories of learning and language development are an essential foundation for my research. Second, applying theories of identity as an analytical lens help focus my analysis on students’ perspectives of how they see themselves as a certain type of person in the world. Finally, my study derives support for analysis and findings from theories related to linguistic and cultural resources to explore the rich personal assets that each student brings to the school context.

Theories of learning and development

Vygotsky (1978) postulated that social development is shaped by interaction with others in settings such as the home, school, and society as a whole. Studies incorporating a sociocultural perspective acknowledge the role of particular environmental contexts in the process of human development in an attempt to not only describe, but explain the processes inherent in human learning and cognition. Vygotsky’s work portrayed human development as a complex combination of biological inheritance carried in the genes and of “an environment that is shaped by the activities of previous generations” (Wells, 2000, p. 54). In this perspective, language functions as one of the tools used to facilitate meaning and joint activity, and culture compiled by previous generations is transmitted through language and interactions.
While Vygotsky noted how an individual’s development is assisted by other members of the society through both interactions with others through artifacts (Wells, 2000), subsequent notable researchers and theorists have built upon this fertile ground of theory to articulate a sociocultural perspective in which individual development constitutes and is constituted by social and cultural-historical activities and practice. In Rogoff’s (2003) cultural-historical approach, individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context, emphasizing human development as “a process of people’s changing participation in sociocultural activities of their communities” (2003, p. 52). People make use of and extend cultural tools and practices inherited from previous generations. As people develop through their shared use of cultural tools and practices, they simultaneously contribute to the transformation of cultural tools, practices, and institutions.

Applying a socio-historical approach to my study lends explanatory power regarding the influence of the social interactions and the cultural-historical context upon individual development. Acknowledging the influence of cultural-historical events on present day circumstances is key to more fully understanding the complexity of a student’s context. For example, the historical and socio-political discourse on language minority students, both in U.S. society (macro-level) and at the school level (meso-level) provide context for the micro-interactions in the classroom. These historically grounded discourses contribute to the context in which Long Term English Learners experience schooling. Since students’ development is shaped through interaction with teachers, peers, and others using artifacts to mediate meanings in social contexts, it is also
necessary to examine how students’ previous schooling experiences have been shaped by and are perpetually shaping continuing social interactions. Both Vygotsky and Rogoff’s theories based on Vygotsky’s work will assist my analysis of students’ activities in their present context by taking into account their past schooling experiences within their socio-historical context.

**Identity**

The conceptualization of identity for this framework is based on the work of several well-known theorists. Gee, who wrote extensively on identity and facets of identity formation, explored how the concept of identity can serve as an analytic tool to help us understand schools and society (2000-2001). Gee defined identity as "being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given context” (2000-2001, p. 99). Gee described identities as tied to the workings of historical and sociocultural forces. Rather than subscribing to a single identity, he explained, “all people have multiple identities connected not to their ‘internal states’ but to their performances in society” (2000-2001, p. 99). In a recent work, Flores, Kleyn, and Menken (2015) define identity as “a performance constructed as individuals make meaning of themselves and others through the repetition of discourses that have been “written” by the society in which they live” (p. 116). Gee’s exposition of discourses explains the connection between discourse and identity.

Gee outlined several types of identities and how they are formed (2000-2001). The first type that will be useful in my study is called Institutional Identities or I-Identities, describing how a person’s identity is related to an institutional position
occupied in society, such as an occupation or role. According to Gee (2000-2001), I-Identities can also be assigned by an institution, such as in the case of an English Learner or Long Term English learner. Institutional identities require discourse and dialogue to sustain them; thus, they recruit the forces that sustain the next type of identity, the Discourse identity (D-Identity). D-identities are created and sustained through discursive processes involving recognition of traits related to the individuality of the person, such as being charismatic or self-assured (Gee, 2000-2001). The source of these D-Identities is the discourse and dialogue of others. These conceptualizations are useful to my study because they can help identify and investigate the how LTELs’ identities are formed and sustained at school in conjunction with discourse about this particular group of students.

Since individuality is socially formed and informed, individuals engage in what Gee (2000-2001) termed combinations, or sets of actions and behaviors that constitute an attempt to be recognized as a certain type of person. Gee explained how people offer what he called combinations as part of identity—“behaviors combined in certain ways to facilitate recognition by others as a member of a group or identity” such as speech, dress, body language, tools, and language (2000-2001, p. 109). What Gee referred to as combinations could also be collections of what some researchers have called signs. In Ibrahim’s (1999) work on identity formation, he discussed the use of linguistic and non-linguistic signs such as written and spoken words, clothing, and other personal choices as to enact one’s identity. By adopting certain ways of speaking, dressing, and being, students may perform a particular identity, as it relates to race, ethnicity, class, gender,
etc. as recognized by others. These concepts will be helpful in examining LTEL students’ ways of speaking and being at school.

The relationship between language and identity offers fertile opportunities for investigations that can lead to a more complex understanding of students’ identities. Examining the language and discourse used about students provides information essential to understanding the context in which students are engaging in their identity work. Flores, Kleyn, and Menken (2015) argue that the Long Term English Learner label “positions students as deficient in English as well as in their home language and as doing poorly in school” (p. 114). Thus, by positioning them as deficient or lacking in knowledge or skills necessary to achieve success in school, labels such as English learners, Long Term English Learners, and Students At-Risk of Becoming Long Term English Learners reflect ideologies that create and perpetuate negative Institutional Identities.

Just as others can use language to position students within a given identity, students employ language as a tool for their own identity construction and performance. For example, how and when students use a particular language, language variety, or particular features of a language constitute important aspects of the performance of identity. Patterns of language use are influenced by both the larger socio-political context and by participation in the local community (Conchas, 2006; Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). While observing students’ behavioral acts can provide insightful information, language preferences offer another rich source of data, such that “focusing on language as part of youth practices can tell us what material practices sometimes cannot, explaining the emergence of unspoken rules (don’t tattle)
and how these create solidarity over time” (Mendoza-Denton, 2008, p. 204). Hunter (1997) equated investment in language learning with an investment in the language learner’s identity:

When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. (p. 608)

Language learners deploy linguistic resources for a variety of social and academic purposes, including establishing and maintaining particular identities or distancing themselves from other positions. Likewise, when teachers use institutional talk to separate students into certain groups based on categories established by the school system, e.g. struggling readers, socioeconomically disadvantaged, Long Term English Learners, it shows that the language learner’s social identity is complex and “must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction” (Peirce, 1995, p. 13). Far from being a fixed phenomenon, Norton (also known as Peirce) described how language learners’ multiple identities are connected to performances; identity constructs and is constructed by language (Norton, 1997, p. 419).

Categorical labels or Institutional Identities that position students as lacking or deficient in some way reflect perspectives that are rife with deficit thinking. Deficit thinking places the blame for low academic achievement squarely on the student and family, often claiming that students lack the normative cultural knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in school and their parents show little to no interest in education
(Cooper, 2009; Valencia, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Deficit thinking infiltrates many aspects of our society, and education is not exempt; more recently, educational researchers have made an attempt at deconstructing this negative way of thinking, especially about certain populations such as language minority students (García & Guerra, 2004). In fact, Yosso describes deficit thinking as “one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US schools” and recommends bold critiques of deficit theorizing and inclusion of data that represents the voices of People of Color (2005, p. 75). Because most educators consider schools to be part of an effective and equitable system, it becomes easy for educators to find fault in the students or their families for limited academic success instead of examining the school context for shortcomings. Just as deficit-informed research exploits areas where students are perceived to be lacking, I turned to research based on theory that investigates resources that students do have offer as a viable alternative. My study examines different types of resources that students possess and by privileges student voices that might otherwise go unnoticed.

**Cultural Resources and Forms of Capital**

The third support in the theoretical framework for my study consists of theory related to resources that students may possess. Many educational researchers have found the ideas of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1986) helpful as part of a theoretical framework for explaining lower academic outcomes for particular populations. His focus on class conflict and the struggle for power as the basis for all social arrangements led him to employ an economic model as a metaphor for cultural and social reproductive processes. In any economy, there exists a hierarchy of social or economic classes, the
possibility of profit through investment, and valuation based on scarcity of resources. Bourdieu applied these principles to explain how “individuals and groups draw upon a variety of cultural, social, and symbolic resources in order to maintain and enhance their position in the social order” (Swartz, 1997, p. 73). Bourdieu engaged these various types of resources 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 and class fractions” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). According to Bourdieu, capital can occur in three forms: economic, cultural, and social. For Bourdieu, economic capital, realized in the form of money or property, was at the root of all the other types of capital, while the other two forms may be converted to economic capital under certain conditions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

### Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is generally understood as a system of dispositions, including linguistic and cultural competence, arising from family socialization. Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* consists of class-specific, deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that are internalized through socialization and life experiences (Bourdieu, 1977). It can include behavior patterns derived from beliefs about fundamental conditions of existence, the state of affairs or orientations toward aspects of the world, and sense of self and place in society. *Habitus* also includes one’s values and expectations based on perceived possibilities, whether they are reasonable or unreasonable, and one’s aspirations for the future (Swartz, 1977).
Bourdieu delineated three types of cultural capital: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (1986). Bourdieu’s idea of embodied cultural capital involved “external wealth converted into an integral part of the person” (1986, p. 245). Embodied capital requires pedagogical action, or “the investment of time by parents, other family members, or hired professionals to sensitize the child to cultural distinctions” (1997, p. 76).

Bourdieu described the second kind of cultural capital, objectified capital, as cultural goods, including “material objects or media” (1986, p. 247). Families invest financial resources to provide consumer goods for students, such as clothing, games, or computers and books, which are considered objectified capital. The third type of cultural capital in Bourdieu’s theory is the institutionalized state. As a form of objectification, it projects original properties on the cultural capital and proffers “a certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). While it is relatively autonomous from the holder herself, an example of this form of cultural capital would be an educational credential granted to an individual (Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu employed an economic model to explain how the social world is structured and how it functions. In his elaboration of Bourdieu’s model, Swartz (1997) explained that cultural resources have come to function as a kind of capital. The unequal distribution of cultural capital in school can help explain the unequal scholastic achievement between students. For example, when a student’s ways of interacting and understanding the world are not recognized or valued in school, the mismatch between the two systems can cause the student to be seen as troublesome or not
an ideal student. Another example would be that credentials or a degree can serve as cultural capital that is recognized in the educational system and affords the holder certain benefits that are not available to others that don’t have one.

**Social Capital**

Bourdieu defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group” (1986, p. 9). Social capital accumulates due to a network of relationships that allows one to attain goals that one cannot attain individually. These resources that accrue are available to groups and individuals within the group. The groups are institutionalized, such as a family or a social class, or consist of members of a particular group such as high achieving students or native English speakers, and offer certain advantages to membership. Bourdieu’s theory is important to my study because discussions of cultural and social capital can help to researchers identify the resources students have available to them in the form of shared knowledge and relationships with others, whether they reside in family connections or in social networks at school and in the community.

**Other Forms of Capital**

Although Bourdieu’s (1977; 1986) theories center on the disadvantages faced by populations without the privileged capital, my study focuses on investigating the abundance of capital resources derived from English learners’ home communities that may not be legitimimized or even recognized at school. Yosso’s (2005) concept of
community cultural wealth, which builds on the Bourdieu’s (1977; 1986) concept of cultural capital in a manner that serves to counteract the deficit thinking reflected in so much of the research on language minority students, provides more explanatory power for the type of data in my study. Community cultural wealth as defined by Yosso, encompasses “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (2005, p.77).

Yosso described six forms of capital that communities of color use to nurture community cultural wealth. The first, aspirational capital, comprises aspirations developed within social and familial contexts. Through storytelling and advice, aspirational capital enables community members to remain hopeful in spite of structured inequality, even when the means to achieve those aspirations may not be present or available. Linguistic capital, or “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style,” also involves storytelling and can also be seen in communication through visual art (p. 79). Yosso’s conceptualization of familial capital fits well with Rogoff’s (2003) cultural-historical approach, in which individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical context. Familial capital “refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (2005, p. 79). This type of capital features a commitment to the well being of not only the immediate family, but to the community, and can be nurtured by extended family, living or passed on, and friends who may be
considered family. These kinship ties provide models of caring, coping, and providing that affect “emotional, moral, educational, and occupational consciousness” (p.79). Yosso’s theory also includes social capital, or networks of people and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support, and navigational capital, which refers to the skills needed to understand and move through social institutions. The final type of capital, resistant capital, highlights “those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (p. 80). Yosso decries research based on deficit perspectives that portray students as deficient in the cultural knowledge deemed valuable by dominant society, advocating instead for research that focuses on the assets and strengths of communities. The categories of capital in Yosso’s work provide a rich framework for examining the schooling experiences of the language minority students in my study. My study embraces a positive approach by investigating English learners’ cultural resources or types of capital as outlined by Yosso’s concept of community cultural wealth (2005).

**Cultural Capital and Funds of Knowledge for Identity**

The concept of “funds of knowledge,” emerged in educational research in the early 1990s when researchers Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) challenged deficit views of working-class families that portray them as “disorganized and socially deficient” by presenting households as “containing ample cultural and cognitive resources” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 134). These funds of knowledge, made up of competencies and knowledge that help a group survive and thrive, can be exchanged and activated to meet group or individual needs; the networks are adaptable and “multi-
stranded, meaning someone may have multiple relationships with the same person or with various persons” (Moll et al., 1992, pp. 132-133). Knowing a person in multiple spheres of activity facilitates knowing the “whole” person; in comparison, the typical relationship between a teacher and student “seems ‘thin’ and ‘single-stranded’” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). Critiques of research on funds of knowledge include its limitations due to the use of a single methodological approach using adult practices as the main unit of analysis (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). My study places the experiences of children labeled as English learners and “students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners” at the center of the analysis (Assem. Bill 2193, 2012). Moll’s concept is useful for my study because children bring their own funds of knowledge and the accompanying practices to school, whether or not those funds of knowledge are recognized by school personnel, or even by the students themselves (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a). More recently, Moll has expanded the research methodology concerning funds of knowledge to incorporate student artwork and extend the concept of funds of knowledge to funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a). My study also includes student artwork as a source of data to explore students’ funds of knowledge.

Esteban-Guitart and Moll (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a, 2014b) elaborated on the concept of funds of knowledge to articulate a theory of human identity. They drew from Vygotsky’s concept *perezhivanie*, usually translated as “emotional experience,” or “lived experience” to understand how the same event can be experienced differently by different people, thus having a different effect on behavior. Lived experience is a product of collective storytelling that “mediates and organizes behaviour…a dynamic, fluid, and
complex unit of analysis between personality characteristics and environmental characteristics” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a, p. 33). People form their identities through resources such as skills, knowledge, and practices acquired through social activities. As such, they become valuable tools for identity work. The authors explained:

Funds of knowledge are repositories of identity to which people have access. Consequently, the funds of knowledge are funds of identity when people use them to define themselves. Specifically, what we understand by funds of identity are historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for people’s self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding. (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a, p. 37)

Because funds of identity function as essential resources for self-definition, it is helpful to include them in a study of how students engage in identity construction. The authors purported that children create their own funds of knowledge and emphasized how families’ knowledge and experiences function as contextualizing resources for schooling to connect the settings in which students make meaning and find social connection (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a, 2014b). Taken altogether, these theories on learning and development, identity, and forms of capital provide a robust framework to examine how students considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners experience school and the resources they bring to bear on this endeavor. The works included in the following review of literature situate my study within research intended to investigate factors related to the pervasive nature of academic underachievement among English learners.
Review of the Literature

English Learners

Several important studies illuminate the nature and kinds of schooling experienced by English learners in U.S. schools that may contribute to stagnant academic achievement. In her seminal work, "Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring," Valenzuela (1999) conducted a three-year ethnographic investigation of schooling orientations among immigrant Mexican and Mexican-American youth at a large, inner city high school in Houston, Texas. Valenzuela used participant observation as the key mode of data collection and augmented the data with field notes and informal, open-ended interviews with students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and members of the community. In addition, she drew information from school and district documents that revealed orientations toward school and achievement. Examining both these quantitative and qualitative data, she argues how assimilationist schooling practices divest students from important social and cultural resources, leading to academic failure.

Valenzuela’s study builds on Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of social capital, or social relationships from which an individual is potentially able to derive various types of institutional resources and support, to conceptualize academic achievement as a collective process. She describes the function of social capital as the benefit that “comes into being whenever social interaction makes use of resources residing within the web of social relationships” (1999, p. 27-28). She revealed ways the social and cultural isolation experienced by students in her study diminished opportunities to build peer relationships
that could provide access to important social capital in school when they became unavailable as friends or sources of academic support.

Noting especially the segregation of immigrant students and Mexican American students in the regular, or non-college-bound classes, Valenzuela highlighted the exclusionary aspects of schooling. She noticed how students were invested in schooling if their friends were invested in it or if they felt their teachers were invested in them. However, when students were repeatedly separated from native English-speaking peers and assigned to special classes for English as a Second Language and remedial classes with the same classmates year after year, this practice resulted in limited access to students who were high achieving. Through placement in regular and remedial classes, Mexican American students had limited access to sources of help such as native English-speaking models, a pro-school ethos, others’ homework, sharing a computer, and study groups that are commonly found in the more advanced classes. Over time, this lack of exposure to resources they needed to be successful in school arrested students’ academic progress.

Valenzuela called this process the “social de-capitalization” of Mexican youth, because it subtracted resources from them. Students became “socially de-capitalized,” by experiencing a “paucity of academically oriented networks” and “disaffection from a highly unequal system of rewards and privileges” (1999, p. 29). Social decapitalization, Valenzuela asserts, describes the lack of opportunities to engage in peer relationships that could be used to build social capital related to school success. Separating students by
keeping some isolated in ESL classes severed networks and cut students’ access to valuable social capital that was instrumental to school success.

Valenzuela also pondered the centrality of the notion of caring that emerged in the study to help explain academic achievement and underachievement among these youth (1991). In interviews, some students accused their teachers of being boring, claiming that if teachers cared about students, then they would do something to make classes more interesting and share responsibility for learning instead of letting students fail. Others asked that teachers not be so busy, but take time to show students that they have worth by spending time getting to know them and care about their lives outside of school. The notion of caring surfaced unexpectedly as a result of Valenzuela’s efforts to privilege students’ perspectives on their own schooling experiences, a viewpoint also examined in my own study.

In a similar study, Valdés (2001) relates in intimate detail the stories of four focal students throughout their first two years in American middle school in order to illuminate the issues surrounding the education of students identified as English language learners. In Learning and Not Learning English, Valdés (2001) provides detailed accounts of English learners’ experiences in classes for English as a Second Language (ESL). Valdés uses the students’ own lives and experiences as a lens to examine the policy and instructional dilemmas surrounding the education of EL students. She observed and interviewed four Latinx focal students over the course of two years, following some who transferred to different middle schools, to examine their perspectives about their options and opportunities in school. During their English as a Second Language (ESL) and
subject-matter classes, she audiotaped lessons, took notes, and interacted with small
groups of students during instructional activities. She also made observations about the
larger school context to learn about peer relationships and sources of English both inside
and outside the classroom setting. Over the course of the two-year study, Valdés also
administered an English language proficiency assessment four times to each focal student
to gather information on the development of their receptive and productive language
abilities in English. She collected written work from not only the focal students, but from
other students in the same classes to investigate the development of their writing skills. In
addition, she conducted interviews with four ESL teachers, teacher aides, subject-matter
teachers who had the focal students in class, the school principal, other school personnel,
and parents of the focal students.

Valdés described the complexity of issues surrounding the acquisition of English
and students’ struggles to learn the language. At the time her book was published, Valdés
also found that when EL students moved to the mainstream classroom, most teachers
were not prepared to support English learners, either academically or emotionally. When
Manolo, who performed at the top of the class in the English as a Second Language
courses, transferred to a mostly Anglo middle school in an affluent neighborhood, he
struggled academically with the content as well as with the feelings of isolation and
failure from scoring at the bottom of his new mainstream content classes. Valdés writes,
“There is much that teachers do not know about how the English language develops in
second-language learners, and there is little information available to guide them in
determining when ESL students at different levels can “compete” with mainstream students” (2001, p. 16).

Valdés also found that students, as in the cases of Elisa and Manolo, were often placed in classes before their English language skills were formally assessed and, once in the program, English learning students had limited access to useful information routinely delivered in the mainstream classes, such as how to study and move to advanced classes, and few opportunities to build relationships with native English speakers. Furthermore, the artificial-sounding or simplified instruction found in the ESL classes did not adequately prepare students for the academic demands of the mainstream classes, nor did it supply the necessary background knowledge ESL students needed to keep up in content classes (p. 70). Thus, students’ English language skills did not develop to the level needed to be successful in advanced mainstream content classes. Valdés notes that students’ advancement was based primarily upon teacher judgment rather than assessment data. For example, Elisa repeated the Not English Proficient (NEP) sequence to act as a translator and helper rather than move on to the more advanced ESL class prescribed by the results of her language proficiency exam. English learning students languished in environments Valdés designated as “ESL ghettos” that stunted their academic progress (p. 159). She encouraged further research and attention to the stagnation of English learning students’ linguistic and academic development.

Research on Long Term English Learners

When the English proficiency skills of students classified as English Learners become stagnant, EL students remain in English language development programs for
much longer than expected. The term “Long Term English Learner” (LTEL) has more recently emerged within the small amount of research literature that exists regarding this subgroup of a subgroup. Research thus far has not uncovered clear answers to the factors underlying LTEL status or solutions for the challenge of educating LTEL (Council of Great City Schools, 2009; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). In the studies that do recognize LTEL, these students are not usually the central focus of the research but LTEL are treated as one of several types of English learners.

In one such study, Menken and Kleyn (2010) conducted qualitative research about English learners in three New York City (NYC) high schools to ascertain more about their schooling experiences and language preferences. One third of EL students in NYC have been in U.S. schools for seven years or more and are considered Long Term English Learners. The three schools chosen as sites for the study served large populations of LTEL students and varied in size and location. Menken and Kleyn conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-nine LTEL students, five school administrators, and four teachers who worked with LTEL students. They also examined academic records, including transcripts, report cards, test scores, birth certificates, home language surveys, and course grades.

LTEL students’ linguistic resources included oral language proficiency in both English and their primary language. While the majority of students in the study spoke Spanish, a sprinkling of students spoke other languages. Approximately one half of the Spanish-speaking students came from homes where both English and Spanish were spoken, and half were from homes that used only Spanish. Most students reported using
both languages almost equally in conversation. They described frequent codeswitching between English and Spanish both at home and at school, which they often referred to as “Spanglish” (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 410).

Although typical LTEL students in the study were orally proficient in both languages, most preferred to read and write in English. A large majority of the LTEL students, even those who had attended bilingual programs, reported that their schooling experiences had emphasized English language literacy skills. Records for most LTEL in the study reported inconsistent placement in programs the authors termed "weak" or transitional bilingual education that had not supported or developed literacy skills in their primary language. Others experienced most of their schooling in mainstream English classrooms with little to no primary language support. Despite the emphasis on English literacy, the LTEL students in the study commonly experienced academic failure and/or retention. Their reading and writing skills in English were an average of three years below grade level with a cumulative average grade of D-. The educational services being offered to LTEL in the study seemed to be mismatched to their needs. For example, LTEL students were often placed in beginning ESL classes with students who were just beginning to learn English or in classes entitled "Spanish for Native Speakers" with newcomer students possessing higher native language literacy skills. LTEL found the native language literacy demands in these classes to be very difficult. Students reporting grade failure and retention often also acted withdrawn and less confident in the classroom.
Menken and Kleyn describe the schooling experiences of LTEL students in NYC as “subtractive,” and as a result, students “have not able to experience the academic benefits that come when their native languages are developed in schools” (2010, p. 413). It is clear that for LTEL in the study, in spite of the presence of strong bilingual oral skills, the lack of opportunities to develop native language literacy skills and English language proficiency prolonged their time in the English language development program and contributed to grade failure; this, in turn, affected their engagement in school and their confidence as learners.

Olsen’s (2010) publication *Reparable Harm*, focusing specifically on LTEL in California, offers a “wake-up call” to policy makers and educators to address the unique educational needs of LTEL students (p. 1). Olsen integrates the results of her analysis from a comprehensive statewide survey of forty school districts across the state of California with existing research, educator forums, and inquiries conducted by leadership teams in California high schools and districts. She begins her article by stating that “the existence of Long Term English Learners is evidence that for many students, the school experience that should have propelled them towards English proficiency and academic success has indeed been an educational dead-end” (p. 7). The survey data include information on 175,734 secondary students in California, representing almost one third of all secondary EL students in the state. Olsen discovered that LTEL students constituted fifty-nine percent of all EL students in public secondary schools in California. A majority of those students have been enrolled in U.S. schools since kindergarten and most were born in the U.S. In spite of the large numbers of LTEL students in California secondary
schools, Olsen found that only one quarter of participating districts had developed a formal definition or designation for identifying or monitoring LTEL (2010). Of the districts that did, most descriptions of LTEL characterized them as EL students in U.S. schools for at least six or seven years who had not reached proficiency in English and were struggling academically.

The LTEL mentioned in Olsen’s article experienced social segregation and linguistic isolation in school that limited their access to social and linguistic capital. LTEL were often placed in ELD classes, most of which do not count toward university-approved English credits, with students who were at beginning stages of learning English. Further, LTEL are often over-assigned to interventions and support classes for English or math, which resulted in limited access to English-speaking peers, as well as to the full curriculum of electives, science, and social studies classes. Most LTEL perform an average of two to three years below grade level and score at about the Intermediate level on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Because most LTEL fossilize at the Intermediate level of English language proficiency, they are assigned to the same ELD classes year after year with the same students, hence the formation of the ESL “ghetto” (Valdés, 2001).

The LTEL students described in Olsen’s article also exhibited high functioning in social interactions in both English and their home language, but weak in academic language with gaps in their literacy skills. She aptly summarizes the subtractive relationship between LTEL students’ language resources from home and English at school in this way:
Many are in the process of losing their home language, and prefer using English. The language Long Term English Learners tend to use and the vocabulary they draw upon is an “imprecise” social language. They exhibit fossilized features of language based upon the home language system superimposed with English vocabulary, and frequently code-switch. This is commonly referred to with terms such as “Spanglish” or “Chinglish,” and while it is expressive and functional in many social situations, it is not a strong foundation for the language demands of academic work in Standard English. (p. 23)

Olsen (2010) also emphasizes that the trajectory to becoming a Long Term English Learner begins in elementary school and recommends comprehensive solutions that require addressing the conditions that contribute to the creation of Long Term status. My study on students at-risk of becoming English learners is intended to examine exactly that time period in an English learner’s educational journey.

**Schooling and Identity**

Matute-Bianchi’s (2008) study of students of Mexican-descent represents a seminal work in the area of schooling and identity. The study examined the relationship between academic performance and students’ perceptions of ethnic identities by examining patterns of school success among the heterogeneous groups of Mexican-descendant students. Matute-Bianchi conducted her study in an agricultural community in California’s central coast among Mexican-descent high school students in relation to their experiences in school. During fieldwork, she collected observations noting participants’ use of Spanish and English, and other outward signs of identity such as clothing, associations within peer groups, and types of interactions with teachers and schoolmates. In addition, she interviewed thirty-five students over a two-year period, listening to
students discuss their future aspirations, hopes and dreams, and their understandings of the different ethnic labels used at the school.

Matute-Bianchi’s found that academic persistence and success surfaced more often among immigrant Mexican-oriented students than nonimmigrant groups while nonimmigrant groups de-emphasized academic achievement as essential to success (2008). For many Mexican-oriented students who experienced a peer culture that legitimized academic success, ethnic pride facilitated school achievement. Similarly, Mexican-descendant students who maintained a separate identity as *Mexicanos* performed as well or better than non-immigrant Mexican-descent peers. Matute-Bianchi proposed that recruitment into a particular identity system begins as early as elementary school grades, a time period addressed in my study of students at-risk of becoming English learners.

Fairbanks and Ariail (2006) expanded our knowledge of the nature and types of capital resources used by minority students in identity formation. They followed the trajectories of three adolescent female students of color, two Latinas and one African American, as the girls navigated middle school. To collect data, the researchers observed in the focal students’ classrooms, videotaped several lessons, and conducted multiple interviews with each focal student. For their analysis of the data, Fairbanks and Ariail adapted a framework by researcher Driessen (2001) based on Bourdieu’s notions of cultural capital. They expanded Driessen’s categories of social, linguistic, achievement, and family practices by examining emergent themes in the data that related to “influences, values, beliefs, and perspectives on schooling that shaped their identities
(e.g. parental expectations, perceptions about language arts instruction, peer relations)” (2006, p. 322).

Analysis of the girls’ interviews and classroom participation from field notes produced three categories of types of capital used by the three focal students: literacy resources, family resources, and social networks. Literacy resources included attitudes and practices for reading and writing inside and outside of school; family resources consisted of parents’ expectations and encouragement, assistance with homework, family language, parents’ education, and socio-economic capital. Fairbanks and Ariail (2006) grouped data related to social networks into the following categories: institutional agents, or members of the school community who provided assistance or opportunities in school, peers, other adults such as church members, and family members. They applied these categories to explore how cultural resources shaped the girls’ identities both as adolescent girls of color and as literacy learners in three individual profile cases.

The first case, Isabel, provided information that highlighted her social and cultural capital. She spoke of extensive relationships with supportive adults both at school and in her community, and when asked to describe what she liked about herself in eighth grade, she commented on her ability to talk to strangers and adults at church easily, indicating that she had access to these adults as sources of social support. Because her mother had worked at the school and reinforced the school’s behavioral expectations, Isabel, as a “quiet and hard-working” girl, was considered a “good student” and “so smart” at school (2006, p. 327). Conforming to the expected behavioral norms at school equated to “proof positive” of Isabel’s scholastic abilities (p. 327).
Melanie’s social capital, on the other hand, consisted of mainly her relationship with her athletic coach at school and the admiration by peers for her athletic abilities. In order to compete, she had to maintain a good academic standing, a status encouraged by both her mother and her coach. Melanie’s social group revolved around a few close friends and basketball. Transcripts of Melanie’s interview about her mother indicated she was “a beacon of support and guidance” for Melanie (Fairbanks and Ariail, 2006, p. 337). According to the researchers, Melanie’s social and cultural capital did not result in a change in her disposition toward school in spite of close surveillance by her coach and mother, since she perceived education as simply a means for her to play basketball.

Teachers perceived the third focal student, Jessica, as a troublemaker; she deviated from the expected behaviors, often seen as impulsive, and chose to use words that were prohibited by school authorities. Jessica’s ties to her family were “precarious,” and she had a “sometimes turbulent” relationship with her mother; Jessica’s social capital was notably limited to a small group of friends that she called “ghetto,” a term which she used to describe a particular way of speaking, dressing, and acting (p. 343). Jessica received grades of A and B in school, but grew bored when assignments seemed irrelevant and meaningless in English class. She described her language skills as knowing how to have a conversation with adults, but talking to her friends in a different way; as such her language “is two worlds” (p. 346). Jessica was a capable student and expressed her intention to complete high school, but her abilities were overshadowed by her behavior and her disconnection to schoolwork when the curriculum offered little by way of the personal connections she sought.
Fairbanks and Ariail’s (2006) study demonstrated how identities intersected with the cultural and social norms of the girls’ middle school to position them as good students or as deficient. The researchers identified students’ family resources as the ways family members influenced them through encouragement, expectations, or socio-economic capital; social networks consisted of institutional agents, peers, and family or community members who provided assistance or opportunities in school.

**Cultural Resources**

Conchas’ (2006) in-depth study of minority students’ experiences in two academies located within the same high school examined interactions between institutional structures and students’ social and cultural resources derived from families and schools. Like Valenzuela (1999), Conchas drew on Bourdieu’s (1977) definition of social and cultural capital to examine a system of dispositions, including linguistic and cultural competence, arising from socialization to explain how students benefited from these forms of capital.

Conchas’ study explained how the programs provided opportunities for minority students to be perceived as good students and experience academic success. Students in Conchas’ study attended a large urban high school in California consisting of three distinct programs. Students in the general education program included all academic levels at the school, but they experienced racial violence and gang involvement as well as low teacher expectations with little to no academic support. The school also offered two alternatives to the general program: The Graphics Academy and the Medical Academy. These programs featured a college-culture ethos and other scaffolds designed to promote
school success. The instructional models emphasized a holistic approach featuring team teaching, interdisciplinary projects, and meaningful learning activities with connections to real life, such as paid summer internships.

Classes in the Graphics Academy focused on graphics arts and fed into the Advanced Placement classes at the school. Students in the Graphics Academy were primarily White and Asian and 100% went on to higher education. Conchas characterized the Graphics Academy as competitive, stressful for students, and reported cases of depression and feelings of alienation. For this review, I have chosen to focus on the other Academy, the Medical Academy, due to its large Latinx population.

In contrast to the Graphics Academy, the Medical Academy, consisting of primarily of Black, Latino, and some Asian (Vietnamese) students, employed a cohort model to build trust and relationships among teachers and students. Students in small class sizes received mentoring from teachers and each other, cultivating a sense of community. In these close knit settings, students and teachers shared academic cultural capital that facilitated academic achievement. The knowledge acquired over time through socialization in school settings, such as where the study groups meet, how to interact with teachers or get good grades, and which classes are needed to graduate, allowed students to navigate the school system successfully. Because the Medical Academy community instilled principles of teamwork and inclusion within students, students viewed themselves optimistically, encouraged one another, and felt close bonds with one another and their teachers. Conchas stated, “The academic culture of these two programs influenced student engagement in school, creating a rich learning environment wherein
students encouraged one another to excel.” (2005, p. 35). Conchas found that positive relationships often resulted in higher levels of academic success, concluding that the social networks available to minority students allowed them to “thrive on strong and positive forms of peer and adult relationships that cut across race and ethnicity” (p. 48). Ninety-eight percent of students enrolled in the Medical Academy continued on to higher education. Conchas’ study demonstrates the ways in which students benefited from the social and cultural capital made available to them through intentional institutional structures and the resulting relationships with teachers and peers.

Most of the studies in this review suggested that students who remain classified as English learners for extended periods of time suffer negative academic and socio-emotional outcomes. For students who are considered “at-risk of becoming LTEL,” it is imperative that research investigates the factors and circumstances surrounding these students that may be contributing to their at-risk status. I could not find studies that included or specified students at-risk of becoming LTEL as described by CA Assembly Bill 2193 in 2012. Considering the increasing numbers of EL students in U.S. schools who are struggling academically and the negative effects of remaining in EL programs for prolonged periods of time, it is imperative to conduct additional studies of how EL considered at-risk of becoming Long Term English Learners experience school. My research is intended to fill that gap.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

Students who enter school speaking a language other than English as their primary language often struggle academically in schools for many years. I chose to use qualitative methodology to answer my research questions because it allowed for a rich description of the issues related to educating English learners. To accomplish this, I employed a case study design in order to describe in detail the perspectives of students considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners (Lichtman, 2013; Yin, 2013). According to sociocultural theorists, lived experiences occur in a social context and are culturally organized (Bourdieu, 1986; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Because identity is socially and culturally mediated and distributed among other people, social institutions, geographical territories, and artifacts, the lived experiences of English learners offer rich sources of information for examining students’ funds of knowledge used to mediate their interactions and identities in school; funds of knowledge become funds of identity when participants appropriate them and use them as signs to define and constitute themselves (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2013).

Research Questions

This study concerned the cultural and linguistic resources of students considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners used for identity. The following questions served to focus my study:

- What funds of knowledge (linguistic and cultural resources) do students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners bring to the school? To what extent do students use them to construct or perform identities in school?
• How does peer school culture shape identities of students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners?

• In what ways do school policies and institutional discourse shape the identities of students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners?

Research Site and Methods

Research Site

My choice of research site was based partly on a set of criteria that included a population with a number of identified English learners in the age range indicated by the definition of students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners (upper elementary grades) and the ability to implement a case study design based on access to students. While I had initially planned to conduct the study at a high school with students already identified as Long Term English Learners, the agreement I had with the first school site fell through. After three additional attempts to secure permission to conduct my study in various school districts were unsuccessful, I proposed my study to the principal of an elementary charter school who responded enthusiastically to my research topic, so I adjusted my research questions accordingly to address a younger population. Surprisingly, I could not find existing studies specifically focused on upper elementary grade students who were considered “at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners” (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2012). I was excited to realize afterward that my study had the potential to contribute uniquely to research that would help prevent the creation of Long Term English Learners by increasing our understanding of students at this liminal
language status. Ultimately, my research activities took place at a school that I will call Daybreak Academy. All names of people and places in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

**Charter Schools**

In 1992, California became the second state in the U.S. to enact charter school legislation. The intent of the Charter Schools Act was to allow educators, parents, and community members “to establish and maintain schools that operate independently from the existing school district structure as a method to…encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods… [and] provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system” (Ed. Code §47601).

According to the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), charter schools are tuition-free public schools, established by a renewable five-year charter “to fill an educational need” not otherwise addressed by traditional schools” (CCSS, 2018). The school’s charter, a document established by parents, organizations, or community groups, outlines the mission of the school, its program, goals, assessments, and methods for measuring success, such as standardized testing and/or other means of measurement. California has more charter schools and students in charter schools than any other state in the country; there are 1,275 charter schools in California serving over 630,000 students in grades K-12. Demographic data on enrollment in California charter schools reveals that charter schools enroll higher percentages of African American students and white students than traditional schools and lower percentages of Asian students, Latino
students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students receiving free and reduced lunch (CCSA, 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Charter Public School Percent of Enrollment</th>
<th>Traditional District School Percent of Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Learner</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free or Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities*</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(California Charter School Association, 2018)

According to a press release from CCSA on April 17, 2018, California charter schools outperformed non-charter schools on the 2015 and 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Scores for the NAEP are calculated based on students’ responses to a series of questions in reading and math given to fourth graders and eighth graders; NAEP also looks at the percentage of students meeting proficiency in reading and math. In 2015 in California, students in charter schools in fourth and eighth grades scored higher in both reading and math than students in similar grades in non-charter
schools and scored equally or higher in percentage of students meeting proficiency in reading and math (CCSA, 2018).

Parents often choose to send their children to charter schools “because they are dissatisfied with the status quo” and “seek a better education” (CCSA, 2018). In exchange for being held to additional standards to ensure that students are meeting their learning goals, charter schools are granted more flexibility in terms of curriculum. While many offer a thematic or specialized curriculum, others may emphasize the basics. What charter schools have in common is that each one is unique. I found that to be the case at the charter school where I conducted my research, which I will call Daybreak Academy (a pseudonym that will be used throughout this paper.

Daybreak Academy

Daybreak Academy (pseudonym) lies in the heart of Southern California, surrounded by renowned theme parks and tourist attractions. Daybreak is a small, fairly young institution, opening its doors to about 200 students in 2015, and operates under the auspices of the public school district in which it resides, but its independent charter guides and informs its programs, curriculum offerings, and services to students and families. The school’s mission statement as found on the school website confidently asserts its desire to “produce well-rounded, self-confident, community-conscious, high achieving graduates who successfully transition into higher levels of education, community involvement, and citizenship…through a strength-based, comprehensive academic program in visual/performing arts, STEAM, athletics, and service learning.”
According to school literature, students receive a rigorous academic program combined with a focus on “discovering scholars’ interests and talents and converting them into strengths through a plethora of enrichment activities” (Daybreak school website). Each day, each every class receives one period of a visual/performing arts (VAPA) class, such as art, music, or drama. While committed to a small school environment, the school quickly reached its maximum capacity of 240 students with more than 300 on the waiting list.

The School Accountability Report Card (SARC) reports that the student body reflects more diversity than the surrounding traditional public schools with 68.3% Hispanic/Latino, 17.5% White, 4.1% African American, 1.2% Filipino, 1.2% Pacific Islander, 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 2.8% Two or More Races. Approximately one quarter (24.09%) of the students have been identified as English
learners and 63.64% are considered socio-economically disadvantaged. The definition of socioeconomically disadvantaged as adopted by the California State Board of Education includes students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch or whose parents have not received a high school diploma (California Department of Education, 2017). The eight classroom teachers participate in an intense professional development of five to ten days just before the start of each school year focusing primarily on curriculum standards, innovative literacy instruction and assessment, and differentiation strategies.

**Participants**

Participants in my study included a group of focal students who were identified as English learners, their classroom teachers, and the school administrator. I recruited student participants using a criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Since the focus of the study was students who were classified as EL and possibly at-risk of becoming LTEL according to the definitions in CA Assembly Bill 2193, I met with the school principal to ascertain the number of EL students in each grade level at the school and identified the grade levels at which the students could be considered at-risk of becoming LTEL. To determine the number of years the students had been classified as EL, I reviewed results from the California English Language Proficiency Test (CELDT) for students in grades four through six. Once the grade levels of potential student participants had been identified, I met with the three teachers of the students to explain the study and invite them to participate by signing assent forms. All three teachers agreed to participate in the study. One of the teachers was about to take time off for maternity
leave, so I met with the long-term substitute who would be teaching in the classroom and she agreed to take part in the study as well and signed an assent form.

I made arrangements to visit each classroom to discuss the project with the students and provide assent forms for them and consent forms for their families. Each EL student who returned a signed assent form received a letter that explained the study and a consent form to take home for a parent/guardian’s permission to participate in the study. The invitations letters were in both English and Spanish with instructions to return them to the student’s teacher at school. Even though I hold a minor in Spanish and consider myself to have an intermediate level of fluency, I asked a well-educated native speaker of Spanish to edit the invitations for me. After one week, I mailed the same letter and consent form, accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope, to the home addresses of the EL students that had signed an assent form but not returned the consent form.

**Focal Students**

A total of ten EL students completed assent and consent forms with permission to participate in interviews and activities related to the study; five were from the fourth grade class and five were from the fifth grade class. This group of five boys and five girls made up the focal group participants. All ten focus students were identified as English learners in the California school system using the home language survey and have been in the English language development program since entering school in kindergarten. All ten students speak both Spanish and English and, according to their cumulative files, identify as Hispanic/Latinx.
The Fifth Graders

The fifth grade students in the study were Pedro, Christa, Eddie, Delilah, and Amber (all pseudonyms). Four out of the five students from fifth grade met the criteria to be classified as students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners as set forth by the State of California in terms of being in grades 5-12, in school for six or more years, and scored at the Intermediate level on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2012). One fifth grader, Delilah (pseudonym) scored at the Early Advanced level, which is one level above Intermediate, but I included her in the study because she nearly met the criteria and I observed that she had peer connections with classmates in the study.

Christa was an outgoing and friendly girl with a gregarious laugh and sparkling dark brown eyes and a medium frame. She seemed to bounce around the classroom due to her bubbly, happy nature. I observed that she spent a lot of time talking with peers during small group activities and while lining up to enter and leave the classroom. Her many friends in the class enjoyed her company and often sought her out for partner work. There was not much about Christa’s family background in her cumulative file except that she is a child of immigrants to the U.S. According to documents included in her cumulative file, Christa’s mother is from Mexico and her father is from Guatemala. She spoke about both of her parents’ daily activities in her interviews, so she likely lives together with both of them. Christa has been in U.S. public schools consistently since kindergarten and currently meets the criteria to be identified as a student at-risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner because her scores for English Language Arts
Eddie was a tall, husky fifth grader who self-identified as Mexican American. According to his cumulative file in the school office, Eddie’s parents were born in Mexico, and Eddie lived with his mother only. He had attended preschool and transitional kindergarten, a program to help preschoolers adjust to school. In the file, Eddie’s fifth grade teacher had described him as a wonderful, entertaining personality and spirit with a big heart who did well in math, but struggled with reading and writing. He produced grade level work when he was focused, but often distracted others around him. On the previous page of the same file, his fourth grade teacher had counted his great sense of humor as an asset to him. Indeed, during my observations of him, I never saw Eddie without a smile on his round, ruddy face, framed by his short black hair and flashing brown eyes. His outgoing, caring manner endeared him to his many of his peers, especially the girls in the focus group, who giggled shyly when he spoke. Eddie has been in U.S. public schools consistently since kindergarten and currently meets the criteria to be identified as a student at-risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2011-12). In his cumulative file, his scores for English Language Arts and Math on standardized testing were listed as Does Not Meet and he scored at the Intermediate level on the CELDT, California’s test of English language proficiency.

Delilah, a tall, slender Latina of Mexican descent with shiny black hair, sat placidly in her seat most days that I observed. Her calm, quiet demeanor belied her keen
interest in what others were doing, especially those she considered her close friends in the class. She remained aware of others’ movements while she worked on her own assignments. Early on, Delilah had expressed an eagerness to participate in the study when I introduced the research project to the class and promptly returned the consent and assent forms. Delilah represented the only focus student in the study who scored in the Early Advanced range on the annual language proficiency test (CELDT), one level above the criteria to be considered at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner in California (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2011-12). I included her in the study because she met the other criteria of scoring Does Not Meet in both math and English language arts on the most recent standardized testing and her language proficiency scores on the CELDT for reading and writing were still in the Intermediate range. In addition, she was in the same class with the others and was friends with Christa.

My research took place during Delilah’s first year at Daybreak Academy, and the educational history I found in her cumulative file was a bit unusual. She attended preschool and entered kindergarten as an English learner. In second grade, her teacher determined that she did not meet the district’s minimum required scores to warrant promotion to the third grade and Delilah had to repeat second grade. The notes in her cumulative file indicated that her mother had protested the retention to no avail. Comments for third grade read that her mother wanted Delilah to catch up; at the end of third grade, Delilah’s mother enrolled her at Daybreak Academy for the following school year, only at the fifth grade level, not fourth. So Delilah skipped fourth grade and returned to the grade level associated with her age-alike peer group at her new school. In
the comments for fifth grade, her teacher at Daybreak Academy stated that Delilah was easily distracted and struggled with staying on task. The score from her latest writing assessment argued that she was “not able to write a persuasive piece.” According to information in the cumulative file, Delilah lived with both parents, who were from Mexico and had at least a high school education.

Pedro was a soft-spoken, petite boy whose mother was from Guatemala and his father from Mexico. He had slightly wavy, medium-brown hair and brown eyes, and considered himself Mexican American. As recorded in his cumulative file, teachers found him to be sweet, kind, and polite. Pedro’s file showed an academic history marked by struggles in reading and participation in reading intervention programs and adequate progress in the area of math. The results of the SBAC standardized tests for him showed Standard Not Met for both English language arts and math, and his most recent writing assessment deemed him not able to write a persuasive piece. Based on these assessments, Pedro met California’s definition of a student at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner because he had attended U.S. schools since kindergarten, and now in fifth grade, had a score of Intermediate level on the most recent English language proficiency assessment (CELDT). In fact, his sub-scores for both reading and writing on the CELDT showed the Early Intermediate level, one level below Intermediate, providing further evidence of his struggles with literacy. Beneath the quiet surface of his somewhat shy, pensive appearance lay a thoughtful, reflective boy with faultless manners and a pleasant conversational style. The other students in the fifth grade focus group welcomed him and
interacted in ways that drew him out of his initial shyness. Amber was one of those students.

Amber was like a shadow, quiet and only noticed when she moved. A Latina of few words, she seemed to appear out of nowhere as if she had just materialized next to her friends. With her lanky, slender frame and long black hair, Amber often worked quietly on her Chrome book alongside two or three other female students from the focal group at a table in the rear of the classroom. Amber seldom spoke, and when she did, it was in the form of short phrases or single word answers. A girl of few words, Amber’s fifth grade report card described her as very helpful and willing to work with others, but also very shy. Her teacher wrote that Amber worked well in one-on-one situations, but had a hard time asking for help. Both of Amber’s parents were born in Mexico and listed the their preferred correspondence language as Spanish. Amber is considered at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner. She has been in U. S. schools since kindergarten and scored at the Intermediate level on the most recent CELDT exam. For both English language arts and math, her scores on the recent SBAC standardized testing read Standard Not Met. Amber, an extremely artistic and creative student, enjoyed drawing and being innovative, and showed considerable interest in producing the art projects for my study.

The Fourth Graders

The five fourth graders in the study, Celia, Tommy, Howard, Jack, and Kaili (all pseudonyms), did not meet the technical definition in Assembly Bill 2193 to be at risk of becoming LTEL because they were only in fourth grade, but I chose to include them in
the study as well because they were very close to meeting the criteria. They have all been in California schools since kindergarten and four out of five scored at the Intermediate level on the most recent CELDT; Kaili scored at the Early Intermediate level, which is one level below Intermediate, which makes her very likely to be at risk of becoming a LTEL when she moves to fifth grade next year.

Kaili was a friendly and well-mannered Latina with dark brown hair that was usually pulled back in a small ponytail. She was often quiet in class during whole group instruction, but spoke freely with peers in the focus group during small group activities. When I accessed her cumulative file in the school office for family background information, I read that both her parents were from Mexico and had less than a high school diploma, although she now lives with her mother only. Kaili self-identified as Mexican American. I also noted that Kaili has been in U.S. public schools consistently since kindergarten. She had attended Headstart for preschool and a transitional kindergarten class, a school classroom for children just under kindergarten age that aims to help them learn basic school skills before they start kindergarten. Her file also mentioned that she had received some sort of tutoring, but provided no further description. Her most recent score on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) was at the Early Intermediate level (level 2 of 5), the lowest score of all ten focal students, and she scored in the “Did Not Meet” range for English Language Arts and Math on the most recent Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) set of standardized tests. In the coming school year, Kaili will most likely meet the criteria to be
identified as “at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner” according to the state definition in AB 2193 (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2011-12).

Howard, a soft-spoken, heavy-set Latino boy with a brown hair and a quiet demeanor, sat at his desk one day as I pulled up a chair beside him to help him with the math problems in his workbook. While the teacher led the class through the instructions for each page, Howard stayed on the same page and fidgeted with his pencil. Other students began working, but Howard continued to play with his pencil. For a moment, I thought it was because he didn’t know what to do, but when I asked him if he was ready to get started, he replied that he was and immediately started working on the first problem and completed it correctly. Most of my interactions with Howard accurately reflected the comments I found written about him in his cumulative file. They can be summarized as:

Grade 1: Positive, happy student; progress in school is slow in all areas;

Grade 3: Still requires close supervision to complete his assignments;

Grade 4: Requires constant supervision and direct assistance with most of his class work.

The little family background information available in Howard’s cumulative file indicated that his father was born in Mexico and his mother in Guatemala. Howard self-identified as Mexican American. According to the information in the cumulative file, Howard should be wearing glasses, but I never saw him with a pair. Howard has been in U.S. public schools consistently since kindergarten. He was identified by the school as an English learner. His latest CELDT score shows Intermediate level overall with his lowest score occurring in the area of Speaking. If his English language proficiency level does
not increase in the coming school year, he will meet the criteria to be identified as “at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner” according to the state definition in AB 2193 (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2011-12). Howard told me that when he grows up, he wants to be a police officer.

Tommy was a stocky Latino boy with a charming smile and an outgoing personality. He had short brown hair and sparkly brown eyes that lit up his kind face. According to records in Tommy’s cumulative file, he lived with his mother only, who was not an immigrant to the U.S. The space for his father’s name on his birth certificate was left blank, although his father’s place of birth listed Mexico. Tommy self-identified as Mexican American. Tommy had attended a transitional kindergarten, or a program designed to help young learners with the transition from preschool to kindergarten. His cumulative file also mentioned counseling, but no details beyond that were provided. A recent entry by the teacher explained that Tommy’s mother worked three jobs and had to wake him up to move him to different locations for child care, causing him to be tired and moody on some days.

Throughout his educational history, teachers commented on Tommy’s difficulty being respectful and taking responsibility for his actions. His health inventory indicated that Tommy needed glasses to see up close, but I never saw Tommy wear them. Tommy has been enrolled in public school since kindergarten with consistent attendance. His most recent scores on SBAC standardized tests for English language arts and Math were Standard Not Met. His latest CELDT score shows Intermediate level three overall. However, he scored at the Beginning level for both Reading and Writing, scores that
were offset by an Advanced score in Listening and a score of Early Advanced in Speaking. If his overall English language proficiency level does not increase in the coming school year, he will meet the criteria to be identified as “at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner” according to the state definition in AB 2193 (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2011-12).

Celia was a slender, wiry girl of Mexican descent with straight brown hair, her skin a warm, nutty brown. She self-identified as half Mexican and half American. Her trademark nonchalant attitude consistently appeared in my observations of her during class. Her desk sat in the back corner of the classroom, farthest from the teacher. She often rocked back on two chair legs, causing her teacher to repeatedly remind her to keep all four chair legs on the floor. Celia always seemed to be aware of what others were doing in the classroom and paid less attention to her work than her teacher would have liked. According to the cumulative file in the school office, Celia’s parents were from Mexico, though she lived with only her mother, who had completed a high school education. Celia had attended Headstart for preschool and was enrolled in public schools since kindergarten. Her third grade teacher commented that Celia needed improvement in listening attentively, staying on task, and being responsible and respectful. Celia’s most recent score on SBAC standardized testing for English language arts and Math showed Standard Not Met. On the most recent CELDT assessment, Celia scored at the Intermediate level, making her likely to be “at risk for becoming a Long Term English Learner” during the next school year if her score does not increase.
Jack sported a surfer-like bowl haircut and laid back posture that often camouflaged his pronounced skepticism. During my classroom observations, I noticed that he occasionally volunteered answers in class, but almost always occupied himself with small items in his desk. He was good friends with one of the other focus students and spoke to him across the classroom when the teacher’s attention was elsewhere. I found it difficult to get him to take the art projects for the study seriously. Nevertheless, there were enough data to include him in the study. Jack’s mother hailed from Mexico and his father was from El Salvador. Jack lived with only his mother, who had some college experience. Jack attended Headstart as a preschooler and enrolled in public schools in kindergarten. In his cumulative file, I also read that his mother had identified him for gifted and talented education (GATE), but no other information regarding GATE existed in the file. There was also a brief reference to counseling with no further details. Jack’s educational history could be characterized by movement; he enrolled in a new school for both second and third grade and now attended Daybreak Academy. Jack’s score for the SBAC standardized tests for English language arts and Math read Standard Nearly Met, representing the highest scores among the fourth grade focal students. He scored at the Intermediate level on the latest CELDT exam. If Jack continues to improve his scores on standardized tests such as SBAC and language proficiency exams, he can avoid being considered a Long Term English Learner.

The Teachers

Three teachers participated in the study by allowing me to observe in their classrooms and partaking in individual interviews. Mrs. Batiste (pseudonym) taught five
of the focus students in her fourth grade classroom. She had seventeen years experience as a teacher and thirteen years as a traditional public school principal, mostly in the district in which Daybreak Academy was located. As such, she was the most experienced teacher in the study. Mrs. Batiste self-identified as a second language learner, and shared that her father spoke five languages and her mother spoke three. In addition to her professional career, aspects of her personal life also involved education. Mrs. Batiste had a son in high school who traveled with a robotics team, and her husband had a business related to science education.

The fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Lopez (pseudonym), went on leave shortly after my study began; therefore she was not available for interviews. However, I did observe her classroom briefly before she left. Ms. Park (pseudonym), a newly credentialed teacher who had completed her student teaching assignment at Daybreak Academy during the previous fall, stepped in for her as the long term substitute teacher. I approached Ms. Kim to inquire about her interest in participating in the study since five of the focus students were in her class, and she was familiar with the school from her previous experience there as a student teacher. She was happy to sign the assent form and showed interest in the study and its findings, although she repeatedly reminded me that she was a newly credentialed teacher and asked if that was OK. I assured her that it was and that my focus students would be the centerpiece of the investigation. I also thought her novice tenure as a teacher would be an interesting contrast to Mrs. Batiste with her many years of experience. I conducted most of my observations in fifth grade during Ms. Park’s time there and conducted an individual interview with her.
The last teacher, Mr. Chapman (pseudonym), taught a fifth and sixth grade combination class. There was only one English learner in his class. There was a Spanish-speaking sixth grader who met the criteria to be considered at risk of becoming a LTEL, but I was not able to get consent for him to be a participant in the study. However, I included Mr. Chapman in the study because he had significant experience teaching English learners. Mr. Chapman reported eight years of non-consecutive teaching experience. In his previous career, he worked for an accounting agency immediately after high school, but “saw the handwriting on the wall” when his position was about to become automated and went back to school for a teaching credential because he “wanted to do something more meaningful” in his life. It was his first year at Daybreak Academy; for the four previous years, he had “subbed and bounced around from place to place” after being laid off from another local public school. Mr. Chapman freely shared his philosophies of education and child rearing, as he had several school-age children.

**The School Principal**

When I first visited Daybreak Academy to meet with the principal and founder, Dr. Schmidt, I encountered a soft-spoken, petite woman with a slender frame who seemed to float through the school office in a long flowing dress. She had sparkling blue eyes and long, reddish-blonde hair, which she wore down in tight curls. Dr. Schmidt welcomed me to the school and led me to a small, windowless room with a round table near the teacher’s lounge. As I explained my study to investigate the resources English learners bring to school, and Dr. Schmidt voiced her enthusiasm for strength based approaches to education, it became clear that Daybreak Academy was a special place and
well suited to my research. Dr. Schmidt had extensive experience as a school site administrator in the local district. She came out of retirement to realize her dream of creating a learning community where children received a strength based education with abundant opportunities in the visual and performing arts, sports, and science. I later learned that Dr. Schmidt practiced yoga and ran each morning before coming to school. Her passion for life, for children, and for education was contagious, and had birthed a unique charter school, Daybreak Academy.

Data Collection Procedures

Observations

For initial data gathering, I observed in classrooms that held focus students and in other locations within the school, recording field notes with a smart pen on everyday school operations, activities, and assemblies such as the school wide Morning Meeting that took place outside on the black top each day for the first fifteen minutes of the beginning of the school day. The observations in classrooms took place for three to fours hours each day I was there during instructional time in grades four, five, and six, for an average of one to two days per week for a period of approximately four months. I took notes in a special notebook using a smart pen that worked in conjunction with an iPad app, which I later amended and converted to text. Observations were focused on peer interactions, teacher-student interactions, the physical classroom and school environment, and students’ language preferences for English and/or primary language use. Observation notes from visits to the school and classroom interactions provided initial information and
impressions about the school that, when added to the survey results, informed specific questions for the semi-structured interviews with focal students and teachers.

**Initial Surveys**

In order to create a variety of opportunities for data to emerge and to gather background information from the student as the basis for more specific interview questions, I constructed a brief survey in Google Forms for the focal students to complete using their Chrome books at school. The survey included general questions about their experiences and attitudes toward school as well as favorite subjects and preferences for use of first and second languages in school and at home. Survey questions took the form of scaled questions and open-ended questions addressing the following topics related to the central research questions for the study: identities shaped by school policies and structure, institutional discourse, and classroom interactions; funds of knowledge ELs bring to the school; identities shaped by peer school culture

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Survey Topic</th>
<th>Identities shaped by school discourse</th>
<th>Identities shaped by peer culture</th>
<th>Funds of Identity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward school</td>
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<td>Preferences for L1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preferences for L2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.1 Initial Survey Topics and Research Questions*

I constructed the survey questions in such a way as to provide multiple opportunities for data related to the research questions to emerge or overlap. These data informed my
ongoing observations and the questions for the semi-structured interviews with groups of focus students.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

In addition to observations, interviews offer qualitative researchers a rich source of evidence for case study research. The study featured semi-structured interviews because they offer qualitative researchers a rich source of evidence for case study research (Lichtman, 2013; Yin, 2013). This format allowed me to utilize a predetermined set of questions with the flexibility to ask for clarification or expansion on a new idea initiated by the participant. For example, when I asked Mrs. Batiste, the fourth grade teacher if she considered speaking a second language a strength, she mentioned that it opened doors. I was able to ask her to clarify and explain what she meant. She discussed how it helps students learn third and fourth languages and also talked about her own personal experiences as language learner.

These semi-structured interviews were designed to gather evidence from participants regarding the overall school context and perceptions of EL at the school as well as the nature of students’ lived experiences as English learners in school.

**Interviews with school personnel**

I conducted a semi-structured interview individually with each of three teachers of the focal students covering topics related to approaches to teaching EL students in the classroom, perceptions of EL students and their linguistic resources, and teachers’ opportunities for professional development related to teaching EL students. I inquired about topics such as how long the interviewee had served in her/his current role,
rewards and challenges of teaching English learners, and his/her idea of the greatest educational need of English learners (see Appendix B for a complete list of questions).

I also engaged in spontaneous, informal interviews with teachers and other school personnel when opportunities arose outside of instructional time such as before or after classes and in non-classroom spaces such as the halls and lunchroom in order to gain an overall picture of the context of the study. I also conducted two interviews with the school principal, one during the initial stage of the study, and one near the end of the data collection period as a follow up interview. Questions in the latter interview were influenced by the data that had been collected during the study. These activities represented a significant source data related to institutional discourse about EL and LTEL as well as institutional identities and social structures within the school.

**Interviews and art projects with focal students**

In order to gather data regarding focus students’ relationships with peers and teachers, I conducted both group and individual interviews with focal students. To complement the traditional ethnographical methods used in qualitative research, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) suggested two activities as a means to detect funds of identity. The teen-aged youth participating in the study first drew a self-portrait in response to a prompt to show who they were at that moment in their lives. Each participant’s explanation of his or her drawing was audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. The second was a “significant circle” in which participants summarized their most important objects, activities, people, institutions, and hobbies by writing them inside a circle so that the most important were closer to the center. Again, participants’ explanations were
audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. The researchers found these activities to be effective means for identifying participants’ funds of knowledge derived from family and peer relationships and membership in community organizations that contributed to their identities.

Based on the work of Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014), I employed two art-based activities aimed at examining cultural and linguistic resources students use to construct identities. Each focus student completed the two art projects based on prompts related to identity and described the artwork as I recorded the description in a notebook while using digital recording device when assent and consent had been given for audiotaping. Focal students were allowed to leave the classroom two or more students at a time over a period of two weeks to go to a table outside in order to complete the art projects and interviews. I provided a variety of art supplies, such as paints, colored pencils, crayons, and markers, for focal students and focal students were able to keep the materials they chose to use. I took photos of any artwork that focal students chose to take home. I later transcribed the audio files containing the focal each focus student’s description of their artwork for analysis by typing them into a computer document.

Self-portraits

Each of the ten focus students completed a self-portrait. I conducted an individual interview with each student in which I asked the student to explain the self-portrait. I audiotaped the explanation whenever parental consent for audiotaping had been given and then transcribed the interview to compare it with the images on the artwork. The self-portrait used the following prompt:
The second art-based activity was called a Significant Circle. I used the same procedure for significant circles. Each focus student wrote words about what was important to who their identity inside the significant circle and explained the words to me in an individual interview that was audiotaped and transcribed. Each focal student was asked to write the names of things that are important to them at this point in their lives inside the circle on the paper, with the more important words closer to the center of the circle. Focal students were given the option to draw their own circle on blank drawing paper or offered a pre-printed circle with the written prompt as shown in Appendix A. Again, I took notes on each participant’s explanation of the significant circle and audiotaped when assent and consent had been obtained. Audio was later transcribed for analysis. Aspects of the self-portrait and words on the significant circles were intended to provide data for analysis, such as how participants chose to represent themselves at school and at home and highlighting the words they used to describe what was important to them based on where the words appeared within the circle.

Based on preliminary analysis of data from art projects and individual interviews with each focus student, I conducted semi-structured small-group interviews by grade level with the focal students, informed by ongoing observations of the focal students in school during instructional time in the classroom. I conducted these interviews to gather more in-depth information on specific aspects of their lives within their families and home communities and how their experiences in school were influenced by them. Topics
included aspirations for the future, perceptions of their adult future, understanding of strategies to achieve adult success, definitions of success and failure, and perceptions of the value of schooling in achieving their expressed goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Identities shaped by school discourse</th>
<th>Identities shaped by peer culture</th>
<th>Funds of Identity</th>
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<td>Aspirations for the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies for future adult success</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definitions of success and failure</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the value of schooling</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Small Group Grade Level Interview Topics by Research Questions

The small group interviews provided data regarding each student’s perceptions about connections between home and school, relationships with family and close friends, and how he or she related to peers and teachers in the school context. The small group interviews also yielded data on real-time peer interactions, first and second language usage, and school peer culture. In addition to taking notes during small group interviews, whenever all focal students present in the group interview had given assent and consent for audio recording, I used a digital recording device and transcribed the interviews for analysis. These data were different from data collected through art projects and individual interviews because students were interacting with each other about questions posed to the group. I had provided the questions in written form so that students could read them as we talked, but I noticed that as soon as I handed them out, each student took out a pencil and began to write answers. This happened in both the fourth grade group interview and
the fifth grade group interview, so I collected the all papers as well in order to refer back to them as I transcribed and analyzed their answers. The handout with the questions for the small group interviews can be found in the appendix.

**Documents**

In addition to transcribed interviews and field notes, I collected and analyzed a number of digital and paper documents relevant to the research questions in order to provide context for the study and to corroborate or augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2013). Types of documents relevant to school context included school newsletters and handbooks, text and images from school-sponsored websites and online documents such as the School Accountability Report Card (SARC), school announcements, school fliers, calendars, handouts and power points from professional development trainings, two books used for professional development, and the principal’s newsletters to staff.

I also conducted an extensive examination of the cumulative file of each focus student. Documentation related to the academic and educational histories of each focus student included detailed longitudinal scores from the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and other standardized test scores, individual histories of program placement including preschool attendance, grade reports, work samples, family preferences for correspondence language, parent levels of education, and written teacher comments. Individual information of this kind was valuable for understanding the past and present schooling experiences of the focus students. In addition, each participant’s self-portrait and significant circle will count as a source of written data for analysis.
DATA ANALYSIS

I engaged in ongoing data analysis throughout the data collection process by creating field notes from observations that informed survey questions, and using survey results to further develop or hone interview questions. Erickson’s (Erickson, 1986) idea of analytic induction (moving from whole to part to find assertions and then deductively looking for evidence of specific arguments in the data) furnished a starting point for analysis. My analysis also featured cycles such as those found in a more generic approach in which data were analyzed and reanalyzed in cycles that employ attribute coding, descriptive coding and coding for patterns as appropriate (Creswell, 2009; Saldana, 2009). The issue of validity was addressed through criteria-based selection and through recursive data analysis that allowed for the examination of competing explanations and discrepant data (Maxwell, 1996), i.e. data were analyzed and reanalyzed throughout the study as new data were gathered.

After coding the data for references to broad categories such as family, school, peers, Spanish, and sports, I nested the categories into rather broad types of capital based on categories established by Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) such as Geographical, Cultural, Social. I modified Geographical to Geo-historical to account for the connection I saw in the data regarding students’ references to particular places and times that were important to them. Then I further refined my analysis using more specific types of capital as outlined by Yosso (2005) that were applicable: familial, linguistic, aspirational, and social (peer-related). I made the decision to apply Yosso’s (2005) categories of capital rather than those of Bourdieu (1986) because both Esteban-Guitart and Moll’s (2014)
work and Yosso’s (2005) work build on Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural and social
capital in a manner that provides more explanatory power for the type of data in my
study. In addition, I added a completely new category not included in either framework
that I called spiritual capital when references to spiritual matters emerged prominently in
the data. I cross-referenced sources (images from artwork, interviews, and observations)
to corroborate my findings. To code the students’ artwork, interview transcripts,
observation records, and school documents, I used a software program at Dedoose.com
created by a professor at University of California Los Angeles that allowed me to select a
portion of the jpg image on the computer and attach the same code tags to it that were
used to code the text from interview transcripts, observations, and pdf versions of school
documents. Using the features built into the online program, I created charts with
instances of code co-occurrence and other tools to sort and identify patterns in the coding
and search written and image excerpts for evidence. The next two chapters detail the
funds of identity I found in students’ artwork and other data sources. These chapters
include pictures students’ art projects, tables of detected funds of identity, and
explanations for my discovery and interpretation of data.
CHAPTER FOUR:
FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS’ CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR IDENTITY

Family is something a lot of people don’t have.
They help you grow up and cheer you on a lot.
The first thing is family, then friends, then whoever you want.
– Christa

Overview

If educators who work with students identified as English learners were to take into account students’ backgrounds and lived experiences in order to differentiate and design instruction according to who students say they are, teachers would find that these students’ identities reflect the abundant cultural resources in their lives. The English learners at Daybreak Academy (pseudonym) who could be considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners demonstrated rich funds of knowledge that they appropriated to mediate their identities in school (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2013).

Each of the ten focus students completed a self-portrait. I conducted an individual interview with each student in which I asked the student to explain the self-portrait. I took notes and audiotaped the explanation whenever parental consent for audiotaping had been given and then transcribed the interview to compare it with the images on the artwork. I used the same procedure for significant circles. Each focus student wrote words about what was important to their identity inside the significant circle and explained the words to me in an individual interview that was audiotaped and transcribed. I analyzed these data along with data from my observations, small group focus group interviews (one with fourth graders and one with fifth graders), teacher and principal interviews, and students’ cumulative files to create a profile of each student’s funds of identity.
As my analysis progressed, funds of identity related to family almost always co-occurred with references to a particular place and time where students experienced interactions with their family members. Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014) included a type of funds of identity they called Geographical Funds of Identity, but that alone could not capture the relationship between place and time that I found evident in the data, so I established a new category I named Geo-Historical funds of identity that incorporated dimensions of both time and place and utilized it in the analysis of each focal students’ artwork and accompanying interview.

I chose to present the five fifth grade students together in this chapter for several reasons. First, four out of the five students in fifth grade met the criteria set forth by the State of California to be considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners due to their Intermediate score on the English language proficiency test (CELDT), their score of Does Not Meet on standardized assessments, and being in fifth grade or above (CA AB2193, 2012). Additionally, they were all assigned to the same classroom in school, so I observed them together while taking field notes, and interviewed their teacher. The fifth grade classroom held about twenty-five desks arranged in uneven rows facing a large white board at the front of the room. Bookshelves framed the room on two sides, while large windows ran the length of the wall on the opposite side. Colorful bulletin boards covered sections of the walls with samples of student writing and math formulas. At the front of the room, a tiny chalkboard’s encouraging message written in white chalk read like a letter to students (original capitalization preserved):
Dear Students,
1. I believe in YOU
2. I trust in YOU.
3. YOU are listened to.
4. YOU are cared for.
5. You are important
6. You will succeed
   Love, Mrs. L

At the back table where I normally sat, I interviewed the fifth grade teacher while the students were at lunch one day. I also conducted a small group interview with the five focus students from the fifth grade class. Even though gender was not a focus of my study, the ratio of three girls and two boys in the fifth grade focus group offered a nice mix of male and female participants. I will begin with Christa’s funds of identity.

**Christa’s Funds of Identity**

**Christa’s Familial and Geo-historical Funds of Identity**

As I interacted with Christa, I encountered an endearing, well-spoken fifth grade Latina with dark brown shoulder-length hair and sparkling black eyes whose past teachers described her in the cumulative file as helpful and responsible, in charge of many classroom responsibilities, extremely polite, respectful and attentive toward others. Christa lived up to those accolades in my observations of her in the classroom. In fact, Christa was the only focus student to approach me to say thank you the week after she took home the art supplies she used in the self-portrait.
Christa possessed rich familial funds of identity from a variety of sources, as seen in Table 4.1. I found direct connections between Christa’s familial and geo-historical funds of identity. According to information in her cumulative file, Christa’s mother is from Mexico and her father is from Guatemala. During the small group interview with the fifth grade focus students, Christa self-identified as Mexican and American combined, which to her meant “born here, but half blood Mexican because of your family,” but in individual interviews about her significant circle and her self-portrait, she offered a three-fold identity to describe herself based on her immediate and extended family relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Familial</th>
<th>Geo-historical</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Aspirational</th>
<th>Social</th>
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<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Teacher interview</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1 Christa’s Funds of Identity*

Christa’s significant circle and self-portrait included words and symbols representing close family members both at home and in Mexico. In the center of Christa’s significant circle, Christa wrote “Family” in blue colored pencil, and a few words below that, the words “Mexico” and “brothers” appeared, also in blue pencil. Just below them, Christa wrote “Mom” and “dad” in green pencil.
During her verbal explanation of the word “Family” in her significant circle, Christa identified several members of her immediate and extended family that she counts as an important part of who she is and what is important to her. In the following excerpt from her interview, she specifically names her mother and father as important sources of personal support, both financial and emotional.

Excerpt 4.1: May 24, 2017
*Significant Circle Interview with Christa*

My mom and dad are really important for me. My mom, she, right now, she’s probably in college and my dad, right now he’s working. He’s important to me because he works a lot for me and for our family ‘cuz if it wasn't for him and my mom we wouldn’t be living in a roof…ah, we wouldn't have anything. My mom is important to me, too, because she’s the one that shows me usually everything ‘cuz I’m a girl…She shows me everything a girl needs to know.

Christa, with a grateful tone, assigns importance to her immediate family members who contribute to the resources necessary for the family’s survival. She attributes the family’s
ability to “be living in a roof” and to “have anything” to her father working a lot and to her mother going to college. In a tender moment, she also describes the emotional support she receives from her mother because her mother shows her “everything a girl needs to know.”

Beyond her immediate family, Christa emphasizes how important her extended family is to her, in spite of the geographical distance between them as seen in this excerpt about the word “Family” from the interview regarding her significant circle:

Excerpt 4.2: May 24, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Christa

Family is really important to me. My tíos and tías and everyone that’s in my family is important to me, even in Mexico…family has always been important to me.

Christa uses the qualifiers “really” and “has always been” to emphasize the high degree of importance she places on family. Christa’s ideas about family were not limited by geography; she reported that everyone in her family is important to her, even family in Mexico, referencing a specific group of people, uncles and aunts, in Spanish. Although the words “Family” and “Mexico” were a few words apart on Christa’s paper, they both appeared in blue colored pencil in the center, written in the largest size letters she used. Christa started at the top of the list and verbally explained each word in detail. When she got to the word “Mexico,” she revisited the importance of her extended family members who live there, added a direct reference to her grandfather (abuelo) and her aunts (tías) in Spanish. In the following exchange with me during the interview about her significant circle, Christa revealed a third descriptor to frame her identity, that of Guatemalteca.
Christa: Mexico’s important for me because mm…my abuelo and my uncles and tías and everybody lives there. Usually they live there. It’s important for me because my mom’s part of the family is Mexican, and I’m Mexican and American and Guatamalteca from my dad’s…

Jenna: Wait. Say that again slower?

Christa: Mexican, American, and Guatamalteca.

Jenna: And what?

Christa: Guatamalteca from Guatemala…My dad’s from Guatemala and my Mom’s from Mexico…It’s like soy Guatemala, Guatamalteca.

Christa drew two of the descriptors, Mexican and Guatamalteca, directly from her parents’ heritage and her family history, and also included American in her identity formula, demonstrating all three as important to her cultural identity. These geo-historical funds of identity serve to connect Christa’s past and present. Although she does not mention ever visiting her relatives in Guatemala, it is clear from her description of her three-fold identity that loved ones in Guatemala, Mexico and within her home in California are important to who she is, and that neither time nor space poses a limit to the funds of identity she accesses through her family.

Christa’s self-portrait presented further evidence of familial funds of identity tied to geo-historical accounts. It featured several symbolic and textual representations of cultural aspects of her identity that are important to her. The religious references scattered across the piece will be addressed in another chapter. On the left, the largest word on her self-portrait is Family, painted vertically in blue letters on a rectangular white
background. Next to the word Family on her self-portrait, Christa painted a small square shape with three equally sized vertical stripes: green, white, and red, colors of the Mexican flag.

![Figure 4.2 Christa’s Self-portrait](image)

In the transcript of her description, Christa explains that the image symbolizes Mexico:

Excerpt 4.4: May 11, 2017  
*Self-Portrait Interview with Christa*

Mexico is a little important for me. It reminds me of happy and sad stuff my mom had to go through. She had to go there because she didn’t have papers and I had to go visit her a lot.

In this excerpt, Christa assigns “a little” importance to Mexico, perhaps because it elicits both happy and sad memories for her. In a nostalgic tone, she recounted a time of separation from her mother when her mother had to go through some “sad stuff.” Christa mentions her travels to Mexico to “visit her mother a lot,” because her mother “had to go
there because she didn’t have papers.” Christa’s artwork and accompanying descriptions demonstrate how her family, close or faraway, plays a central role in the cultural resources that contribute to her identity. In this way, Christa shows how she has activated her funds of knowledge to “internalize family and community resources to make meaning and to describe [herself]” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2103p. 33). Her feelings about close family in faraway places can be summed up in these reflections:

Excerpt 4.5: May 17, 2017
*Significant Circle Interview with Christa*

Christa: Family is something a lot of people don't have. I feel really

<reflectively>…They help you grow up and cheer you on a lot.

The first thing is family, then friends, then whoever you want.

**Christa’s Linguistic Funds of Identity**

Christa displayed her linguistic funds of identity in her use of Spanish and English language resources in interactions with others and in her significant circle and interview. During classroom observations, I heard Christa occasionally use a word in Spanish to discuss situations from home or for clarification. For example, I listened as Christa and Delilah, another student in the study, worked on Chrome books at the back table one day (April 25, 2017, Field Notes). Delilah was conducting a Google search for photos to change the wallpaper on her computer while Christa started working on the online math assignment. Delilah commented that her mother said she couldn’t have a boyfriend until she is thirty-two years old. Christa replied in Spanish, although too quietly for me to hear what she said. (Even though Spanish was my minor in college many years ago, I estimate my own proficiency to be roughly at the intermediate level; I can understand most of
what is spoken, but my ability to respond orally is limited by my knowledge of Spanish vocabulary.) Later on in the same conversation, I noticed that when Christa needed clarification of what Delilah wrote about in the after school program, Delilah responded with a Spanish word to clarify:

Excerpt 4.6: April 25, 2017

Field Notes

Delilah: We just wrote about like topics for behind the scenes, like Frozen…a coconut in…

Christa: What?

Delilah: A coco…(Spanish for coconut).

Mrs. Park, their teacher, also reported hearing Spanish in the classroom during my interview with her:

Excerpt 4.7: May 11, 2017

Interview with Ms. Park, 5th grade teacher

Ms. Park: I hear them speaking Spanish amongst each other in the classroom, and with actually other instructional aides, too. They communicate in Spanish...I think it’s a good thing for them. I hear a lot of Spanish words just being thrown out, like casually, in our class, so I feel like it’s a good bonding thing for them as a whole, so, yeah.

Jenna: So when you say bonding, do you mean bonding with each other?

Ms. Park: Yeah, like they have that um, connection, I guess I could call it. Like I can see that it’s something that they really all pretty much value, and it’s comforting to them, I think.

In this excerpt, we see that Ms. Park heard students “speaking Spanish amongst each other in the classroom” with “a lot of Spanish words just being thrown out, like casually.”
By throwing out or speaking Spanish words, students used Spanish as “a good bonding thing for them” because it’s something they value; speaking Spanish provided social capital in the classroom in the form of a connection between language alike students that offered them comfort in the classroom.

Christa also displayed her linguistic funds of identity in her use of Spanish language resources in her significant circle art project and accompanying interview. In her explanation, Christa began at the top of the circle (see Figure 4.1) and discussed each word. Christa used Spanish to describe two words inside the circle, “family” and “Mexico.” Both words were written in blue colored pencil, and the explanations for both featured Spanish words for family members that were important to her identity, as shown in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 4.8: May 17, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Christa

Christa:
Family is really important to me. My tíos and tías and everyone that’s in my family is important to me, even in Mexico… Mexico’s important for me because…my abuelo and my uncles and tías and everybody lives there.

During her explanation of the word “family,” Christa used the words “tíos” and “tías,” which mean uncles and aunts in Spanish, to refer to specific relationships in her family that are important to her. She then qualified it by stating that everyone in her family is important to her “even in Mexico.” When she got to the word Mexico on her paper, she also used the Spanish words abuelo (Spanish for grandfather) and again used the word for aunts, “tías.” The remaining use of Spanish on her significant circle was a
reference to “Osita,” her puppy, which means “little bear” in Spanish. Each of Christa’s uses of her primary language resources as funds of identity focused on relationships at home in with family members in Mexico; there were no references to school, academics, or friends on her significant circle. Christa’s linguistic funds of identity clearly indicated the importance of her family relationships to who she as a Spanish speaker.

**Christa’s Aspirational Funds of Identity**

Although Esteban-Guitart and Moll’s (2013) model of funds of knowledge used as funds of identity did not specifically include aspirations, I was able to borrow from Yosso’s (2005) idea of aspirational capital, or aspirations developed within social and familial contexts that enable community members to remain hopeful about the future, to explore the funds of identity that influenced the aspirations English learners. Two main sources of information provided data on Christ’s aspirations, her significant circle and the small group grade five interview. On her significant circle (see Figure 4.1), Christa wrote the word gymnastics in pencil to the left of the center, where students were instructed to place items less important to them. In the accompanying interview, Christa explained:

**Excerpt 4.8: May 17, 2017**

*Significant Circle Interview with Christa*

Christa: Gymnastics is really important for me; I do gymnastics, and when I grow up I always wanted to be an Olympic gymnast? Gymnastics? I always wanted to do flips and round offs, handstands, cartwheels, everything I always used to see on the TV.

Christa’s aspirations to be an Olympic gymnast were influenced by media, specifically the programs she watched on TV, and her own involvement in the sport. During the small group interview, Christa answered questions about her future aspirations on paper (see
Small Group Interview Protocol in Appendix B) and verbally. When asked about the kind of job her family wants her to do and whether they talk about it, Christa replied, “My parents don't tell me any kind of stuff like that. My mom just says follow your dreams.” On her paper, she wrote that she would like to be a “nure or docter” (nurse or doctor) and that in ten years she thinks she will be in medical school. Christa cited the reason for getting good grades in school as “to go to a good school. If I do good, they might pay college for me.” Christa had mentioned during a classroom observation that her mother went to college. Having a parent in college posed a likely contribution to Christa’s awareness of college and what it entailed. Christa understood the way to get good grades as “learning and studying; paying attention.”

Although Christa expressed a past desire to be an Olympic gymnast on her significant circle, her aspirations to be a nurse or doctor eclipsed other aspirations. She understood that getting good grades in school could lead to the ambiguous “they” that might pay for her to attend college and expected to be medical school in the future. Christa’s funds of identity as a future medical professional supported her efforts to get good grades in school, which is done by “learning and paying attention.” Her mother’s status as a college student and the adage to “follow your dreams” opened a wide door for Christa to explore different options for her future.

**Delilah’s Funds of Identity**

Delilah, a tall, slender Latina with long, straight black hair and impressive multi-tasking skills, remaining well aware of the activities of others around her while she vacillated between class assignments and her own agenda. My observations of her in
class and her artwork with accompanying explanations revealed that Delilah’s funds of identity emanated mainly from familial and social domains, as shown in Table 4.2.

**Delilah’s Familial and Social Funds of Identity**

Delilah particularly spoke about her mother, both in classroom interactions and in her art projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Familial</th>
<th>Geo-historical</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Aspirational</th>
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*Table 4.2 Delilah’s Funds of Identity*

For example, in this brief exchange between Delilah and Christa while they were working on Chrome books at the back table, Delilah mentioned her mother twice.

**Excerpt 4.9: April 25, 2017**

*Field Notes*

Delilah is looking for pictures on Google for a new wallpaper; she is supposed to be doing Think Central Math lesson 9.4.

Delilah: My mom says I can’t have a boyfriend until I’m 32.

Christa: < replies in Spanish, but not loud enough for me to write down>

Delilah: My mom lets me use her computer because I’m using Rosetta Stone to learn different languages.

Jenna: What language are you learning?
Delilah: French.

Christa: I signed the paper, but they never gave me it.

Delilah speaks of ways her mother poses limits on some aspects of her behavior like having a boyfriend, but encourages others that contribute to her identity as a learner of multiple languages, such as using the computer to learn French. Delilah’s familial and social relationships appeared prominently in her self-portrait as well (Figure 4.3).

![Figure 4.3 Delilah’s Self-portrait](image)

Placed squarely in the middle of her self-portrait is a red heart with a plus sign in it. The letter M appears just above the heart and the letter D just below it. At first, I thought it might have stood for mom and dad, but in the accompanying interview, Delilah explained it differently.

Excerpt 4.8: May 4, 2017
Self-portrait Interview with Delilah

Jenna: So tell me about the shapes and colors that you have.
Delilah: The clouds are out and it’s the day. And the colors are my favorite colors.

Jenna: And M+D is?

Delilah: My mom and me.

Jenna: Mom and Dad?

Delilah: Mom and me.

Jenna: Mom and Delilah! And so what’s kind of the infinity sign over here? Is that what it is, the infinity sign?

Delilah: I think so. It’s family and friends.

Jenna: Family and friends.

Delilah: And the flower’s because my mom loves flowers.

Jenna: And what kind of flower is that?

Delilah: It's a palm.

Jenna: Palm?

Delilah: Palm something.

Jenna: And is there anything else you want to tell me about what’s on your picture? Like maybe some of your family and friends who would fit under that sign?

Delilah: Mom, Dad, brothers and sisters and my close friends.

Jenna: Are your close friends at home or at school or at both?

Delilah: Both.

On her self-portrait, Delilah devoted considerable space to symbols that represented her relationships with family and friends. To the left of the central heart with initials for her
and her mother, she painted her mother’s favorite flower, a palm flower. To the right of the heart, an infinity sign contained the first letter of the word for family (missing the letter m) and for friends. She reported friends both at home and at school, but did not write any particular names. Later in the interview, Delilah provided some examples of what she and her mother like to do together:

Excerpt 4.9: May 4, 2017
Self-portrait Interview with Delilah

Jenna: Yeah. And can you tell me about what’s in the heart?
Delilah: A plus sign.

Jenna: A plus sign? Are you close with your mom? Is that why you put your mom on there? What do you and your mom like to do together?

Delilah: We like calling my dad. We like going shopping. And we go on scary rides and we both go to the haunted maze in Hollywood.

In contrast to other focus students, who included symbols related to their extended family and Latino heritage, Delilah’s funds of identity relied on her present circumstances for self-definition, especially her relationships with friends and her mother’s strong influence in her life. Delilah’s significant circle exhibited similar themes of familial and social resources for identity (see Figure 4.4).
Delilah carefully followed the directions to place the most important things closer to the center of the significant circle and chose to write her explanation rather than provide an audiotaped description of her project. In the very center, she wrote Family in green marker, with the word “School” just above it and the word “Friends” directly below it, also both in green marker. Her written explanation reads, “These things are important to me because they help me in the future and now. They are important to me because they are part of my life.” In the outer part of the blue circle, Delilah chose a red marker to write “my dogs, money, taco bell, my teacher, subway” (the letter b was backwards). To explain, she wrote below them, “These things are somewhat important.” Although Delilah included “my teacher,” who she deemed “somewhat important,” in her circle, by placing the words near the edge of the circle, she separated her teacher from “school,” which appeared in the center of the circle with the word “friends” as more important. For Delilah, school offers a clear connection to her friends, demonstrating the
importance of social relationships in her funds of identity. To corroborate, in the transcript for her self-portrait discussed previously, Delilah told me that she has friends both at school and at home.

**Delilah’s Geo-historical Funds of Identity**

The remaining two words that Delilah felt warranted mentioning in her significant circle referred to the fast food restaurants Taco Bell and Subway. Delilah’s geographical funds of identity related to specific places where she ate meals, presumably with her family and/or friends. These references to experiences with family and friends in the present provided additional evidence that Delilah’s funds of identity were tied to her present social relationships with friends and family rather than her parents’ past in Mexico. Thus, her geo-historical funds of identity to describe herself reflected her orientation toward the present.

**Delilah’s Linguistic Funds of Identity**

Delilah’s multi-layered linguistic funds of identity appeared in two main sources: my observations and her self-portrait art and accompanying explanatory interview. My observations corroborated their teacher Ms. Park’s statements about Spanish being thrown out (meaning used) casually in class (see Excerpt 4.7). In the following conversation, Delilah shared that she was expanding her linguistic resources by learning French on the computer at home, while a few lines later, Delilah employed her linguistic resources in Spanish to clarify a concept for Christa (Excerpt 4.6 is revisited her in Excerpt 4.10).
Excerpt 4.10: April 25, 2017
*Field Notes*

Delilah: My mom lets me use her computer because I’m using Rosetta Stone to learn different languages.

Jenna: What language are you learning?

Delilah: French.

Christa: I signed the paper, but they never gave me it.

Christa: My mom doesn’t work; she just goes to college.

Delilah: K2, right? We don't have to pay for the school program?

<Discussing whether snacks are free.>

Delilah: We just wrote about like topics for behind the scenes, like Frozen…a coconut…

Christa: What?

Delilah: a coco…(Spanish for coconut).

I never heard Delilah speak in French, but her use of Spanish with other students to communicate in class demonstrated the depth of linguistic resources available to her.

During Delilah’s interview to explain her self-portrait, I asked her specifically about her language preferences at home.

Excerpt 4.11: May 4, 2017
*Self-portrait Interview with Delilah*

Jenna: So when you’re with your family do you speak mostly English or Spanish, or both?

Delilah: Spanish.
Jenna: All Spanish?

Delilah: Except for my brothers and sisters.

Jenna: Oh, what do they speak?

Delilah: English and Spanish.

Jenna: Both, so it sounds like the kids speak English and Spanish, both, but your mom and dad like Spanish. Do they think it’s cool that you can speak both?

Delilah: My mom says it could get me into a good job.

Jenna: To speak both English and Spanish?

Delilah: Yeah.

Jenna: Do you help your parents sometimes with English?

Delilah: Yeah.

Jenna: Yeah? Can you tell me about like one time that you helped them?

Delilah: Uh, when they were filling out forms to come to the school.

Jenna: So enrolling in school, filling out forms...Do they ask you to help a lot?

Delilah: Yeah, especially my brothers and my sister.

Jenna: Are they older than you?

Delilah: Yeah.

In this exchange, we see that Delilah speaks Spanish with her parents, but both Spanish and English with her siblings. Delilah shared a specific time when she helped her parents fill out forms for enrolling in school in English, functioning as a language broker for her family. Valdés (2002) discussed young interpreters as “members of immigrant families...
whose parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings call on them to broker the world that surrounds them” (p. 55). She noted that the act of interpretation “requires highly sophisticated, complex, and interrelated abilities that the literature on novice interpreters is only beginning to uncover” (p. 54). Delilah’s actions on behalf of her family may be an indicator of these abilities. Delilah noted that her older brother and sister were called upon more often to act in that role. Delilah’s ability and willingness to serve as a language broker for her family represented a practical and meaningful aspect of her linguistic funds of identity. Delilah also stated that her mother told her that speaking both Spanish and English could “get her into a good job,” connecting her linguistic resources to her options for the future. By encouraging Delilah to speak both Spanish and English and to learn a new language, French, Delilah’s family provided multiple opportunities for Delilah to develop her linguistic resources, which became a part of her identity as a language learner.

**Delilah’s Aspirational Funds of Identity**

According to the information related to her artwork and her responses during the small group interview, Delilah’s family greatly influenced her aspirational funds of identity. For example, in the previous excerpt from her self-portrait interview, Delilah’s family promoted the idea that linguistic resources provided more options for employment, connecting Delilah’s linguistic funds of identity to her aspirations for the future. On the bottom of her significant circle (Figure 4.4) Delilah wrote that her family helps her for the future as well as now. As she was writing about it, I asked Delilah about other ways that her family helped her for her future. She told me that they cheer her on at
sports such as soccer and as a cheerleader. When I asked her why she wrote the word *money* on her significant circle (Figure 4.4) near the inside edge, she explained that it gives us a place to live and food. Delilah was well aware of how money provided for basic needs such as housing and food. As part of the small group interview, Delilah reported that her family discussed future occupations with her such as lawyer and doctor, but that she would like to be in the army or work as a 911 operator, two things she might be doing ten years from now. Delilah equated success with being good at something, just as she considered her brother successful because he is in the army. Delilah’s aspirations rose above working at menial or low-paying jobs, as she made clear when she pointed out that it is important to get good grades in school “so you can not work in McDonald’s.” Delilah realized the connection between academics and future opportunities, but when asked if she wanted to attend college, she responded “to make my mom happy.” On one hand, she desired a better job than working at McDonald’s, but did not necessarily adopt her mother’s urgency to attend college as a part of her own choices for the future.

**Eddie, the Savage**

Eddie was a well-groomed, larger framed Latino boy with a persistent smile and personality to match his size. Eddie possessed rich and abundant funds of identity, characterized mainly by relationships with the people around him and his interests in the larger world context (see Table 4.3). In this way, Eddie established his place within his family, his peer group, and in the global community.
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*Table 4.3 Eddie’s Funds of Identity*

**Eddie’s Familial Funds of Identity**

Eddie’s familial funds of identity were clearly evident in both of his art projects. On his self-portrait, the word “family” appeared as the largest word on his paper, written in white paint at the bottom and interrupted only by a large ice cream cone (Figure 4.5).

In the accompanying interview, Eddie told me that he loved his family, but did not elaborate on the point. He also said that he loved ice cream so much.

*Figure 4.5 Eddie’s Self-portrait*
Eddie’s significant circle and interview produced much more detail about his feelings toward his family (see Figure 4.6). He drew the entire circle and its contents, including words and small images, in pencil. At the very bottom, Eddie wrote “my family” and drew two tiny figures holding hands labeled “Mom” and “Me.” According to the cumulative file, Eddie lived only one parent, his mother. Near the top of the circle on the left, the words “My mom” appeared, and to the right of center, he wrote “my sister.” The other word related to family on the paper was “nece,” which Eddie talked about as nephew.

![Figure 4.6 Eddie’s Significant Circle](image)

When Eddie began to explain his project, he started at the left side of the circle with a basic need, food. He paused to add the word “water” on the right, and then proceeded to talk about his family. As he spoke, I thought he might systematically explain each item in the circle from left to right, but I soon realized that Eddie carefully chose the order in which to talk about the words on his circle. He started with basic needs, the most important items for survival; then he skipped around to describe his family and other
words on the page, and then reiterated his need for food and water, as seen in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 4.12: May 24, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Eddie

Jenna: All right. Tell me about your circle Eddie.

Eddie: Food because it makes...oh, forgot...wait, wait, mmm...put it right there - water.

<Other students giggling at Eddie>

Eddie: Without water there would be no surviving. Ok. Here you go.

Jenna: It's going. <the audio recorder>

Eddie: Oh. My mom because she’s been working hard for me and being really nice to me. Soccer is very- is my life because when since I was four I play soccer, and, it’s been my favorite thing. My sister, I love her. Um, she’s my, my sister I ever had- I have. Um...water is my favorite thing because, because with- without water we would be dying. And food, too.

After stressing the importance of food and water because “without water, there would be no surviving,” Eddie expressed his gratefulness to his mother for “working hard” for me and “being really nice to me,” along with his love for his sister. Later in the interview, Eddie revisited his family as he moved to the bottom of the paper.

Excerpt 4.13: May 24, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Eddie

Eddie: My family is important to me, um...because they’ve done a lot of stuff for my mom and me to be good. And my sister, my nephew, who I forgot to put- nephew <writes “nece’ near the center of the circle>. My nephew, too, my nephew’s important to me because he’s my first nephew I had,
and once he came out of my sister’s stomach or whatever it’s called, I was happy about that—that he was my first nephew I’ve ever had.

Though no names of specific family members were mentioned, Eddie referred to family outside of his mother and sister, who have “done a lot of stuff for my mom and me to be good.” The benefits of familial capital that Eddie and his mother experienced allowed them to “be good.” Eddie then spoke with pride about how happy was when his first nephew was born. His role as uncle in his family proved to be an important his familial funds of identity.

**Eddie’s Social and Geo-historical Funds of Identity**

While Eddie regarded his family as very important to his identity, the bulk of his funds of identity lay clearly in social and linguistic domains (see Table 4.3). His fifth grade teacher had composed an apropos description of him in his cumulative file as having an extremely playful and entertaining personality. I certainly found this to be the case based on my observations and interactions with him. He defined himself with reference to how he wanted others to see him. One particularly illustrative example appeared on both his self-portrait and his significant circle. On both art projects, the word “savage” appeared. On the top right of his self-portrait in large red letters, Eddie painted the word “savage” (see Figure 4.5). In excerpt 4.14, Eddie espoused an identity called “savage” and provided its meaning.

**Excerpt 4.14: May 11, 2017**

*Self-portrait Interview with Eddie*

Eddie: I’m a savage, as you know.

Jenna: Tell me what that means.
Eddie: Mm...why did I put that...Savage is when you do crazy stuff. Like-
Jenna: Tell me-
Eddie: -not that crazy, but-
Jenna: Tell me one crazy thing you did.
Eddie: Uh...Like in class, I...erased the board...But I erased like one of the, only one letter though. Only one letter. And, um, that’s it.

Later in the same interview-
Jenna: So if you could say, like, in, in a couple words, like who you are right now, what would you say? How would you describe yourself?
Eddie: I’m cool...I’m awesome...I dunno.
Jenna: What makes you cool?
Eddie: I dunno.
Other student: Beatbox.
Jenna: How come you didn’t put beatbox on there?
Eddie: People think I’m cool. Am I cool?
Other student: No.
Eddie: Ok, then I’m not cool.
Jenna: Hey…
Other students: Yeah.
Jenna: How come you didn’t put beatbox on there? That’s pretty cool.
Eddie: Ok, I’ma put beatbox…
Jenna: [Laughs]
Students: [Laughing]

Jenna: Ok, anything else you want to tell me on your painting?

Eddie: I’m really funny! I make people laugh a lot, and I beatbox. Well I’m a

have a talent show today, and I’m beatbox.

Jenna: Can you do some beatbox for me?

Other students: Oh, yeah!

Eddie: [beatboxing]

Jenna: Oh my gosh that is so awesome, thank you!

Eddie’s social funds of identity are derived from how he wants to be recognized
in his peer group, specifically as cool, really funny, and savage. He called himself funny
because he makes people laugh. When I asked Eddie what made him cool, other students
interjected “beatbox.” According to Proctor, Bresch, Byrd, Nayak, and Narayana (2013),
beatboxing is “an artistic form of human sound production in which the vocal organs are
used to imitate percussion instruments” (p. 1043). When I petitioned Eddie for a
demonstration of his beatboxing skills, his peers encouraged him to do so, and he readily
agreed. I heard at least four distinct rhythms in Eddie’s impressive beatbox performance.
He talked excitedly about beatboxing in the talent show at school later that day. Eddie
used his sense of humor and his ability to beatbox to construct his social identity among
his schoolmates as a cool, funny student.

In the same conversation about his self-portrait, Eddie also referred to himself as
“a savage.” To Eddie, “savage” meant doing crazy things in school, such as sneakily
erasing a letter on the whiteboard. Eddie also included the word “savage” on the top of
his second art project, his significant circle (Figure 4.5). In the accompanying interview, he related the same classroom incident, but aggrandized his exploit to include erasing an entire word rather than just one letter from the whiteboard.

Excerpt 4.15: May 24, 2017

*Significant Circle Interview with Eddie*

Eddie: Savage - I do crazy stuff.

Jenna: So that’s how you describe yourself - savage. So what kind of crazy things do you – do savage people do?

Eddie: They do weird stuff. Um…Oh, yeah, yeah- in class, one time, I erased one of the words in the whiteboard.

Jenna: Oh.

Eddie: The teacher didn’t get me, oh yeah. Like multiple, like a whole word, I erased it, but then the teacher didn’t see me.

Jenna: But you didn’t get caught.

Eddie: No, and then other kids started doing it.

According to Eddie’s interview, savages do crazy, “weird stuff” in school without getting caught by the teacher. When other students copied his “savage” behavior of erasing a word from the whiteboard, he wore it as a badge of pride. Eddie’s social identity as the cool, funny kid who could beatbox and get away with tricks in the classroom made him the center of attention among his school peer group.

Eddie’s social funds of identity were not limited, however, by his geographical location, but extended into the world. He also defined himself by those he admired in the broader global community, for example, in sports and on the Internet. Data from both of
his art projects and their associated interviews illustrate this point. On his self-portrait and significant circle, Eddie wrote “Team 10 Ohio” and “Team 10 is life.” His explanation during the interview for his self-portrait follows.

Excerpt 4.15: May 11, 2017
*Self-portrait Interview with Eddie*

Eddie: Team 10 is a You Tuber. I like his YouTube videos a lot. His name is Jake Paul, but there’s 10 people in there, and Ohio is where he was born in and he has a brother named Logan Paul.

When I investigated Team 10 on YouTube, I found a list of popular daily video blogs posted by a group of white young adult males. Eddie claimed they “do really cool stuff” in the interview for his significant circle, but did not elaborate. Eddie’s reference to Ohio, a state thousands of miles from his home in California, appeared on his self-portrait and was the only reference to a state in the study. As a follower of the Team 10 You Tubers, Eddie subscribed to an online community of people he admired who act in ways he thought were cool.

Eddie’s geographical funds of identity also reached beyond the U.S. to other parts of the world through those he admired through his interest in soccer, as displayed by both pieces of artwork. Eddie drew a small soccer ball on his self-portrait (Figure 4.4), eclipsed by the giant ice cream cone, and his significant circle read “soccer is life” (Figure 4.5). In the interview for his significant circle, Eddie declared that “soccer is my life” because it has been his favorite thing since he started playing at age four. On the left of his circle, Eddie wrote about the number he wore on his soccer team (twenty-four),
and the bottom left of the circle he inscribed with “Messi Number 10.” When I asked him about it, he explained that it referred to an international soccer player.

Excerpt 4.16: May 24, 2017
*Significant Circle Interview with Eddie*

    Eddie: Messi, because it’s cool…

    Jenna: Wait, what is cool?

    Eddie: Messi.

    Jenna: Messi?

    Eddie: Number 10, yeah. Messi.

    Jenna: OK, tell me more about Messi.

    Eddie: Messi is a soccer player. He’s really good at soccer.

    Jenna: What team does he play for?

    Eddie: Messi plays for Barcelona. He’s number 10.

Eddie made a distinct delineation in his significant circle between what he considered things necessary for survival, such as food and water, and things that provide him with “life.” His concept of life transcended basic needs by referring to two aspects of his social and geo-historical funds of identity that offered him fulfillment: international sports heroes and YouTube personalities.

**Eddie’s Linguistic Funds of Identity**

I observed Eddie using Spanish only three times during the study, and each time it was a single word. Eddie had drawn a small outline of a cross at the center of his significant circle (Figure 4.5) and filled it in with pencil with the word “Jesus” printed just above it. In his explanation of the symbol he said, “What it is, is a cruz. A cruz
because I love God.” Cruz is the Spanish word for cross. Because of the name Jesus above it, it most likely represented the Christian cross. The second use of a Spanish word occurred in the same interview as Eddie talked about his soccer team. His team, Manchester United, lost a game against a team called America. Eddie pronounced the name of the other team in Spanish, written as América. The final use of Spanish took place during an observation I made of him with his peers at school, as recorded in my field notes from May 24, 2017. As the fifth grade students were mingling outside one sunny day during mid-morning recess, some of the focal group students, including Eddie, gathered at a table and began to chat. Pedro, one of the focal students, hung back as if he were unsure of whether to join them or not, when Eddie called out to him, “Pedro, come over here. You’re familia.” Familia is Spanish for family. It is possible that Eddie first learned those three words in Spanish from his family or at church since his mother is from Mexico, but Eddie clearly knew the word family in English, as he had written it on both art projects. In this incident, Eddie chose to activate his linguistic resources in Spanish as a way to draw Pedro into the group, using their identity as Spanish speakers as a bonding agent. Ms. Park, the fifth grade teacher, had also attested to hearing students use Spanish at school, describing it as a “good bonding thing for them” that they found comforting (Except 4.7). Although Eddie I did not observe Eddie activating his primary language resources very often, his linguistic funds of identity as a Spanish speaker played a role in how he showed care for Pedro and inclusion in the group as a Spanish-speaker.
Eddie’s Aspirational Funds of Identity

Most of Eddie’s aspirations for the future revolved around soccer. In the small group interview with fifth grade focus students, Eddie spoke about being a soccer player when he grew up, specifically mentioning playing soccer with Messi, the international soccer player, ten years from now. When I asked him if he knew what his family wanted him to do as an adult, he replied, “Whatever I want. Soccer player.” Eddie consistently reported that he considers his family as successful. When asked how people become successful, he replied that they were “born with it.” From Eddie’s perspective, his mom and his family are successful because he loves them and they work a lot. Eddie reported that he planned to go to college because he wants to study. He understood the importance of getting good grades in school “because you can go to a really good school like Oxford.” Eddie mentioned that he planned to go to college, but failed to articulate any connection between college and his future career in soccer. His awareness of “really good” schools like Oxford bore no relevance to his future career goals. This gap between his career aspirations and academics became evident in his significant circle interview as well.

Excerpt 4.17: May 24, 2017

*Significant Circle Interview with Eddie*

Eddie: Sometimes we, in our after school program, we play soccer. And I uh, every time I practice I get better and better every day. And um, I really like soccer, too.

Jenna: So is that part of school? Soccer is part of school?

Eddie: Oh, it’s not part of school, but sometimes we play and when we play I like
it a lot ‘cuz I like when I play soccer. Like, I don’t know. Like, um, I just like it.

Jenna: So would you say you’re a good soccer player?

Eddie: I don’t know. If you consider me as a soccer player.

Jenna: Yeah, what position do you play?

Eddie: I play forward, middle, and defense. I play all the positions except goalie.

So even though soccer is not part of school, Eddie likes to play it both at home and at school. Despite Eddie’s enthusiasm about playing the sport now and as a future career, he expressed present uncertainty about his own soccer skills. Eddie’s aspirational funds of identity relied on his personal interest in soccer, clouded by his ambivalent self-evaluation of his soccer skills and his nascent understanding of the importance of grades to college attendance.

**Pedro’s Funds of Identity**

As a researcher, I found it challenging to identify Pedro’s funds of identity due to his shyness and the sparse placement of words and symbols on his art projects. However, Pedro’s visible funds of identity originated from mainly family at home, but social and aspirational sources found at school (Table 4.5). Pedro made no reference to any places or locations outside of school that could be used to determine his geo-historical funds of identity. Nor did he ever use Spanish in any of the interactions I observed or on any of his art projects.
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*Table 4.4 Pedro's Funds of Identity*

**Pedro’s Familial and Aspirational Funds of Identity**

Pedro’s familial funds of identity featured his respective roles within his family as a responsible person, fixer and provider, concepts that correlated with his aspirations for the future. Foremost, Pedro defined himself by his relationships within his family. For example, in excerpt 4.18 from his self-portrait interview, Pedro introduced himself as an uncle because he has a niece now. The title of uncle, which he announced with pride and gravity, established his place within the family as someone with responsibility for another, his niece. His self-portrait contained a only one picture of a person- his niece (Figure 4.7). Her floating, bodiless head appears in the center of the paper with green hair and a brown face, all drawn with fine tipped markers. She wears a smile under two large black circles for eyes. To the right of his niece’s face, Pedro wrote the word “family,” also in green marker. A little below the word family, the words “being with family” appear in the same brown marker used on Pedro’s niece’s face.
Excerpt 4.18: May 11, 2017
*Self-portrait Interview with Pedro*

Pedro: I am a [sic] uncle now. I have a niece.

Jenna: Is this your niece? <points to the face on the paper>

Pedro: Yeah. And...my family is important because, like, because I almost get to see them every day. And I like being with my family.

Being with his family constitutes an important part of Pedro’s familial funds of identity. He has internalized his role as an uncle as part of his identity and place in the world. According to Yosso (2005), familial capital includes a commitment to the wellbeing of the family and community. As a responsible member of the family, Pedro also showed his commitment to the wellbeing of his family as fixer and provider. He expressed his concern about his father’s drinking and smoking in excerpt 4.19.
Pedro: My family is important to me because um, like, I never get to see them that much because my dad goes out drinking beer and smoking, and I don’t like that, and I’m trying to stop him.

Pedro spoke of his disdain for his father’s behavior and his attempts to stop his father from drinking and smoking. Because of the delicacy of the topic, I did not press Pedro for details. His self-imposed familial identity as a fixer corroborated the gravity with which he approached his roles within his family. Additionally, Pedro adopted a provider identity by recognizing the need to support his family financially. In the middle of his significant circle (Figure 4.8), Pedro wrote “Hockey.” Just above, he wrote the word “family,” followed by a colon and a list of four family members. Toward the bottom of the circle, the words water and food appear.

Figure 4.8 Pedro’s Significant Circle
In the interview for his significant circle, Pedro discussed his understanding of his family’s basic needs and his plans to satisfy them (see Excerpt 4.20).

Excerpt 4.20: May 24, 2017

*Significant Circle Interview with Pedro*

Pedro: And food is important because you won't live without, like, food because like in the old days like you have to hunt for food. You can’t just like, buy it off stores.

Jenna: Right. So what do you want to be when you grow up?

Pedro: First I’m gonna become an engineer. Then I’m gonna be a hockey player because they earn a bunch of money, and I want to help my family with the money.

Jenna: Do you need to get good grades to be an engineer, too?

Pedro: Yah.

Jenna: So is that something that's connected to school?

Pedro: Yah, yah I think.

Pedro understands the modern concept of exchanging currency to pay for necessities like food. He can “buy it off stores” in contrast to the “old days” when people had to “hunt for food.” He planned to be a hockey player after becoming an engineer because hockey players “earn a bunch of money.” Pedro’s responses in the fifth grade small group interview corroborated his aspirations to be an engineer first, and then a hockey player. He shared that his family wanted him to be an engineer, but in ten years, he expects to be playing hockey. Thus, his desire to help his family by providing for them financially
fueled his idea of becoming a hockey player, rather than a personal affinity for playing the sport, as we observed in Eddie’s desire to play soccer (Excerpt 4.1). Pedro’s familial funds of identity and sense of responsibility directly influenced his aspirations for the future.

**Pedro’s Social Funds of Identity**

Unveiling Pedro’s social funds of identity posed a significant challenge due to his presentation as a soft-spoken, rather shy student and the constraints he experienced at home. My limited observations of Pedro interacting with others reflected his tendency to work independently in class and keep to himself during recess. However, his social funds of identity were most apparent in his desire to inspire others (see Excerpt 4.21). In addition to the two art projects he completed for my study, Pedro was working on a poster for the school hockey team.

Excerpt 4.21: May 24, 2017

*Significant Circle Interview with Pedro*

Pedro: I play hockey, for because [sic] I want to inspire the school to play hockey, like, excellent.

Jenna: Like who?

Pedro: Like, um, the hockey team, like if they want to join and I was working on a like a poster for hockey….And school is important to me because I don't want school to end because it’s boring at my house, like we don't get to do nothing. Like, you just sit there watching TV, doing nothing. I don’t want to be like that. Like, I want to go out with my friends, but my mom doesn’t let me.

Pedro hoped to recruit new members of the hockey team from the student body at school through his poster. Pedro did not have the poster with him, nor did he attempt to show me
where it might have hung in the school, so I did not get to see it. Pedro’s motivation for
the poster stemmed from his desire to “inspire the school to play hockey, like, excellent.”
His social funds of identity focused outward, not toward specific individuals or friends,
but to the school as a whole. As a member of the hockey team that represented the
school, Pedro played because he wanted to inspire others to play “excellent.”

Pedro’s significant circle art project held another example of the broad focus of
his social funds of identity. Neither of Pedro’s pieces of artwork included names of any
individual friends, whether at school or at home. However, of the few words featured on
his significant circle, Pedro chose to write the word “school” next to water and food
(Figure 4.8.). Pedro explained in the circle interview (Excerpt 4.21) that he did not want
school to end because his mother does not allow him to go out with his friends, making it
boring to be at his house. He complained, “We don't get to do nothing. Like, you just sit
there watching TV, doing nothing. I don’t want to be like that.” Since his relationships
with friends in the neighborhood were constrained by his mother’s directive to stay home,
school offered the opportunity for Pedro to interact with peers, a more appealing activity
than watching TV. At school, Pedro encountered the interaction with others that he
claimed was denied him at home. Thus, Pedro’s social funds of identity found a surrogate
source in school to supplement his stunted home networks.

Amber’s Funds of Identity

Since Amber, a shy Latina of few words, rarely spoke in complete sentences, the
art projects in my study proved to be an effective means for identifying Amber’s funds of
identity (Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014). Her teacher fifth grade teacher described her
as an extremely artistic and creative student who enjoyed drawing and being innovative, Her artwork exploded with color in patterns and words. Amber’s funds of identity spread quite evenly across the given categories, making the optics of even her identity table seem visually well balanced and aesthetically pleasing (see Table 4.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Familial</th>
<th>Geo-historical</th>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Aspirational</th>
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Table 4.5 Amber's Funds of Identity

Amber’s Familial and Geo-historical Funds of Identity

Amber’s significant circle proved to be the most robust source of data for her funds of identity due to the amount of information she included. Amber carefully followed the instructions to place the more important items closer to the center of her significant circle (Figure 4.9) to show people, places, and things that she considered important to her. On the day that Amber completed her significant circle (May 11, 2017), a friend who had not given consent to be audiotaped accompanied her, so I took detailed notes as Amber explained the items in her circle. I gave each focus student the option to take her/his artwork home on day it was completed, and Amber chose to leave with it, so I snapped a photo of her work with my phone before she returned to class. Amber virtually filled her significant circle with words that represented those things to the point of almost overlapping. Nevertheless, when I asked Amber to explain her significant
In the center of the circle, I wrote Family/College. These things are most important to me because they are something in my heart.

Figure 4.9 Amber’s Significant Circle

Amber wrote only three particular items in green marker, each one close to the circle’s edge: “grandparents” on the bottom right, “my house” on the lower left, and “caring about others” toward the top left. Amber chose to explain to me only six of the many colorful words in her circle, “family” and “grandparents” being two of them. The others were “dog,” “sports,” “technology,” and “college.” In her explanation of why her
grandparents were important to her, she shared that her grandma and grandpa teach her how to bake. In addition, her grandpa shows her places where he has traveled. Amber did not provide details about the specific geographical places her grandfather showed her or other locations important to her. However, she chose to include “my house” in her circle; clearly she considers her home, where she interacts with her family, as important to her. Spending time with her grandparents and learning from them played an important role in Amber’s concept of herself. The skills and knowledge Amber accumulated from her family members at home contributed to her cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and to her familial funds of identity.

**Amber’s Linguistic and Social Funds of Identity**

Although Amber’s significant circle contained the word “school” and “old friends,” her self-portrait and interview revealed in more detail the sources of Amber’s social and linguistic funds of identity.

*Figure 4.10 Self-portrait by Amber*
Amber’s self-portrait burst with more than forty-five swatches of vibrant colors in acrylic paint covering more than half of her paper from the left side (Figure 4.10). To the right of the ocean of colors, Amber painted a dog’s collar in blue with tiny silver studs and license, a paw print, a treble clef in red, and the only word on the paper, “Dance.” In the top right corner, a lone yellow circle shone down on the other items on the paper. In the interview that accompanied the self-portrait, I asked Amber to tell me about the colors (Excerpt 4.22).

Excerpt 4.22: May 4, 2017
Self-portrait Interview with Amber

Jenna: And what are all the colors there for?
Amber: I guess for like friends, and stuff.
Jenna: So can you tell me more about why you chose those specific colors to stand for your friends?
Amber: So - my friends’ favorite colors.
Jenna: You have a lot of friends. <laughing> You have a lot of colors there. So are they mostly friends at school or at home, or at church?
Amber: Home, old school and this school.
Jenna: This school. Is this your first year at Daybreak?
Amber: No, second.
Jenna: Do you keep in touch with your old friends at your old school?
Amber: No, not really.
Jenna: And you have friends at home, too?
Amber: Mm-hmm.

Jenna: So how do your friends help you?

Amber: They make me feel better.

Jenna: Like what do they do that makes you feel better?

Amber: Make me laugh.

Amber devoted more than half of the space available in her art project to represent her friendships by painting her friends’ favorite colors. They included friends at home, friends at her current school, Daybreak Academy, and friends at her former school, even though she admitted she does not stay in touch with them. Amber defined herself by her friends, indicating them not by name, but by their favorite color. Amber’s fifth grade teacher recorded in the cumulative file that Amber was artistic and innovative. This proved to be the case in Amber’s unconventional use of colors to depict friends tied to her identity. Amber’s friends helped her by making her laugh, and she had harnessed her creative abilities to visually display them as central to her social funds of identity.

**Amber’s Aspirational Funds of Identity**

Inside her significant circle (Figure 4.9), “college” was one of the words Amber wrote in black fine-tipped marker directly above the word “Family.” One of only six words from the various words written there that Amber chose to discuss, she told me that college was important to her family and to her because she can get a job. Amber stated that they always mention it as very important. On the bottom of the paper, Amber explained in sentences that those things are important because they are someone or something in her heart. In the fifth grade small group interview, Amber reiterated her
family’s involvement in her aspirations for future career options by talking to her about different kinds of jobs, such as becoming a lawyer. Amber’s aspirational funds of identity as a future college student reflected her family’s consistent encouragement and the importance they placed on going to college. It was now something in her heart.
CHAPTER FIVE:
FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS’ CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR IDENTITY

The five fourth grade students in the study met the criteria set forth by the State of California to be considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners except for their grade level, which needed to be fifth grade to meet the State’s definition (CA AB2193, 2012). I made the choice to present these five students together in this chapter because they are all assigned to the same classroom in school. Therefore, I observed them together while taking field notes, interviewed their teacher, and conducted a small group interview with this lively mix of two girls and three boys. With a small row of windows on one side, the crowded fourth grade classroom packed in about thirty desks arranged in L-shaped rows with most facing a white board that signified the front of the room. A low bookshelf filled with a variety of literary and informational texts lined the wall opposite the windows. On a typical school day, Mrs. Batiste, a veteran teacher with almost thirty years in education as a teacher and school principal, moved in and out of rows, carefully monitoring students’ work while asking the class questions about the day’s math problems. A small breezeway at the entrance to the classroom offered the perfect space for me to interview Mrs. Batiste and meet with two or three focal students at a time for their art projects and interviews over the course of my study. Each of the focus students completed two art projects, a self-portrait and a significant circle, in which they drew and wrote words about people, places, and things that are important to who they are. Each art project was analyzed in conjunction with the transcribed explanation of the piece by its author. During the follow up small group interview with all five fourth graders, the class became very loud, so we decided to move our discussion outside under the umbrella of a
small round picnic table on the lunch patio. Using these multiple sources of data, I created a profile of each students’ funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2013). I will begin with Kaili.

**Kaili’s Funds of Identity**

**Kaili’s Familial and Geo-historical Funds of Identity**

Kaili, a Latina fourth grader who self-identified as Mexican American, had the lowest score on the most recent California English Language Development Test (CELDT). She scored at the Early Intermediate level (level 2 of 5), one level below the specified criterion for being identified as at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner. Therefore, she is very likely to be a LTEL student unless her language proficiency scores increase soon. Mrs. Batiste, Kaili’s teacher, during an interview, identified Kaili as her “lowest English learner” in terms of academic achievement. Kaili’s artwork and accompanying explanatory interviews revealed several sources of her funds of identity as shown in Table 5.1.

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*Table 5.1 Kaili’s Funds of Identity*
Kaili’s Familial and Geo-Historical Funds of Identity

When presented with the opportunity to choose materials and create a self-portrait, Kaili eagerly began choosing specific colors of tempura paint and fine-tipped colored markers with which to compose her self-portrait as if she already had an idea of exactly what she wanted to portray. A specific scene slowly unfolded with symbols and depictions of the people and experiences she deemed important to her identity. Kaili’s self-portrait (Figure 5.1) shows a sunny day with two small figures under a large red rectangular outline of a flag with the title “Mexico City” written inside it in pink marker with a serif font and heart shapes in place of the dots over each letter “i.” The figures are a man with a beard and young girl, hands in the air, standing over a bed of green grass with a soccer ball between them.

Figure 5.1 Self-portrait by Kaili
When I asked her to tell me about her portrait, Kaili related this story that illustrates the importance of family and memories linked to specific locations in place and time (geo-historical resources) as resources for her identity:

Excerpt 5.1: May 10, 2017
Self-Portrait Interview with Kaili

Kaili: My dad is in Mexico and then we used to play soccer when I was a little girl, probably like when I was three or five years old. And then I got a sun because it’s kind of shiny over there, and it doesn’t rain that much, and then I drew a flag of Mexico. I just have to paint it now.

As Kaili explained that her father is in Mexico, she relates a memory she has of playing soccer with him when she was younger. Both her parents were from Mexico, and according to the information in her cumulative file, she now lives with just her mother. Although Kaili did not express explicitly that she misses her father, it was clear from her choice of subject in her self-portrait that she indexes a meaningful personal experience of the past with a person who is now geographically distant to express a present sense of loss of a very important part of her life, but a part that remains important to her identity. For example, in her description, she tells us that her father is in Mexico, but employs phrases in past tense such as “used to,” and “when I was a little girl,” to describe interactions with him; then uses “over there” to express a sense of distance between her present location in the world and where she interacted with her father. By this we observe how Kaili chooses an experience she considers precious from her past to explain her present identity, thereby seamlessly connecting them. Toward the end of the interview, when I asked Kaili whether there was anything else she wanted to tell me about that’s
important to her, Kaili reiterated that her dad is important to her, and further explained that he moved to Mexico to care for her grandmother, who “got a accident going down the stairs.”

Figure 5.2 Kaili’s Significant Circle

Kaili’s significant circle, the second art project, reflected similar themes related to family and specific locations as important to her identity. Kaili’s significant circle contained a list of ten words written vertically in the center of the circle. She wrote each word in black marker and then proceeded to trace each word in crayon using different colors. Eight out of the ten words referred either directly to family (family, mom, dad) or to events and places associated with family experiences (tacos, Disneyland, Mexico). Kaili informed me during her description of her significant circle that she has visited family in Mexico. It is notable that the topmost word on the list of items important to her on Kaili’s significant circle is “Mexico,” but in the oral description of her circle, she
began reciting the words at the bottom first, which were “mom” and “dad” and read
Mexico last. I asked her to tell me about Mexico:

Excerpt 5.2: May 17, 2017
*Significant Circle Interview with Kaili*

Kaili: Mm…’cause it’s a beautiful place there and you can have fun.

Jenna: M-hm. Do you have relatives, family there? Who’s there?

Kaili: Um, Grandpa...Grandpa, Grandma, and more tíos and more aunts and my
nephews, um, and, a lot of stepsisters.

Jenna: Wow, you have nephews? Do you go there a lot?

Kaili: Hmm?

Jenna: No?

Kaili: Only like, probably like a couple times.

Although Kaili’s has only visited Mexico “probably only like a couple times,” she
included Mexico, which she called “a beautiful place,” in a nostalgic manner in both her
self-portrait and her significant circle in conjunction with specific family members, rather
than as a present or ongoing event. She listed some relatives she has there: Grandpa,
Grandma, aunts, nephews, and “a lot of stepsisters.” Kaili listed particular group of
family members she has visited in Mexico using Spanish. She referred to them as “more
tíos” or aunts and uncles, implying that some of her relatives are located closer to her
home, but her faraway uncles are just as important even though separated from her by
geography and time. For Kaili, Mexico and the extended family members in Mexico
whom she considers close to her as a part of her identity existed geographically and
temporally faraway.

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**Kaili’s Linguistic Funds of Identity**

As a fourth grader who has been in U.S. schools since Kindergarten, Kaili was expected to be beyond the Early Intermediate level. Kaili employed her linguistic resources mainly to refer to specific relationships within her family that are important to her identity. However, Kaili’s written responses, marked by misapplications of conventions and unorthodox grammar in English, display errors typical for English learners at the Early Intermediate level. In the interview I conducted with Kaili’s teacher, Mrs. Batiste explained her perspective on second children with home languages other than English and on Kaili in particular (Excerpt 5.3).

Excerpt 5.3: May 3, 2017
*Interview with Mrs. Batiste*

Jenna: Would you consider a student’s home language other than English to be one of his or her strengths, and why or why not?

Mrs. Batiste: Yeah, I would. Uh, because if they have another language, it is a strength. It leads to open doors that otherwise wouldn’t and also you…(laughing).

Jenna: So, can you tell me a little more about like, the opening doors, and do you think it helps them in school in some ways?

Mrs. Batiste: In some ways, yes. They have to be fluent in that language, though or at least able to go back and forth between the two...But I think it strengthens kids, especially with kinds of language because sometimes grammar’s better and vocabulary’s better. They pick those things up faster because they have a dual language, and also kids with dual languages will learn another language easier, quicker.

Jenna: Like a third language?
Mrs. Batiste: Yeah, a third language, fourth language, fifth language…

Mrs. Batiste: With Kaili, it’s …because she’s the one here that truly proves, I believe, that…is…her ability to understand concepts is definitely related to her EL status because she is one that she doesn’t hear anything but Spanish at home, so when she reads at school, she’s not hearing English, so with her I like to write things down, that works for her.

Mrs. Batiste viewed a student’s home language other than English as a strength because it “leads to open doors that otherwise wouldn’t,” but she believed that in order for a student’s home language to help them in school, students need a certain level of fluency in their first language, or the ability to “go back and forth between the two.” Home languages, according to Mrs. Batiste, were most helpful with different “kinds of language” such as grammar and vocabulary. She claimed that students with dual languages learn additional languages faster because they have a “dual language.”

Unfortunately, this was not the case for Kaili as seen in the following analysis of grammar and spelling errors in her written samples, perhaps because Kaili’s fluency in Spanish was not at the level that Mrs. Batiste claimed was needed to be helpful in school.

In a jumbled mix of English and Spanish, Kaili applied her current knowledge of conventions in English to Spanish words and Spanish conventions to English. For example, Kaili’s significant circle featured two words in Spanish: “tio’s” and “Dois.” In each of these Spanish words, Kaili made an error in spelling. Tíos can refer to male uncles or a collection of aunts and uncles. In this case, Kaili most likely meant both her aunts and her uncles as part of her extended family. Dios is the Spanish word for God. Even though she misspelled Dios as “Dois” on her circle, she pronounced it correctly in Spanish as Dios. Kaili also added an apostrophe to the word tíos, but left out the accent
The apostrophe almost never occurs in Spanish, but in English signifies possession. The plural word tíos in Spanish, therefore, does not require an apostrophe, but the letter /i/ in tíos does require an accent mark. It is possible that Kaili wrote the apostrophe instead of the accent mark because she knew the word required some kind of mark, but did not know what it was or where to put it.

During the fourth grade small group interview, Kaili self-identified as Mexican American and wrote on her paper, “I have Mexican and American.” Kaili borrowed the grammatical structure from Spanish by using “I have” instead of “I am” to describe herself. In Spanish, a comparable use of “have” for “am” in English would be “Yo tengo sed” or I have thirst (I am thirsty). Then she added an accent mark above the letter /e/ in American, as if it were the Spanish word for America (América). Kaili’s writing reflected her identity as a child straddling two worlds, one in English, the other in Spanish.

For Mrs. Batiste, Kaili’s performance “proves” that an English learner’s ability to understand academic concepts is related to “EL status.” Interestingly, Mrs. Batiste referred to Kaili’s status as an identified English learner and not to Kaili’s English language proficiency level. Mrs. Batiste felt that because Kaili “doesn’t hear anything but Spanish at home,” this prevented her from hearing English when she read at school. However, I contend that Kaili’s written responses in her significant circle and small group interview reflected her given language proficiency level and her identity as an emergent bilingual, a term for English learners appearing in the more recent literature (García, 2008). García defined emergent bilinguals as children who become bilingual
through school and through acquiring English, with the ability to continue to function in their home language as well as in English (2008, p. 6). Zentella (1997) made similar observations in her study of bilingual children in a close-knit Puerto Rican community in New York that she called *el bloque*. She found that code switching, or changing the language used while speaking, occurred among the children in her study an average of once every three minutes, i.e., their bilingual repertoire included multiple codes representing overlapping racial and cultural identities. The blending of English and Spanish conventions and grammar in Kaili’s artwork and written responses demonstrated her own attempts to apply her existing linguistic resources in ways that reflected her identity as a bilingual student.

While Kaili’s errors proved to be a cogent indicator of the state of her present language development skills, Kaili was well aware of her own limited literacy skills in Spanish, as she admitted in Excerpt 5.3.

**Excerpt 5.4: May 17, 2017**

*Significant Circle Interview with Kaili*

Jenna: When you go there [Mexico] do you speak Spanish?

Kaili: Yeah.

Jenna: No English? Are you good at speaking Spanish?

Kaili: Kind of.

Jenna: Kind of?

Kaili: I don’t know how to read it, but I know how to speak it.

Jenna: You know how to read it, you said?

Kaili: No, I don’t know. I, well, I do know how to read it, but I don’t know
Kaili’s self-evaluation as being “kind of” good at Spanish stemmed from her realization that she felt more comfortable speaking it, but had little confidence in her ability to write in Spanish. Her linguistic repertoire could be characterized by a rudimentary understanding of rules of grammar and conventions from both languages, sometimes mixed together. In Kaili’s own words, “I have Mexican and American.” Even after several years of public school instruction in English, Kaili’s literacy skills languished in a kind of linguistic limbo, causing her to be dangerously close to becoming a Long Term English Learner.

Kaili’s Aspirational Funds of Identity

For the fourth grade small group interview with all five focal students, I provided a half sheet of paper with a list of questions for each student to read while we talked about them (Appendix A). To my surprise, the students immediately took out pencils and began writing the answers rather than just discussing them. I started from the first question and read each one aloud, giving students time to talk to me and to each other about their answers while taking notes. I did not audiotape because not all the focus students had given assent to be recorded. Kaili barely spoke at all during the discussion, but listened to her peers while intently writing her answers to the questions on the paper. Kaili’s aspirations for career revolved around becoming a veterinarian. She wrote that her family talks to her about this vocation, but gave no further details; neither did she draw any information that would reveal her aspirational funds of identity on either art project.
When asked about college, Kaili wrote that she planned to go, not because it would allow her to become a veterinarian, but because “it helps my [sic] get smart. Kaili’s understanding of the requirements to become a veterinarian fell short of her career aspirations. In addition, Kaili believed that getting good grades in school is important “because you get a good job.” Kaili did not provide details on what kind of job would be a “good job,” but recognized, at least on the surface, the relationship between doing well in school and gainful employment. Kaili named her mother as someone who is successful “because she works hard,” equating success with working hard. An unsuccessful person, according to Kaili, is someone who lives in the streets. Ten years from now, Kaili thought she would be taking care of her mother. She didn’t mention a career as a veterinarian, but focused on her commitment to the well being of her family.

Kaili’s Social Funds of Identity

I found it very difficult to locate Kaili’s social funds of identity apart from relationships with her family. She often kept to herself in class, and even in the small group setting among other focus students, she remained very quiet and interjected only occasionally with a few words or a short phrase. The word “school” appeared directly above “dad” and “mom” in the vertical list of words in the center of her significant circle (Figure 5.2). When I asked Kaili to explain her circle, she merely recited the words starting from the bottom and read through them quickly without commenting on school. Neither did she include the names of any specific friends in her circle. The only two figures she drew on her self-portrait were her father and herself, another reference to her family rather than other social relationships. It was unclear whether Kaili’s social
networks were being affected by her lagging language proficiency or a possible lack of confidence in her language skills, but Mrs. Batiste commented on Kaili’s need for peers who were near the same language level as her greatest educational need in Excerpt 5.5.

Excerpt 5.5: May 3, 2017
*Interview with Mrs. Batiste*

Jenna: What do you say is the greatest educational need of English learners specifically in a charter school?

Mrs. Batiste: Groupings. With someone like Kaili, who is my lowest English learner, I have no one to group her with, say, to do an EL lesson. That makes it harder.

Kaili, as the only English learner at the Early Intermediate level in the class, was furthest from grade level standards in English, and she faced a considerable challenge to reach English proficiency, a journey that she seemed to travel alone in many ways.

**Howard’s Funds of Identity**

In my observations and interactions with Howard, he presented himself as a very quiet, contemplative boy. I never saw him volunteer an answer in class or initiate an interaction with a classmate, even to ask about schoolwork. He seemed to be in his own world there at his desk on the end of the row. To my surprise, Howard’s funds of identity suggested that he was very people-oriented, though not verbally expressive. His funds of identity were concentrated in two main areas related to people: familial and social (see Figure 5.2). His latest CELDT score showed Intermediate level overall with his lowest score occurring in the area of Speaking. If his overall English language proficiency level
does not increase in the coming school year, he will meet the criteria to be identified as “at risk of becoming a Long Term English Learner” according to the state definition in AB 2193 (Assem. Bill CA 2193, 2011-12).

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*Table 5.2 Howard’s Funds of Identity*

**Howard’s Familial and Geo-historical Funds of Identity**

The visual components in Howard’s art projects most clearly exposed his familial and geo-historical funds of identity. His self-portrait depicted a peaceful scene from his memories (Figure 5.3). He completely filled the paper for his self-portrait with a kaleidoscope of colorful images. In the middle of the picture, Howard painted the outline of a house with two windows and a door under a rainbow in a sunny sky. To the right of the house, a tall tree accompanied a splash of red representing laundry hanging outside. Opposite the tree on the left of the house, a figure painted in blue stood next to a soccer ball. Three connected circles in the shape of a Mickey-Mouse head floated above the figure playing soccer. When I asked Howard what they were, he explained that it as a fidget spinner, a small toy that students hold and spin to help them focus.

Because Howard was a young man of very few words, during the interviews to explain his art projects, I prompted him each time to tell me about the objects and words
on his self-portrait and significant circle. Even then, he hesitated and answered with mostly one-word responses or not at all. The excerpt from his self-portrait interview demonstrates his reluctant, but informative explanation.

Excerpt 5.6: May 17, 2017
Self-Portrait Interview with Howard

Jenna: OK. Howard can tell me about your picture? What’s in your picture?
Howard: Um, my house. Outside is the laundry
Jenna: What are these colors over here?
Howard: That’s a rainbow.
Jenna: Oh a rainbow. Nice. And tell me what else to you have?
Howard: It’s spring break and all the grass is green and the trees are always, like always…
Jenna: Anything else you want to tell me about your picture?
Howard: Watching TV.
Jenna: Watching TV? OK.
Howard: And I think there’s over here, and my brother’s over here in this room.
Jenna: And they’re in the room with the window?
Howard: My sister’s on the phone and my little brother is…
Jenna: Your sister’s on the phone and your little brother is what?
Howard: Sleeping.
Jenna: Sleeping? Oh because he’s a baby, right?
Howard: M-hmm…
Jenna: Who’s in the house?
Howard: My auntie and my grandma.

Jenna: Your grandma’s there, too?

Howard: And my uncle and my aunt.

Jenna: Your uncle and who?

Howard: My aunts.

Jenna: Your uncle and your aunts are all in the house?

Howard: It’s because we were having a party.

Jenna: Was it somebody’s birthday?

Howard: We just decided to have a party.

Figure 5.3 Self-Portrait by Howard
To express his identity, Howard chose to paint a meaningful location, his house, on a serene day during spring break in which his family members were present. Howard nostalgically portrayed the events that occurred at his home on that particular day because they held importance to him as part of his geo-historical funds of identity.

Howard also mentioned a number of family members as important to him. On the day in his portrait, his sister talked on the phone while his baby brother slept inside a room with one of the windows. Howard also included his grandma, and his uncle and some aunts. I thought it interesting that Howard painted himself alone outside playing with a soccer ball while everyone else remained inside the house. Howard painted an image of himself as a quiet boy who seemed to prefer solitude to the party activities happening inside or watching TV with others. This snapshot into Howard’s life revealed his identity as part of a family, yet somehow alone at the same time.

Howard listed a number of words down the center of his significant circle, first in pencil, then outlined in red crayon (Figure 5.4). The instructions directed him to write the more important things in the center of the circle. Written squarely in the center of Howard’s significant circle he printed two words: Jeff and family. When I asked Howard to explain his significant circle, he quickly read through the words from top to bottom (Excerpt 5.7). Again, I had to prompt him for any further information. I thought that Jeff might be Howard’s brother because his name appeared in the center with family, but to my surprise, Jeff was Howard’s pet bird.

Excerpt 5.7: May 17, 2017

Significant Circle Interview with Howard

Howard: Church, soccer, Obama, tacos, Jeff, family, school, and Edward.
Jenna: Why did you choose those things to go in there?
Howard: Which ones?
Jenna: Like, why did you put Edward? Who’s Edward?
Howard: Edward’s uh…
Another student: His friend
Jenna: Is he in your class?
Howard: Yeah.
Jenna: And then…who is Jeff? Tell me about Jeff.
Howard: My pet.
Jenna: And what kind of animal is he?
Howard: A bird.
Jenna: What kind of bird?
Howard: Uh…
Jenna: Like a parrot, or…?
Howard: Just like, a regular bird.
Jenna: And then, tell me about Obama, why you put Obama on there.
Howard: He was the best president.
Jenna: He was the best president?
Jenna: And then, anything else you want to tell me?
Howard: Mm.….not much.

Aside from his pet bird, Howard did not discuss his family; however, several words provided clues to Howard’s geo-historical funds of identity. He included school and
church as places he considered important, although they appeared close to edges of the circle as relatively less important than family and Jeff. Due to Howard’s quiet nature, he did not volunteer information; I allowed the interview to end because I felt that prodding him further might cause him to shut down and lose interest in the study.

![Howard's Significant Circle](image)

**Figure 5.4 Howard’s Significant Circle**

**Howard’s Linguistic Resources**

I never heard Howard speak in Spanish; in fact he hardly spoke at all, and when he did, his responses consisted of mainly one-word answers to a direct question. His reluctance to speak may help explain why he scored lowest on the Speaking portion of the annual English language proficiency exam (CELDT). However, in the interview with his teacher, Mrs. Batiste shared two instances in which Howard exhibited a very different side of his personality than the laid back persona he offered in my observations (Excerpt 5.8). When I asked her to explain her perspective on the use of visual and performing arts
activities in relation to students’ strengths, she began discussing a play her students performed and then quickly digressed to a particular presentation by Howard.

Excerpt 5.8: May 3, 2017

*Interview with Mrs. Batiste*

Mrs. Batiste: Howard, because he is an EL student, he is very – flat. They had a science experiment to do…They had to do the scientific method. They had to do a research project, and then they had to present. They had to collect data, analyze the data, you know, the whole nine yards. They had eight weeks to do it. We went over it, sample projects. When he came in to present, he was another person. He had a big smile on his face; he was in front of the room; he had his report, he was showing the pictures. I mean- incredible. He was just amazing. He learned so much….

Later in the interview:

Mrs. Batiste: When we did the inquiry, I took them outside and we walked around, and I just had them write down anything- I wonder why the tree trunk is brown…I wonder why. And they found all kinds of different things that I didn't even notice and then we come back, and we put them in groups. He loved that because then what happens is that each group had to research using the computer or using the Chrome book, to find out why, you know, why ants are there ants over there and not there, and whatever is was they had to research and find out why. And then they presented in their group and, they did Google slides and presented.

Jenna: Great.

Mrs. Batiste: So they like that. So they like that kind of learning. And he likes that; he did well.

At first, Mrs. Batiste referred to Howard as “flat” because of his classification as an EL student. In fact, I wondered if it could be the other way around. In my experiences with Howard, he had no difficulties with English grammar or vocabulary, which would be typical of an English learner. As I spoke with Howard and observed no errors in grammar or vocabulary, it seemed to me that he declined to speak not because of his EL status, but
because of his own choices. I believe that what Mrs. Batiste termed Howard’s “flat” affect reflected his easygoing, contemplative nature. Mrs. Batiste continued to tell a story about a time when Howard was he was “another person.” Students worked for eight weeks on a science project by collecting and analyzing data to report it to the class. Mrs. Batiste reported that Howard “had a big smile on his face. He was in front of the room. He had his report; he was showing the pictures. I mean- incredible. He was just amazing,” exuding an enthusiasm that mirrored Howard’s own. Howard’s interest in his science topic motivated him to his linguistic resources in order to communicate his ideas in front of the class.

In the second portion of Excerpt 5.8, Mrs. Batiste relayed a story about another presentation Howard made as part of a group inquiry activity. She told me Howard “loved that because then what happens is that each group had to research using the computer or using the Chrome book. And then they presented in their group…And he likes that; he did well.” Again, Howard engaged with the oral language activity when it involved presenting science information he had researched. So although Howard’s art projects did not contain much information about ways he used his linguistic resources as funds of identity, his teacher observed that under certain circumstances Howard could successfully activate his language resources to communicate about topics that interested him. Thus, his linguistic funds of identity were not fixed, but static; held in reserve for when Howard felt conditions were right.
Howard’s Aspirational Funds of Identity

Howard’s responses to the questions in the fourth grade small group interview about his aspirations indicated a degree of vacillation about his options for the future. On the paper with the questions, Howard wrote that he wished to be a police officer, but his family wanted him to be a doctor. I recorded in my notes overhearing him say that his family gave him choices, but he listed only doctor on his paper. In another example, Howard named his mother as someone who is successful “because she was in college,” but also wrote that he did not plan to go to college because he wants to stay with his family. Howard’s reason to strive for good grades in school focused on his present school experience; he stated a purely instrumental desire “to go to the next grade.” At this point in his life, Howard’s aspirational funds of identity, like his linguistic resources, were pliable. However, if his score on the English language proficiency assessment does not improve by the next school year, he could be classified as a student at risk of becoming a Long Term English learner, further jeopardizing his academic options for the future.

Howard’s Social Funds of Identity

Howard’s social funds of identity outside of his familial relationship offered quite a challenge to locate due to his quiet demeanor. I examined his art projects and my observations of him along what his teacher said about him in an interview to assist this endeavor. While he made no mention of anyone outside of family members in the interview for his self-portrait, his significant circle (Figure 5.4) printed the words “school” and “edward” very close to each other at the bottom edge of the circle. When I
asked him directly who Edward was, another student who had been eavesdropping piped up “his friend” (see Excerpt 5.7). Howard clarified that Edward was someone in his class at school. Edward’s name was the only name of a friend in or out of school that appeared in Howard’s circle. Mrs. Batiste commented on Howard’s interactional preferences in class in Excerpt 5.9.

Excerpt 5.9: May 3, 2017

*Interview with Mrs. Batiste*

Jenna: …So more student-directed, self-directed.

Mrs. Batiste: Right, but he does not work well with a group. He kind of, maybe one other student, but he, I don’t know what it is with him. He, um, I know, he doesn’t seem real happy all the time.

Jenna: Does he kind of withdraw if it’s a big group?

Mrs. Batiste: M-hmm. And (other) kids, too. He can be mean.

Jenna: But he seems to do well with a partner?

Mrs. Batiste: Yeah. Yeah.

Mrs. Batiste observed that Howard “does not work well in a group” but performed more successfully with a partner. Because “he can be mean,” and “doesn’t seem real happy all the time,” Mrs. Batiste noticed other students withdrawing from Howard. I did not observe Howard working with a partner or with Edward, but according to his significant circle and Mrs. Batiste’s testimony, Howard’s social carefully guarded his social funds of identity at school by limiting them to one classmate with whom he felt comfortable. Interestingly, the only other name that appeared in addition to Edward (and his bird, Jeff) was that of President Obama. Even though it was doubtful for Howard to know the
former president personally, Howard felt it was important to include Obama on his
significant circle because “he was the best president.” Howard’s political affiliation as
fan of President Obama also contributed to his social funds of identity if in a small way.

**Tommy’s Funds of Identity**

Tommy was the most outgoing of the fourth grade focal students. He could often
be found talking during class to a peer or to calling out to his teacher, Mrs. Batiste. To
discover his funds of identity, I analyzed his two art projects with interviews, my
observations, an interview with his teacher, and the fourth grade small group interview.

Table 5.3 shows the distribution of what I found.

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*Table 5.3 Tommy’s Funds of Identity*

**Tommy’s Familial and Geo-historical Funds of Identity**

Tommy’s self-portrait offered a glimpse into his familial and geo-historical funds
of identity (Figure 5.5). He divided the paper in to four quadrants and painted each one
completely as if seen from the air like a map. In the top left quadrant, Tommy painted a
green soccer field with a white center line and a soccer goal net on each side. Beneath the
soccer field, Tommy painted a small square in the lower left corner and wrote *Taco Shop*
in red letters inside the small square. The white lines on just outside of the taco shop indicated parking spaces. At the top right of the picture, there is another parking lot next to the white outline of a building with a small grassy area just under it. Tommy saved the final quadrant for his name, which he painted in large red letters on a blue background. I retouched this portion of his painting to preserve his anonymity using a photo image program on the computer.

![Tommy's painting](image)

*Figure 5.5 Self-Portrait by Tommy*

When I asked Tommy about his portrait, Tommy explained it in a very matter of fact manner, beginning with the taco shop and proceeding clockwise to each quadrant, as seen in Excerpt 5.10.

**Excerpt 5.10: May 10, 2017**

*Self-Portrait Interview with Tommy*

Jenna: OK Can you tell me about your picture?

Tommy: So, I put the taco shop ‘cuz I love tacos and basically my whole family. And I put a soccer field because I like to play soccer. And then I put my name. And there’s supposed to be road and then I put a house right here – it's like a little field, and this is the parking lot for the soccer field. You
don’t have to go anywhere else, and so you can park by the house. And then this is the parking lot for the tacos. And then yah.

Jenna: So why is the taco shop important to you?

Tommy: ‘Cuz I love tacos and my family loves and yah.

Jenna: Why is the soccer field important to you?

Tommy: ‘Cuz I love soccer.

Jenna: Are you good at it?

Tommy: Yes.

Jenna: Who do you like to play soccer with?

Tommy: Like, Jason, my friends, Coach E, my mom, wait no, no, no, well, maybe my mom; Mickey, ‘cuz he has it.

Jenna: Do you play on a team?

Tommy: No

Jenna: Just for fun?

Tommy: Yah.

Tommy’s funds of identity were concentrated in geographic locations that represented things he loved- tacos, soccer, family. Rather than draw a single taco or members of his family, Tommy chose to paint the specific taco shop where he eats tacos with his family and the very soccer field where he plays soccer with friends and family. Tommy’s geo-historical and familial, and social funds of identity were literally mapped to places that resonated with Tommy as an integral part of his life because of his history of experiences there with family and friends. In contrast to other focus students who played on a soccer team and had aspirations to be professional soccer players, Tommy did not play on a
team but played for fun. For Tommy, the sport of soccer functioned in an instrumental role for building and maintaining relationships with those who were important to his identity.

Tommy’s significant circle also yielded information on his familial and geo-historical funds of identity (Figure 5.5). Tommy wrote a series of words clustered near the center of the circle. In the very middle, he wrote “mom,” “tacos,” and “family.” While the word tacos appeared on both art projects, Howard did not include soccer in his circle. However, Howard added two additional references to places that were important to his funds of identity: Mexico and Disneyland. He actually did not finish the word Disneyland because he didn’t know how to spell it, so I helped him spell the end of the word. When I interviewed Tommy about the items in his significant circle, he recited each word starting at the top and reading each row left to right. I asked him about “Dabing” (dabbing) and

Figure 5.6 Tommy’s Significant Circle

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**Figure 5.6 Tommy’s Significant Circle**

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he explained it as a dance move that he loved to do. The only word he wanted to talk about was *tacos* because he loved eating them. He did not discuss Mexico or Disneyland, but their inclusion in his circle as important to him signified them as constituent parts of his geo-historical funds of identity. Tommy made one other reference to Mexico when he wrote that he was “Mexican and American” on his small group interview paper.

**Tommy’s Linguistic Funds of Identity**

During the tenure of my study at Daybreak Academy, I did not hear Tommy use any language other than English. His most recent scores for Listening and Speaking on the CELDT were Advanced and Early Advanced, which indicated had well-developed oral language skills in English. This was not surprising since his mother was not an immigrant to the U.S., so it is reasonable to assume that Tommy most likely used at least some English at home. The most interesting use of linguistic resources Tommy used to express his identity occurred in his self-portrait. Tommy filled in the entire lower right quadrant with blue paint and then wrote his name in large red letters across the square. I used a retouch feature in a photo application to conceal his name for anonymity reasons, but in his self-portrait interview, he made it very clear the importance of his name to his identity (Excerpt 5.11).

**Excerpt 5.11: May 10, 2017**  
*Self-Portrait Interview with Tommy*

Jenna: And anything else you want to talk about that’s important to you?

Tommy: Well, uh, my name.

Jenna: Why is your name important to you?

Tommy: ’Cuz it's my name.
Jenna: Yah?
Tommy: Yah.
Jenna: Doe it have a special meaning or anything?
Tommy: Yah, me. The special meaning is myself.
Jenna: Yourself?
Tommy: Yah.
Jenna: OK. Anything else you want to tell me?
Tommy: No.

Tommy exhibited a pride in his given name because it was a part of who he was. When I asked if it had a special meaning, Tommy replied “Yah, me. The special meaning is myself.” Tommy assigned importance to his name as a fund of identity for him.

**Tommy’s Aspirational Funds of Identity**

During the fourth grade small group interview, Tommy first reported that he wanted to be a police officer, and that it was his mother’s idea for him to become a cop because people have respect for police officers (Excerpt 5.12). Later in the interview, when I asked the students what they thought they would be doing ten years from now, Tommy gave a very different answer.

Excerpt 5.12: June 7, 2017
*Fourth Grade Small Group Interview*

Tommy: My mom said if I stay in the program 3 years I can be a cop. People respect cops.

Jenna: Whose idea was it?

Tommy: My mom’s idea…
Jenna: What will you be doing in ten years?

Tommy: I’ll be a cholo, a gangster.

A “cholo” is a somewhat derogatory term for a male Hispanic person, usually a teenager who is involved in gang activities. Mendoza-Denton (2008) described similar behavior in her study of Latinas who called themselves Nortenas or Surenas. She found that students often engaged in particular acts of identity such as gang-related behaviors in accordance with an oppositional ideology rather than an ethnic or regional origin: “Although official gang membership is restricted to a small group, inducted through a ritual process, many more youths participate in the oppositional dynamics of gang identity than are actual members of the gangs” (p. 58) [emphasis in the original]. She likened the practice to sports fans who may be indistinguishable form players when they are wearing the team’s jersey and insignia. While it is possible that Tommy was joking since he did have a good sense of humor, it is interesting that the two aspirations he mentioned were diametrically opposed to one another. His answer could be interpreted as an oppositional response to the suggestion his mother had made for him to become a cop. One swore an oath to uphold and protect the law, while the other engaged in illegal and dangerous gang activities.

Tommy’s teacher expressed a third possibility for Tommy’s future aspirations based on her observations of his interest in robotics, namely to be an engineer (Excerpt 5.13). She recognized it as one of his “strengths.”

Excerpt 5.13: May 3, 2017
Interview with Mrs. Batiste

Mrs. Batiste: Every single child has a strength, every single one. For example,
Tommy, he loves robotics. When I started robotics in the beginning of the year here, and then there’s GATE robotics, but I worked to get him in the GATE robotics, even though he is not GATE. It is a strength of his. I would not have known that if I didn’t just put these robots out in the very beginning of the year or the kit, and say, “Build.” And watching them build, there’s a lot of, I think, future engineers in this room. Now there could be in every classroom; I don’t know, but I see it here. So I work on that with him and with other ones.

Mrs. Batiste’s son participated in a high school robotics team that competed in California and other states. She brought some robotics kits to her classroom at the beginning of the year and allowed students to experiment with them. The school also had a robotics program, but at that time, enrollment was limited to students who had been identified for gifted and talented education (GATE). Since Tommy had not been identified, but Mrs. Batiste recognized his aptitude in this area, she “worked to get him in the GATE robotics, even though he is not GATE” because “it is a strength of his.” The substantial underrepresentation of English learners in gifted and talented programs has been well documented and remains an issue of educational equity (Birdsall & Correa, 2007; Swanson, 2006). I chose not to pursue the school’s identification criteria for entry into the GATE due to the constraints of my current research project, but further research is needed to explore ways to provide access to GATE programs for language minority students.

**Tommy’s Social Funds of Identity**

Most of Tommy’s social funds of identity involved playing soccer with his friends. In the interview for his self-portrait (Excerpt 5.10), Tommy reported that he loved playing soccer with Jason, his friends, Coach E, his mom (maybe), and someone named Mickey, apparently the owner of the soccer ball. Jason was a classmate of
Tommy’s in the fourth grade class at Daybreak Academy and Coach E worked at Daybreak as part of the physical education program. Since there were no students named Mickey in Tommy’s class and Tommy emphasized playing soccer near the taco shop, I concluded that Mickey was a friend from outside of school. Jason’s name also appeared on Tommy’s significant circle next to the word X-box. It is possible that Tommy and Jason played X-box games together as well as soccer.

**Celia’s Funds of Identity**

Celia had straight brown hair that hung just above her shoulders. Her nonchalant attitude reflected her aloofness among peers in the classroom. Although it was challenging at times to understand her responses, I analyzed the information I collected from her to discover the layout of her funds of identity (see Figure 5.4). Celia’s funds of identity were highly concentrated in family relationships with little regard for her peers at school. Celia’s funds of identity revealed a girl who values the large network of relationships at home, but remained rather disengaged at school.

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<td>Teacher interview</td>
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*Table 5.4 Celia’s Funds of Identity*
Celia’s Familial and Geo-historical Funds of Identity

Celia’s familial funds of identity were firmly anchored in her family relationships. Her self-portrait (Figure 5.7) focused on a single figure. Celia painted a girl with long eyelashes wearing a blue triangle dress while floating above the ground just in front of a rainbow.

![Figure 5.7 Self-Portrait by Celia](image)

At her feet lay a flower, and the sun shone down from the top right corner of the paper. The left top corner of the composition contained a cluster of blue dots. At first I assumed that the girl in the picture represented Celia, but her interview with me corrected my faulty interpretation of her artwork (Excerpt 5.14).

Excerpt 5.14: May 10, 2017
Self-Portrait Interview with Celia

Jenna: So what’s in your picture?

Celia: My mom, a rainbow, the sun, a flower, and a paint ball.
Jenna: Oh, these are paint balls in the corner? And why are those important?

Celia: Because it’s fun and it’s funny because when I when I hit my brother, it leaves him a mark.

Jenna: Do you like to play paint ball? Are you good at it?

Celia: Mm-hmm.

Jenna: And tell me about the rainbow.

Celia: The rainbow is cool, and I like it.

The figure in the picture is Celia’s mother with a rainbow behind her. Celia included the rainbow because “the rainbow is cool, and I like it.” Celia denoted her relationship with her brother with paint balls in the left corner. Paint ball is a game in which teams of people shoot balls of brightly colored paint at each other in a special building. Celia considered it both fun and funny because the paint balls left a mark on her brother. Although Celia did not give a specific location for where she played paint ball, the time she spent playing the game with her brother held meaning for her. Celia found her identity in being part of a family with her mother and brother.
Figure 5.8 Celia’s Significant Circle

Celia’s familial funds of identity encompassed not only her immediate family, but her large extended family as well. She drenched her significant circle (Figure 5.8) in color and then filled it with names of people she considered important her, such as brothers, grandparents, cousins, and nieces. She described its contents in the interview for the circle in Excerpt 5.15.

Excerpt 5.15: May 17, 2017
*Significant Circle Interview with Celia*

Jenna: Okay, so tell me what’s in your circle.

Celia: My mom, my brother Sergio, my family, my grandpa, my grandma, my brother and my niece. I just looked at this one.

Jenna: Wait, wait- are you- what are you- why are you coloring Mexico yellow?

Celia: Because I want it- it wants it to be more blue.

Jenna: You want to cross it out?
Celia: Yeah.

Jenna: Why?

Celia: Because I just put that there.

Jenna: So, is it, is it- did you put it there because it was important to you?

Celia: Uh, no, it isn’t.

Jenna: Did you change your mind?

Celia: Yeah.

Jenna: Why did you change your mind?

Celia: Um, because, uh, I like America better.

Jenna: You like America better? Have you always felt that way or was there a time when you liked Mexico better?

Celia: Mm…I still like Mexico.

Jenna: You’ve always liked America, too? So who else? You have a grandma, grandpa, and who’s this?

Celia: My brother Sergio.

Jenna: Uh huh. And who’s Cindy?

Celia: Yeah.

Jenna: Is that your niece?

Celia: M-hmm.

Jenna: And Michelle? Is that your niece?

Celia: M-hmm.

Jenna: And Abe?
Celia: My brother.

Jenna: Your brother, Abe. Got it. So this is the brother, this is a brother, and these two are nieces. And why are they important to you?

Celia: Uh, ‘cuz they’re family.

Jenna: ‘Cuz they’re family?

Celia: Uh-huh. And family is important to me.

Jenna: And why is family important to you?

Celia: Uh, ‘cuz, ‘cuz it isn’t really.

Jenna: Is there anything else in your life that’s important to you that’s not on your circle yet?

Celia: Um, no.

At some points in the interview, Celia’s responses appeared contradictory. For example, when she began to rework the word “Mexico,” I asked her about it since Celia self-identified as half Mexican and half American. At first she reported trying to make it more blue, but I asked her if she was crossing it out and why. She vacillated between feeling that Mexico was important to her and changing her mind because she liked America better. When asked if she always felt that America was better, she clarified that she still liked Mexico. Celia’s funds of identity related to her Mexican heritage lay in a precarious position, reflecting a dichotomous model of loyalty to one country or the other. This disequilibrium produced in her an internal struggle regarding her geo-historical funds of identity. At the end of the interview, Celia became flustered. Not wanting to answer any
more questions, she contradicted her statement about her family being important, so I
decided to conclude the interview with her at that point.

**Celia’s Linguistic and Social Funds of Identity**

Like Tommy, Celia did not use any Spanish over the course of my study. However, at the end of her self-portrait interview, she articulated the importance of her name to her identity (Excerpt 5.16). I wanted to know whether Tommy and Celia had influenced each other’s idea about their names, but found that their interviews were conducted at least one week apart; therefore, I do not believe their answers were related. She made it very clear the importance of her name to her identity as well.

**Excerpt 5.16: May 10, 2017**  
*Self-Portrait Interview with Celia*

Jenna: Is there anything else in your picture or in your life that you think is important to you?

Celia: Mm, my name.

Jenna: Your name? Tell me about your name.

Celia: Uh, I don't know. My name is…

Jenna: It’s kind of an unusual name, right? Can you say it for me?

Celia: <Celia> [Celia is a pseudonym in order to preserve anonymity.]

Jenna: Yah. Does it have a special meaning?

Celia: Yes, it means star.

Jenna: Star. Oh wow. And what language is that in?

Celia: I don’t know.
Celia demonstrated pride in her name because it had a special meaning. Although I cannot reveal her real name, I suggest that her name most likely originated in an indigenous language of Mexico due to its structure and unusual cluster of consonants and because Mexico was her parents’ country of origin. Celia’s linguistic funds of identity supported her connection to her family’s geo-historical past, but literally in name only.

**Celia’s Aspirational Funds of Identity**

As part of the fourth grade small group interview, Celia answered questions about her future aspirations, some verbally as well as on paper. Celia wrote that her family did not talk to her about what kind of job they would like her to have “because they are adults and have job.” She stated verbally that she has plenty of time and will choose “sooner or later” (see Excerpt 5.17). Celia’s definition of success was to get A’s in school, but when asked if she knew how to get A’s, she replied, “How? I don’t know.” However, her awareness of scholarships may be attributed to her brother’s experiences in college. She named him as a person who she thought was successful because “he did everything and he is doing his masters in Berkely” [sic]. Her brother’s academic achievements made her aware of the importance of doing well in school, but did not translate into how to do it.

Excerpt 5.17: June 7, 2017
*Fourth Grade Small Group Interview*

Jenna: What kind of job would you like when you grow up?

Celia: I have plenty of time. I can choose sooner or later.

Jenna: Is it important to get good grades in school? Why or why not?

Celia: So you get scholarships.

Jenna: Scholarships to what?
Celia: scholarships to everything.

Jenna: How do you get good grades?

Celia: How? I don't know.

Jenna: What does it mean to be successful?

Celia: When they get A’s.

Jack: Yeah, when they get A’s all the time.

Jenna: What do you think you will you be doing ten years from now?

Celia: What I'll be doing? I'd work at Google because I would be helpful and tell the people that can't type I'd type it in for them.

To answer the final question of what she thought she would be doing ten years from now, Celia wrote “Whatever I’m doing [sic] then,” but her verbal response offered a glimpse of her values toward helping others. She offered to work at Google so she could be “helpful and tell the people that can’t type I’d type it in for them.” Though she was nonchalant about deciding her future as a fourth grader, her aspirational funds of identity included an orientation toward service to others.

**Jack’s Funds of Identity**

Jack, the final fourth grade focal student, presented a considerable challenge for me to collect data related to his funds of identity. He had a difficult time creating a self-portrait; his interview answers consisted mainly of brief phrases or simple sentences, and he answered some questions with “I don’t know.” Jack scored in the Early Intermediate range for Speaking on the CELDT and did not seem to struggle with English vocabulary or grammar, so I do not think his reluctance to explain was related to his English
language proficiency, but to his personality as a skeptic. Though I did not find data for every category of funds of identity on the chart (Figure 5.5), I will discuss the data that were present in what I collected.

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<td>Teacher interview</td>
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*Table 5.5 Jack’s Funds of Identity*

**Jack’s Familial and Social Funds of Identity**

I was unable to collect a self-portrait from Jack. He abandoned his first pencil sketch of a soccer ball because he couldn’t get it to look like he wanted it. I showed him some photos of soccer balls from an Internet search on my smart phone to help him, but he became more frustrated and less willing to draw. Ultimately his composition showed several streaks of erase marks in the shape of a large square. After I interviewed him about what he was drawing he did not want me to take a photo of it, so I did not include one in this chapter. However, I transcribed the interview in order to analyze it (Excerpt 5.18).

Excerpt 5.18: May 10, 2017

*Self-Portrait Interview with Jack*

Jenna: OK. So can tell me about your picture?

Jack: It’s a soccer field.
Jenna: OK, and why did you choose to draw a soccer field?

Jack: Cuz I like soccer.

Jenna: And who do you like to play soccer with?

Jack: Anthony, my friends, um, coaches, my brother, yah.

Jenna: So what’s your favorite thing about playing soccer?

Jack: I don’t know.

Jenna: And do you do it every day?

Jack: No.

Jenna: After school or on the weekends?

Jack: Sometimes after school, but not every day after school.

Jenna: And anything else you want to tell me about what’s important to you? Like people or places?

Jack: No.

Jack’s funds of identity focused on relationships he built while playing soccer. He mentioned Anthony, a fellow classmate in the fourth grade, some other friends, coaches, and his brother. Jack played after school sometimes with friends or his brother. Jack did not mention any other family or things that were important to him, but ended the interview abruptly. Based on his brief interview, Jack’s funds of identity involved social interactions and one familial connection to him.
Jack showed more willingness to complete his significant circle (Figure 5.8) a week later, although his responses during the accompanying interview remained very brief (Excerpt 5.19). In the center Jack wrote “family,” “mom,” and “brother,” signifying they were most important. Jack simply read down the list from top to bottom. On the edges, he printed “soccer,” “brother,” and “Anthony.” Anthony is the same classmate that Jack discussed in the interview for his self-portrait (Excerpt 5.18).

![Figure 5.9 Jack’s Significant Circle](image)

Excerpt 5.19: May 17, 2017

*Significant Circle Interview with Jack*

Jenna: Okay, tell me what’s in your circle.

Jack: Soccer, tacos, family, mom, brother, Anthony.

Jenna: Is that Anthony that was just here?

Jack: Yeah.

Jenna: Is he a good friend of yours?
Jack: Yeah.

Jenna: And why--why are those things important to you?

Jack: ‘Cause it’s….tacos are good, yeah I don’t know…

Jenna: Is your family, is your mom and your brother, anybody else?

Jack: It’s important. Family, mom, brother.

Jenna: Is there anybody else in family that you didn’t write about?

Jack: There is, but there’s a lot.

Jenna: There’s a lot...

Jack: I have a lot of cousins.

Jenna: So family kind of includes everybody?

Jack: Yeah my sister, and cousins, and everybody.

Jenna: Ok, anything else you want to tell me?

Jack: No.

Jack described his family as important, starting with his mother and brother. He expanded his definition to include “a lot of cousins,” his sister, and “everybody.” This is the first and only mention of Jack’s sister. His familial funds of identity occupy the forefront of his significant circle; however, Jack’s social funds of identity consistently connected him to soccer and the friends who spent time playing it with him.

**Jack’s Aspirational Funds of Identity**

Jack hardly spoke at all during the fourth grade small group interview, but scribbled a few words on the half sheet of paper that I provided for him to read the questions. When he grows up, Jack would like to be a cop. He reported that his family
did not talk to him about a future career; it was his idea to become a police officer. Jack thought it was important to get good grades and planned to go to college because he wanted to get smarter. His definition of success was getting A’s all the time because it’s important to get good grades in school. Jack wrote that he considered his mother successful, but did not provide any further information on why. Jack’s own ideas about his future fueled his aspirational funds of identity. Jack’s conceptions about academic achievement, college attendance, and career form a solid framework for his aspirational funds of identity.
CHAPTER SIX:
IDENTITY AND SCHOOL CULTURE

As a public charter school, Daybreak Academy experienced a significant amount of freedom in its policies and programs, curriculum offerings, and services to students and families while still adhering to federal and state regulations. The school subscribed to a unique philosophy emphasizing a strengths-based education and attempted to create students’ identities as “scholars” through school policies and institutional discourse; but were the students’ own funds of identity a part of those efforts? Was the strength-based approach powerful enough to counteract the prevalent deficit views of students with low achievement, as documented in previous research (Olsen, 2010, 2014; Valdés, 2001; Valencia, 2010; Valenzuela, 1999)?

In this chapter, I provide more context about Daybreak Academy’s culture and curriculum. Then through an examination of the school policies, structures, and classroom interactions that shaped students’ identities, I argue that some of these school structures and classroom interactions contradicted the school’s strength-based approach to high achievement in ways that subtracted resources from students. The school’s efforts to imbue students with a “scholar” identity fell short, even though students’ funds of identity offered robust opportunities to connect their lived experiences outside of school to the everyday curriculum. I then offer recommendations for ways to align curriculum and school structures with the school’s philosophy to invest in students.

School Policies and Structures that Shaped Students’ Identities

Daybreak Academy’s Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), required by the California Department of Education, boldly claimed an engaging, strength-based
experience to “scholars” in a physically and socially-emotionally safe learning environment where they feel accepted, respected, and fulfilled (summarized for anonymity). On its website, Daybreak Academy asserted its mission to “produce well-rounded, self-confident, community-conscious, high achieving graduates who successfully transition into higher levels of education, community involvement, and citizenship …through a strength-based, comprehensive academic program in visual/performing arts, STEAM, athletics, and service learning” (Daybreak Academy website, location kept anonymous, 2017). STEAM stands for science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. To accomplish this ideal, each day, every class of students, from kindergarten to sixth grade, received one period of a visual/performing arts (VAPA) class, such as visual art, music, or drama, taught by specialists from outside the school. On Fridays, the VAPA hour for each class featured activities related to science and technology. Most Fridays, students worked on robotics or spent time in the zSpace lab. Zspace is a private company that provides special educational software and hardware to schools. The lab is a room at the school with computer stations where students experienced proprietary educational apps in augmented or virtual reality wearing special glasses. The school has adopted a daily format for reading instruction that emphasized student choice of activities, such as buddy reading or reading alone, and small group instruction based on assessed needs. In addition, each student had access to individualized curriculum through online learning experiences using a Chrome book.

Daybreak Academy was ostensibly the realization of founding principal Mrs. Schmidt’s dream to create a school community predicated on a strength-based
philosophy. She was the driving force behind the inception of the intentionally small, two
year old school with 246 students. In my interview with Mrs. Schmidt, she shared her
most important conclusions about the school at the end of the school’s second year:

Excerpt 6.1
Interview with Mrs. Schmidt

Jenna: So now that school has completed two full academic years, what have been
your biggest take-aways and challenges?

Dr. Schmidt: The biggest part that has been affirmed for me is the importance of
creating a climate that’s based on a strength-based perspective where we
truly strive to see the strengths of each person...I think it was always
fundamentally my philosophy, but then I tried to apply it to a school of
800. And it worked, but it didn’t sustain once I left. And I really was
working so hard on sustainability; I was disappointed that it wasn’t
something that was embraced to such an extent that it had legs of its own.
So, at this school with a smaller school population with being able to
touch the lives of so many people, the way we can connect with each
other, that’s my major take-away, that benefits of a small school setting
where you can evolve a philosophy together so that the scholars feel this
throughout the school setting rather than just some pockets of excellence
instead.

To Dr. Schmidt, striving to see the strengths of each person was central to creating the
school climate she desired to cultivate at Daybreak. Using the third person “we,” she
emphasized the collective nature of her vision to “evolve a philosophy together so that
the scholars feel this throughout the school setting.” She admitted her long-term espousal
of a strength-based philosophy, which she found to be unsustainable in the large school
context, and intentionally maintained a small school of one class per grade level in order
to “connect with each other” and “touch the lives of so many.” The school had a waiting
list of over 300 children and held a lottery each spring to determine new enrollment for
any open seats they expected for fall based on the average class size of thirty-two students.

In addition to the VAPA classes and small school size of only 246 students, Dr. Schmidt created a school community based on ritual. For the first fifteen minutes of each school day, she led the student body in a Morning Meeting outside on the blacktop where students lined up by classroom. All students and teachers attended these meetings facing the front door of the school, which was bordered by an American flag and the California state flag. Dr. Schmidt lifted the microphone and began each meeting with an exercise in deep breathing, using military-like commands, as shown in excerpt 6.2.

Excerpt 6.2
Field notes, June 7, 2017

I want you to go up on your toes, breathing in. Go back down breathing out. Up on your toes, breathing in. Go back down. One more time, breathing in, up on your toes. Going back down. Court- Atten-hut! Court at ease. Feet just shoulder-width apart. Court- relax. Close breathing like that, especially as we’re approaching the end of the year, (as adults we know that when there’s a lot going on sometimes we have to really remember to breathe), sounds so simple. So, how many of you are breathing right now? I hope so! But see, when you breathe with intention, meaning that sometimes you stop and you breathe more deeply than usual, you breathe out more deeply than usual, it actually kind of calms you and lets you focus.

Morning Meeting offered students the opportunity to engage in this and several other rituals that Dr. Schmidt designed to build community at the school. She emphasized students’ self-regulation, reflection, and taking responsibility for their actions and learning. Deep breathing with intention, according to Dr. Schmidt, “kinds of calm you and lets you focus” in order to set the tone for the day and be ready to learn. Occasionally when Dr. Schmidt had to be absent for a Morning Meeting, a student led the routine. In
the next portion of the morning meeting, a teacher or student stepped forward to share another ritual, the “golden moment.” On this particular day, Mrs. Batiste, one of the teachers in my study, shared her version of her golden moment:

Excerpt 6.3
*Field notes, June 7, 2017*

I was trying to think of my golden moment, and what I realized was, I don't have one golden moment. I have thirty-two, well one moved, thirty-one golden moments, and they’re standing right there – the 4th grade scholars. And just to share a couple of things that make it so exciting, and I come here with joy in my heart from this, and it’s because I’ve seen them grow so much academically and behaviorally. They’ve made friends, they make good choices, they’ve learned so much with robotics and VAPA and science and watching them do science experiments. And because I love robotics, seeing them do robotics and writing and math and everything just watching in their eye when they say, “Oh, I get it!” That’s what makes me a happy teacher, watching you all learn. So thank you, 4th grade scholars and Dr. Schmidt, for giving me this opportunity to teach 4th grade.

Sharing Golden Moments was something akin to giving a testimony in many religious settings. In her testimony, Mrs. Batiste echoed Dr. Schmidt’s orientation toward students as “scholars” and named her fourth grade class as her golden moments. In her student-centered remarks, she expressed her joy at watching her students grow academically and behaviorally, discussing their activities in VAPA, robotics, and other content areas. Seeing them learn made Mrs. Batiste “a happy teacher.”

The golden moment speeches offered a positive start to the school day, but perhaps the most powerful ritual students engaged in during the Morning Meeting occurred following the pledge of allegiance to the American flag as students recited the School Credo in unison, led by one of their own:

Excerpt 6.4
*Field notes, June 7, 2017*
We are responsible, respectful, safe, and kind.
We take care of ourselves, but keep others in mind.
We are scholars - We make smart choices and aspire to be our best.
We are scholars, leaders, and strive for success.
Go Labradors! Woof, woof, woof!

In this declaration, students identify themselves as “scholars” and “leaders” who “make smart choices” and “aspire to be our best.” According to Gee (2000-2001), Institutional Identities are assigned by an institution, such as in the case of “Long Term English Learner” or “scholar.” Institutional identities require discourse and dialogue to sustain them. Morning Meetings at Daybreak attempted to establish students’ Institutional Identities as “scholars” according to the School Credo as they stood together and declared it to the world each morning. The main dialogue surrounding the term “scholar” at Daybreak could be found in the School Credo and adults’ use of the word “scholars” to refer to students; this limited amount of dialogue was insufficient to produce a clear understanding of the term in teachers or students or to operationalize it at the school.

The impact of this ritual appeared in the survey data I collected from focus students at the very beginning of my study. I asked the ten focus students to answer this statement: I feel most connected to school when ____. Two of them answered that it was when they “do the school credo.” This simple ritual served to connect students to school in a profound way. Much like reciting a corporate prayer in church, it functioned as a meaningful connection point to the school community. One explanation for this could be that in many Latinx cultures, the definition of education (educación) involves a cultural construct about how to live in the world as a caring, responsible, well mannered, and respectful human beings (Valenzuela, 1999). The emphasis on respect and responsibility
in the School Credo may appeal to the Mexican American students in my study because of the alignment with cultural values. However, it de-emphasized the academic aspects of education so desperately needed by students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners.

But the School Credo, with its apparent impact on students’ sense of connection to school, shifted the focus of scholarship away from academics in favor of good behavior and social skills. In this way, the school’s Institutional Identity for students as “scholars” detracted from the school’s ultimate goal to produce “high achieving graduates” as stated on the school website and diminished English Learners’ resources related to academic behaviors associated with academic achievement. Olsen (2010) noted that the LTEL students in her study were well behaved and almost invisible in class, but had not been explicitly taught the skills necessary for academic success, such as how to approach academic texts, write down homework assignments, seek help, and recognize appropriate ways to participate in class; nor were they expected to behave as academically engaged students. Menken and Klein (2010) also reported LTEL students’ poor overall academic performance. Students scored several years below grade level in reading and writing; their limited academic literacy impacted their performance in not only language arts, but in other content areas as well.

The focal students in my study, considered “at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners,” scored below grade level in language arts and in math, and scored at the Intermediate level or below on the annual English language proficiency test in spite of several years of schooling in U.S. schools (CA AB 2193). These students are not failing
due to a lack of respectfulness toward adults and peers, but because of their low performance in academics. What they need is more emphasis on habits of engagement in school rather than invisibility, and explicit instruction in academic skills (Valenzuela, 1991; Menken & Klein, 2010; Olsen, 2010).

Regardless of any possible appeal to cultural values such as respect in the School Credo, reciting it daily for an entire school year did not result in the students in my study adopting the identity of “scholar” for themselves. I found it surprising that despite their daily declaration “We are scholars,” not one of the focus students used the word “scholar” in any of their art pieces or verbal descriptions of themselves. In addition, even though adults at the school consistently referred to the students and addressed them as “scholars,” I never heard the students themselves ever say this word. The absence of any mention of scholars by students in my study made me curious about their understanding of the term and whether they truly embraced their “scholar” identities. When I asked the focus students to finish the statement “A scholar is _______” on the initial survey on Google Forms, most of their answers referred to having good behavior or just another word for student (Table 6.1). Several students’ answers included spelling and grammatical errors, but in most cases, it was unclear whether the errors were due to students’ poor spelling skills or mistakes in typing. Christa’s answer “shure” is most likely due to poor spelling skills since the “sh” at the beginning has to be typed intentionally and the keys are located far apart on the computer keyboard.
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<td>Howard</td>
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Table 6.1

*Focus Students’ Responses to “What is a scholar?”*

*spelling and grammatical errors in the original student answers*

Delilah and Amber’s answers included specific words included in the credo: leader, responsible, and respectful. The content of the School Credo led students to believe that being a scholar means having good behavior, being kind, respectful and responsible, rather than focusing on academics, resulting in students’ understanding of being a scholar as someone who can “make smart choices” and “be our best.” While those character traits prescribe expectations for how to treat others, they have little to do with scholarly acts such as studying and researching. Scholars regularly and consistently engage in particular literacy practices such as reading and writing, researching, and critical thinking to communicate their ideas. Therefore, the school’s attempt to create an identity for students as “scholars” through structures and Institutional Discourse was not taken up by the students. Instead, it shifted their focus to good behavior and away from practices that lead to academic success.

The school’s attempts to create a scholarly identity for students was also complicated by teachers’ perspectives. Teachers at Daybreak expressed doubt as to whether students could assume or even understand the identity of a “scholar.” For
example, the fifth/sixth grade teacher attributed his ability to understand the meaning of being a scholar to people in his personal family background who were college educated, but assumed that English language learners did not grasp the meaning because they don’t have a lot of college-educated influence. I found that not to be the case according to my focus students. Some students in the focus group had family members who were in college/graduate school or who emphasized the college attendance as very important. For example, at the small group interview for fourth grade, I provided a half sheet of paper to each student with the questions written on them so that students could follow along with the questions we discussed. Instead of using them for reference only, the students took out pencils and began writing their answers as we talked in the group. During this activity, focus students wrote answers to the following written questions: Is there a person in your family that you think is successful? Who is it and how do you know they are successful? Celia wrote in response, “Yes, I do. My brother Abrham [sic]. He did everything, and he is doing his masters in Berkely [sic].” Other examples arose during focal students’ explanations of their Significant Circle artwork. Christa, a fifth grade focal student, reported in the interview about her Significant Circle that her mother attends college while her dad is at work. Amber, also in fifth grade, wrote “college” next to “family” in the very center of her Significant Circle as very important (Figure 4.9). As she explained the words in her circle, Amber shared her family’s emphasis on college as very important.

Excerpt 6.5: May 11, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Amber

Amber: College-important to family and me because you can get a job.
Jenna: How do you know it's important to your family?

Amber: Because they always mention it. They say it's very important.

Clearly, the teacher’s assumptions that English learners do not have college-educated influences at home and therefore will not understand what “scholar” means, undermines the school’s efforts to create “scholars.” These assumptions also blame the family and their supposed lack of academically oriented resources for students’ inability to grasp the concept of a scholar. Instead of holding schools and educators responsible for teaching students what scholarship means, the responsibility falls on the family, indicative of classic deficit thinking (Cooper, 2009; Gorski, 2010).

**Battling Deficit Thinking**

Despite the best efforts of the school administrator and founder, Dr. Schmidt, to create a community of “scholars” with curriculum focused on students’ strengths, in many ways, deficit thinking remained firmly embedded in the ideology of teachers at the school. Gorski (2010) defined deficit thinking as “approaching students based upon our perceptions of their weaknesses rather than their strengths” (p. 2). While this definition seems to be at odds with the philosophy at Daybreak Academy, the underlying deficit ideology remained intact. According to Cooper (2009) deficit thinking “accounts for students’ academic and social struggles at school by pointing out those ‘desirable’ attributes a student or student’s family lack… In the language of deficit thinking, children who are at-risk suffer because materially, socially and culturally, they lack so much, not because the schools they attend fail to meet them where they are in terms of their language and social skills” (p. 1-2). At Daybreak, the ‘desirable traits’ that students
supposedly lack according to teachers are the same ones the school purports to teach to students.

Deficit thinking “leads to policies designed to instill those desirable traits/behaviors in students or in students’ parents. But people who practice deficit thinking often fail to pay attention to those aspects of the student’s life experience and family that make him/her unique and resilient” (p.1). Attempting to create a “scholar” identity for students, especially one focused on good behavior rather than academics, constitutes a policy designed to instill in students the desirable traits they ostensibly lack. Daybreak’s strength-based approach may seem to offer some reprieve from deficit thinking; however, only offering experiences to “discover” new talents and abilities via new opportunities ignores the resources students hold most dear. By not investigating the resources students already possess as strengths through their life experiences, such as students’ funds of identity, educators perpetuate deficit thinking by ascribing to stereotypical ideas about students’ lives outside of school. When students’ lived experiences become irrelevant to the school context, it is very difficult to promote engagement in the curriculum.

Classroom Interactions

Clearly, the English learners in my study possessed many cultural and other resources from which teachers could draw to design and deliver instruction in a relevant manner. Each of the ten focus students expressed a unique sense of identity and values about what is important for life, school, and the future. School represented a peripheral part of their identity, and indexed mainly their social networks of friends. Unfortunately, I found that, in general, students did not initiate their own use of funds of identity in
school, but displayed habits of non-engagement through classroom experiences. Like the middle school and high school Long Term English Learners (LTEL) in Olsen’s (2010) study, these students who were “at risk of becoming LTEL had already developed habits of “non-engagement, learned passivity, and invisibility” in school (p. 24). I had assumed from my prior experience as an elementary teacher, that most younger English learners would still be enthusiastic about participating in class. To my surprise, I found students “at risk of becoming LTEL” were much like their older counterparts in middle school and high school.

During my observations and interactions with focal students during class, I noticed that they learned to be invisible even though they needed assistance. Because their behavior did not cause a disruption, it did not elicit attention from the teacher. For example, when Mrs. Batiste asked me to sit next to Howard to help him with his math workbook, he never spoke unless I asked him a question directly. In fact, I did not observe him answering the teacher’s questions during class or even initiating a conversation with peers. He sat quietly playing with a pencil until I asked him if he was ready to get started. He completed his work correctly, but not until I directed him to his workbook. This type of quiet, seemingly compliant behavior often goes unnoticed until it is time for the teacher to collect the incomplete work. A teacher may presume the student unable to complete work because he did not understand it, but in this case, Tommy understood the concept completed it correctly on his own with a little encouragement from an adult.
While observing in the fifth/sixth grade classroom, another example occurred. I paid close attention to the only EL in the class, a Latino LTEL called Gabriel. Gabriel did not return his consent form and was therefore not an official focus student, but he remained part of my usual classroom observations over the course of my study during instructional time. His desk sat just to the left of the teacher’s desk. Each time I visited his class, Gabriel displayed habits of learned passivity and non-engagement. For example, on one visit, the teacher provided instruction on mean, median, and mode. Gabriel did not always respond verbally with the rest of the class to answer the teacher’s questions. The teacher directed students to work with a partner to solve the equations. A few minutes later, Gabriel had not started his work. When the teacher asked him why he wasn’t working, Gabriel replied that his partner had gone to the restroom. The teacher instructed Gabriel to start the work on his own, and he proceeded to slowly dig through his desk to find his whiteboard. A few minutes later, I noticed Gabriel still not working, chewing on his shirt while he continued to wait for his partner to return. The teacher had not returned to follow up on him.

On another day of observation at about a week later, students opened their Chrome books to start a practice test in preparation for standardized testing. Gabriel spent most of the time playing with a rubber band instead of logging in to his account and working through the practice test. On yet another day, students worked in small groups to create display boards for open house. Gabriel remained alone at his desk, so I inquired of the teacher about whether Gabriel was working on a display. The teacher walked over to Gabriel’s desk and asked him to start working on his project. Gabriel did not move from
his desk or start working on anything; a few minutes later I watched as he twirled a circular piece of paper around his fingers. In all of these instances, Gabriel exhibited habits of learned passivity and non-engagement. Despite Gabriel’s significant need for academic assistance as a LTEL, the teacher failed to provide the attention and accountability necessary for him to succeed.

In the fourth grade classroom, I observed the nature of teacher-student interactions with Tommy, another focus student with habits of non-engagement. During most lessons I observed him looking around the classroom or playing with something in his desk instead of taking out the workbook or materials as directed by the teacher. He vocalized some of his frustration rather than being invisible. These actions resulted in some attention from the teacher, but the nature of the attention served to shut him down rather than engage him in the activity as seen in Excerpt 6.6. After the teacher read the math problem aloud to students and instructed them to work with a partner to solve it, the following exchange occurred:

Excerpt 6.6
*Field notes, March 29, 2017*

Mrs. Batiste: Tommy!

Tommy: But I can't see from there.

Mrs. Batiste (to Tommy): Cover your paper.

Tommy: <yawning loudly two times>

Tommy: <arguing with a peer regarding if $5 can be divided for 2 people>

Mrs. Batiste: How much does he need?

Tommy: One dollar and…
Mrs. Batiste: Did you write it down? Did you do the math?

Tommy: Yes.

Interrupting Tommy rather than allowing him to explain in his own words foreclosed him from expressing his ideas or practice academic language. In this way, resources were subtracted from him when he was not given the opportunity to articulate his learning. The instances discussed in this section have simple, yet profound solutions, as outlined in the following section.

Recommendations

Curricular adaptations

1) To promote engagement in core curricular activities, teachers can make explicit connections between school curriculum and students’ lives outside of school. While the school offers an extensive array of opportunities for students to discover new talents or interests, students arrive at school with set of life experiences and ways of making meaning that are important to them and their families. These personal understandings and values should not be ignored or dismissed as insufficient for academic success. Cooper maintained that avoiding deficit thinking entails teachers being willing “to take the time to learn more about the lives of individual students outside of school and celebrating their uniqueness” (2010, p. 3), i.e. teachers need to become students of the children they serve. Detecting students’ funds of identity through surveys or art projects such as the one in my study was an effective way to do this. I found that students eagerly opened up to me, a stranger, when I showed the slightest interest in them as individuals and showed them that I valued their perspectives. Some of them wrote my name on their Significant
Circles! The Self-portrait and Significant Circle exercises offer a great starting point for educators to learn about their students’ lives. The art projects are easy to implement using existing materials found in most classrooms and don’t take much time. Teachers can develop lessons related to the activity that cover curricular standards in art methods and in language arts when students are asked to write about their art projects. I highly recommend that teachers meet with individual students when possible or in small groups and take notes on students’ explanations of their artwork. Teachers can collect and use the resulting information to relate the daily concepts in the curriculum to some aspect of students’ lives or interests outside of school. The individual conference times with the teacher that are already built into writers workshop activities is an ideal time for these meetings.

In my study, for example, students’ main sources of funds of identity originated within familial and geo-historical contexts. For example, Kaili’s self-portrait featured memories of playing soccer with her father, who she had not seen for a long time because he lived in Mexico (Figure 5.1); Tommy’s self-portrait resembled a Google map showing his favorite taco shop and soccer field where ate and played soccer with his family and friends (Figure 5.5). Howard’s drew a picture of his home under a rainbow in his self-portrait (Figure 5.3). When students spoke of their homes, they also included their pets as important to them. Pedro drew his cat Ginger on his significant circle, Amber depicted her pet with a paw print and collar, and Christa wrote the names of her puppies, “Osito” [“Little Bear”?] and “Baytobin” (Beethoven) on her circle. Many people consider their
pets to be members of the family. In this sense, students used their connections to their pets as bids to activate their familial funds of identity.

Teachers can use the topic of pets as a way to tap into students’ familial funds of identity and engage them in everyday lessons. For example, as I observed a math lesson one day, students were milling around asking each other how many pets they had to fill a chart in the math workbook. Next the teacher filled in a chart with student responses on the projector, moving immediately on to finding the average mean deviation. This classroom activity lent itself easily to connections to students’ lives outside of school, but the teacher missed the opportunity to engage with students on a more personal level by quickly moving on to statistics rather than asking students to share their experiences with their pets.

In another example the teacher found a “kind of fun” math activity idea online involving planning a summer road trip. Students were to choose from several regional cities in the southwestern part of the U.S. and calculate mileage and travel costs. Some students chose to rent a Lamborghini to drive to Las Vegas. For most students (and teachers), renting a Lamborghini to drive to Vegas far exceeds what is financially possible. To make the lesson more relevant and achieve the same instructional objective, students could be given the opportunity to draw from their geo-historical funds of identity to select more familiar vehicles and destinations that were meaningful to them for their math calculations, such as driving to the local taco shop in Tommy’s self-portrait where he eats tacos with his family to purchase a meal, or a trip to Mexico for Kaili to visit her father and extended family there.
2) Build on students’ social orientations toward school by providing consistent opportunities for students to practice academic language in meaningful, structured group activities. This recommendation for curricular adaptations fits well with the strength-based philosophy of the school as well as my findings on students’ social orientation to school (see more on this in Chapter Seven). Findings on students’ social orientation toward school arose from data related to their social funds of identity rather than school peer culture. I first developed my research question regarding how identities were shaped by peer school culture based on my initial attempt at this research in a high school setting, where peer culture is a large part of students’ schooling experiences as adolescents. When that particular district denied my request to do research at any school in their district, including the high school that had agreed to allow me to conduct my study, I was forced to search for an alternative research site. My research took place at an elementary school instead. A future study of LTEL students at older ages would provide more potent data and findings on school peer culture.

One factor contributing to the status of these students as at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners could be the absence of a strong student identity. Based on the absence of images or words referring to scholarly activities in students’ artwork and interviews about who they are and their funds of identity, it appears that they do not have a student identity. They do not have a school-based identity in terms of identifying with academics, whether as ‘students’ or ‘scholars.’ They don’t seem to have a student identity, but do have strong family and peer identity. Peer culture mattered more than school culture in students’ orientations toward school. According to the social funds of
identity discussed by the students in this study, social relationships with friends emerged as central to their orientations toward school. Therefore, one way to nurture a scholarly identity is to build on their existing funds of social identity with peers at school, using their everyday life with friends as a motivation to engage with academic material in a more meaningful way. In the following paragraphs, I will provide examples of activities that facilitate opportunities for students to practice academic language and work with each other at Daybreak.

**Project-Based Learning and Literature Circles**

One unintended side effect of Daybreak’s individualized curriculum through technology, specifically Chrome books, is that students such as English learners, who need increased opportunities to practice and develop academic language in speech and writing, spend less time working with peers and teachers in a face to face setting. Although some teachers used brief turn-and-talk type activities in which students shared for a moment with a neighbor, these instances did not allow for the deep discussion and negotiation of meaning that students, especially English learners, need in order to master new vocabulary and concepts. I recommend incorporating formal structures, such as Project Based Learning, into the curriculum to promote sustained student engagement with peers and with the content in the standards in an authentic, meaningful manner.

According to the Buck Institute for Education (BIE), Project Based Learning (PBL) involves students working on a standards-based project for an extended period of time that “engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question” (Buck Institute for Education, 2018, p. 1). The project involves sustained
inquiry, reflection, and allows for student voice and choice because it “speaks to
students’ personal concerns, interests, and issues in their lives” (p. 1). BIE’s website
claims,

Too many students – especially those furthest from opportunity – are unprepared
for the modern economy and the challenges of the 21st century. Project Based
Learning (PBL) prepares students for “academic, personal, and career success,
and readies young people to rise to the challenges of their lives and the world they
will inherit. (2018, p. 1)

BIE developed video examples of student projects and a High Quality Project Based
Learning (HQPBL) Framework with guiding principles for implementation that describe
“what students should be doing, learning, and experiencing and is intended to provide
educators everywhere with a shared basis for designing and implementing good projects”
(p. 1). In PBL, students give and receive feedback from peers and teachers to create and
improve their products or ideas. These processes fit nicely with the Common Core
Standards’ emphasis on collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.
They also meet many of the English Language Development Standards related to
listening and speaking. In addition, they fulfill Daybreak’s mission to produce
“community-conscious” graduates through opportunities such as “service learning.”
Projects are chosen and designed with student input and often include service projects
related to community needs.

One idea for PBL that builds on what Daybreak already has in place is to develop
specific projects related to the school garden located across the street from the school.
Gardens offer a broad range of opportunities for students to learn about agriculture, math,
engineering, cultivation, irrigation, environmental science, climate change, water, and
social issues relating to economics and food insecurity in the global and local community. Educating students on these issues, including research, reading and writing about them, and allowing groups to design and conduct a project that produces a product or addresses a local need can provide opportunities for students to engage with each other and the local community in meaningful ways that also meet academic content standards. Food from the garden could also be part of the daily breakfast and lunch program at the school. The school garden is just one example of how PBL offers opportunities for students to work together on projects that meet standards in science, math, and language arts.

During PBL and other classroom activities, the teacher’s role is similar to a facilitator in that students direct much of the learning. This is another way that PBL fits with Daybreak’s vision to build on students’ strengths. Students with organizational and communicative strengths will hone their skills while others will be developing these skills. It is important in all classrooms that teachers be attentive listeners as well as speakers. In my experience as an educator, I noticed that allowing students to explain their ideas thoroughly without interrupting or cutting them off is essential to student engagement, autonomy, and confidence. It also encourages practice of academic language and offers assessment opportunities for savvy educators.

Literature Circles offers another opportunity for students to practice academic language in meaningful, structured group activities. According to Schlick and Johnson, (1999), Literature Circles form when students gather in small groups to discuss a piece of literature in depth. Students use personal experiences to discuss events and characters in the book and to construct meaning with others through collaboration, feedback, and
critical thinking. Groups are formed by student choice of reading materials and are intended to provide a context for applying reading and writing skills. These characteristics make Literature Circles and effective method for promoting student engagement, use of academic language, and tapping into students’ social funds of identity at school. Listening to others also shows them that we care. In the initial student survey, I asked students to complete the following statement: I know my teachers care about me when _______. Three students answers involved when they got hurt, but most of their answers were similar to Christa’s: “Help me when I don’t know something.” Delilah wrote that her teachers could “make me study and help me.” The word “help” appeared numerous times, indicating that to students, help = care. The students in Valenzuela’s study expressed similar sentiments (1999). Several students expressed the view that teachers did not take time out for students and that most of their classes were boring and there was nothing to do. Some students described a shared responsibility for learning between students and teachers in which teachers should come and help students who are failing instead of letting them fail. Students who are at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners are in danger of academic failure. These are the very students that need the attention from teachers that indicates teachers care about them. Simply paying attention to them as individuals, getting to know them and their needs, and holding them accountable for learning goes a long way in sending the message to students that they matter, they are important, and the teacher cares about them and their education.


**Recommendations for Aligning School Structures**

Projects like those in PBL can also be used to bring school practices more in alignment with Daybreak’s goals and policies. To enhance the school’s efforts to create “scholars,” I recommend that a formal conceptualization and definition of what it means to be a scholar is developed by the school community and disseminated among the staff, students, and families. Once a formal definition and characteristics are in place, make explicit the definition of scholar along with formal instructional structures that are reinforced daily and teach scholarly habits and practices. It may take the form of icons or a poster in each classroom outlining the scholarly habits that the school desires students to develop.

One example of a natural fit for scholarly practices occurs in the writer’s workshop. Many classrooms ascribe to a form of process writing, which includes brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Since scholars are those who research, write, and publish to communicate their ideas, the publishing activity in process writing allows students a public audience with which to share their ideas openly, either verbally by presenting their writing, or being posted on a bulletin board or teacher/school web page. The act of sharing or publishing provides a meaningful, authentic context for student writing. These activities also meet content standards in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as academic language development for English learners and other students. Teachers can provide models of scholarly activities by demonstrating and sharing their own study habits and literacy practices, thereby creating a learning
community. As part of sharing, students can engage in self-reflection to recognize and articulate the scholarly habits they are cultivating.

One possible project idea that combines scholarly practices with students’ interests and funds of identity could be a research project on a person in the student’s life that is important to them. Students could choose a family member, parent/guardian, church member, family friend, or a relative that lives close or far away or even an ancestor. When students choose the subject of their study, they tap into their familial, geo-historical, social, or spiritual funds of identity. The teacher can provide an outline of questions for an interview with the person or students can work together to give each other feedback on questions. Students can also access online resources using their Chrome books. Students then produce a written report or an oral presentation using technology such as Google slides, which students at Daybreak already use for class presentations. The teacher can then use this information to learn about students and make connections between the curriculum and students’ lives outside of school.

Most of these recommendations imply some degree of professional development and collaboration within the school community. Teacher professional development on specific strategies for teaching English learners can include techniques for connecting curriculum to students’ lives, providing increased opportunities for peer interaction and critical thinking, and questioning strategies that facilitate student engagement, increase students’ use of academic language, and discourage habits of non-engagement. As the principal, Dr. Schmidt, stated in my interview with her, “it takes a village.” Educators
must take the necessary steps to ensure that English learners receive every opportunity to succeed and avoid becoming Long Term English Learners.

The plight of Long Term English Learners and the academic failure, higher drop out rates, and foreclosure from opportunities they experience after years of schooling amounts to nothing more than educational malpractice; it is wholly preventable. By taking time to build relationships with students and get to know them and their background experiences in order to make connections to the curriculum, educators can provide the intrinsic motivation these students need to become life long learners and experience academic success and intellectual fulfillment. In this way, Daybreak Academy can meet the goals expressed in its Local Control Accountability Plan to provide a place where every student feels accepted, respected, and fulfilled.
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Summary of Major Findings

My study was predicated on the simple premise that, in contrast to deficit perspectives which focus on what language minority students lack in terms of resources, children possess a store of beliefs, ideas, skills, and abilities based on their life experiences and social interactions that function as resources for building identities, or “funds of identity.” What students believe about who they are is relevant, important, and significant because “students learn and remember new information best when it is linked to relevant prior knowledge, specifically ‘prior funds of identity’ ” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 44). My study investigated and documented the ways in which ten Latinx focal students in grades four and five who were considered at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners at Daybreak Academy (a pseudonym) used cultural and socio-historical resources as funds of identity to express their self-definition and sense of place in the world. This type of research is driven by an equity agenda that capitalizes on building on students’ knowledge and experiences as resources for schooling (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014).

In this study, it became clear that English learners arrive at school with an abundance of resources that serve as funds of identity, but very few of them related to their status as students in spite of the school’s attempts to create “scholars.” I will discuss five main findings regarding English learners’ funds of identity and how their identities were shaped by institutional discourse.
My first finding was that familial funds of identity were by far the most substantial, influential resources for identity. Yosso (2005) noted how kinship ties, as part of familial capital, provide models of coping, caring, and providing that impact emotional consciousness. The students in Valenzuela’s (1991) study expressed similar notions of the importance of caring. They complained about their teachers being boring and claimed that if their teachers cared about them, the teachers would make the lessons more interesting and not be so busy. References to family members, both immediate family and extended family, dominated each focus student’s artwork and interviews. Students possessed rich networks of family resources characterized by emotional support, physical provision, and a sense of cultural history. The students in my study demonstrated awareness of ways in which their families cheered them on, provided food and shelter for them, and established roles for them that contributed to their identities. For example, Pedro and Eddie (all names are pseudonyms) stated their role as an “uncle” as very important to them. Others shared how their family cheered them on, and as Christa stated, her mother shows her “everything a girl needs to know.”

Familial funds of identity almost always co-occurred with references to a particular place and time where students experienced interactions with their family members. Esteban-Guitart & Moll (2014) included a type of funds of identity they called Geographical Funds of Identity, which are references to specific locations such as the Grand Canyon as a symbol of Arizona. Geography alone could not capture the relationship between place and time that I found evident in the data, so I established a new category I named *Geo-Historical* funds of identity. Students’ funds of identity were
tied to not just a simple geographical location; specific memories, unhampered by limitations of space and time, encompassed places that were local, distant, or even virtual where people and places of the past converged to create a nostalgic, dreamlike present. For example, Howard’s self-portrait depicted a serene, sunny day during spring break when his family held a party inside his home while he played soccer alone outside. Kaili chose to portray her memories of playing soccer with her father, who she had not seen for a long time because he lived in Mexico with her grandmother and other extended family members. Tommy’s self-portrait resembled a Google map showing his favorite taco shop and soccer field from above, complete with parking lot and outbuildings, where he spent time with his family and friends. Other geo-historical funds of identity strayed from family to include people and places found in virtual spaces on the Internet and in media. Eddie, the only student to name a U. S. state on his artwork, identified with his favorite mischievous You Tubers from Ohio, and Messi, his soccer hero who played internationally for Barcelona. As students reflected on their self-definitions, their expressions of familial and geo-historical funds of identity transcended time and place to produce a sense of timelessness. As Amber told me, “They are always there with me.”

My second finding involved linguistic funds of identity. These resources relating to students’ home language appeared depleted and deemed irrelevant to the current school context. Valenzuela (1999) found that the resources of English learners in her study were subtracted from them in a process she called “de-capitalization.” While the decapitalization Valenzuela discussed related to social capital, students in my study suffered linguistic de-capitalization when their primary language resources were
underutilized and dismissed by teachers as useful only in ambiguous future job possibilities. Of the ten Spanish-speaking focal students, six students did not use any Spanish at all in either their art projects, interviews, or my observations. The four students who used Spanish reserved it for naming specific extended family members such as abuelos (grandparents) and tíos (aunts and uncles) or religious symbols such as a cruz (cross). For all other communication, the focal students relied on English to communicate their ideas. The only exception to this was Delilah, whom I observed using Spanish to clarify in casual conversations with Christa. The use of Spanish did not seem to be tied to proficiency level in English since Delilah had the highest overall score of all ten focal students on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Delilah also shared in an interview that her mother told her that speaking Spanish “could get me into a good job.” Delilah’s mother also allowed her to use the computer at home to learn French on Rosetta Stone. Delilah’s linguistic funds of identity were fueled by her family’s encouragement and the resources they invested in her multilingualism. However, the value of primary language skills was limited to an instrumental function of a getting an unknown future job rather than immediate application to Delilah’s current schooling.

Most comments by adults at school regarding students’ primary language reflected a similar view of linguistic resources and worked to reinforce marginalized Institutional Identities of English learners and the diminished role of primary language resources. According to Gee (2000-2001), Institutional Identities must be sustained through discourse and dialogue. During individual teacher interviews, I asked the three teachers whether they considered a student’s home language other than English to be a
strength. Their positive responses applied only to ambiguous potential long term advantages related to getting a job, and offered little to no relevance to the students’ current education. For example, the teacher with the fewest English learners in the present class, but with extensive experience with them in the past gave this response:

Excerpt 7.1: May 17, 2017
Fifth/Sixth Grade Teacher Interview

Uh, I would consider it to be a strength long term. I think in the beginning, it could cause struggles because they want to be like the other kids and they want to get doing everything. So long term it becomes a strength, but I think when they’re starting off in school it's definitely a struggle, so… I’m glad I only have one remaining English language learner because, and he doesn’t care if he’s one of those personalities, you know, but I find really working with the vocabulary and before we start any kind of project or any activity really frontloading strategies to them and the vocabulary and getting them ready and building the background knowledge because so many times I find they don’t know what we’re talking about on something that we as Americans just know.

According to this teacher, a student’s home language can cause struggles because it prevents English learners from “doing everything,” and only “becomes” a strength in the long term; The teacher reported frontloading vocabulary and building background knowledge as important to instruction because English learners often “don't know what we’re talking about on something that we as Americans just know.” Using the exclusive third person “we” reflected an aspect of the Institutional identity called “English learners” as outsiders, and not privy to the common knowledge(s) available to the group called “Americans,” even though the English learners in the study were born in the United States as Americans.

The fourth grade teacher also considered having another language a strength, but only for certain purposes (see Excerpt 5.3). For this veteran teacher of thirty years who
identified as a “second language learner,” speaking a language other than English could “open doors that otherwise wouldn’t” and made it easier for students learn third, fourth and fifth languages. The notion that speaking other languages leads to “open doors” reinforces the narrative of ambiguity surrounding the benefits of bilingualism. The teacher also stated the limited conditions under which primary languages were helpful in school. Primary languages were only helpful when students were “fluent” in the language or “at least able to go back and forth.” Long Term English Learners in recent studies were reported to be orally proficient (fluent) in English and their primary language, but experienced a paucity of opportunities to develop their primary language literacy skills and the academic language in English necessary to be successful in school (Menken & Klein, 2010; Olsen, 2010). Very few English learners or other students receive instruction in third, fourth, or fifth languages in U.S. public schools, which renders that possible benefit immaterial.

The third teacher in the study, a newly credentialed long-term sub, represented the only teacher in the study who mentioned observing students’ use of Spanish in her fifth grade classroom.

Excerpt 7.2: May 11, 2017
*Fifth Grade Teacher Interview*

I hear a lot of Spanish words just being thrown out like casually in our class, so I feel like it’s a good bonding thing for them as a whole… like they have that um, connection, I guess I could call it. Like I can see that it’s something that they really all pretty much value, and it’s comforting to them, I think…I know that they speak Spanish obviously with their parents, but overall I haven’t really seen too much about their home culturally.
The Spanish she heard “just being thrown out like casually in our class” functioned as a bonding experience for students, offering them a sense of comfort and solidarity as a shared value. However, the teacher remained unaware of their cultural resources, outside of speaking Spanish casually, that served as their funds of identity.

My third finding from my study involved how students’ aspirational funds of identity were empowered or constrained by the mediation (or lack thereof) of others. Yosso (2005) defined aspirational capital as “the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (p. 77). She further explained that aspirational capital is developed within social and familial contexts through storytelling and advice. Students in my study exhibited conflicting aspirations when their desires for the future did not match their parents’ aspirations for them or they were unaware of their teacher’s perspectives of their abilities. Very few references to future aspirations surfaced in their artwork and accompanying interviews. To identify their aspirational funds of identity, I asked questions regarding their aspirations during the small group follow up interviews that I conducted with each of the focal students by grade level. Several students reported advice from their parents that conflicted with their own aspirations. For example, Delilah, Amber, and Howard reported that their parents wanted them to become a doctor or lawyer, but they desired to be a 911 operator, an artist, or a cop, respectively. Others’ aspirations matched their parents’ wishes for them to be a veterinarian or police officer, or they reported no specific input from parents at all. For example, Christa shared that her mother told her to “just follow your dreams.”
Some students also expressed a responsibility to take care of family in their future. When asked what they thought they would be doing ten years from now, Kaili and Pedro referred to taking care of a parent and making money to help out their family. Most of the focal students desired to attend college, but their reasons for doing so had little to do with achieving their occupational goals. They listed getting smart, getting scholarships, or “to make my mom happy” as reasons for going to college. Howard wrote that he did not want to attend college because he wants to stay with his family. Interestingly, Howard’s teacher told a story about a science presentation in which Howard, a student with a “flat” affect, became a different person when animatedly sharing his research report. The same teacher reported that she saw Tommy, another focus student, as a future engineer based on his aptitude and interest in the classroom robotics program. Tommy reported that his mother wanted him to become a cop “because cops are respected,” but ten years from now, he said he saw himself as a cholo, a gangster. Neither Howard nor Tommy appeared to be aware of the aspirations their teacher had for them. Somehow, those possibilities were lost in translation. Perhaps if their teacher communicated these ideas to them directly, their vision for the future could expand to consider broader opportunities available to them.

The fourth finding of my study deals with their social funds of identity and school. Fairbanks and Ariail (2006) examined ways that peer relations influenced students’ perspectives on schooling and shaped identities. They found that for one of the girls in their study, school represented a means to develop her social networks through the playing on the basketball team. Melanie’s social group revolved around a few close
friends at school who played basketball with her, and she maintained her grades to stay eligible for the team. Even though Melanie’s mother and coach encouraged her to do well academically, her disposition toward school as just a means for her to play basketball did not change.

Similarly, in my study, I found that students’ main orientation toward school centered on relationships with friends or the sports they played together. Although most focal students reported that they felt it was important to get good grades in order to advance to the next grade or graduate, the only occurrences of the word “school” on their artwork accompanied the name of a specific friend or group of friends they knew from school. Several others discussed sports they played with friends at school such as soccer or hockey. Pedro, who played on the school hockey team and drew two hockey sticks on his self-portrait, declared, “I don't want school to end because it’s boring at my house, like we don't get do nothing…Like, I want to go out with my friends, but my mom doesn’t let me.” For Pedro, school served as a surrogate source of social interaction when his relationships at home were constrained by his mother’s rules. Only one focal student included the words “my teacher” in her significant circle, but placed the words toward the edge of the circle, away from the center where the most important items were written. Stories about academics or school experiences related to learning remained conspicuously absent in the data, drowned by the tidal wave of school peer culture.

The absence of references to academics was even more pronounced in light of the unique culture of Daybreak Academy. The fifth finding from my study describes a mismatch between students’ orientations to school as mainly a source of social
interaction with friends and the institution’s efforts to create for each child the identity of a “scholar.” Daybreak Academy’s Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), required by the California Department of Education, boldly claimed, “The scholars of “Daybreak Academy” will experience a physically and socially-emotionally safe learning environment in which they feel respected, accepted, and fulfilled through an engaging, strength-based philosophy.” Students received a rigorous academic program combined with a focus on “discovering scholars’ interests and talents and converting them into strengths through a plethora of enrichment activities” (Daybreak Academy website, 2017). Every adult at Daybreak referred to students as “scholars” throughout the day. In doing so, the school ascribed to each child an Institutional identity of “scholar” and differentiated between a scholar and a student. According to Gee (2000-2001), Institutional Identities can be assigned by an institution and require discourse and dialogue to sustain them. The principal, Dr. Schmidt, initiated and maintained a school culture in which institutional discourse surrounding students bestowed upon them a scholarly identity. However, none of the focus students used the word “scholar” on any of their artwork or in interviews to describe their identities. In addition, there was not a uniform understanding among teachers related to a scholarly identity. One teacher made this observation:

Excerpt 7.3: May 17, 2017
*Fifth/Sixth Grade Teacher Interview*

Jenna: And your school refers to students as scholars. How do you think that might affect how students see themselves in relation to their schoolwork?

Teacher: Uh, I, I don’t know. Sometimes I feel like they don’t understand exactly
what a scholar is, and it’s just another word for them. It’s kind of like going into Starbucks and hearing frappe, I mean, not frappe, but like venti, I just want a coffee, what size is it? Know what I mean? So I don’t think, to be honest with you, I don’t think that they -a lot of my, especially my English language learners, their parents aren’t college educated, and they don’t have a lot of college-educated influence, so the whole idea of a scholar to them, I don’t know if they totally grasp it.

For this teacher, in order to understand what the school meant by scholar, students’ families need to have “college-educated influence.” Otherwise it’s “just another word for them.” Another teacher answered the same question in this way:

Excerpt 7.4: May 3, 2017
Fourth Grade Teacher Interview

Teacher:…Sometimes I point out the difference between a student and a scholar by saying, “You’re acting like students, not scholars.” I don’t know if everybody does. I’ve done that so that they know the difference between them- what a student is and what a scholar is. I think, to me, a scholar is more your behavior and a student is more who you are, but that’s not the definition used here.

Jenna: How would you describe the definition they use here at the school?

Teacher: Well, they all come, look, I’m not really sure to be honest with you right now. I’d have to look, but I think it’s more like they come ready to learn, and I think most of them do. That’s part of it, but then the other part is what they do with it.

Jenna: So do you think the students see themselves as scholars?

Teacher: I don’t know. I think some of them do. I think they all would say they do, but I’m not sure if they are using the correct definition. That’s why I try to point it out.

This teacher’s understanding of the Institutional Identity created by the school differed from her personal definitions of scholar and student, which focused on behavior. Based on students’ orientation to school as a place to establish and maintain social networks, the
absence of any mention of the identity of scholar in data produced by focal students, and
the teachers’ testimony, it is doubtful that the focal students embraced or even understood
the new identity for them created by the school. Perhaps the school needs to do more to
help students build a conceptual understanding of the term scholar as the school’s
founders intended it. Thus, there was a mismatch between their experiences in school and
the school’s discourse about their identities.

Unexpected Findings

In the course of analyzing the data for this study, a pattern emerged relating to
religious references and symbols in the artwork and student interviews I had collected.
After realizing that these references represented a significant number, I felt compelled to
add and apply a code specifically devoted to spiritual references. I found that the code for
spiritual matters had been applied thirty-four times, representing more references to
spiritual funds of identity than any other single code (linguistic, aspirational, geo-
historical, and social capital), except for familial capital. As a diligent and responsible
researcher, I could not ignore the plethora of unsolicited and unexpected references to the
spiritual aspect of students’ personal lives in my data.

Although Yosso’s (2005) framework accounts for several types of capital,
resources relating to spirituality or faith were not mentioned in her work. To add to the
framework, I propose spiritual capital as a resource students used as part of their funds of
identity. I chose to use the term spiritual rather then religious for two reasons: 1) I
wanted to capture students’ orientations to spirituality regardless of their religious
affiliations; and 2) some of the ways in which students explained these references held
meaning in their personal lives apart from religious institutions. In this chapter, I present a brief review of the literature on spiritual capital in an attempt to define spiritual capital as it relates to the data in my study, and apply it to examine students’ expressions of spirituality as funds of identity.

**Spiritual Funds of Identity: A Unique, Untapped Resource for Identity**

Despite its emergence in other fields of academic discourse, the concept of spiritual capital remains alarmingly neglected and under-theorized in educational research. The conspicuous absence of research on the role of religion, spirituality, and faith in the lives of K-12 students’ has led to a gap in discourse and theory. Philosophers and poets have long recognized the spiritual nature of human experience. The current crisis of capitalism demands that theorists move beyond the exclusive focus on economic values and growth in order to capture a more holistic conception of human well-being, including its spiritual dimension. In an attempt to more fully understand the deeper values and objectives espoused by members of a community, the notion of “spiritual capital” has emerged in academic literature beginning in the early 2000s, mainly in the areas of sociology, economics, and organizational leadership (Middlebrooks & Noghiu, 2010; Palmer & Wong, 2013; Woodberry, 2003).

**Conceptions of Spiritual Capital**

Bourdieu’s (1986) idea of social and cultural capital provided the foundation for several theories of spiritual capital. Verter (2003) most directly aligned three forms of spiritual capital to Bourdieu’s three states of cultural capital, embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital. According to Verter, spiritual capital in its embodied
state, as an outcome of education and socialization, included the dispositions, knowledge, and tastes related to religion. In its objectified state, spiritual capital encompasses religious objects such as sacred texts, artifacts, and ideologies. Institutionalized spiritual capital takes the form of authoritative religious structures and organizations, such as churches, denominations, and seminaries (Verter, 2003). Verter proposed these three forms of spiritual capital to explain ways in which the individual is embedded within religious organizations.

Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2007; 2010) attempted to integrate spirituality with theories of organizational leadership to examine the impact of spiritual capital on service orientation at an organizational level. They built on the broad definition developed in 2003 by Philadelphia-based Metanexus Institute through a $3 million research program to explore spiritual capital sponsored by the Templeton Foundation. The Metanexus Institute defined spiritual capital as “the effects of spiritual and religious practices, beliefs, networks and institutions that have a measurable impact on individuals, communities and societies” (p. 68). A white paper published by the Templeton Foundation in 2005 proclaimed religion “a critical factor in understanding every facet of life from the radius of trust to behavioural norms - all of which have vast economic, political and social consequences” (John M. Templeton Foundation, 2005, p. 1).

Middlebrooks and Noghiu (2010) expanded this definition to include the following components:

Individual dispositions that manifest as a sense of meaningfulness through: (a) belief in something larger than self, (b) a sense of interconnectedness, (c) ethical and moral salience, (d) a call or drive to serve, and (e) the capability to transfer the latter conceptualizations into
individual and organizational behaviors, and ultimately added value (2010, p. 9).

Middlebrooks and Noghiu contended that spiritual capital, as a collection of inner dispositions of spirituality created by a person’s religious beliefs, knowledge, and practices, can lead to an orientation to service that influences organizational practices and culture at multiple levels within an organization.

Palmer and Wong (2013) also applied the concept of spiritual capital to organizations in an exploration of the link between spirituality and leadership orientations in faith-based organizations in Hong Kong. They emphasized spiritual capital as not just an add-on to previous theories. After problematizing the concept of spiritual capital in a thorough review of the literature, they defined spiritual capital as "the individual and collective capacities generated through affirming and nurturing the intrinsic spiritual value of every human being" (p. 13). Palmer and Wong warned of the potential danger of “enlisting ‘spiritual capital’ as a mere resource in the service of financial and economic capital” (p. 5) because of its capacity to transform other capitals through the application of spiritual motivations and values. They emphasize the uniqueness of spiritual capital due to its non-instrumental, intrinsic nature in this way:

Thus, while social capital is usually understood as social networks which can be used instrumentally, spiritual capital changes or enriches the quality of social relationships away from purely instrumental purposes and toward a [sic] affirming the intrinsic value of each person - this effect, in turn, generating even more spiritual capital. The transformational, self-generating and intrinsic qualities of spiritual capital are what make it unique as a form of "capital." (p. 17)
Palmer and Wong explain that due to the unique qualities of spiritual capital, religion, as an organized structure, provides a natural framework and explicit language to discuss the transcendental values and purpose found within it.

Woodberry (2003) also conceptionalized religion as a resource people can access from anywhere, and urged social scientists to include it in their economic models to account for the influence of religious individuals and communities on the economy. He noted, “Religious people invest money and skilled work, risk certain relationships, and forgo chances to learn culturally-valued knowledge in pursuit of spiritual returns. In the process, they build up spiritual, material, intellectual, and social resources that shape both themselves and society” (p. 2). Woodberry also argued that spiritual capital differs from other forms of capital, not in terms of material resources, skills, and culturally valued knowledge, but because religious groups seek uniquely spiritual experiences, stressing the actualization of their relationship with God. As an example, he discussed the Eucharist or Communion, the act of receiving a small piece of bread and a sip of wine. The idea that they may become either actually or symbolically the body and blood of Christ, makes sense only within a religious worldview. The Eucharist has little direct monetary or nutritional value. However, the sense of spiritual well-being that believers experience on receiving the Eucharist reinforces the authority of the Christian tradition to make moral claims on the believer’s life. These moral claims and sense of spiritual strength that results may drive people to engage in other activities that influence society. (p. 3)

He claimed that these religious experiences and teachings can provide the motivation and strength for individuals and groups to reach particular ends while shaping which ends people seek, often using other forms of capital in novel ways. It is this motivation and strength that I attempt to account for in my analysis of students’ spiritual capital.
Spiritual Funds of Identity

In my examination of my focus students’ artwork, their individual interviews about their drawings, surveys, and small group interviews, I found thirty-four references to matters of spirituality. Five of the ten focal students, or one-half of the group, made reference to the spiritual aspect of their lives; four of them supplied significant accounts of their spiritual resources connected to their identity. I considered these encounters as evidence of the impact of spiritual experiences on students’ sense of well being and their identity.

To examine the references to spiritual capital, I will use Woodberry’s (2003) definition describing ways religious experiences and teachings can provide the motivation and strength for individuals and groups to reach particular ends while shaping which ends people seek. A sense of spiritual strength often imparts the encouragement to persevere in activities they may find difficult, such as education. In addition, Woodberry’s notion of the intrinsic aspects of spiritual capital as a means to actualize a relationship with God combined with idea of others as having value as human beings offer additional assistance in the analysis of student artwork and discussions that follow.
Christa’s self-portrait (Figure 4.2) featured several objects and words painted in vibrant colors. When I asked her to tell me about herself based on her portrait, rather than begin on the left with the word Family, she chose to start with the image of the purple cross and the word Jampak in yellow at the top.

Excerpt 7.5: May 11, 2017

*Self-Portrait Interview with Christa*

Christa: Cross because I’m a Christian. I love worshipping him, praising God. At Jampak I learn about the Bible. It's Jesus And Me Performing Arts Camp. Love is important for me because it's something God gave us. I think you cannot live without it. It's one of my favorite words.

In excerpt 7.5, Christa identified herself foremost and primarily as “a Christian.” She expressed her love for God and her involvement in a spiritually-oriented performing arts program where she learned about the Bible. The word “love” on her portrait appeared in all capital letters painted in white inside of a read heart with yellow rays emanating from around the heart. She described “love” as her favorite word, a gift from God, and
“something you can’t live without.” Her spiritual experiences centered on love—her love for God and the love he gave her. The love-gift from God gave her a sense of well-being and meaning because one cannot live without it. After this, Christa spoke briefly about family, and then addressed another spiritual image on her portrait, the small black square in between the purple cross and the heart.

Excerpt 7.6: May 11, 2017
Self-Portrait Interview with Christa

Christa: The Holy Bible is important for me. I almost read it every single day to learn what God wrote and what He wants us to do.

Christa looked to the Holy Bible for daily guidance and direction. The Bible, as a religious artifact, provided not only a source of information on what God wanted her to do, but also an opportunity to engage in literacy practices. In this way, Christa’s spiritual experiences contributed to her literacy development outside of the school day.

Christa’s significant circle (Figure 4.1) also included three words related spiritual capital: Jesus, Christmas, and church. When asked I about her artwork, Christa again began the interview with one of them.
Figure 4.1 Christa’s Significant Circle

Excerpt 7.7: May 11, 2017
Self-Portrait Interview with Christa

Christa: Jesus is important because he’s the one who, you know, whenever I have a hard time doing something he helps me. I just need to lay down and pray. And he hears them and helps me be better in my career and everything. So yah…Christmas is important for me because um it’s Jesus’ birthday. I’m not sure if it’s Jesus’ birthday, but it could be or it could not, but it’s celebrating Jesus’ birthday…Church is important for me because that’s where I learn about Jesus and God and how he created everything and like, how he shows us everything.

Christa relied on Jesus as a transcendent source of help whenever she had “a hard time doing something.” Her belief that Jesus hears her prayers and helps her demonstrates the actualization of her relationship with a divine entity. She specifically mentioned receiving help in her career “and everything.” At this point in the interview, Christa did not elaborate on whether career meant school or a future career, but later in the interview, she included Jesus in the list of people who help her be a better student.
Jenna: Now is there anything on there that helps you be a better student in school?

Christa: Yah. My family, my mom and dad, my brothers, and Jesus.

Jenna: And how do they help you be a better student in school?

Christa: My mom helps me learn a lot. She encourages me just like my dad. Jesus is important to my life a lot. He’s the one who created us. Um, he’s the one that, you, know, gave us life, helped us in everything that we couldn’t do. He’s the one that I praise – I pray for him to hear me and he hears my praise.

Christa credited Jesus with being important to her life “a lot” because he “created us” and “gave us life” and “helped us in everything we couldn’t do.” Therefore, he was worthy of her praise and prayer. Christa attributed the encouragement she received from her parents and the help from her Jesus, who created us, to helping her be a better student in school.

Eddie, another fifth grader in the same class with Christa, also included several references to spiritual funds of identity in his artwork (Figures 6.3 and 6.4) and accompanying interviews. He also started explaining his portrait by discussing the cross, which was purple like the one in Christa’s artwork.
Eddie explained that the purple plus sign was a “cruz.” Cruz is the Spanish word for cross. Eddie drew the symbol of a Christian cross to represent his love for God, an indicator of the importance of actualizing his relationship with God as part of his identity. He also activated his linguistic resources to explain the symbol by naming it with the Spanish word; Eddie’s linguistic capital was influenced by his spiritual experiences. When I noticed that both Christa and Eddie had drawn their crosses in the same color (purple), I became curious to see whether they had maybe influenced one another’s artwork. When I compared the dates on which I met with them, I found that Christa and Eddie had completed their self-portraits with interviews on the same day (May 11, 2017).
However, both Christa and Eddie also included words describing their spiritual lives in their significant circles, which were completed about one week apart from each other and not together. Therefore, I do not believe that they influenced one another’s decisions to include spiritual items in their artwork.

![Figure 4.6 Eddie’s Significant Circle](image)

*Figure 4.6 Eddie’s Significant Circle*

In Eddie’s significant circle, (Figure 4.6), the name “Jesus” appeared at the center of the circle, indicating its relative importance as more important than the words listed at the periphery of the circle, per the directions for the project. Just below the word “Jesus,” Eddie drew the outline of a small cross (plus sign) and filled it in with pencil. Eddie’s explanation of the symbol is found in excerpt 7.10.

Excerpt 7.10: May 24, 2017
*Significant Circle Interview with Eddie*

Eddie: Jesus. Jesus is um, really important to me because without him we
wouldn’t be here, and, I always go to, I always go to church. I go to Catholic school, and they teach me a lot. They teach me a lot of stuff about Jesus that I didn’t know. And, um last Saturday I graduated from ch- um, Catholic school.

Jenna: Oh, congratulations.

Eddie: And then, and then, this is my first year. I need one more year and it’s two years, and then I do my first communion.

Eddie explained that Jesus was important to him because “without him we wouldn’t be here.” He “always” went to church and attended Catholic school as well to learn more about Jesus. For Eddie, belief in Jesus provided a sense of purpose and meaning for him being here. Learning about Jesus in Catholic school also served as the pathway to participate in communion, an important part of the Catholic Church service. Eddie’s motivation to reach a spiritual end, namely, to take part in the communion elements, fueled his willingness to make a two-year investment in his spiritual education. As Woodberry (2003) pointed out, the spiritual capital Eddie sought had little extrinsic value other than the intrinsic value of the spiritual experience of taking communion as part of a religious community.

At the end of the interview to explain his significant circle, I asked Eddie about anything else he wanted to share. In his response, he returned once again to his spiritual capital, as seen in excerpt 6.6.

Excerpt 7.11: May 24, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Eddie

Jenna: Anything else you want to tell me about stuff that’s important to you or
places…

Eddie: Jesus. Yeah, Jesus is really important for me ‘cuz, like I, like I said already, if it, if it wasn’t for him, we wouldn’t be alive or none of that stuff. And I’m really happy about that, that I’m alive, and my mom, um, my mom, and my sister, I’m happy for them that they’re alive with me.

Eddie attributed his being alive to Jesus, because “if it wasn’t for him, we wouldn’t be alive or none of that stuff.” He expressed his happiness for being alive, and that his mother and sister are “alive with me.” An orientation toward the intrinsic value of each person as a created being can enhance the quality of relationships in ways that contrast a purely instrumental stance (Palmer & Wong, 2013). In this way, spiritual capital is qualitatively different from other forms of capital. For Eddie, this orientation led to an attitude of happiness because he was grateful that his family members were alive with him.

Kaili, the only fourth grader with spiritual references in her artwork (Figures 5.1 and 5.2), also chose to explain them first in her self-portrait interview. She painted two large crosses with rays coming out of each one. The crosses appeared on each side of the picture of her and her father playing soccer under a flag labeled Mexico City. The cross to the left of them was blue, and to the right, purple. Kaili explained in excerpt 7.12.

Excerpt 7.12: May 10, 2017
Self-Portrait Interview with Kaili

Kaili: My picture is some crosses because I love going to church…I put some crosses because I’m already done with my first communion and then you have to just like eat this bread and then the beer, and then it’s kind of like, the bread is not that good. I still have to eat it.
Kaili reported that she drew crosses because she loved going to church and had already finished her first communion, something that Eddie was still pursuing as a fifth grader. Kaili’s understanding of communion consisted of eating “this bread” that is “not that good,” and “then the beer,” even though it was most likely wine and not beer that she drank. Nevertheless, it was important enough for her to include in her self-portrait as a part of her funds of identity. Her pride in her accomplishments at church and with communion offered her a sense of spiritual strength (Woodberry, 2003).

Kaili’s spiritual experiences also influenced her use of her linguistic resources. Embedded in the middle of her list of words inside her significant circle, Kaili jotted down the word “Dois” [sic] in pencil and outlined it in black crayon. Dios is the Spanish word for God. It is the only word on the page that is outlined in black crayon; for the remainder of the words, Kaili used a variety of colors. It is also one of only two words Kaili wrote in Spanish, the other one being “tíos” or uncles/aunts in English. Kaili
announced each of the words in her circle starting at the bottom, and when she came to “Dois,” she pronounced it correctly in Spanish as Dios. Later in the interview, Kaili briefly discussed her literacy skills in Spanish, admitting that she knows how to read it, but not how to write it. A reasonable assumption would be that Kaili experienced at least part of her religious training in Spanish. For Kaili, her spiritual experiences proved meaningful to her life and warranted inclusion in her significant circle as part of her funds of identity. In addition, she associated her spiritual experiences with her linguistic resources, demonstrating the influence of spiritual capital on other capitals.

A large purple cross filled the center of Pedro’s self portrait (Figure 4.7) surrounded by a few scattered words, two images of hockey sticks, and the faces of his cat and his niece. At the beginning of the interview for his portrait, Pedro told me he goes
to church every Sunday. Later in the interview, I asked Pedro specifically about the cross (Excerpt 7.13).

Figure 4.7 Self-portrait by Pedro

Excerpt 7.13: May 11, 2017
Self-portrait Interview with Pedro

Pedro: Ok, um, I have a cat that is Ginger and I play ice hockey and I go to church every Sunday…

Jenna: And tell me more about the cross.

Pedro: Um…ah, I’m a Catholic, so I believe in God the Mother. So like, there’s this one story that’s, like, um, three boys was playing, like soccer, and then they saw God’s mother, like out of nowhere; but no one else saw her, only them.

Jenna: And was that story important to you?

Pedro: Yeah.

Jenna: Yeah, what did you think of that story?
Pedro: That…’cause I, like, I felt lucky ‘cause they...they, um, saw her, because it was a really, really good thing.

Jenna: What does that mean that they saw her?

Pedro: That...I dunno, I forgot, but…

Jenna: I mean, what do you think it means?

Pedro: Like, they’ve been really good they’ve never done nothing bad.

In reference to the purple cross, Pedro immediately identified himself as “a Catholic” and declared his belief in “God the Mother” (most likely a reference to the Virgin Mary). Then he related a story he had heard about three boys who saw God’s mother while playing soccer. The story made him feel “lucky” and called the mystical appearance of God’s mother “a really, really good thing.” To Pedro, the boys caught a glimpse of the divine as a reward for moral behavior because they were “really good and they’ve never done nothing bad.” Thus, the story served as a spiritual source of inspiration that facilitated a moral consciousness in Pedro’s life.

Pedro also included the name “Jesus” in his significant circle, not in the center, but just below and to the left of his list of family members (Figure 4.8). He explained it in the accompanying interview (Excerpt 7.14).
Excerpt 7.14: May 24, 2017
Significant Circle Interview with Pedro

Pedro: …And I love Jesus because he created us.

Pedro’s declaration reflected his love for Jesus as his creator, which represented spiritual capital related to perspectives on meaning and purpose in life, the intrinsic value of human beings, and his actualization of a relationship with Jesus (Woodberry, 2003). Though he did not elaborate, taken together with the story about God’s mother from his self-portrait interview, Pedro’s religious experiences and teaching provided spiritual capital in the form of inspiration for moral behavior and a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

The final instance of a focus student’s reference to spiritual matters occurred during the interview with Delilah about her self-portrait. She briefly mentioned church as
an activity in which she participated outside of school. I coded it as a spiritual reference even though data were limited to a one-word answer and Delilah did not make any further comments about it.

Perhaps the most surprising reference to spiritual capital emerged not in data from focal students, but from the school principal, Dr. Schmidt. As a deeply spiritual person, Dr. Schmidt infused her philosophies about life, energy, and community into her efforts to create something unique at Daybreak Academy. In the exit interview with Dr. Schmidt, she shared with me in detail about a moving event that had taken place on the last day of school in June.

Excerpt 7.15 June 13, 2017
Interview with the Principal

Jenna: So, is there anything else that you would like to share about your school or scholars or teachers or families that might help me in my research?

Dr. Schmidt: So, we had our final day on Friday. And it really was wonderfully emotional, and for me it was almost like an indicator that we are hitting the mark when it comes to creating that classroom climate, that school climate, parent involvement - all those pieces. I feel that in all that I do there is God’s presence. And even in public education, I think that God’s presence is what makes something work. We had a circle ceremony at the beginning, and it was so amazing. It was the first time I’ve ever tried this in a school. And of course it takes a village. It wasn’t all about me, but it was something that was just kind of planted inside me that we needed to have a chance for our sixth graders to connect back to the kindergartners and the kindergartners to connect with the sixth graders. So all of our scholars went to the soccer field, created a circle, and then the parents created the last segment of the circle, and each one of our sixth graders had representation within that circle…We talked about how they needed to see every kindergartner and fifth grader just like they are seeing them, and we had them go around this big circle and the little ones had their hands extended and our sixth graders said and it was like an exchange of energy because in life you know you should be giving back as much energy if not more to whatever you do in life…it was so emotional it made me
emotional…Everyone was so quiet, and at the end the sixth graders had a chance to reflect, as well as the outer circle. I’m sure some reflected in prayer, some reflected in meditation, some reflected by just reflecting, but it showed what we can create together as a school. So then after that they had their sixth grade promotion, and that was amazing, too. We had our kindergarten celebration, and that was amazing, too—everything attended so well by the parents and families and grandparents and this and that. We are creating a community and to me, after just two years, that’s our biggest success story. And we have to fill in all the other blanks that will make our dream come to its full fruition.

In this excerpt, Dr. Schmidt describes the “circle ceremony” witnessed by the entire school community on the last day of school in June. She told me that the idea for the ceremony “was just kind of planted inside me” and it was the first event of its kind at the school. Dr. Schmidt considered the event as “an indicator that we are hitting the mark when it comes to creating that classroom climate, that school climate, parent involvement—all those pieces.” In the “wonderfully emotional” event, the sixth graders who were leaving the school, connected with the kindergartners by forming a large circle outside on the field, including sixth grade parents who were there for the promotion event later in the day. As students moved around the circle and touched hands, Dr. Schmidt described it as “an exchange of energy because in life you know you should be giving back as much energy if not more to whatever you do in life.”

Dr. Schmidt’s expressed her spirituality freely with me as she shared the instrumentality of divine intervention in her life: “I feel that in all that I do there is God’s presence. And even in public education, I think that God’s presence is what makes something work.” Her spiritual capital and energy influenced her philosophy about creating the school climate she desired for Daybreak Academy. As the ceremony drew to a close, students quietly reflected in prayer or meditation. Dr. Schmidt continued with
feelings of pride and wonder as she concluded that the event “showed what we can create together as a school… We are creating a community and to me, after just two years, that’s our biggest success story.” For Dr. Schmidt, the community included not only students and staff, but parents, families, and grandparents as well. Events such as this simple circle ceremony contributed to the realization of Dr. Schmidt’s vision for the school to be a place where children experience a physically and socially-emotionally safe learning environment where they feel accepted, respected, and fulfilled, as expressed in Daybreak’s goals in the Local Control Accountability Plan. It is reasonable to expect that Dr. Schmidt will be using her own spiritual capital to “fill in all the other blanks that will make our dream come to its full fruition.

There is a desperate need for an approach to educating English learners (and all students) that recognizes the whole person and the many factors that contribute to a student’s sense of well-being and identity, including the untapped spiritual resources they bring to bear on their lives. Throughout this chapter, I explored how students’ spiritual capital contributed to their identities in significant ways by furnishing a sense of purpose and meaning, a transcendent source of guidance and help with life’s problems, and a notion of the intrinsic value of human life. The concept of spiritual capital has just recently emerged in some literatures related to economics and organizational leadership, but remains grossly under-theorized in research related to education. Spiritual capital should not be considered as just an add-on to the list of types of capital, but is substantially different because of its unique nature and its influence on other types of capital. Spiritual capital may present a useful theoretical metaphor, with possible
connections to research on social-emotional aspects of learning and direct implications for differentiating instruction according to students’ characteristics, interests, and needs. Perhaps the concept of spiritual capital will inspire educational researchers to courageously embark on a journey with new directions in scholarship.

**Recommendations and Implications**

**Recommendations For Practitioners**

First, I recommend that schools and teacher education programs provide in-service and pre-service teachers with training in strategies for identifying and incorporating funds of identity into students’ school experiences. Art projects such as a self-portrait or significant circles are simple tools that can be implemented in a way that fits with current educational standards for content areas such as writing and art by expanding them to include a written description of the artwork. This would be especially helpful at the beginning of the school year when teachers and students are getting to know one another and provides teachers with a baseline writing sample as well. Student-generated writing on personal interests and experiences does not violate interpretations of American conceptions of boundaries between church and state, but offers a student-centered approach to teaching that is more effective than teacher-centered approaches. Connecting students’ life experiences to their schooling creates a bridge between home and school that allows students to navigate their education in ways that are comfortable and make sense to them. I would even recommend that the teacher herself complete the art project and written description to share with the class so the students have the
opportunity to get to know the teacher as a person and build trusting relationships with students.

Second, I urge teachers to communicate to students and parents the aptitudes they observe in students while conducting different projects and subject areas. This perspective, along with information on associated careers, could be something the students and families had not even considered as future options and broadens students’ understanding of possible vocations.

Third, schools can recognize and build on students’ social orientations to school to promote engagement. This approach aligns with the emphases in the Common Core Standards on collaboration and communication. For example, offering opportunities for students to engage in collaborative activities such as project-based group learning allows them to learn to work together to accomplish an academic task, meeting both their need for social interaction and academic content and standards.

**Implications for Future Researchers**

My study was limited in that it could not capture all of the kinds of cultural resources that students bring to school as part of their identity. Additional research is needed to further theorize funds of identity in order to connect students’ lives to school. Spiritual capital in particular has been ignored and grossly under-theorized in educational research, yet it emerged second only to familial resources in its importance for funds of identity used by students in the study. Research on spiritual capital in non-U.S. contexts would also yield important findings due to the complicated conceptualization of the relationship between church and state in the U.S.
More research needs to explore ways in which the cultural resources students have accumulated can be validated and incorporated into their schooling experiences to connect the curriculum with students’ lives. Integrating these bodies of knowledge with teaching practice in elementary grades is vital in order to promote engagement in school and avoid the passivity and disengagement that leads to negative educational outcomes associated with Long Term English Learners (Menken & Klein, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

My study validates the need for a more holistic approach to research on student identity, perhaps combining socio-emotional learning outcomes with spiritual capital with due to its unique transformational qualities. We know that the longer a student remains classified as an English learner, the more likely he or she is to suffer poor socio-emotional outcomes (Castro-Olivo, Preciado, Sanford, & Perry, 2011). Therefore, in order to prevent the negative outcomes suffered by Long Term English learners, it behooves educational researchers to investigate any and all resources in students’ possession that can support their social-emotional well-being and motivation.
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APPENDIX A

Self-Portrait Prompt:
‘‘I would like you to show me on this piece of paper who you are at this moment in your life. If you wish, add the people and things most important to you at this moment in your life.’’ (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014)

Significant Circle Prompt:
Draw a circle and place within it the different objects, activities, institutions, and people that are important to who you are. Place the most important things closer to the middle of the circle (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014).
APPENDIX B

INITIAL SURVEY

Name____________________________ Date ________________

Please use the following scale:
1- Strongly agree 2- Agree 3- Neutral 4- Disagree 5- Strongly disagree

_____ I enjoy school.
_____ I get good grades in school.
_____ I work hard in school.
_____ I have friends at school that help me be a better student.
_____ I would like to go to college.
_____ My teachers think I am a good student.
_____ I learn new things at home from my family that help me at school.
_____ Family traditions are important to me.
_____ I like to speak a language other than English.
_____ Speaking more than one language is important to me.
_____ Speaking more than one language is important to my family.
_____ Speaking more than one language helps me in school.
_____ Speaking more than one language is one of my strengths.
_____ My teachers think that speaking more than one language is important.
_____ My favorite subject in school is: ____________ .
_____ I can tell that my teachers care about me when: ______________________ .
_____ The job or profession I would like to be in is: ______________________ .
_____ I feel most connected to my school when ____________________________ .
_____ Some things I like to do with my family and friends are: ____________________ .
_____ I feel close to my family when ________________________________ .
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Questions for Teachers of English Learners

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching at this school?
3. Does your school identify long term English learners or students at-risk of becoming LTEL?
4. Could you tell me more about your experiences teaching English learners, i.e. rewards and challenges related to teaching English learners?
5. What approaches or strategies have you found to be most successful for teaching EL?
6. What kind of professional development have you received related to teaching English learners?
7. What do you see as the greatest educational needs of English learners?
8. Do you see students’ home language as a strength? Why or why not?

Questions for the School Administrator

1. What is your role at this school? How long have you been in this role?
2. Does your school identify long term EL or students at-risk of becoming LTEL?
3. What types of programs does your school offer for these students?
4. Could you tell me more about your experiences with English learners, i.e. rewards and challenges related to the education of long term English learners?
5. What kind of professional development has your school received related to teaching English learners?
6. What do you see as the greatest educational needs of English learners?

Questions for Small Group Grade Level Interviews

Name: ___________________ Grade: ____________

1. I would describe myself as (you can choose more than one): (Please circle the word and explain)

   • American
   • Mexican American
   • Mexican
   • Mexicano
   • Chicano
   • Other

2. What kind of job would you like to do when you grow up?

3. What kind of job does your family want you to do? Do they talk to you about it?

4. Do you plan to go to college? Why or why not?

5. Is it important to get good grades in school? Why or why not? How do you do it?

6. What does it mean to be successful or unsuccessful? How does someone become successful?

7. Is there a person in your family or that you know that you think is successful? Who is it and how do you know they are successful?

8. What do you think you will be doing ten years from now?