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ABSTRACT
                As part of a larger ethnographic project addressing
the construction of gender through literacy, this study focused on
understanding how the children in one writing process classroom
expressed their social selves in their written compositions, as well
as how those compositions were engineered within the social dynamics
of the classroom. The study considered written narratives, their
nature, content, and the processes of their creation, in order to
illuminate gendered patterns and the relationship among gender,
ethnicity, culture, and social class. A participant observer
conducted the study by spending 2.5-hour reading/writing blocks on
one to three mornings each week during two consecutive school years
in a school located in a poor, Latino, working-class neighborhood.
Most of the children were immigrants, the classroom was
Spanish-English bilingual, and all students were limited in their
English proficiency. Data were gathered from 301 student-created
books and analysis of their authorship, topics, characters, and
illustrations. The analysis found that students struggled to
understand their social identities through their narrative writing,
that they wrote themselves into a range of possible existences, and
that they displayed their understanding of the possibilities that
were available to them, depending in part on their gender and social
class. In general students did not voluntarily cross gendered borders
in their writing, and when they did, their crossings were not
equilateral: girls were more likely to move into territory that was
defined by boys than vice versa. Appendices contain a list of topics
of student-authored books and titles of classroom-published books in
English and Spanish. (Contains 36 references.) (JB)

Good guys and "bad" girls:
Gendered identity construction in a writing workshop

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Good guys and "bad" girls: Identity construction in a writing workshop

Quiero trabajar como juez. Antes quería ser policía, pero después se me cambió la idea y quería ser abogado, y ahora quiero ser juez. Como Fernando ha publicado libros, y yo los leo, y veo ideas. Y él hizo un libro de reciclaje, y me gustó porque él era pobre, y empezó a juntar botes, y se hizo rico. Después tenía una casa grande, y después sigó juntando botes, y se hizo juez. . . .

(I want to work as a judge. Before I wanted to be a police officer, but then I changed my mind and wanted to be a lawyer, and now I want to be a judge. Because Fernando has published books, and I read them, and I get ideas. And he made a book about recycling, and I liked it because he was poor, and he started to collect cans, and he got rich. Later he had a big house, and then he kept collecting cans, and he got to be a judge.)

The children that I observed in a writing workshop environment during two overlapping school years, like the children studied by Dyson (1989; 1993; 1994), were actively engaged in the construction of their own social identities, and they experimented with multiple possibilities for themselves in their stories as they sought to make sense of what it meant to be girls or boys, rich or poor, brown or white, good, bad, beautiful or smart. In the pages that follow, I will describe the kinds of identities and social positions that this group of Latino and Latina students tried on in their writing, and consider the implications of writing workshop environments for both expanding and delimiting the range of possible identities available to students, at least on paper, if not in their lives.

The study is part of a larger ethnographic project which addresses the construction of gender through literacy across a range of practices in two elementary school classrooms. Here I focus on one of those two classrooms, and on one arena for the gendering of literacy: that of the students' written narratives. In this paper, I examine the nature and content of the children's stories, as well as the processes through which they were created. I aim to illuminate gendered patterns as well as insights into the relationship between gender, ethnicity, culture, and social class as understood and expressed in the writing of these young people.

Theoretical Framework

The larger project is framed within a social practice perspective on the construction of both literacy and gender. A social practice approach to literacy suggests that what it *means* to be literate can only be understood in relation to the practices through which literacy is enacted in any given sociocultural context. In other words, there is no such thing as literacy in the abstract; we construct notions of literacy through particular kinds of engagement with print and through the values that we attach to those forms of engagement--practices and values which are profoundly social in nature. There is a large body of literature which addresses literacy as a sociocultural phenomenon both in and out of school and which examines variations in literate practices across diverse contexts. (See for example Baker, 1993; Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Edelsky, 1986; Gee, 1990; Green & Meyer, 1991; Gutierrez, 1993; Heath, 1983; Meyers, 1993; Solsken, 1993; Taylor, 1983; 1991; Teale, 1982).

Similarly, a social practice view of gender suggests that the meanings we attach to being male or female (not the biological "fact" of such distinction) are shaped through social practices (Connell, 1987; Thorne, 1993). Those meanings can change over time and across cultures, situations, and contexts; while we are always either male or female, the fact of being male or female can have different implications and varying degrees of salience across a range of situations, and in interaction with other social categories. A social practice view of the construction of gender does not deny a role for biology in sexual differentiation; but it does suggest that biological forces cannot be

separated in any meaningful way from the social practices that reinforce, elaborate, or expand them, and that nature and nurture are mutually informed.

Both sociocultural approaches to literacy and social practices views of gender assume a grounded view of human activity: the focus on research is on *who* does *what* under *what* cirumstances. This could be seen as a materialist bias which directs the researcher's attention to physical details and concrete interactions rather than to symbolic or ideological dimensions. Nevertheless, within a grounded view of material action and interaction, there is still room to consider the role of more abstract, ideological forces, given that values, beliefs, and social norms enter into and partially shape the interactions of people in any given situation. I sought to achieve this dialectical balance by attending to the social discourses that are taken up and given expression by human beings engaged in particular forms of social practice.

With this general framework guiding my larger research agenda, the work that follows in this study is shaped more directly by a growing body of work which explores the social negotiations that are engineered within classroom writing workshop environments. This work considers writing workshops not just as places where children can develop a broad range of literacy skills and strategies, as has been demonstrated in work by Calkins (1983), Graves (1983), and others, but where children learn about what it means to be literate persons, and to be social beings within classroom literacy environments as well as within the larger social contexts which inscribe them.

The work of Dyson (1989; 1993; 1994) is particularly insightful in this regard. Dyson examines children as fully social beings who use language to position themselves in their social worlds, to experiment with multiple worlds of both fantasy and reality, and to negotiate the tensions inherent in their community, school, and peer cultures. She considers the role that both spoken and written narratives play as a means for children to shape a symbolic world over which they have control, with writing serving as a vehicle for establishing social cohesion and for "declar(ing) themselves as competent kids who were members of important social groups." (1993, p. 201). She argues that as children learn to read and write texts they also learn to read and write "human possibilities;" they use their stories to transform images of power and gender, and to deal with the pressures of growing up in a society in which power is not equally distributed (1994). Dyson looks at the developmental processes of individual children but always situated within social contexts.

MacGillivray (1994) focuses more directly on classroom social environments for writing, engaging in ethnographic work in one primary school classroom and identifying salient aspects of that classroom's writing culture. MacGillivray describes the children "mov(ing) among the present and multiple realities of their compositions seemingly as a way to relate to each other in different ways" (p. 260), creating "virtual realities" in which "rules of fantasy were negotiated very seriously and interwoven into talk about the here and now" (p. 261). The children used writing as a way to establish, defend, and redefine their own peer relationships, and to explore the meanings of freedom, power, and fear in their lives. At the same time, writing also served as an act of unification, as for example when the children negotiated co-authorship arrangements.

Lensmire (1993; 1994) provides a critical eye on the social dynamics that may be given free range for expression in writing workshop environments; his work serves as a cogent reminder that children, as social beings, may engage in social practices that are oppressive in nature and that reproduce or reinforce social heirarchies. The children Lensmire studied in his own writing process classroom for one year used writing as a means of establishing and maintaining social boundaries and heirarchies within peer culture, with the classroom appearing to be a much safer and more comfortable environment for some students than for others. Lensmire highlights the "underside" of children's social interactions, and the limitations more than the possibilities of particular social environments; his work provides an important check on more romantic visions of children's social worlds.

Similarly, critical checks on depoliticized views of children's choices in writing process classrooms has been provided by researchers who have explored the gendered dimensions of students' "free" choices of engagement in literacy activities. Gilbert (1993), for example, suggests that process writing classrooms may be places in which gendered stereotypes are reproduced, reinforced, and implicitly sanctioned, given that the stories that are written by children become texts

that are read by their peers. She argues that the content of children's writing should be as important to teachers (and, I would add, to researchers) as the processes through which they are produced, particularly if our goal is to widen the range of possibilities that are open to girls and to boys for subject positions in the world:

> ...story-writing at school may contribute in quite significant ways to the entrenchment of stereotypical gender positions in classrooms. For instance, significant research evidence exists at every level of institutionalized learning to indicate students' clear acceptance of the need to take up stereotypical gendered subject positions in writing...But the significance of this has not often been explored...For the most part, what children actually write about (the speaking positions they take up and the subjects they construct), seems not to be of key concern to many teachers. (p. 193)
> At the same time, other work points to ways in which such stereotypes can be taken on and challenged (Comber, 1993; Kamler, 1993; Kempe, 1993); but not without real challenges (Davies. 1989; 1993; Orellana, 1995).

As suggested by this brief review of the literature, the writing process classrooms that were born out of early research on writing have opened up whole new areas of investigation for researchers of children's literacy. Some researchers have concentrated on understanding the social dynamics of classroom writing workshops; others have focused on examining the products; a few, like Dyson, have done both. Some researchers have chosen to highlight the possibilities that these writing environments offer for children's social development; others have addressed their limitations. Some studies focus on children's agency within particular social environments; others center on the forces that shape students' interactions. In the study that follows, I examine both the social processes that were engaged by students in their writing work shop environment, and the products of those environments; I try to consider both the possibilities and the limitations of free-writing arrangements, and I aim to view children both as active agents who negotiate their own futures and as persons whose possibilities are delimited by the forces and structures that they pick up from the world around them.

Research questions

My work in this study centered around understanding how the children in one writing process classroom expressed their social selves in their written compositions, as well as how those compositions were engineered within the social dynamics of the classroom. I wanted to consider what students wrote about (the topics, the story plots, the characters they portrayed, with attention to individual authors' or groups of authors' engagement with these themes, under different circumstances over time), the processes involved in writing these stories (how multiple authorships were orchestrated, the sources of ideas for stories, and negotiations of story development), and aspects of the forms these ideas took, both in the texts and in the illustrations that accompanied them. In all of this, I sought to describe gendered relations, to understand the evolution and modulation of those relations in the social setting of the classroom, and to examine their expression in written form.

The focal questions of my research can be summarized in the following:

- **What processes are involved in the production of these stories?**
  -How are multiple authorships negotiated?
  -In what ways do the authors' social relationships influence the nature of the topics, plots, themes, and characters portrayed in the books?
  -In what ways can these processes be considered gendered?

- **What patterns are evident in the products of this writing workshop environment?**
  -What topics do students select for their books?
  -What themes are evident in their stories?
  -What characters do they present?

-In what ways are these patterns gendered?

- **What insights do the processes and products of this writing workshop provide into the children's understanding of their own actual and potential social positions in the world?**

Participants and setting

I had visited Carol Lyon's[1] ungraded primary classroom while employed as a research assistant on another research project (Rueda & García, 1994), and had been impressed by the sheer amount of books that students produced in her classroom. I later resumed contact with Carol and arranged to observe in her classroom for the remainder of that school year, and then extended my participant observation into the following year, when she moved along with the majority of her students to form a third-fourth combination class.

The school was located in a Latino working-class neighborhood in one of the poorest suburbs in the nation; the majority of the students qualified for free lunches under federal income guidelines. Most of the children were immigrants or the children of immigrants from various regions of Mexico; a smaller number were recent immigrants from Central or South America.

The classroom was a Spanish-English bilingual classroom. All of the students were classified as "limited" in their English proficiency, according to state guidelines, and although Carol allowed the children the option of reading, writing, or speaking in English as well as in Spanish, all of the students consistently worked in Spanish (except one who showed a preference for English in oral language), and except during a period devoted to ESL each day, Spanish was the language of instruction. Carol was not a native Spanish speaker, but she was fluent in the language, and used it in both her professional and personal life on a daily basis. She was also committed to providing a solid base for students' first language development, and was an outspoken advocate of bilingual/bicultural education. Carol had taught in the school district for ten years.

As an ungraded primary setting, there were approximately ten students in each of grades one, two and three in the first year of the study, with some fluctuation as a few students entered or exited from the classroom due to changes of address. The fact that the classroom had a mixture of ages adds a further dimension to the research; this was not a central focus of this inquiry, but certainly played out in the topics and content of students' books, and became an even more important element when I made the decision to follow this classroom into a second year. All of the second and third graders remained with Carol for the second year of the study, when the classroom was redesignated as a third-fourth combination; only the first graders dropped out, to be replaced by eight additional third and fourth graders. There were slightly more boys than girls in the classroom, although the ratios fluctuated over time; in all, 23 boys and 16 girls were in the room for some period of time during the two years, though never more than 35 total at any one time. During the most stable period, there were 17 boys and 15 girls.

Methods

I was engaged in this classroom as a participant observer during the approximate 2 1/2 hour reading/writing block on one to three mornings each week during two consecutive school years: from January through June in Year 1, and from July through December in Year 2, plus eight follow-up visits from January through June to observe specific aspects of the writing process and to follow the continued production of classroom books. The school operated on a year-round schedule, and so the class was not in session for three weeks during each of the months of April, July, October, and January.

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[1] Pseudonyms have been used for the teacher, the students, and the school. I refer to the teacher by her first name because this seems most consistent with the classroom power relations that she preferred. Most students referred to her as is "Maestra" or "Teacher;" at other times they called her "Miss Lyons;" I rarely heard them use her first name. but occasionally they would write to her as "Carol" in their dialogue journals.

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My observations in the classroom focused on the social dynamics of the writing process. I noted where students sat and with whom they worked, and considered gendered patterns in those arrangements. I also engaged in semi-formal and informal interviews with the students and teacher about the writing process; in these I sought to understand how literacy was viewed by members of the classroom and the role it played in their lives, as well as details of the choices students made in producing the texts (topic selection, negotiation of authorships, development of the plots, etc.). I took field notes while participating with students in the classroom; after leaving the classroom, I typed and elaborated them, resulting in approximately 300 pages of elaborated notes.

The main focus of this study was on the production of student-authored books, and so a large aspect of the data collection involved compiling notes on the stories that were produced. Data for this study are comprised of notes from 149 books from the first year of the study, and 152 books from the second year. The books from the first year represent the majority of the books that the first, second, and third graders who comprised the classroom wrote during that year. The books from the second year include all but eighteen books that were published during the first nine months of school by students who were then in the third and fourth grades; the eighteen missing titles had been token home by the students before I could read them.

I collected and read all of the books, and took detailed notes on their contents. These notes included summaries of the story plots and extended verbatim excerpts from each text, as well as salient aspects of illustrations, design, and authorship. This resulted in approximately 125 pages of notes about the stories, and 27 pages of summary charts. I also made copies of selected texts.

The following aspects of each book were coded and summarized:

Authorships: I recorded the number of authors for each book, by gender, and organized them in three categories: books by female authors, books by male authors, and books written in co-ed partnerships.

Topics: As a first cut, I read each story, summarized it in brief abstract form, and labeled it with a word or phrase that seemed to capture the essence of the story. I grouped these in categories and made adjustments to accomodate stories in multiple categories where appropriate. I was able to categorize most of the books under a single topic; a few were multiply coded. A category was formed when there were more than two books on a given theme during either phase of the study.

Characters: I coded the types of characters that appeared in the stories by broad categories, and looked for patterns in the number and types of male and female characters represented in books written by male, female, and co-ed authors.

Illustrations: I examined the illustrations that accompanied many of the stories, looking for salient features used to mark gender and ethnicity. In books that had colored illustrations, I noted the hair, eye, and skin color of the characters.

In the second phase of the study, I was able to access classroom lists which grouped the books in order of the dates in which they were written. I used the chronological list, supported by field notes, to gain insights into the socially constructed nature of the topics selected by students, with attention to when and how particular topics emerged and were/were not taken up by other students.

Following this, I engaged a comparative analysis of the topics and content of books written by male and female authors. I sought to highlight general patterns by gender, but also continuously to look for points of similarity in the writing of male and female authors. Finally, I selected representative samples of common story topics for detailed, interpretive content analyses. These analyses focused on representations and expressions of gender (in interaction with ethnicity and class) in the stories, and variations in the approaches of individual authors, or groups of authors, to these issues in their texts.

In addition, I talked informally with the students during every observation period, and with Carol as demands on her time allowed. We met for two semi-formal, audio-taped interviews in her classroom, and for extended conversations at her home on three occasions. Carol also read and commented on drafts of this work. I have done my best to incorporate her feedback into this paper.

Findings

I have organized my presentation of the findings to move from the "real" world of the classroom writing workshop to the symbolic worlds that are represented in the children's stories. To do this, I will first describe the general nature of the writing workshop and the process of book production. I will then present three layers of analysis of the children's socially negotiated worlds: I will look at the relationships between the authors within the workshop environment, at those that bridge between the authors and the characters in their texts, and at those that are represented in the texts themselves. By proceeding through these three levels of analysis, my aim is to provide a window into the children's understanding of their own social positions, as reflected, mediated, and modulated through the fantasy worlds they create on paper.

Overview of the writing workshop

In this section, I will describe the writing workshop environment and the general processes that the children followed in writing their stories; I will consider the sources of ideas for their narratives. and the influence of the classroom environment on both process and product. I will look briefly at the teacher's role in the setting, but only in order to define the parameters she established for the classroom. In the remainder of the paper, the words and actions of the children will be the main focus of my analysis.

Students wrote drafts for these stories during an approximately 2 1/2 hour reading/writing block in which they could choose from a variety of literacy-oriented activities such as reading books, listening to books on tape, and writing letters for distribution in the classroom mail system. These contracts were not formalized, although in the second year of the study Carol asked students to keep records of the choices they made and to cover a range of activities each week. By far the most popular activity during the contracts period was that of writing and publishing books.

In the first year, very little class time was taken for discussion of what to write about or how to approach developing the topics, and no topics were assigned for writing during the contracts period. In the second year, Carol did begin introducing potential topics and occasionally assigned students, by teams, to write books on a particular issue at other times during the day. The books that were assigned were not included in my analysis and will not be discussed here.

After drafts had been prepared, students met with both peers and the teacher to discuss what each liked about the story and to offer ideas for developing or revising the texts. In these conferences, Carol frequently emphasized the fact that all suggestions were just ideas, and that each author could decide whether or not to incorporate those ideas into the stories. She generally tried to limit her interventions in the conference process in order to open up more space for peer feedback, which was seen as a valuable part of the writing process. At the same time, she began to model additional strategies and to provide more explicit instructions to students during the second half of the study; she was familiar with some of the debates surrounding Whole Language approaches to literacy acquisition (see for example Delpit, 1986; 1988; Cazden, 1992), and she aimed to incorporate more explicit forms of instruction into her holistically organized program, but always within the context of students' work. Almost all of the drafts that students wrote were eventually published as books.

The children in this classroom seemed to have no problem producing stories, but most did not easily verbalize how they came up with their ideas. When I asked individuals what had inspired them to write a particular story, most shrugged, said they didn't know, or said they had gotten it "from their heads." A few mentioned the influence of other students' stories; a few others said that television served as a source of inspiration. Indeed, a limited number of basic story plots were used for a large number of classroom books, with slight variations on each theme, and a number of others either explicitly recounted the plots of movies or Spanish television novelas, or incorporated elements from those sources in innovative ways. Relatively few books were modeled on the professionally published literature that was available in the room, but the peer-published books were a large source of inspiration for the student authors.

It is important to note that the production of these books--like all aspects of learning in schools, and especially perhaps in a complex, free-flowing, interactive, and richly textured classroom like Carol's--was a dynamic one, which is difficult to capture in the still-life picture of this research

report. As authors, the children in this classroom were immersed in a community of practice that evolved, or simply changed, over time, with all participants in this community acting as joint agents in its construction. The effect might be described as kaleidoscopic; the learning environment--and thus the sources of influence on students' books--shifted, focused, and continuously refocused as members of the community interacted with each other and with the resources of their environment over time. It changed as the children developed new friendships, new interests, and expanded writing competencies, as they sought out different materials that were available to them, as changes occurred and events transpired in their families and communities beyond the border of the school, and as the teacher introduced new topics of study or modified the foci of her instructional efforts, even in relatively minor ways.

Although all members of the classroom influenced the nature of this learning community, Carol undoubtedly had a weightier role, given her position in the classroom, and the dynamic approach that she took to her job. Carol continuously experimented with new approaches both to explicit and implicit forms of instruction, based on the ideas she brought back from numerous workshops she attended, conversations she held with colleagues and with me, or materials she read. She introduced new elements into classroom dynamics through semi-formal lessons, through the books that she chose to read with the class, through the posters and displays that she introduced into the environment, and through the issues that she brought for discussion. All of these things influenced students' learning, their writing, and perhaps especially their authorship of books.

The table of books by topic and the list of book titles by date of publication (Appendices A and B) give some indication of the extent to which students were influenced by each other's stories; as new topics were explored by some students, they were picked up by others, and played out in sequels or related texts over time. Some relationship between topics and the themes of classroom study is also evident; the children wrote about pollution and recycling when they studied the environment, about whales (both fictional and nonfictional approaches) when they studied the ocean and discursed the popular film "Free Willy," and about holidays (again, both factual reports and fictional stories) as each major U.S. holiday was celebrated in class. (Notably, other, non-"mainstream" holidays, such as "Cinco de mayo," which were celebrated both by the class and the school, never became the subject of books.) The children also wrote about events that occurred in the larger world around them, such as reports and editorials about a rapist who was at large in the city at the start of the new school year, fictionalized versions of the war in Iran, and blow-by-blow descriptions of boxing matches in which Julio César Chávez invariably won. Once a topic was introduced, however, it would often reappear in other students' writing, even long after the thematic unit was completed or the once-current event had passed into history. This was especially true in books about César Chávez and the United Farmworkers, perhaps because Carol's interest in the cause of the farmworkers was continuously evident in her words, actions, and classroom displays, and the students took up this cause as their own, or sought to please her.

Gender relations among authors

With the previous section serving to contextualize my analysis, I will now examine the relationships that the authors negotiated among themselves within this writing workshop environment. This is important for establishing the "real" world that the authors structured for themselves within the writing workshop as a gendered one, and for understanding the conditions under which the gendered themes that are discussed later in this paper were forged.

The children were free to write alone or with partners, and more than half of the books were written by multiple authors, but very few girls chose to work with boys or boys with girls. In the first year, of a total of eighty-seven joint authorships, only three of these were of mixed genders. In the second year, there were nine co-ed partnerships, in comparison with thirty-six multiple authorships by girls, and thirty-nine multiple authorships by boys. In addition, there were four co-ed partnerships with the teacher listed as a co-author during the first year, and two co-ed partnerships with the teacher listed as a co-author during the second year; these are not included in my analyses because I was not able to monitor the influence of the teacher in these groups. However, since *all* of the books in which the teacher participated as a co-author included girls and boys on the

publishing teams, it would seem that the teacher's presence played a role in mitigating against gender-segregating forces. This is consonant with Thorne's (1993) observation that the presence of adults minimizes the gender segregation of children's freely-formed groups in school.

Table 1. Number of student-authored texts

	Single authors (Year 1)	Multiple authors (Year 1)	Total (Year 1)	Single authors (Year 2)	Multiple authors (Year 2)	Total (Year 2)
Male authors	27	56	83	28	39	67
Female authors	32	31	63	40	36	76
Coed authors	NA	3	3	NA	9	9
Totals	59	90	149	68	84	152

Table 1. Number of books written by single and multiple authorship teams, by gender.

The mixed gender groups tended to be larger, with seven of the thirteen involving four or more authors. One group involved seven students (three girls and four boys), another five (three girls and two boys), and another *ten* (four girls and six boys). There were two cases of a single girl participating with a group of three or more boys, but in no case did a single boy work with more than one girl.

The only boys who worked in *dual* authorships with a girl were Jesús and Jorge (each with Katia), and Daniel (with Martha--on a book written early in the year when the pair's common background as students from another classroom may have over-ridden any gender segregating forces). Katia in particular was a student who seemed to cross gendered borders more easily than the other students; Katia enjoyed playing soccer with the boys at recess, and she complained to her teacher in her classroom journal about the dresses her mother bought for her. Carie also moved easily among the boys, especially with Carlos, Josue, Fernando, who emerged as leaders in classroom meetings (described elsewhere in Orellana, 1994); she participated as the only girl in another group authorship.

The patterns of engagement described here suggest several things. First, the children seem to follow implicit rules that mitigate against girls and boys working together on stories, making mixed gender authorships the exception to the rule, and establishing the act of writing as a gendered one. Where gender borders were crossed, it was typically done in company with others, with a few girls moving into boys' groupings, but with no boys venturing onto (or being invited into?) the girls' teams. The conditions under which mixed gender co-authorships were formed will be considered further in the next section, in which I explore the relationship that appeared to exist between the authors and the characters in many of their texts.

The authors' gendered relationships with the characters in their stories

In this section, I look at the relationship that appeared to exist between the authors and the characters in many of their stories, and between the authors' social worlds and the worlds they constructed in print. I consider points of similarity and contrast between these real and fictitious worlds, again focusing my attention on their gendered dimensions. This level of analysis is important because it provides a bridge between the real and the symbolic, and gives greater meaning to my interpretation of the tensions in the stories themselves, which follows after this.

The lead characters in the children's fictitious stories were typically named for the author or authors, with each author appearing prominently in the text. In some stories, the protagonists were not actually named, but their gender and number ("three boys" or "two girls") usually matched the gender and number of the authorship team. This suggests that the authors were willing to identify closely and publically with the characters they created and with the activities they had those characters pursue.

Often, the authorship teams were formed *after* a plot had been hatched for a story. When one person had an idea, he or she might go and recruit other authors by saying "Do you want to be in my

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story?" If a student accepted, (s)he might go and sit with the originating author, but his/her level of involvement in the actual writing would vary, despite Carol's attempts to insist that all authors who were listed actually participate in writing the stories. The authors seemed to connect intimately with the texts in which they appeared as actors, but not necessarily with the writing process.

Given this relationship between authors and characters, it seems plausible to suggest that co-ed authorships may have been formed only when a particular story line required both girls and boys in key positions. Conversely, however, it could be argued that pa. .icular story lines may have been *invented* in order to allow a publically acceptable space for co-ed authorship teams to be formed. When I asked Carie, Josue, Carlos and Marco how they had formed their group for writing the story "La niña que se paró en una tumba" ("*The girl who walked on a tomb*"), the boys told me, "We needed, like, three boys and a girl. We were gonna' have a party, so we needed, like, some boys in it. And the girl was gonna', like, die. And Carie was the only girl who said, 'Cool.' So that's how." On another occasion, these same boys said they were planning a book about football. They asked Sarai and Mirna if they wanted to help them. I asked them why they needed Sarai and Mirna to join the authorship team. They said, "because we've got the football players, and now we need the cheerleaders." Carie listened to this explanation and nodded her head in agreement.

On another occasion, two boys had written a story about some Ninja turtles who come to Earth and raped three girls in the classroom (discussed elsewhere in Orellana, 1995). In this case, the three girls were *not* listed as authors on this first book; they had relatively minor roles in the story, appearing only as victims and not as protagonists. In a conference that addressed the use of these girls' names in connection with a rape scene, however, the boys changed the story line and had the Ninja turtles grant power to the girls. In a sequel to this story, the two boys invited the girls onto their authorship team (along with two other boys and another girl), and the group wrote a book about seven Ninjas-- who shared power equally; all seven students were listed as authors.

Overall, the students seemed more focused on the social aspects of the stories than on linguistic or literary ones, and they appeared to negotiate the friendships that appeared in the stories just as they negotiated their own friendships in class. Many mentioned the act of co-authoring books as an index of friendship in their conversations with me and in letters that they wrote to their friends as part of the classroom mail system. This lends insight into why gender segregated worlds appeared in so many texts, as discussed below. It also gives greater weight to my claim that students projected important aspects of themselves and their own desires through these texts; in these texts, the line between their real and fictional lives often blurred.

The degree to which these lines became blurred is perhaps revealed most clearly by looking at the language forms the authors used to position their characters in the texts. They would often introduce the characters in their stories by referring to them in the third person, but after a few lines, they would frequently slip into the use of the first person, and begin to speak in the voice of the characters rather than *for* them. They would write, for example: "Once upon a time there were three boys named Carlos, Marcos, and Fernando. They wanted to enter a car race. And so we asked our parents for permission. They told us we couldn't go." I was present when Carol attempted to call the class' attention to this inconsistency in perspective in a large group strategy lesson, and I sensed that the group did not really understand the problem.

The children also used language forms in ways that revealed their deeply *gendered* identification with the characters in their stories. When girls and boys did write their stories together, they were extremely careful to distinguish between the language forms used to describe male and female characters, stressing the difference between masculine and feminine nouns in ways that was not required, or even natural, in the Spanish language. For example, Katia, Jesús, and Marco wrote a draft for a book called "Dos vampiros y una vampira," ("*Two male vampires and a female vampire*"), and Ofelia transformed "Los tres cochinitos" ("*The three little pigs*") to "Dos cochinitas y un cochino" ("Two male pigs and a female pig") when she, Jesús, and I were thinking of titles for potential stories. In these cases, the children could easily have written about three generic vampires, or three generic pigs, leaving the gender ambiguous (or subsuming the feminine within the masculine, as is the rule in Spanish), but their careful language distinction may be some indication of

their level of identification with the characters, and their concern that *they* be tagged with the proper gender label.[2]

Relations within the texts

The authors' intense identification with the characters is important, because it suggests that the issues the children dealt with, the worlds they sketched in their stories, and the characters they personified were intimately connected with their own identities and their own social worlds--both the actual and the possible, both the real and the ideal--or with the identities and worlds that they were willing to be associated with on paper. The tensions that appear in the stories may illuminate some of the tensions that the children themselves struggle with as they figure out their own places in the world, as they try on potential identities and explore the implications of various subject positions.

In this third level of analysis, I center on the relationships and the characters that are represented within the children's stories. I first look at general aspects of the gendering of the children's stories by considering who appears in the texts and how those characters are portrayed. I consider how the characters in the stories negotiate their own symbolic social worlds, and key in on several salient, overlapping tensions with gendered and classed dimensions that appeared within the corpus of the class' writing, using samples of students' texts to illustrate these themes.

Gender separate worlds

Girls were often completely absent from the boys' stories. In only one story written by a boy was the lead character female, and in only seven books were girls present as supporting characters. Adult women were somewhat more visible, appearing in a total of 36 of the boys' books, but mostly as mothers; adult men appeared in 52 books, in a range of positions, less than half of the time as fathers.

The girls, on the other hand, although favoring girls or women for the lead figures (usually minimally fictionalized versions of themselves) in the vast majority of their stories, did occasionally give b ys or men a central position in their writing. In the first year, the girls wrote two stories that centered around a single man, and one that featured two boys in the lead, plus four books with both a girl and a boy, or several girls and boys, as the central characters. In the second year, they wrote *nineteen* stories that revolved centrally around men or with male leading characters, and two additional stories about mixed groups. The girls also portrayed men or boys in supporting roles in 68 stories.

The fact that gender separate worlds appear in most of the children's stories could suggest that the children see their own social worlds as highly segregated and value such segregation. However, although I did see some spaces of clear gender segregation in the children's work and play environments, I saw many other spaces in which the children mixed freely, both in the classroom and on the playground. Thus, the books cannot be taken as a reflection of social reality; what they may project is a vision of the social worlds that the children feel comfortable proclaiming publically. In a sense, the children (the boys more than the girls) endorse and sustain a *discourse* of gender segregation even as they disrupt or only partially maintain such segregation in practice.

Gender stereotyped illustrations

When women were featured in illustrations, they often appeared wearing princess-like dresses, with large, heart-shaped bosoms; in more than half of the colored illustrations they were blond with blue eyes. Boys and men were rarely represented as blond in either boys' or girls' illustrations, but in a number of the books they were clearly featured with blue or green eyes. As with the gender segregated worlds, this cannot be seen as a direct reflection of the children's social reality; not a single student in the classroom had anything but brown or black hair and dark eyes. Instead, this suggests that even as the authors identify closely with their characters, they construct images of

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[2] I have argued elsewhere (Orellana, 1995), that because the Spanish language is a gender-marked language, gendered dimensions of literacy in Spanish-dominated classrooms may be more evident than they might be in other language settings.

themselves that deny important aspects of their identities; their idealized constructions of gender seem tightly bound up with internalized racial discourses, and they try to claim a stake in white Eurocentric norms of beauty through the characters they personify in their stories.

Thematic tensions

In major themes that run through their stories, the students in this classroom seemed to struggle with their portrayal of their own gendered and classed identities through the characters in their stories. In many of the texts, the children present characters who are gendered in very particular ways, and who stand on the extremes of particular dichotomies--as rich or poor, smart or dumb, blond or dark-haired, and good or bad. The authors also present these characters in different lights, and make assorted judgments on their fates. In doing this, they seem to pick up and express dominant discourses about gender and class that exist in the social world around them and that exert some influence on their developing notions of themselves; at the same time, they also contest, disrupt, and refigure those differences in the worlds they create on paper.

Love and romance

Love, romance, and jealousy were central themes in many of the girls' stories, and a peripheral aspect of others. During the first school year, when the students were in grades one to three, there were six stories by female authors that revolved centrally around romance. For example, Janet and Mirna wrote about a female duck who ignores her mother's advice to find a rich man, instead following her heart, which leads her to marry a poor male duck and have five babies. Wendy, Isabela, Reyna, Sarai, and Mirna joined forces to write a story about butterflies who fall in love and get married; the girls did not adopt Carol's conference suggestion that they consider alternative endings to the story, but at the same time showed very clearly that they saw through the illusion of living "happily ever after" when they warned Carol that caring for babies was often frustrating and much hard work.

There was only one story that dealt centrally with romance that was written by a boy; Mario (a first-grader) wrote about a personified car who married a pink female car ("un carro muchacha"); together they had purple baby cars. Mario was same boy who wrote the only male-authored story to feature a female protagonist. (In that story he wrote about a female elephant whose parents didn't love her because she was ugly, and who wasn't accepted in a ballet class, but who was finally welcomed to join a circus, where she taught ballet to the other animals. Only on stories in which he participated with a group of male authors did Mario deal with more stereotypically masculine themes.)

In the next school year, when the children were in grades three and four, there were fewer stories that followed a simple love-marriage-babies formula. Wendy and Mirna wrote one book about a rose that falls in love with a carnation from Mexico. who then together have two babies flowers--one rose and one carnation. Olivia wrote a story about two mermaid friends, who at first do not have boyfriends ("because they didn't want them"), but then find two handsome boys, fall in love, get married, and have babies. But in general, the girls' treatment of romance grew more complex. Carie and Elsa wrote about impossible love when they retold the story of a man who falls in love with a ghost; Katia later reworked this idea to have a woman fall in love with a male ghost but then stop loving him when she realizes he's a ghost, leaving the man pining away for her (and wanting to kill her) in death. And several other stories evinced the influence of Spanish television novelas, either explicitly or implicitly following the themes of jealousy and betrayal that are central to those genres. But despite the girls' increasingly complex treatment of these issues, most of the books categorized as "romances" did not stray too far from stereotypical portraits of gender.

Two books by Rosa hint at the tensions that some girls may feel between operating within a discourse of love and romance, and an alternative "good girl" discourse, at least insofar as "goodness" is inscribed for girls as students. First Rosa wrote about a girl who watches too many soap operas, talks about them incessantly in school, kisses a boy in school while under their influence, and performs miserably as a student, until her teacher talks to her mother. At that point

the girl stops watching novelas and becomes a model student. In a later version of the story, however, Rosa wrote the following text, presented here in its entirety:

> Había una vez una niña que le gustaba ver novelas. Pero luego comprendió que no necesitaba tantas novelas para ver. Empezó una novela muy interesante y la miraba. Pero ella no solo miraba una, pero otra y muchas novelas. Luego se acabó la novela *Alcanzar una estrella* y no sabía que hacer. Se estaba volviendo loca. Decía, "Quiero ver novelas. Yo no voy a hacer nada en la escuela." Luego ella tuvo que ir a otra escuela. Un día cuando ella se fue a la escuela, quería ir a la casa para ver novelas. No sabía que hacer. Era muy malcriada con su mamá. No estudiaba. La maestra la mandaba cada hora a la directora. Cada minuto decía que se sentía mal, pero solo a propósito lo hacía. Cuando creció, no sabía nada. No pudo terminar sus estudios. No sabía pero nada. Cuando tenía trabajo, la corrían. Así cuando ves muchas novelas te vas a ser adicta y no vas a querer estudiar.

> *(Once upon a time there was a girl who liked to watch novelas. But later she understood that she didn't have to watch so many. She began one that was very interesting, and she watched it. But she didn't just watch one, but another and many novelas. Later she finished the novela "To reach a star" and she didn't know what to do. She was going crazy. She said, "I want to see novelas. I'm not going to do anything in school." Later she had to go to another school. One day when she went to school, she wanted to go home to watch novelas. She didn't know what to do. She behaved really badly with her mom. She didn't study. The teacher kept sending her to the principal. She was always saying that she didn't feel well, but she did that on purpose. When she grew up, she didn't know anything. She couldn't finish school. She didn't know anything at all. When she got a job, they fired her. So if you watch a lot of novelas you'll get addicted and you're not going to want to study.)*

In this text, Rosa describes a girl who displays her resistance both to school and to being a "good girl:" she resists by watching television novelas, which deal centrally with love and romance and which position her within a highly gendered discourse. This leads to her failure to succeed in school and in life. The tensions here resonate with those described by Anyon (1983) in her analysis of working class girls' resistance to school, and the effect of that resistance to lock girls into traditional gendered and classed roles in life outside school.

Rosa displays this same tension in the corpus of her writing as well. She wrote detailed accounts of love triangles, jealousy, and passion in her two versions of *Alcanzar una estrella*, but she also wrote the first piece railing against the actions of a serial rapist who was at large in the town at the time, and a series of stories and journal entries about strong women in her life: her mother (whom she referred to as "la mamá valiente" or "*the brave mother*"), her teacher, the principal, and myself. In none of these were the women described in relation to men; however, beauty and goodness were the chief traits highlighted in each. In these works, Rosa seems to oscillate between playing out romantic fantasies, and protesting against the realities of many women's treatment in the real world that surrounds her.

Good girls, Good Guys ...

As may be evident in Rosa's stories about love and romance, a second major tension that ran through the children's writing centered around what it meant to be good or bad. This tension became a gendered one, because goodness and badness were inscribed differently for girls and for boys, and the children seemed to use these stories to play out different ways of being gendered, and to consider the implications that followed from each.

Most of the lead characters in the girls' stories from the first phase appear to be "good girls;" they are obedient, submissive, passive, thoughtful, cheerful, kind, and peaceful. They either stay at

home or go to a few places with their friends, live happily with their families, and contemplate beauty in the world around them. They live like still-life portraits in homes that have few problems and that seem detached from the world around them, existing in a sort of idyllic social vacuum. When conflicts do arise, as in Denora and Noemí's story about a beautiful house that gets broken in a fight, people come back together to patch things up and then desist in their fighting. Problems are resolved and the protagonists can live happily every after, as in Carie's story called "Los corazones" ("*The hearts*"):

> Denora el corazón es feliz. Dijo "I love you" a su novio. El novio dijo "I love you" a Denora. Se iba a la casa y era noche. El novio estaba a la casa. El carro machucó al novio y la novia estaba llorando. Al novio lo llevaron al hospital. Pero el novio vivió. Y estaba feliz el novio y la novia.

> (*Denora, the heart, is happy. She said "I love you" to her boyfriend. The boyfriend said "I love you" to Denora. She went home and it was night. The boyfriend was at home. A car smashed the boyfriend and the girlfriend was crying. They brought the boyfriend to the hospital. But the boyfriend lived. And they were happy, the boyfriend and the girlfriend.*)

In the boys' first stories, there are a few images of "good boys," who appear as compliant, hard workers and obedient children; but more often the boys assume much more powerfully good roles, when they become "Good Guys" (a rather different construction than "good boys"), who fight the forces of evil. In doing this, however, the Good Guys get to get in on some really "bad" action; the theme seemed to allow the boys to be both good, and very powerful, through character traits that were not as accessible to girls. Many of these books also allowed the boys some vicarious participation in the deeds of the Bad Guys without having to become bad themselves; the authors used their own names for the heroes in the stories and set up the Bad Guys as "Others," but often provided elaborate details of the Bad Guys' dark deeds, and they sometimes wrote avidly about war even as they made their characters resolve their conflicts by waging peace. This may have allowed them to please two different audiences: their peers, who were as intrigued by war and "badness" as they were, and their teacher, who overtly promoted peace.

It is worth noting that the characters who are transformed into superheroes were often explicitly constructed as *poor* boys, and when they became superheroes they often specifically used their powers to help the poor. Through these superhero characters, perhaps, the boys found a way to assume power in a world that typically denies such power to poor, working class children, and to rectify some of the inequalities they sensed in the world around them. This will be discussed later in this paper.

In other stories, the boys did not transform themselves into super-beings in order to play out powerful roles; they found other means to achieve similar ends. In the following story, Fernando presents a poor boy who overcomes great odds by studying hard, earning a scholarship to Yale, and joining the army; there he assumes a powerful position but uses his power to wage peace instead of war:

> Eran dos continentes, Norte America y Asia. Se peleaban por tres años. Había una vez un niño llamado Fernando. Los padres de él no tenían dinero para pagar sus estudios. Recibió una beca y decidió estudiar con Yale. Se metió en los estudios del gobierno. Luego tuvo que meterse al Army y él no quería. Paró la guerra no más porque él no quería meterse en el Army. Ya nunca ni un continente quisieron guerra, y todos los continentes se hicieron amigos y quisieron paz y nunca tener guerra.

> (*There were two continents, North American and Asia. They fought for three years. Once upon a time there was a boy named Fernando. His parents didn't have any*

*money to pay for his schooling. He received a scholarship and decided to study with
Yale. He studied about the government. Later he had to go in the Army and he didn't
want to. He stopped the war, just because he didn't want to go in the Army. Never
again did any continent want war, and all of the continents became friends and wanted
peace and never made war.)*

Although none of the girls ventured into the realm of superhero stories, several female authors
did experiment with more active heroine-like roles in books produced during the second phase of the
study than they did in the first. For example, Carie, Vicky, and Elsa joined together to write "Las
tres detectivas" ("*The three female detectives*"), a story in which the authors are the only detectives
who are able to capture an international thief.

In "Las angelitas" ("*The little angels*"), which is presented here unabridged, Carie carries this
interest in powerful roles to new heights, as she assumes an almost *omnipotent* role, unmasking the
devil, defeating him in a fight, and liberating God himself:

Había una vez una niña que se llamaba Carie. Ella era pobre. Su hermana se
llamaba Denora y su hermano, Danilo. Danilo y Denora eran ricos. Cuando Carie
estaba chiquita, su mamá la dejó olvidada en una tienda. Por eso Carie se hizo pobre.

Un día Carie se fue a una casa para trabajar. El hombre la mató. Fue a matar al
hermano y a la hermana porque sabía donde viven porque Carie le hubo dado la
dirección de la casa.

Luego se hicieron angelitos. Conocieron a Dios. Carie dijo, "Tú no eres Dios."
Carie le quería quitar la máscara. Se la quitó. Era el diablo. Denora se asustó. Carie
peleó con el diablo. Carie ganó.

Estaban felices, pero el diablo casi no se murió. Carie tenía una abuja y lo picó en
las pompis del diablo.

Vieron una casa. Allá arriba fueron para ver algo porque oyeron una voz diciendo,
"Ayúdenme." Era Dios y otros angelitos que el diablo les había sequestrado.

Carie, Denora, y Danilo salvaron a ellos. Celebraron porque Dios estaba muy feliz
con ellos. Los otros angelitos eran muy agradecidos. Hicieron un party. El diablo se
volvió a un angelito.

*(Once upon a time there was a girl named Carie. She was poor. Her sister was
named Denora and her brother, Danilo. Danilo and Denora were rich. When Carie
was little, her mom had left her forgotten in a store. That was why Carie was poor.*

*One day Carie went to a house to work. The man killed her. He went to kill her
brother and sister because he knew where they lived because Carie had given him the
address.*

Then they became little angels. They met God.

*Carie said, "You're not God." Carie wanted to take off his mask. She took it off. It
was the devil. Denora was frightened. Carie fought with the devil. Carie won.*

*They were happy, but the devil wasn't really dead. Carie had a needle and she
pricked the devil in his bottom.*

*They saw a house. They went up there to see something because they heard a voice
calling, "Help me." It was God and other little angels that the devil had kidnapped.*

*Carie and Denora and Danilo saved them. They celebrated because God was very
happy with them. The other little angels were very grateful. They had a party. The
devil became a little angel.)*

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Rosa also experimented with at least one powerful role for herself, along with the strong characters she gave other women in the biographical sketches she wrote. In "Las tres mosqueteras" ("The three musketeers"), Rosa, Elsa, and a third female character (named for the teacher) ride on three horses (named for three boys in the classroom), and go out to save the king's son, at his request. The story ends before we find out if their mission was successful, however, and the authors never produced the promised continuation.

Of all the girls in the room, it is not surprising that Rosa and Carie are the ones who most experiment with powerful portraits of women and girls in their writing. They were two of the most outspoken students in the room, who held their own in public spaces that were largely dominated by boys, and their leads were often followed by other students in the classroom. Nevertheless, the tension that these girls feel about their positions in the classroom and in their texts seems evident. Rosa, after all, leaves open the question of whether or not she saves her prince at the end of her text, and although Carie defeats the devil in a story that she wrote by herself, she seems to do so at least in part to make God happy, and she does not protest against the role that is assigned to her by her male co-authors in the story of the football team and the cheerleaders.

Through their stories, the girls and boys in this classroom seem to acknowledge that there are very different options for being good open to them by gender, with different implications in terms of power, prestige, and influence on the world. The fact that a few of the girls did write a few adventure stories in which they present themselves as heroines suggests that there is some room for girls to cross this gender-marked border, and some motivation for them to do so. Conversely, there were no instances of boys taking up a theme that had been established by the girls.

...And the lure of being bad

The boys seemed as fascinated by "badness" as they were by goodness, and they wrote a number of books whose main characters were constructed as bad boys. Some of their earliest narratives on this theme took on moralistic tones, ending with the boys rectifying their ways (as for example when boys who fought learned not to do so in Eduardo and Carlos' story, "La casa" or *"Home"*) or meeting their just fate (as in Johnny, Hansel and Carlos' account of boys who defy their parents and play video games until their parents break their Nintendo, or in Fernando's account of a man who takes drugs, becomes an addict and a thief and ends up in jail). Others, however, clearly suggest the boys' temptation with being "bad" and with displaying themselves in socially taboo ways. Two books were written about the Super Pedoros (*"Super Farters"*) in which boys who fart have a series of adventures but ultimately die in a fire started from their own fumes; and another was written about the "Super Traviesos" (*"Super Menaces"*)--twin boys who engage in a series of somewhat tame mischief.

In the second phase of the study, the boys experimented with ever bolder characters and with having those characters meet assorted fates in their books. In Fernie and Robby's "Los alrevezados" ("The mixed up ones"), the bad boys come from another planet (where no one loves them--a fact that is merely stated, without claiming this as either a cause or a consequence of their badness), steal things on Earth, laugh at others, live on the street, but eventually die from their own stench. In Carlos' "El super travieso" (*"The Super Menace"*), a boy who fights in the United States and in Mexico gets kicked around the world (literally) as a consequence for his bad behavior. In Robby, Julio, and David's story about three boys who fight in school and get suspended, only one of the boys (the "little angel") is sorry for his deeds; the other boys seem confident in the power of their badness. It was Robby and Julio who also wrote "Los super gordos" (*"The super fat ones"*) and "Los super tontos" (*"The super dumb ones"*), stories in which the authors seem to delight in having the characters engage in socially taboo activities such as farting, saying bad words, and defecating on the seats of an airplane.

Later, Carlos, Robby, Jorge, and Fernie joined forces to produce a story that plays with taboo subjects in an especially provocative way: in "Los cuatro draculas" (*"The four draculas"*), the spirit of four dracula boys' *mother* appears on the scene, farting and calling to her sons as the character "La Llorona" does in the classical Latin American folk tale. The boys later order their mother to make underwear soup ("sopa de chonis") for them to eat:

Había una vez una familia de draculas. Leonardo era el papá de los niños y su mamá era Sarai. Una vez su mamá estaba embarazada. Tuvo 4 niños. Los abandonó porque se murieron los padres. Los niños crecieron y crecieron hasta que tenían 5 años. El espiritu de su mamá venía a visitarlos. Los niños tenían miedo de su mamá. Decía "Ayyyy, mis hijos," y echó un pedo. Los niños corrieron. La mamá dijo, "Ayyyy, mis hijos, no corran, ayyy, mis hijos." Y los niños ya no eran niños. Eran draculas que tenían 29 años. Tenían dientes bien filosos y grandes. Un día regresaron a su casa, y todo estaba quebrado. Encontraron a la mamá que se llamaba la Llorona. Los draculas le dijeron a su mamá que querían comer sopa de chonis.

(Once upon a time there was a family of draculas. Leonardo was the father of the kids and the mother was Sarai. One day the mother was pregnant. She had 4 kids. She abandoned them because their parents died. The kids grew and grew until they were 5 years old. The spirit of the mother came to visit them. The kids were afraid of their mother. She said "Ayyyy, my children," and farted. The kids ran away. The mother said, "Ayyyy, my children, don't run, ayyyy, my children." And the kids were no longer kids. They were draculas, and they were 29 years old. They had big sharp teeth. They found their mother, who was called The Weeping Woman. The draculas told their mother that they wanted to eat underwear soup.[2])

It is worth noting that in this story, Sarai is selected by these male authors to play the less than flattering part of this mother who farts (and who abandons her children, albeit by dying). This raises the question, also raised by Lensmire (1993), of how writing workshop environments may allow authors to use their texts to position their classmates in oppressive ways. The authors do *not* name one of themselves as the father, perhaps because they are not willing to be associated in a textual marriage, and subsequent pregnancies, with Sarai. Although they do not name themselves as the children, the fact that there are four draculas, and four authors, is suggestive of their identification with that role.

By the second or third month of the second school year, however, it was not only the boys who were experimenting with having their main characters do really "bad" things. (In the first phase of the study, a few images of somewhat hesitatingly mischievous girls appeared, but there were no flagrantly "bad" characters.) Three girls (Denora, Noemí and Elsa), first wrote about boys who engage in such socially unacceptable behavior as throwing the baby Jesus on the floor in a Christmas pageant (in "El niño travieso" or *"The mischievous boy")* and putting screws on each others' chairs that puncture their bottoms and send them to the doctor for operation. Still, in these texts, the authors distanced themselves from the characters, and presented clear consequences to the boys for their badness. In the first one, the "bad" boy does not receive any gifts from Santa Claus; during the same time frame, Denora wrote another book in which a "good" girl gets *many* presents at Christmas.

Seven other girls, however, took this theme of "badness" and made it their own. In different groupings over a period of several months, they produced at least five stories in which *they* were featured being "bad," in several cases engaging in taboo behavior that rivaled that portrayed by the boys:

• Vicky and Sarai wrote about girls who rob a store to get stickers after they fight over the stickers they bought. The story promises "to be continued. . . . "

• Carie, Elsa, Sarai and Mirna wrote about three girls who steal money, rob a store, and play with meat in a meatshop. This story also promises "to be continued. . . . "

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- Sarai, Laura, and Mirna wrote about girls who fight with each other and break each others' things.

- Sarai, Mirna, Wendy, Elsa, Carie, and Cindy joined forces to write about two girls who try to strangle each other, make jokes about bodily functions, and destroy things in their house.

In each of these four stories, Sarai was involved as one of the authors, and my observations would suggest that Sarai was a principal force behind the more provocative aspects of the stories. When she was engaged with Laura and Mirna in writing "Las niñas traviesas," Sarai seemed to delight in telling me that "then she (the sister) is gonna' kick her butt, and then she (the other sister) is gonna' kick her butt. Like that." In general, Sarai presented herself as outgoing, confident, bold, friendly, and rather wise beyond her years. The other girls, particularly Mirna and Wendy, were rather quiet, soft-spoken students who projected an image of prototypically good girls: they rarely spoke in public in class, they sat quietly doing their work, and they never broke the classroom rules. Yet Mirna and Wendy wrote a fifth story about mischievous girls by themselves, in which they portrayed a struggle over what it means to be good or bad: they appeared as girls who destroy their mothers' things until their mother sends them away to obedience school for a year. When they return they are "good"--they clean their rooms, set the table, and wash the dishes, the patio, the kitchen, and the bathroom (while their mother cooks and then watches t.v.) Then, however, the girls watch a show on television about two mischievous girls, and once again they become "bad" as they start destroying the house; they remain "bad"--and powerful in their destructive forces--at the end of the book. The story was apparently influenced by a movie that the girl saw, but the girls took the subject and made it their own.

Intersections of poverty, wealth, power, and gender

As indicated in my discussion of the previous themes, references to poverty and wealth were prominent in the children's stories. The boys, in particular, wrote about winning money in car races and boxing matches; they wrote about poor boys who are transformed into superheroes who become rich; and they made frequent references to "los pobres" ("the poor"). By using this term, or by presenting themselves as poor boys who escape poverty, the boys distance themselves from poverty (even as they identify with it), treat it as a condition that can be overcome by those who are strong, smart, or talented, and help to construct an image of those who remain in poverty as nameless, faceless "Others."

Just as in their treatment of goodness and badness, the children treated poverty and wealth as dichotomous, with transformations between the two possible but with little room for middle positions. The constructions of poverty, wealth, and power are in many ways bound up with constructions of goodness and badness, which are in turn interwoven with constructions of gender, so much so that it is difficult to separate the threads of these themes in my discussion. Yet it is in the inter-relationships between the dimensions of poverty/wealth, goodness/badness, and gender that are displayed in the children's writing that the most important insights into the children's understanding of social identities may be gained.

For example, in only one story is a bad child specifically designated as rich, yet in more than a few stories good persons are, and other poor boys become both good *and rich* when they assume super power. Many of the bad children in the stories project an image of poverty (as indicated by their thievery and several cases of homelessness). This suggests that the children may see poverty as a sort of punishment for being bad; the poor that they see around them (and of which, statistically at least, they are part, despite their considerable efforts to separate themselves from "los pobres") somehow deserve their fate. This is supported by the fact that in the one story in which a rich boy is "bad," in Fernando, David, and Walter's "El saborrión, el enojón, y el presumido" ["*The glutton, the mad one and the presumptuous one"*], the rich boy dies and loses all his money to the other boys in the story, who are poor, good, and not presumptuous--and so presumably are rewarded for their goodness. This has important implications for the boys' self-images--they only seem to present

themselves good, and powerful, when they are able to escape from their current class positions; they have to deny who they *are* in order to be what they would like to be.

The girls did not seem as concerned with issues of poverty and wealth as did the boys; they generally dealt only peripherally with the theme, with the following exceptions: Denora, Noemí, and Elsa wrote a story about a poor, homeless girl who entered a singing contest and won $3,000,000. The girl didn't know what to do with so much money; she bought a house, grew up, got married, and "vivió muy feliz" (*"lived very happily"*). Later, the same girls wrote a fictionalized biography of the popular singer, Gloria Trévil, who really did get rich by singing; she sent her money to help her mother and father. In one other story, Denora and Noemí wrote about 8 orphaned rich girls who are poisoned on Halloween, but the girls' wealth was only an incidental part of the story line.

Summary and conclusions

The students in this classroom can be seen struggling to understand their social identities through their narrative writing, where they write the word, the world, and their very selves. They write themselves into a range of possible existences in the spaces that are opened up for them in this writing workshop, and they display their understanding of the possibilities that are available to them, depending at least in part on their gender and their social class, through the characters that they choose to portray and the tensions they explore in their narratives.

Some of the ways of being that students take up in their stories correspond closely with some of their actual behaviors in the world, and some do not. Some aspects of their identities are directly represented in print, and others are transformed, modified, denied, or erased. And some of the personas that individuals assume in different stories contradict each other: they may be good guys in one story, and bad boys in the next; they may be girls whose main dream is to marry a handsome man in one story, and musketeers going on heroic missions in the next. Yet such contradictions are inherent in the multiplicity of beings that all of us are, or at times dare to be.

The "free writing" process that was cultivated in this classroom allowed room for the expression of multiple identities in ways that are not open to students in more traditional classrooms, where writing topics are assigned or where strict regulations are placed on what students can write about. Writing workshops such as this one may provide one of the only legitimate academic arenas in which students beyond the preschool age are able to *play*: to experiment with a range of characters and stories and to try on a number of possible social identities. In this classroom, the stories became a place where the children could be rich, or powerful, or really good, or really bad. They could push at the limits of certain forms of social regulation, as when they wrote about taboo topics without any censure by their teacher. In doing this, they could at times cross borders such as those that are defined by gender, and gain more freedom in their fictitious worlds that they perhaps had in their real ones. For the girls, the opportunity to be bad may be especially significant, given the strong pressures that are typically exerted on girls to be good, and the ways in which their construction as good girls can keep them locked into limited, passive, repressed forms of being, as Walkerdine suggests (1990).

Yet in general the students did not voluntarily cross gendered borders in their writing, and when they did, their crossings was not equilateral. Both girls and boys did some of the "borderwork" (Thorne, 1993) that kept them on separate authorship teams, that reinforced gender-separate worlds in their texts, and that generally maintained their characters within supposedly gender-appropriate roles; but girls were more likely to move into territory that was defined by boys than vice versa. Several girls joined boys' groupings and took up topics that had been established by the boys, while only one boy (Mario) explored more overtly "effeminate" topics such as love, romance, and ballet lessons. Thus, as the work of Gilbert (1992), Walkerdine (1990), and others would suggest, the "freedom" of this free writing environment may be illusory; the fantasy worlds that the children created on paper were largely influenced by the very real social worlds that they saw around them, and perhaps even more by the very real social discourses that regulate action in that world and the define the range of possible identities that the children could safely try on.

The implications of the particular types of border crossings that occurred in this classroom also bear exploration. I am left wondering just what it means for girls to break out of the strictures of the "good girl" mold by choosing to be bad. I am reminded of Willis' (1977) analysis of how working class boys'

resistance to the regulatory forces of school served to lock them into working class lives, and of Anyon's (1983) similar perspective on resistance and reproduction in relation to gender. Are there other ways in which girls can gain freedom from traditional notions of goodness? Are there ways of responding to the girls' narratives that could help them to explore other possibilities?

I am also left wondering how we should respond when poor boys display in their writing their internalization of a work ethic ideology which suggests that anyone who works hard enough or is smart enough can get rich. Should we endorse Carlos' dream of becoming a judge, as quoted in the introduction, by encouraging him to start collecting cans, like the boy in the story his peer wrote? If Carlos does not succeed in achieving the dream that Fernando spun out on paper, how will he feel about himself? Can we help children like Carlos to see the complex mechanisms that maintain class and gender divisions in society while still encouraging them to pursue their own dreams, to be all that they want to be? Are there ways of responding to children's experimentations that can help them view the complexities of their characters and stories while still ensuring their freedom to play?

These are some of the many issues that will arise for teachers in writing workshop classrooms, and they represent new challengers for researchers in those settings. I hope to continue exploring these issues in my own future work, and I look forward to dialoguing with others in the process.

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APPENDIX A: Topics of student-authored books

Topic	Boys	Co-Ed	Girls	Total Year 1	Boys	Co-Ed	Girls	Total Year 2	Grand total
Animals	8	0	6	14	7	1	7	15	29
"Bad" boys and girls	7	0	4	11	10	2	11	23	34
Butterflies, Rainbows, Hearts, Flowers	0	0	13	11	0	0	2	2	13
Candy					0	0	3	3	3
Cars, Boats, Planes	6	0	0	6	5	0	0	5	11
Disney	1	0	3	4					
Environmental concerns					1	0	4	5	5
Fairy tales, folk tales					0	0	3	3	3
Family & Home	1	0	10	11	10	0	6	16	27
Farm-workers	4	0	0	4					4
Friends	8	0	2	10	8	1	2	11	21
Getting rich/Money	5	0	1	6	11	0	4	15	21
Ghosts, monsters, witches, vampires	4	0	3	6	3	3	3	9	15
Good/Bad Guys	2	0	0	2	5	0	2	7	9
Holidays	5	1	12	18	5	1	13	19	37
Jealousy					1	0	5	6	6
Local events					0	0	6	6	6
Misc.	7	0	7	14	4	0	1	4	18
Races	6	1	0	7	4	0	0	4	11
Romance	1	0	6	7	0	0	11	11	18
School	0	0	3	3	2	0	6	8	11
Superheroes	13	0	0	13	6	2	0	8	21
War and Peace	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6

Topics of books authored by male, female, and coed authors during the first phase of the study. Multiply coded as appropriate.

APPENDIX B: Titles and dates of classroom-published books from Year 2

Title		Date published
1. El violador de mujeres I y II	*The rapist I and II*	7-93
2. El violador de mujeres	*The rapist*	"
3. Super cullos	*Super gerbils*	8-93
4. La bicicleta chiquita	*The little bike*	"
5. Dos pescadores	*Two fishermen*	"
6. Los carros	*The cars*	"
7. La mamá valiente	*The valiant mother*	"
8. El niño amenazador	*The threatening childe*	"
9. Los mighty ducks	*The mighty ducks*	"
10. Mi hermanito	*My little brother*	"
11. Los chicanos	*The chicanos*	"
12. Los carros de carrerras	*The race cars*	"
13. Las maquinitas	*The little machines*	"
14. Alcanzar una estrella	*To reach a star*	"
15. Las dos niñas traviesas	*The mischievousgirls*	"
16. El cullo que se murió	*The gerbil that died*	"
17. Los vaqueros	*The cowboys*	"
18. Reciclar basura	*Recycling trash*	"
19. La lancha	*The boat*	"
20. Los alrevesados	*The upside down ones*	"
21. Las dos niñas traviesas	*The two mischievous girls*	"
22. Pollution	*Pollution*	"
23. La luna, el niño y la niña	*The moon, the boy and the girl.*	"
24. México	*Mexico*	"
25. El pájaro	*The bird*	"
26. La maestra y los alumnos	*The teacher and the students*	"
27. El arcoiris	*The rainbow*	"
28. El cullo murió	*The gerbil died*	"
29. Los carros	*The cars*	"
30. El supertravieso	*The super-menace*	"
31. Mi maestra	*My teacher*	"
32. Mi papá	*My dad*	"
33. El príncipe y la princesa	*The prince and the princess*	"
34. El caballo blanco	*The white horse*	"
35. Los carros de carrerras	*The race cars*	"
36. Malas noticias	*Bad news*	"
37. Lo que hago en mi casa	*What I do in my house*	"
38. La coneja que se murió	*The (female) rabbit that died*	"
39. Gloria Trévil	*Gloria Trévil*	"
40. Los conejos	*The rabbits*	"
41. Los aviones	*The planes*	"
42. Los carros II	*The cars II*	"
43. El mundo	*The world*	"
44. Una historia	*A story*	"
45. Los campesinos	*The farmworkers*	"
46. Un día en el rancho	*A day in the ranch*	"

47. Mi caballo valiente	*My brave horse*	"
48. Los ricos buenos	*The good rich ones*	"
49. Los perros	*The dogs*	"
50. La casa	*The house*	"
51. Los enemigos	*The enemies*	"
52. Los tres ninjas	*The three ninjas*	"
53. Una historia de Tarzán	*Tarzan's story*	"
54. Los campesinos II	*The farmworkers II*	"
55. Mi libro de quebradita	*My book of*	"
56. Los superninjas	*The superninjas*	9-93
57. Los ricos	*The rich ones*	"
58. Super pro	*Super pro*	"
59. Los carros	*The cars*	"
60. Qué bien me sabe	*How good I taste*	"
61. Los niños malos	*The bad boys*	"
62. El niño, el angelito y el diablio	*The boy, the angel, and the devil*	"
63. La rosa en el mar	*The rose in the sea*	"
64. El saborión, el enojón, y el presumido		"

The glutton, the mad one, and the presumptious one

| 65. La vida de César Chávez | *César Chávez' life* | " |
| 66. El diablito, el angelito y el changito | | " |

The little devil, the little angel, and the little monkey .."

67. Los niños peleoneros	*The fighting boys*	"
68. Las caricaturas	*The cartoons*	"
69. Los karatecas y los karachuegas		"

The karate fighters and the crooked faces (play on words)

70. El correo	*The mail*	10-93
71. Gloria Trévil	*Gloria Trevil*	"
72. Mi amiga Martha	*My friend Martha*	"
73. Mi viaje a México	*My trip to México*	"
74. Los caballos	*The horses*	"
75. Reciclar II	*Recycling II*	"
76. Hocus pocus	*Hocus Pocus*	"
77. La casa infernal	*The infernal house*	"
78. Diferentes países	*Different countries*	"
79. Lo que deben hacer en Halloween	*What you should do on Halloween*	"
80. Las 8 niñas en Trick or Treat	*The 8 girls going Trick or Treat*	"
81. Los caballos	*The horses*	"
82. La llorona	*The weeping woman*	"
83. El vampiro	*The vampire*	"
84. La llorona	*The weeping woman*	"
85. Las niñas traviesas	*The mischievous girls*	"
86. Ms. Rodriguez, la directora	*Ms. Rodriguez, the principal*	"
87. Los vampiros y la vampira		"

The (male) vampires and the (female) vampire

88. Halloween	*Halloween*	"
89. El dragon	*The dragon*	"
90. El menso	*The dumb one*	"
91. Los cuatro draculas	*The four draculas*	"
92. Como el perro llegó a ser perro	*How the dog became a dog*	"

93. Los supergordos	*The super fat ones*	"
94. Thanksgiving	*Thanksgiving*	"
95. Las arañas	*The spiders*	11-93
96. Las niñas traviesas I	*The mischievous girls I*	"
97. El pavo vivo	*The live turkey*	"
98. La navidad	*Christmas*	"
99. La muñeca infernal	*The infernal doll*	"
100. El superninja	*The super ninja*	12-93
101. Las novelas II	*The soap operas II*	"
102. La navidad	*Christmas*	"
103. La navidad	*Christmas*	"
104. La navidad de los superboys	*The superboys' Christmas*	"
105. Sandra y la navidad	*Sandra and Christmas*	"
106. El día de navidad	*Christmas day*	"
107. Las muchachas	*The girls*	"
108. La navidad	*Christmas*	"
109. Los tres super Mickeys	*The three super Mickeys*	"
110. La navidad	*Christmas*	"
111. La navidad	*Christmas*	"
112. La navidad y los 5 enanitos malos	*Christmas and the 5 bad elves*	"
113. Los tres superpuercos	*The three super pigs*	"
114. Mi paseo en el tiempo de los dinosaurios		"
	My walk in the time of the dinosaurs	
115. Las caricaturas	*The cartoons*	"
116. El carro automático	*The automatic car*	"
117. Los tres super Mickeys	*The three Super Mickeys*	"
118. Mimo y Mima y Doña Semillita	*Mimo y Mima y Mrs. Seed*	1-94
119. Mi amigo Daniel	*My friend Daniel*	"
120. Bailando con un fantasma	*Dancing with a ghost*	"
121. El terremoto I	*The earthquake I*	"
122. Las angelitas	*The little angels*	"
123. Los dos diablitos y el chango	*The two devils and the monkey*	"
124. Las canicas	*The marbles*	"
125. El día de San Valentín	*St. Valentine's Day*	"
126. El superbasketball	*The superbasketball*	"
127. Los carros de Jairo y de José	*Jairo and José's cars*	"
128. Las casas de dulce I y la niña	*The sweet house and the girl*	"
129. Estoy felíz porque va a ser Navidad		"
	I'm happy because it's going to be Christmas	
130. Los Superboys	*The superboys*	"
131. Las casas de dulces y el Sr. Azúcar	*The house of sweets and Mr. Sugar*	"
132. El día de San Valentín II	*St. Valentine's Day II*	"
133. Los tres diablitos	*The three little devils*	"
134. Las casas de dulces y el Sr. Azúcar	*The house of sweets and Mr. Sugar*	"
135. Las tres mosqueteras	*The three (female) musketeers*	2-94
136. Cruzando la frontera	*Crossing the border*	"
137. La casa de San Valentín y Reciclar	*St. Valentine's house and recycling*	"
138. La rosa que caminaba	*The rose that walked*	"
139. Los superkaratecas kungfu	*The super karate fighters kung fu*	"
140. Mi familia	*My family*	"

141. Ir a la escuela I	*Going to school I*	"
142. Parques nacionales	*National parks*	"
143. El día de San Valentín	*St. Valentine's Day*	"
144. El viejito y la viejita	*The little old man and the little old woman*	3-94
145. Bailando con un humano I	*Dancing with a human I*	"
146. La casa de dulce y el Sr. Azúcar	*The house of sweets and Mr. Sugar*	"
147. Los aviones	*The planes*	"
148. Las detectivas	*The detectives*	"
149. Un cuento de ballenas	*A story of whales*	"
150. La laguna del diablo	*The devil's lake*	"
151. Los superchurritos I	*The super churritos I*	"
152. La niña y el delfín	*The girl and the dolphin*	"
153. Doble Dragon	*Double Dragon*	"
154. Un cariño de espanto	*The love of a ghost*	"
155. Las ballenas	*The whales*	"
156. Las María Mercedes	*The María Mercedes*	"
157. Los superninjas	*The super ninjas*	"
158. Los superninjas II	*The super ninjas II*	"
159. Los tres mocosos	*The three mucous ones*	"
160. Estudiando de ballenas	*Studying about whales*	"
161. Mi paseo en busca del tesoro	*My walk looking for treasure*	5-94
162. La niña que se paró en una tumba	*The girl who stepped on a tomb*	"
163. Los tres niños que cuidan perros	*The three girls who care for dogs*	"
164. Libre Keiko	*Free Willy*	"
165. Doble Dragon IV	*Double Dragon*	"
166. Las dos orcas	*The two whales*	"
167. Los dos mezcladores	*The three mixed up ones*	"
168. Los superkaratecas	*The super karate fighters*	"