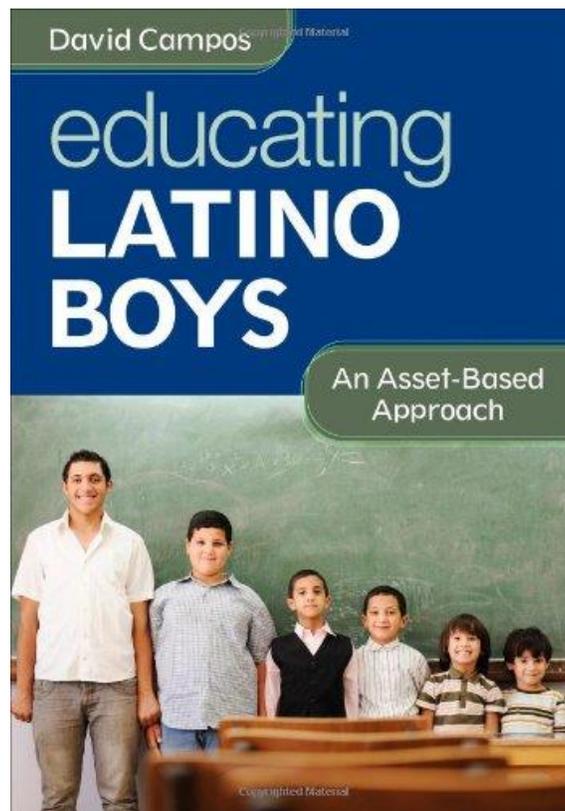


Review of Educating Latino Boys: An Asset-Based Approach

Gabriela del Villar
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA



Campos, D. (2012). *Educating Latino boys: An asset-based approach*.
Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

ISBN: 978-1452235028

Pages: 272

There is a crisis with the underrepresentation of Latinos at U.S. institutions of higher education given the high school dropout rate and low college retention among Latino males (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2014). Therefore, in his book, *Educating Latino Boys: An Asset-Based Approach*, Campos urges U.S. K-12 teachers and academic personnel to take action. Action is imperative given the steep growth of the US school age Latino/a population during the past decade. Campos counteracts the deficit-view discourse of Latino boys in U.S. schools and demonstrates Latino boys have many assets that teachers and school personnel can build upon by becoming culturally knowledgeable and responsive.

Campos' goals are "to establish a sense of urgency for meeting the needs of Latino boys and to draw attention to how some Latino boys can clash with school practices" (p.1). In this regard, the author argues that school leaders and teachers often assume middle-class and dominant-culture frames of reference to appraise Latino boys, and these frames can create a deficit point of view (Ogbu, 1987; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1987; Marx, 2008). Campos outlines this problem with personal cases, teacher self-reflective questions, practical resources, and recommendations that appear throughout the text. Campos describes specific issues that particularly affect the lives of Latino boys in the US and offers practical strategies.

Educating Latino Boys is comprised of eight chapters and divided into four parts. Part one frames the scope and purpose of the book with critical attention to Latino boys within the US educational system. Part two describes the circumstances and trends of contemporary Latino boys with orientation to cultural background. Part three depicts the social forces and stresses that affect Latino boys and the role of schools in their educational achievement. Part four offers strategies for teachers and schools to promote Latino boys' academic success with a review of programs that support Latino youth.

In chapter one, Campos positions the importance of education for Latino boys. Demographic statistics reveal Latinos are the nation's largest minority group

(U.S Census Bureau, 2010). Therefore, Latinos are critical to the architecture of the future in the US and much "depends on how Latino youth progress in schools" (p. 5). However, Latino high school dropout rates are the highest of any ethnic group in the United States (NCES, 2014). Campos believes the failure of Latino boys in the US educational system is directly related to cultural illiteracy. Teachers and educational systems with insufficient cultural knowledge serve as decision makers for Latino boys' lives and circumstances. This lack of sociocultural and linguistic knowledge connects with spurious assumptions about Latino boys. Thus, teachers and educational systems fail to respond to the needs of Latino boys with appropriate policies and programs. As Campos describes, and many other researchers have found, Latino boys have many assets: they are bicultural—they have learned to balance and to shift between two cultures (Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2012); they are bilingual (Baker, 2011); they are respectful of their parents, teachers and peers; and their parents support and value education (Valdés, 1996).

In chapter 2, "Cultural Conflict between Latino Boys and School", Campos reviews the existing literature about gendered developmental and cognitive differences (Cleveland, 2011; Tyre 2008), and he identifies behavioral patterns and attitudes associated with boys in schools. The author includes this literature review to demonstrate that there are intrinsic differences between boys and girls and in addition cultural differences between Latino boys and other children. These case studies not only allow us to see how cultural differences are often disregarded or undervalued but also reveal how teachers commonly approach Latino students from a normative European-American point of view, in other words, through a dominant cultural perspective. As a result, Latino boys become academically disengaged and become apathetic toward education. Next, in the "What I Can I Do Next" section there are strategies to create more inclusive classrooms.

"Circumstance of Contemporary Latino Boys" and "The Cultural Background of Latino Boys" are chapters 3 and 4 of the book. Campos suggests

questions for critical self-reflection about teachers' assumptions, values, beliefs and questions how perceptions of Latino students influence their success. These real cases offer a holistic view of Latinos that help readers understand the associated demographic and academic trends. Some of these demographic trends are the rapid growth of the Hispanic population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), the poverty rate of Latinos in U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012.), and the high dropout rate of Latinos that results in their underrepresentation in U.S. colleges (NCES, 2014). Teacher effectiveness is a critical variable that determines educational success for Latino boys, but more urgently Latino boys need 'cultural knowledgeable' teachers to bridge cultural mismatches and to accommodate core Latino cultural values in their instruction. Therefore, in the final section of this chapter, Campos offers ideas on design and implementation of curriculum to enhance Latino boys' schooling.

In chapter 4, Campos describes the characteristics of the diverse Latino culture. By describing the heterogeneous characteristics of Latino culture Campos not only hopes to provide a better understanding of the values, beliefs and behaviors that contribute to Latino boys' performance in schools, but also to caution teachers in their classification of all Latino boys as "the same". Researchers like Moll and others (Moll, et al., 2005) have emphasized the wide range of traditions, language practices, and values of Latino boys that are shaped by family background, immigration status, degree of acculturation, location and level of education, socioeconomic status, and other factors. At the end of this chapter, Campos not only proposes some strategies for teachers to use when meeting with Latino parents, but also in a section called "What Can I Do Next", Campos list a set of strategies to incorporate Latino students' lives in the classroom. Some strategies include a multiliterate print environment, the use of Spanish literature, and learning Spanish phrases.

In Chapter 6, the authors look specifically at In the third section Chapter 5 and 6 Campos describes some social issues that affect Latino boys' schooling. In chapter 5 suitably titled, "The Different Kinds of Capital in the Lives of Latino Boys", Campos

describes how physical, human, cultural and social capital influence Latino boys' long-term outcomes. In a first instance, Campos explains the poverty of many Latino families in the United States. Latino boys have limited physical resources (i.e., food, clothes, a computer, and books). The examples illustrate a lack of physical resources can prevent Latino boys from relating to class discussions. About human capital, Campos points out that although a Latino boy may know or have in his family a wide range of persons with talents, skills, and rich backgrounds (i.e., mechanics, bakers, faith healers, gardeners), the valuable attributes of these persons are not oftentimes recognized by the dominant culture. The limited cultural capital—especially regarding the workings of the US educational system—is perhaps one of the biggest obstacles teachers and researchers have found among Latino parents (Valdés, 1996; Moll et al., 2005). As Campos explains, this is due to the parents' modest education, limited English proficiency, and recency of immigration. Finally with regard to social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), Campos points out that Latino boys have multiple levels of social interactions in their community, dependent on unique social resources.

In Chapter 6, "The Balancing Act That Latino Boys Perform", Campos describes the conflicting circumstances that Latino boys experience living in two distinct sociocultural domains: their Latino culture—at home and in the community—and the mainstream culture that they are exposed to in school and in the media. Campos says that this balancing act is clearly perceived in three aspects: the challenge of acculturating, the worry over immigration, and the stress of learning English. All these issues as other researchers have documented (Harman & Varga-Dobai, 2012) put Latino boys at risk for school failure as well as other conduct and psychological problems. With the challenge of acculturation, Campos explains that the pressure to conform to two cultural standards can be immense for Latino boys; on one hand, Latino parents want their boys to retain their culture and native language, and on the other, Latino boys feel compelled to conform to the dominant culture transmitted in school. Campos adds that keeping the balance between two cultures is magnified all the more if

they (or their family members) are undocumented persons, but also if their English proficiency, more specifically academic English is limited. About the latter, Campos points out that academic English is particularly important for Latinos to achieve higher academic levels. Thus, in the final section of this chapter, Campos offers teachers a resource list to develop Latino boys' academic English.

Part fourth of Campos' book consists of chapter 7 and 8. These chapters provide K-12 teachers and educators with resources for Latino boys' success throughout their school years. Chapter 7 specifically offers instructional practices to foster a positive classroom climate so that Latino students become intellectually engaged. Some of these practices include building strong relationships and trust with students (Marx, 2008). Campos described several ways to achieve trust like inviting students to share about their lives, having lunch together, and organizing after school activities. Other ideas to create a warm, supportive classroom environment and a school community include the structuring of lessons for responsive learning, the recognition of Latino culture in teaching, building relationships with parents, and building of partnerships with the community. In chapter 8, Campos lists local and nationwide K-12 programs available outside of the traditional school curriculum. These programs seek to help Latino youth graduate from high school and increase the likelihood of entering college and

earning a degree. They range from early intervention programs (i.e., Head Start, AVANCE, etc.), to programs that target college students who need support to earn their degrees (i.e., Upward Bound, TRIO). As is true in several other chapters, Campos also includes in a chapter "What Can I Do Next?" and a final thoughts section.

In *Educating Latino Boys: An Asset-Based Approach*, Campos not only describes thoroughly the circumstances that affect Latino boys within the US context, but he also provides a plethora of simple strategies that could be immediately put into effect by K-12 teachers. In this book, Campos has the advantage of an emic perspective from his Latino boyhood and as an educator, and with this background he demonstrates the many assets of Latino boys on which teachers and school leaders can build. However, Campos argues that not only do they need to be culturally aware of these assets, but they also have to be able to incorporate them into teaching and curricula. By doing so, Campos says K-12 teachers will enhance Latino boys' success in US education system. Finally, although Campos does an excellent job in providing strategies and practical resources for immediate use, it would have been more beneficial for K-12 teachers if he included information or chapters related to the benefits of bilingualism (Bialystok, 2001; de Groot, 2010; Grosjean, 2010) and multicultural education (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

References

- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Cleveland, K.P. (2011). *Teaching boys who struggle in school: strategies that turn underachievers into successful learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- De Groot, A. (2010). *Language & cognition in bilinguals and multilinguals*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- González, N., Moll, L.C. & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Grosjean, F. (2010). *Bilingual: Life and reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harman, R. & Dobai-Varga, K. (2012). Critical performative pedagogy: Emergent bilingual learners challenge local immigration issues. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 14(2), 1-17.
- Marx, S. (2008). Popular white teachers of Latina/o kids: The strengths of personal experiences and the limitations of whiteness. *Urban Education*, 43(1), 29-67.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). *The condition of education 2014* (NCES 2014-083) Washington, DC: U.S. Department of education.
- Nieto, S. & Bode, P. (2012). *Affirming diversity*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Ogbu, J.U. (1987). Variability in minority school performance: A problem in search of an explanation. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 312-334.
- Tyre, P. (2008). *The trouble with boys: A surprising report card on our sons, their problems at school, and what parents and educators must do*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *The Hispanic population: 2010 census briefs*. Retrieved June 11, 2014, from www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States*. Retrieved June 11, 2014, from www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.pdf
- Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging distances between culturally diverse families and schools: An ethnographic portrait*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Vogt, A.L., Jordan, C., & Tharp, R.G. (1987). Explaining school failure, producing school success: Two cases. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 276-286