

Engaging in *Travesuras*: A Latino Fifth-Grader's Disassociation from the Schoolboy Label

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This case study examines José, a bilingual Latino fifth-grader, and his complex and dynamic engagements in *travesuras* (mischievous behaviors). José's *travesuras* served to disassociate him from being labeled a "schoolboy." This disassociation was evident in how José: (1) renounced "school-like" work and (2) downplayed his intelligence. José had been pigeonholed—for the most part—as a smart student who should have known better than to behave inappropriately. Implications point to how to create more nurturing and enriching experiences for urban Latino youth such as José.

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José (pseudonym) was one of my Pre-K students when I (first author) was a bilingual elementary teacher at Rosa Parks Elementary (pseudonym for an urban public school serving 75% Latino and 25% African American students). On José's Pre-K report card, I had written: "*No tiene verguenza por hacer preguntas. Es muy curioso y observador* [He is not ashamed to ask questions. He is very curious and observant]" (Report Card, 1997-98). José's advanced level of questioning, which had impressed me when he was in my Pre-K classroom, was just as impressive five years later when I returned to Parks as an educational researcher during the last six months of José's fifth-grade year.

During interviews with José, I often wondered who was interviewing whom. He wanted to know why I had come back as a researcher to collect data

on 16 of my former Pre-K students, why I recorded the interviews and who would hear them, whom I had already interviewed, where the interviews took place, how long they lasted, and if I asked everybody the same questions. When I explained that I would use some parts of the interviews for a paper I was writing, José wanted to know how audio-text could be used for a written paper. When I described how I would use a transcriber to type out our interviews, he excitedly began to ask more technical questions about how transcribers work.

José had received the second highest reading scores on the high-stakes standardized tests in the fourth grade at Parks Elementary. However, a mere year later, he was pulled out for remedial reading groups for students “at-risk” of failing the fifth-grade reading test. José was one of those students who understood that:

Star students are not the only ones who capture the teacher’s attention. When schools are not able to meet their needs, some boys cross the line and go from calling out to acting out. On the classroom stage these males take the bad boy role, sometimes using it as a passport to popularity. (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 201)

While I would not consider José popular like some of the “star students” in the sense of exhibiting athleticism or being conscious of their physical appearance (e.g., clothes, hair), he sought visibility and notoriety through *travesuras* (mischievous behaviors) that included teasing, joke telling, calling out, and acting out.

In this case study drawing from a larger qualitative study (Cuero, 2009), I examine José’s complex and dynamic engagements in *travesuras* as a means to disassociate from a “schoolboy” label. I highlight pertinent literature that explores academic achievement and participation of students of color—particularly urban Latino youth and discuss my methodology more in depth, providing more information about José’s background. Next, I delve into the findings where two themes emerged regarding how José (1) renounced “school-like” work and (2) downplayed his intelligence. Finally, I provide deeper discussion and implications for students, like José, who have been pigeonholed as smart students who “should know better” than to behave inappropriately.

Negotiating Systems, Solidarity, and Smarts

Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) reports on the alarming trend that “Latino males are more likely to drop out of high school, to join the workforce rather than attend college, and to leave college before graduating” (p. 54). Fordham and Ogbu’s (1986) landmark study sparked a firestorm of controversy by concluding that students of color—particularly African American and Latino youth—experience significant underachievement due to a notion they coined as “the burden of acting white.” This notion suggests that students of color often associate academic achievement with Anglo students and reject applying

themselves academically, because they will be judged harshly by their peer groups for “acting white.” Akom (2008) cautions social scientists to problematize the “burden of acting white” by critically examining the institutional racism and structural disparities found in educational practices and policies that act as barriers for students of color.

In one ethnographic study at a predominantly Latino urban high school, Flores-González (2005) states that “ethnic identity and academic achievement can and do go hand in hand” (p. 626) and places the onus on the system for the achievement gap between students of color and Whites. For example, Flores-González explains that teachers often label students based on their appearance, conduct, and style of speaking resulting in the marginalization of students of color for exhibiting characteristics contrary to the dominant culture’s.

The schooling practice of tracking students also exacerbates the achievement gap, because students are sorted out into discrete pipelines. The “lower” tracks are typically under-resourced, reductive in nature, and disproportionately serve more students of color from low socio-economic backgrounds—resulting in limited academic opportunities for meaningful and cognitively demanding interactions that are more characteristic in the higher tracks (Burris, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008; Cammarota, 2008; Gibson, Gandara, & Koyama, 2004). The practice of tracking particularly for students of color and from working-class backgrounds is evident in the sprinkling of high-caliber magnet programs amidst the “regular” urban middle and high schools. In their longitudinal study, Cuero, Worthy, and Rodríguez-Galindo (2009) found that three bilingual Latina sixth-graders agonized over choosing between attending seventh grade at a prestigious magnet school or their lackluster-reputed neighborhood school. Their decision-making process centered on issues of *status* (e.g., better schooling and career opportunities) for the magnet school and of *solidarity* (e.g., attending with siblings and peers, more access to Spanish language, and parents’ familiarity with school) for the neighborhood school. In the end, two of the girls chose to attend their neighborhood school and the other the magnet school. The decision not to attend the magnet school in favor of their neighborhood school could easily be misinterpreted as lack of ambition or devaluing education, when in reality, this dichotomous decision is a symptom of the school system’s failure to provide equitable educational opportunities to all students—particularly urban youth of color and from working-class backgrounds.

In their longitudinal analysis, Lundy and Firebaugh (2005) found that gender more than race accounts for school resistance. Boys seek to distance themselves from behaviors they consider feminine, such as behaving in school, so they act out to impress their peers. Their grades often reflect their effort rather than their ability (Lundy & Firebaugh, 2005). The construction of a “bad boy” persona is described by Gallas (1998) as “a performance that conceals many layers of social awareness, creative activity, and ambivalence toward others (usually, but not always, women)” (p.33). Cammarota (2004) reported similar findings in his study that explores the act of school resistance among Latino youth. He found that Latina students have more positive educational

experiences than their male counterparts and charged educators to explore the nature of this resistance to schooling in order to implement pedagogical practices that benefit all students regardless of race and/or gender.

Coupled with inequities in the schooling system, many urban male students find the prospect of being labeled a schoolboy a deterrent from reaching their academic potential. Gibson, Gandara, and Koyama (2004) discuss boys acting out as a form of finding inclusion in the school environment and speculate that teasing one another about being a schoolboy is one method of social stratification where boys do not want to be associated with academic clichés that will leave them alienated socially. In Hatt's ethnographic study (2007), the urban youth who had dropped out or been expelled from school were beginning to redefine the concept of smartness. Drawing from Bakhtin's (1981) explanation of "authorship," Hatt (2007) explains how these urban youth find their "own voice as a space for agency" (p.153). This means that youth define smartness using their own terms, which often challenge the narrowly defined criteria of how smartness is framed in the traditional contexts of schooling, particularly for urban public schools.

Method

As part of a larger qualitative study¹ that examined identity negotiations and schooling perceptions of 16 bilingual Latino students enrolled in a transitional bilingual education program from Pre-K through fifth grade, this case study specifically addresses José's agency of actively and deliberately disassociating from the schoolboy label. I open-coded (Glesne, 2006) data sets from the following sources: daily school observations, a 10-week after-school focus group, dialogue journaling, researcher log, small-group *paseos* (fieldtrips), and interviews with students, teachers, and families. I incorporated several processes throughout the data collection and interpretation phases in order to contend with my research and interpretation biases as a White, middle-class researcher, such as peer-debriefing sessions with Latino/Latina scholars. My co-author (who was born and raised in South Texas by bilingual parents of Mexican decent) served as an important sounding board for my interpretations and assisted me in preparing this article for final submission.

Who is José?

Although José was enrolled in the bilingual program from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, English had always been his language of preference. As with most of his daily interactions with family, peers, and teachers, José was more comfortable conducting our interviews in English. However, he had the tendency to code-switch (Salazar & Fránquiz, 2008) when speaking with someone who was bilingual, by slipping in Spanish words and phrases (e.g.,

cocinarlo, patas, sangre, un borracho, muda, carbón). This pattern of language use—using mostly English with certain words and phrases in Spanish—was similar to how José’s mother and siblings spoke.

José’s mother, Ms. Rodríguez, was a third-generation Mexican American. When I asked José if his mom was born here in the U.S. he said: “Yeah, my mom was born here and my grandma. Well, my grandma’s grandma wasn’t. My grandma’s mom wasn’t. But we don’t go to Mexico” (Interview, 2/04). José’s father, Mr. Rodríguez, was originally from Guatemala. At the time of the study, José’s four siblings Camila, Rigo, Angel, and Edward were 18, 15, 13, and 7 respectively. José lived with three of his siblings (Camila had moved out of the house to live with her boyfriend), his mother, and her boyfriend Julio. Julio, an undocumented construction worker, was originally from Mexico and had been living with José’s family for two years.

His older brother, Rigo, influenced how José viewed school and his place in it. José often reiterated what “Rigo told me...” regarding the hypocrisies within the educational system, racist behaviors on the part of teachers, and how “doing good” on the standardized tests “don’t really matter, because they’ll pass you anyway.” Indeed, José’s lack of respect for and testing the boundaries of the system were evidenced in his everyday, and sometimes subtle, *travesuras*. Ms. Schaffer, José’s fifth grade language arts teacher commented to me one day, “I think it’s more than seeking attention. I mean—As soon as I get him to stop tapping his pencil, his feet start stomping. As soon as I get his feet still, his mouth is going. As soon as I get him to stop talking, he’s up walking around the room” (Fieldnotes, 2/04). After I observed José during Ms. Schaffer’s class one day while they did practice reading passages, she approached me in the hall later that afternoon with a smile on her face and eyebrows raised. She said affectionately, “That little stinker! He can stay still. He can keep still and do his work. Usually he’s up, down and up, down. He was really pulling it together for you.” She said that she could not understand how he scored the second highest reading score in the school on the fourth-grade TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills)² but was not passing any of his fifth-grade benchmark tests (Fieldnotes, 2/04).

In one interview, José explained why being authored as a schoolboy (or schoolgirl) was not desirable and should be avoided. He mentioned that smart kids got “beaten up” and defined a schoolboy as someone who “would be kissing up to the teacher,” receiving “a lot of good scores,” and “messing with people and then the teachers won’t even say nothing” (Interview, 5/04). José made sure to point out that, “if you like school,” you were also a schoolboy. The adults in his life, including myself, constantly reminded him of how capable he was of doing well in school based on his intelligence and isolated instances of stellar performances. Yet he was never sure that doing well in school or liking school was how he wanted to author himself, especially if that would yield a schoolboy label. José’s agency of actively and deliberately disassociating from the schoolboy label was evidenced by the way he (1) renounced “school-like” work and (2) downplayed his intelligence.

Renouncing “School-Like” Work

José did not like others to see him get excited by or engaged in most kinds of academic, or “school-like,” work. José’s insatiable curiosity and deep reflection on topics shined through only under certain conditions: (a) when he was engrossed in the specific topic, (b) when he had a personal connection with the teacher, and (c) when there was minimal risk of being labeled a schoolboy. These three conditions allowed José to exempt a handful of school-like endeavors and rationalize his active participation in them.

High-Interest Topics

After reading a passage about dinosaurs and oil in Ms. Schaffer’s language arts class, José asked, “How does oil get in the ground?” José proceeded to ask advanced questions that went beyond the scope of Ms. Schaffer’s knowledge base and the information in the passage. As a result, Ms. Schaffer called her husband, a geological engineer, to attain answers to José’s sophisticated questions. While her husband was on the line in the middle of class, Ms. Schaffer relayed back and forth between José’s called-out questions and her husband’s geologic explanations.

Even though José almost never did assigned homework, the following anecdote illustrates José’s passion for learning and connection whether the quest for knowledge was officially labeled “homework” or not. When I took José home one day, he excitedly told me that Mr. Ortiz (his science teacher) had given the “supercomputer” of the class to Silvio (José’s best friend). He went on to explain, “Silvio didn’t want it and was going to throw it away after school. So I asked him if I could have it. And he gave it to me! It’s in my backpack!” The “supercomputer” was a project Mr. Ortiz’s classes worked on, which consisted of series of aluminum foil circuits threaded across twenty 9x12 pieces of construction paper. As soon as we walked in the house, José ripped open his backpack, took out the construction paper with labyrinths of aluminum foil, kneeled down in the middle of the living room, and quickly, but carefully, started laying the pieces on the floor in a five by four grid. Ms. Rodríguez, Rigo, and Angel walked in the house shortly after we had arrived. We all sat on the couches and talked while José busily connected the aluminum foil circuits. Then he announced, “Done! Now all I need is a battery and a light bulb!”

These topics of oil from dinosaurs and supercomputers were not “school-like” in José’s mind. In other words, he felt comfortable showing more enthusiasm than usual because high-interest topics varied greatly from the typical day-to-day banking-education activities and lessons driven, in part, by high-stakes test preparation. Banking education, a concept coined by Freire (1973), primarily relies on the practice of transmission teaching as if students

were passive, empty vessels and teachers were all-knowing sources of knowledge. He also openly showed passion for learning when the topics related to him personally. For example, he was motivated to come to the after-school focus group sessions where the students took digital pictures and discussed them. After I told him that the after-school focus group meetings lasted an hour and 15 minutes, José said: “Really? ...for me it’s like 30 minutes in there!” (Interview, 2/04).

Connection with Teachers

José stated that science was his favorite subject “because we learn interesting stuff” like building “supercomputers” and remote-control robots. Another reason that science was his favorite subject was due to his connection with Mr. Ortiz. José connected with Mr. Ortiz and wanted to perform well in science class because Mr. Ortiz would often confront boys’ misbehavior and/or indifference with stern lectures. Therefore, José could not “fake” his indifference, claim that he was “distracted,” or downplay his intelligence.

Also, his connection to me as his former bilingual Pre-Kindergarten teacher played a part in José choosing to participate as a focal student in the study. When I first returned to Parks as a researcher to begin the study and choose focal students for the after-school focus group, José came running up to me when all the fifth grade classes were outside. He asked, practically out of breath, “You doing a program?” I told him some preliminary details like the fact that we would be meeting a couple of times a week after school to talk about their lives. He made a point to tell me, “I don’t do any after-school stuff” like classes or tutorials, but that he would be interested in mine because “you used to go to my house when I was in your Pre-K class” (Fieldnotes, 12/03).

Minimal Risk of Being Labeled a Schoolboy

Before he admitted to wanting to partake in the after-school focus group, José asked, as if he had forgotten a very important detail, “Is Manuel doing it?” (Fieldnotes, 12/03). José wanted to clarify whether Manuel was going to participate, because José and other students at Parks Elementary considered Manuel one of the “coolest” students out of my former Pre-K students (i.e., the participant pool for the study). Therefore, if Manuel were to participate in the study, José’s interest in participating would not likely be judged as though he were a schoolboy.

Another example of José feeling comfortable with school-related discourse happened on our *paseo* [fieldtrip] to a university campus. On this *paseo* with three of José’s classmates and me, not only was José acting like a schoolboy but he was also envisioning himself as a “college boy.” At one point, he pointed out a

couple of short university students who walked by and stated that maybe he would be mistaken as a college student. Later when I asked him about his interest in possibly attending college, other forces and structures began to flood José with contradictory and ambiguous authorings regarding schooling and his place in it:

KC: What do you think you have to do to get into college?

José: Behave good. Do my work with a great smile [smiles big]....

KC: So, when you say you want to go to college—

José: Is this all going to be about school?

KC: Well, José, it's interesting. Because you say you want to go to college, you know you're smart, you know you can do good work, but then you also say, "I don't have to pass any test. And I really don't have to work hard to get to sixth grade." So where do you want to be? Where do you see yourself? [I was using my hands to show the two extremes.]

José: In this side. [points to the hand of going to college, etc.]

KC: On this side? Starting when?

José: I don't know. Starting tomorrow. [He smiles exaggeratedly big.] ... The day of the test. When we finish the test, that's when I start behaving good.

KC: The day you finish the TAKS? Because you want to go to Spaghetti Warehouse and the museum?

José: Yeah. (Interview, 4/04)

The vision of going to college drifted away when I asked him what going to college would entail. He became apprehensive about continuing the conversation about his future school plans when he mockingly stated, "Behave good. Do my work with a great smile" and asked if the whole interview would be about school. José returned to the topic of his here-and-now life of a fifth grader where he seemed to do a type of a cost-benefit analysis on which behaviors would have the bigger pay-off. He implied that he would engage in *travesuras* [mischief] pre-TAKS (maybe to keep the days of drill-n-kill activities more interesting). However, he then would reign in the degree to which he engaged in *travesuras* post-TAKS because he wanted to be included in the end-of-the-year fieldtrip to the Spaghetti Warehouse Restaurant and I-MAX movie at the Texas History Museum. As a side note, due to his "bad behavior" as cited by Ms. Schaffer, José was not allowed to go on the fieldtrip despite his plans.

José began to think in the short-term (e.g., behaving good after TAKS = going on fieldtrip), because he was well aware of the script that would play out for the remainder of the school year: drill-n-kill until the day of the high-stakes test, then teachers lighten up, and the kids do more fun things like going on field trips. Talk of long-term visions like attending college was quickly overshadowed by his

immediate concern of keeping up with the day-to-day game of shaking up the monotonous school days and not appearing like a schoolboy in the process.

Downplaying Intelligence

In the previous section, we saw how José felt comfortable partaking in school-related endeavors when the risk of being singled out as a schoolboy was minimal. However, when the risk was high, José tended to downplay his intelligence. For example, José stated that school would be better if teachers only gave “easy” problems even though, in reality, he liked taking topics deep.

José claimed that reading was his least favorite subject, “...because it’s boring.” During that same interview, José told me he was pretending to read practice passages in Ms. Schaffer’s class.

KC: What did you think about the passage you read today in Ms. Schaffer’s class?

José: Oh, I didn’t ever read it. I was just faking...

KC: You were just faking?

José: No, I just read paragraph one and two on the elephant. Then I saw the questions and then—um—it said paragraph six. So I just went to paragraph six.

KC: So you didn’t have to read the whole thing?

José: No.

KC: But you did answer the questions right.

José: How do you know?

KC: Because I looked at it.

José: They were right? Oh. (Interview, 2/04)

In José’s effort to rush through the reading passages and corresponding questions, he did not appreciate the fact that he was actually demonstrating advanced reading strategies such as reading ahead and skimming for pertinent information. Ms. Kendall, the fifth grade math teacher, also mentioned that José rushed through his class work in order to visit with his classmates.

Besides “faking” or rushing through his class work, another way that José downplayed his intelligence was by using typical school discourse to explain his lack of attention and poor performance in his classes. He would often claim, “I’m distracted.... I can’t concentrate.... I have ADD, Miss!” I sat in his driveway one day when I took him home following an after-school focus group session, and I asked him why he didn’t do better in school when we both knew he was very capable. He smiled and said, “It’s because I get distracted.” As I continued talking, Angel, his sister, walked by the car to enter the house, José

exaggeratedly turned his head away from me and followed her with his gaze. Then he looked back at me with a big smile and said, “What did you say? See! I got distracted!” We both laughed. Even though José was never referred to special education, he made fun of himself using typical catch phrases associated with “off-task” behaviors exhibited by students labeled with ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder).

As a result of downplaying his intelligence and resisting that schoolboy label, José often showed his intelligence in other ways, such as testing boundaries. José tested boundaries by behaving in ways that disrupted the school day. Pretending to be “off task” and behave “bad” did not deter José from keeping up with most of his academic demands. While he often appeared not to attend to the academic content of the lessons, José liked to know what was happening in the classroom both socially and academically. In one interview, I asked José how Mr. Ortiz would describe him:

José: I don't know. That “he's a smart kid.” Because each time—like when the principal came, she asked what we were doing and I was saying everything.

KC: You were saying everything?

José: I even screamed it out. And he said, “Okay. Let other people talk.” But I still said everything that I knew. (Interview, 2/17/04)

To a certain extent, José seemed to enjoy the fact that Mr. Ortiz recognized his intelligence. However, one seemingly safe way to showcase his intelligence in front of his peers and other adults was to do it in unacceptable ways such as screaming out answers in front of the principal.

He admitted that he liked to talk “all the times” which included talking over people, making fun of people, telling jokes, and calling out answers.

KC: Do you like to talk?

José: Yeah.

KC: Do you think you talk over people sometimes?

José: Not sometimes. All the times.

KC: [laugh] And why do you think that you do that?

José: Because I want to answer the questions. ...Because [Mr. Ortiz] was telling me to raise my hand, but they [the teachers] always pick other persons. (Interview, 2/04)

In his mind, José was guaranteed to receive more attention from calling out answers than from raising his hand or waiting his turn. Calling out the answers in a loud and abrupt manner allowed José not only to seek out attention from his peers and teachers but also to verify that he knew the content of the lesson.

Discussion

José had a special knack for not only calling attention to himself, but also controlling the topic at hand. Even though on the surface he seemed distracted as evidenced by his constant movement and talking with peers, the way he authored himself was quite deliberate in order to stay in his comfort zone. When he did not want to engage in the day's lesson, he turned the attention away from the academic and toward the discipline through his *travesuras*. This behavior was observed in Hurd's research (2004) where he noted, "The classroom environment is fraught with constant disruptions by some male students, managed in turn by teacher threats, and results in a shift of attention from the class lesson to discipline" (p. 66).

Since most teachers viewed José as an academically capable student, his attention-seeking (mis)behaviors and (dis)engagement with "school-related" tasks caused the school to inappropriately attempt to meet his needs. For example, he was targeted to receive small-group, pull-out reading instruction based on the results from the Beginning-of-the-year (BOY) benchmark tests. Ms. Dawson, the reading specialist in charge of the special pull-out groups, mentioned that she did not believe José should be pulled out. After all, he received the second highest score on his fourth-grade reading test. This type of individualized attention would have been better directed toward students who needed it, such as students who were in danger of failing the state-standardized test. As a result, José was often reprimanded by many of his teachers for not behaving better and not applying himself.

José's lack of appropriate "social skills" like turn-taking had more to do with his resisting education, in Walsh's term (1991), "as a principal site for colonization" where schools:

most often become the location for socializing individuals into compliance and for perpetuating class divisions and the status quo. Children are alienated from meaningful symbolic interaction within their culture in order to diffuse group solidarity and dissipate collective identity; they are acculturated into a mold that favors those in power. (p. 4)

José, however, did not want his intelligence and curiosity channeled into performative scripts that required passive, unreflective participation. He refused to engage in learning as a banking construct. Therefore, José found alternative ways to engage in learning and make schooling meaningful for himself. His engagement in *travesuras* allowed him to actively construct a place where he could exhibit his values, intelligence, curiosity, and sense of humor.

Implication

In our efforts to create more supportive and culturally relevant educational opportunities for Latino students in urban settings, José's case study allows us to understand more about how particular students may make sense of and react to the multitude of expectations placed on them by school, their families, and their peers. All students engage and author themselves distinctively according to these expectations.

Report cards and standardized-test scores do not have the power to reveal students holistically and uniquely. Engaging in holistic relationships with students will allow teachers to catch glimpses of how and why students are dialogically authored to (dis)engage in academic pursuits. Even the smallest details of students' lives have the potential to inspire modifications of instruction and curricular content, which include students in their own learning. In the official (i.e., academic/instructional) contexts of school, teachers could incorporate authentic and valuable opportunities into the curriculum. For example, students could engage in writing through dialogue journals with the teacher. Dialogue journals would provide a forum for many students to express themselves and feel part of a relevant correspondence with the teacher—particularly for Latino students (Reyes, 1991). Students could be invited to bring in artifacts from home with special significance or express themselves through alternative forms of representation, as the focal students did with their digital pictures. Storytelling (Sanchez, 2009), such as oral and/or written autobiographies, could be a valuable endeavor in the classroom setting.

Some ways to get to know details of students' lives outside of the official schooling contexts include having lunch with students periodically, visiting with the students and their families in their homes, or participating in the daily life of the community (e.g., grocery shopping, festivals, carnivals, and religious functions). Teachers who are aware of and tuned into aspects of how students are authored by themselves and others have a distinct advantage. They will be able to get to know students more holistically, inform instruction and assessment, motivate students with what they are already interested in and know about, and advocate for better ways of including students in their own education. As we observed with José, he may have responded more positively to the academic tasks at hand if he were affirmed in a way that did not single him out from his peers. Other ways to encourage achievement of many levels are to foster native and heritage language development, advocate for multiple forms of assessment, and tap into and integrate funds of knowledge into the curriculum (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These responsibilities are not meant to fall solely on the shoulders of the teachers. Administrators must value teachers' precious time and dedication by offering more supports. Another responsibility of teacher educators and administrators is to recruit and retain more male teacher and teachers of color (Moll & Ruiz, 2002).

Like Trueba (2002), researchers need to dedicate more of their efforts into documenting Latino/Latina students who are “successful” without leaving their collective identities behind. Out of this research, we can build on the landmark theories of bilingualism and biculturalism (Darder, 1991; Lambert, 1975; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Trueba, 2002) and work toward developing theories that fathom ways that children can find a place of equity and excellence, for example, continuing to examine what factors help students have both a positive school and ethnic identity, such as social networks (Guerra, 1998; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), generational and immigrant status (Olsen, 2009; Valenzuela, 1999), and language supports (Darder, 1991).

Instead of unrealistically requiring students to *normalize* and conform to out-of-date institutions, we must recreate ourselves within the institutions in order to tap into and build upon the wealth of knowledge and resources that students bring with them to the school experience. By proactively moving toward resource-oriented paradigms, we can co-construct knowledge along with the children we purportedly serve, as opposed to approaching education as a uni-directional, top-down transmission of knowledge.

Endnotes

1. This study was institutionally approved by both the university IRB and at school district levels. Informed consent was obtained by all participants involved in the study.
2. TAKS is the standardized exam required in Texas that is based on the essential knowledge and skills identified by grade level and subject area.

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