Ethnic Minority-Cultured Students and Classroom Engagement

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ETHNIC MINORITY-CULTURED STUDENTS AND CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

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WHO AM I?

I am a PGR investigating the intersectionality of factors such as ethnicity, gender and social class and its role in students' engagement in and participation with mathematics tasks and from a socio-cultural perspective.

EXTRACT 1 - VIGNETTE I

Mr. William turns to Abdul-Majeed, who is still involved in the pretend fight, and sends him outside of the classroom. It's only in this moment that Alia (one of the two girls in the group) looks over to Pierce, who is still struggling with the starter (as he has only got the first answer right so far), and shouts the answer (to 9 x 8) out to him. "74", she says. This is quickly followed by an insult by her. "Bullshit", she says. However, she also realizes that her solution is wrong and turns around to other groups for assistance. "72", she shouts this time. "56", she shouts next as an answer to -7 x 8.

EXTRACT 2 – VIGNETTE II

It is Group B's turn and the student selected (through the random generator) is Mohammed, who has remained quiet throughout the lesson so far. He is given the task of explaining the concept of multiplication through 'partitioning' of two and three digit numbers using a worked example, which is as follows:

100 x 59

Mohammed does not say anything, but starts to write on the board. He has written the following so far:

59 x 99

5900

CONTD.

At this stage, Mr. William asks Abdul (another student from Mohammed's group) to assist him. Abdul's role in this situation is to not only assist Mohammed but to also act as a translator so that Mr. William can communicate with him with regards to this task (as Mohammed is not a fluent speaker). Therefore, Mohammed tells Abdul what he is doing and adds the following to the board:

59 x 99

            5900
           59

CONTD.

This leads to further confusion. Prompted by Mr. William's request for clarification, Abdul takes the marker and does the following changes in his attempt to convey Mohammed's communication. He completes the task as Mohammed is telling him to do in Arabic:

59 x 99

100 x 59 = 5900

$$\begin{array}{r} -59 \\ \hline 5841 \end{array}$$

Having understood what Mohammed is trying to do, Mr. William then says to Abdul, "Ask him to partition 59", which he does. Mohammed then writes a 50 and a 9 on the board.

BOURDIEU'S THEORY: DOMINANT VS DOMINANT?

AbdulM

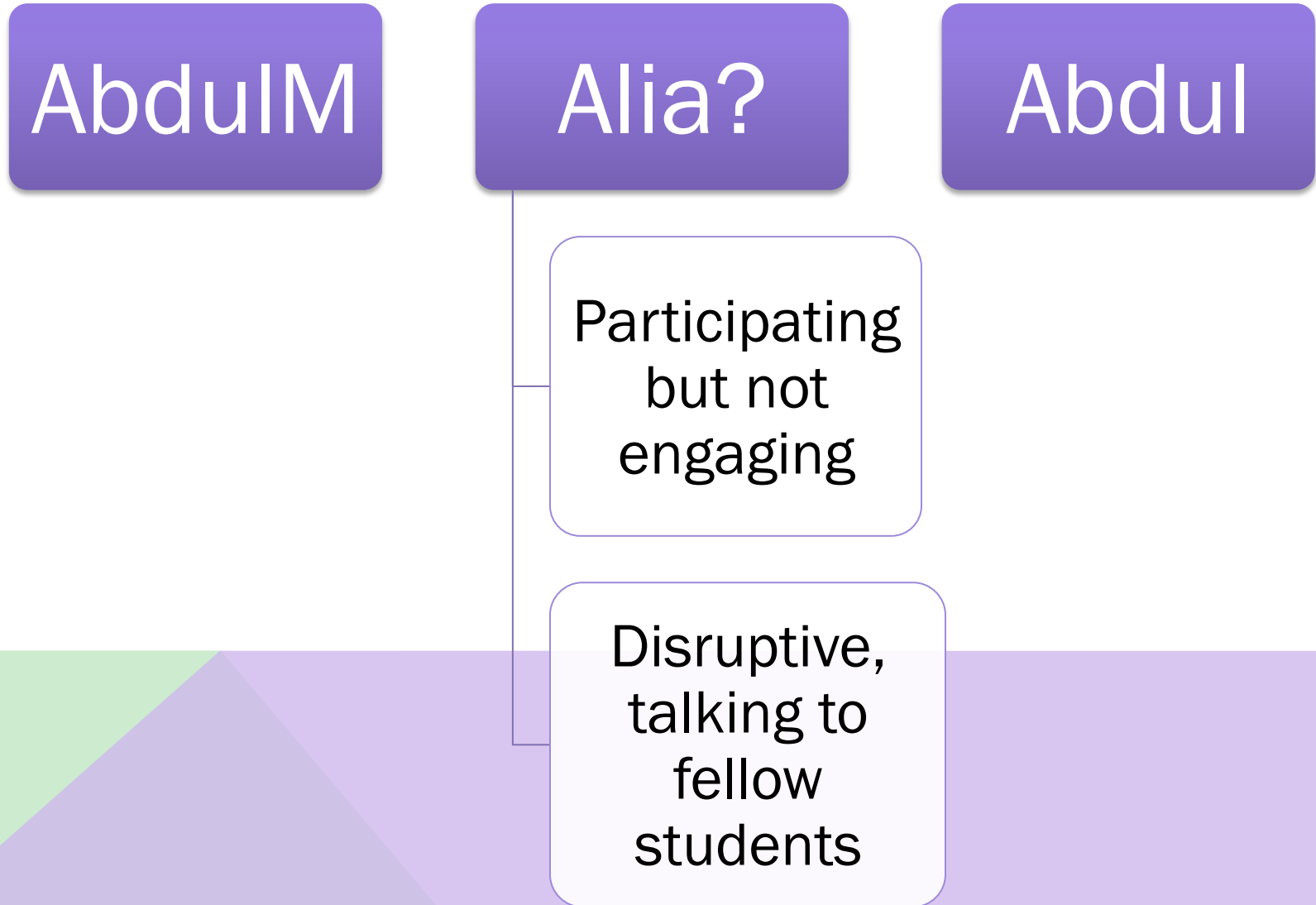Disengaged, involved in a pretend fight → has friends who are also disruptive

Lack of mathematics cultural capital

Abdul
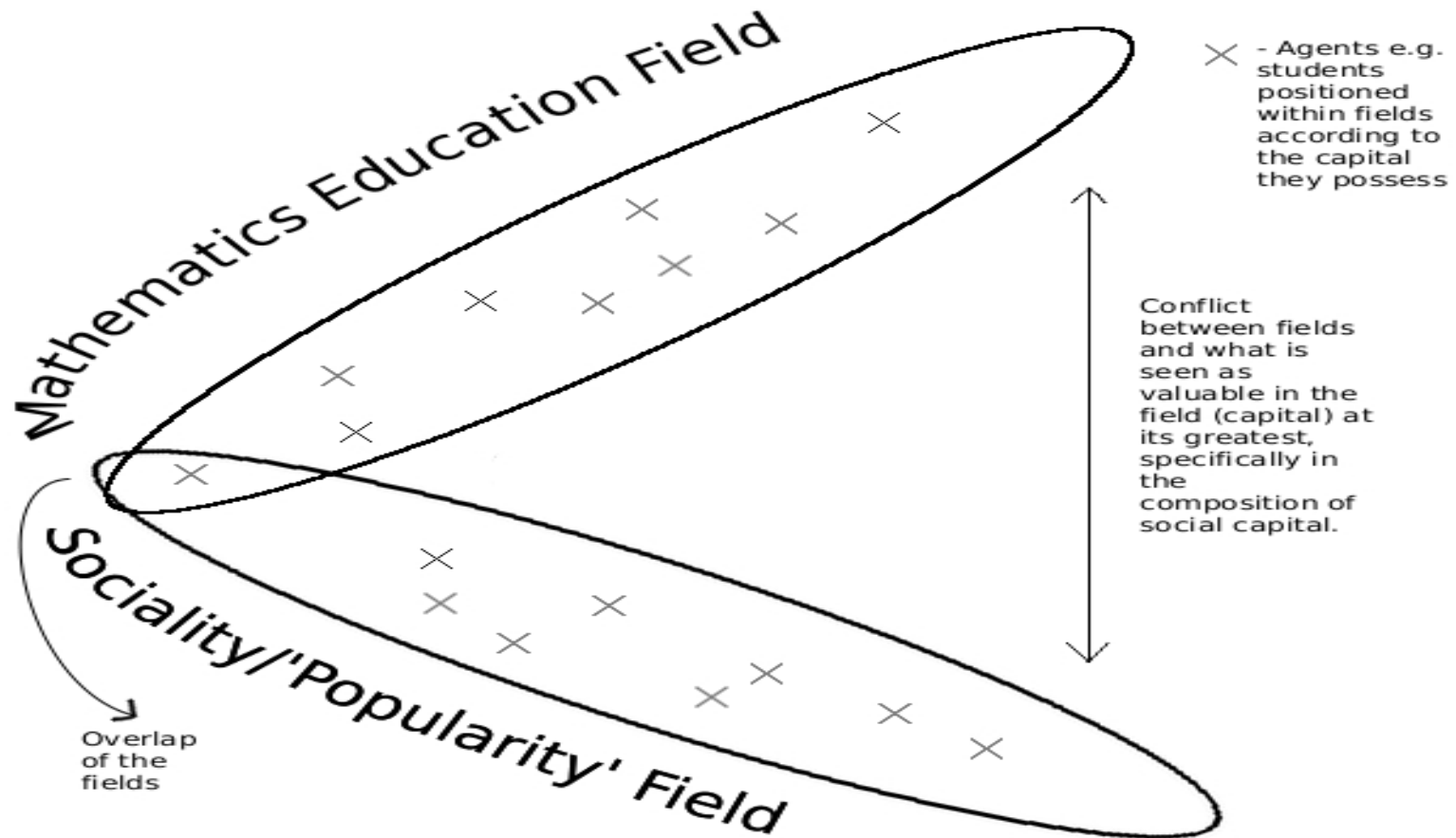
Linguistic & mathematics cultural capital

Engaging with teacher as well as fellow peers.

BOURDIEU'S THEORY CONTD.

AbdulM

Alia?

Abdul

Participating but not engaging

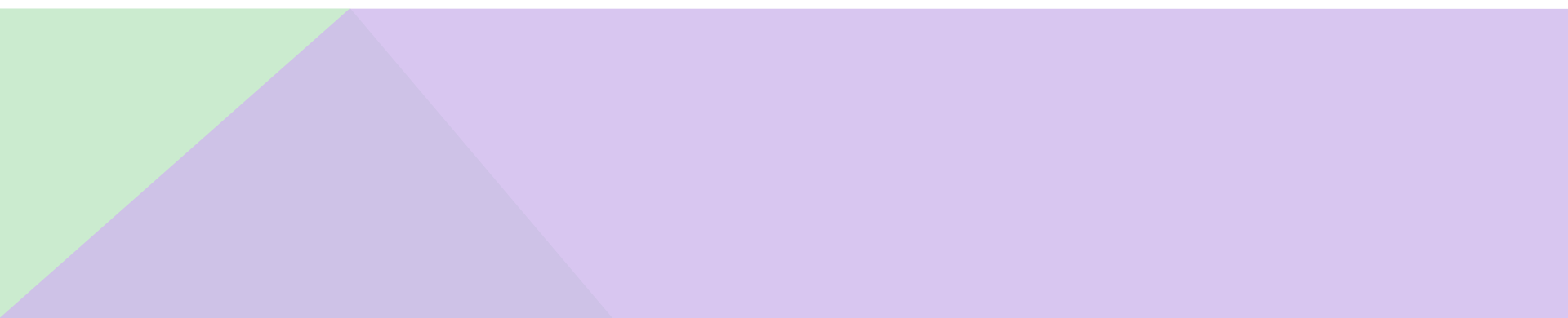Disruptive, talking to fellow students

CONFLICT WITHIN COMPOSITION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL VS CONFLICTS BETWEEN FIELDS IN THE SAME FRACTION OF SOCIAL SPACE I.E. CLASSROOM

CHAT PERSPECTIVE

"An activity system contains a variety of different viewpoints or "voices," as well as layers of historically accumulated artifacts, rules, and patterns of division of labor. This multivoiced and multilayered nature of activity systems is both a resource for collective achievement and a source of compartmentalization and conflict." (Engeström, 1998: 78)

ENGESTRÖM 1987

Diagram obtained from Cole (2007).

Tertiary contradiction:

For example, the shift from a dominant motive of a primary school student going to school to a culturally more advanced motive

WHY THE CONFLICT BETWEEN DOMINANT PRACTICES…IS IT THE MOTIVE?

Leont'ev 1947

Structure of Activity:

Activity → Motive
Actions → Goals
Operations → Conditions

ACTIVITIES DIFFERENTIATED BY MOTIVES

1. One which is characterised by engaging with schooling and pleasing the teacher i.e. the activity of 'doing mathematics' → Abdul.

2. Another which is characterised by impressing the peers and displeasing the teachers i.e. being popular within the 'street crowd'/peer groups → Abdul-Majeed.

Alia again is trying to be engaged in both activities simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

- Although the application of Bourdieu's theory of practice allows me to address the positionality of students in a mathematics classroom in terms of capital (i.e. mathematics cultural capital, linguistic capital, social capital, etc.) and outline the dominant practices within such a fractions of social space, it does not give me the tools to investigate conflicts between overlapping fields within the classroom.

- Here a synthesis of the CHAT (i.e.. Leontiev's notion of three level activity) with Bourdieu's theory allows me to analyse the above problem further by investiaging e.g. why for some students such as AbdulM there is a mis-alignment between his motive and the school's motive leading to a dip in his mathematics results.

MANY THANKS FOR LISTENING!

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