

Classroom Power Relations: Understanding Student-teacher Interaction

Mary Manke

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This book is based on a careful theorizing of classroom power relations that sees them as constructed from the actions of all participants. Contrary to the common assumption that the teacher is the source of classroom power, it sees that power as arising from the interaction between students and teachers. If power is owned by the teacher, she is completely responsible for events in the classroom, whether or not she chooses to share her power/control/authority with the students. If, as this book claims, power is the joint creation of all participants, teachers are freed from an excessive and damaging weight of responsibility for classroom events and outcomes. The shared responsibility between students and teachers for what happens in the classroom is brought to light.

Based on an ethnographic study of three elementary classrooms, this book offers a careful look at the workings of classroom power. It is of interest both to those seeking to understand power relations from this theoretical viewpoint and to those whose concern is with the daily workings of classrooms, often called classroom management. Questions explored in this book include:

- * How do teachers organize time and space in classrooms as part of their contribution to the development of classroom power relations?
- * What kinds of discourse choices do they make, and why?
- * How do students contribute to defining what will count as classroom knowledge, and how do they resist teacher agendas as they play their part in constructing classroom power relations?



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