

Twice as Smart: The Exchange of Cultural Capital in a Two-Way Immersion Program

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Abstract

How is the classroom dynamic affected when native English speakers and heritage language speakers learn academic content together in two-way immersion programs? What influenced teachers to believe that their students were “twice as smart” as those who were enrolled in either traditional bilingual education or all-English programs? This article examines qualitative data from interviews with two-way immersion teachers and administrators in five elementary school two-way immersion programs in which culturally and linguistically distinct groups of students learned academic content together through their two languages. The article addresses how cultural capital differed for students, families and teachers from the two language groups, how the exchange of cultural capital occurred within the TWI, and the extent to which each group was advantaged or disadvantaged at school.

Introduction

Foreign language, world language, and bilingual teachers are well aware that language education has to do with a great deal more than just language. As Pierre Bourdieu might argue, whose language gets valued and how language groups are viewed are issues of power and social stratification (Lareau, 2003). In today’s climate of accountability and standards, the ability to understand, speak, read and write standard English and to perform well academically on tests in English form the core of the debate over annual yearly progress (AYP) and academic achievement gaps under No Child Left Behind. Little pressure exists for students in the United States also to perform well in other languages. The strong value for English both socially and within educational institutions in the United States can inform our understanding of expectations and academic outcomes for children who speak other languages, and also for what happens when English-speaking children are placed together in the same classrooms with children from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This study examines the perceptions of teachers and administrators in five two-way immersion (TWI) programs in the southwestern United States. The purpose of this article is to examine the exchange of cultural capital among native English speakers (NES) and native Spanish speakers (NSS) and their families, as well as associated changes in relationships of power and status in TWI programs. The design of the two-way program, in which two language groups study academic content together in both

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Spanish and English, provides a unique opportunity to examine intergroup relations, the kinds of cultural capital each group brings to the educational context, the dynamics associated with differing styles of parental involvement, and the ensuing expectations for both teachers and students. Through a critical, multicultural approach to qualitative research, the article investigates what influenced teachers to believe that TWI students were “twice as smart” as children in other programs and how these beliefs may have helped shape program outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu suggests that social structures are inherently unequal in power, and that power determines whose activities are valued in a given social situation (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Lareau, 2003). Power and privilege are passed from one generation to the next as part of a process that is largely invisible, accepted as the “natural order,” and legitimized by society. Members of both dominant and dominated groups tend to accept that “status, privilege, and similar rewards are ‘earned’ by individuals; that is, they are perceived as resulting from intelligence, talent, effort, and other strategically displayed skills” even when these privileges have actually been conferred as a result of their social class membership (Lareau, 2003, p. 275).

Bourdieu theorized that individuals are socialized to acquire class-based knowledge regarding normalized ways of acting, thinking, and interpreting meaning that feel natural and comfortable. What Bourdieu referred to as individuals’ *habitus* influences, in turn, their access to *cultural capital* during interactions with social institutions such as schools (Lareau, 2003). Cultural capital consists of personal dispositions, attitudes, prior knowledge and experience that facilitate access to social networks and institutional resources. The cultural capital of middle class families tends to confer advantages for their children due to its congruence with the systems of social relationships within educational structures (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

In a study of racially diverse middle class, working class and poor families, Lareau (2003) found that while race was an important factor in many social situations, social class trumped race in conferring advantage to children in school. She also identified an important class-based difference in families’ childrearing practices. Both White and Black middle class parents tended to approach childrearing through *concerted cultivation*, characterized by the active effort to systematically promote and monitor their children’s repertoire of “talents, opinions, and skills.” Middle class parents in the study tended to maintain tight control of their children’s schedules, and to cultivate a reasoning-focused discourse during family discussions. They were also observed to “hover” over their children both in and outside of school and “did not hesitate to intervene” on their behalf. Middle class children, in turn, tended to exhibit a sense of entitlement displayed through a predisposition to question authority, and to “talk back” to adults.

Working class and poor families, in contrast, tended to prefer childrearing practices which Lareau (2003) termed the *accomplishment of natural growth*. These parents were more likely to allow the “spontaneous unfolding” of children’s development.

Their concern centered around providing a basis of security, support and basic needs such as clothing, housing and food. Children were allowed a good deal of autonomy to initiate informal play and to interact with peers, siblings, and cousins. The researchers observed fewer adult-initiated activities, fewer disputes with siblings, and less talk, including less “talking back...whining and badgering.” At the same time, clear boundaries were maintained between adults and children through a tendency for adults to use more directives than reasoning-oriented discourse with their children. These families seemed to regard language as a means of communication rather than as an end in itself. Poor and working class parents avoided questioning their children’s teachers, and seemed less confident in their efforts to intervene on their children’s behalf. The author concluded that neither approach to childrearing is fundamentally superior to the other, except that the concerted cultivation approach seemed to prepare children for greater success in school and subsequent career paths. This, she argues, has more to do with the congruence of cultural capital between middle class families and the U.S. educational system than to any inherent differences of intelligence or ability on the part of the children.

Setting

Aymes Independent School District (AISD) is a large, urban school district located in the southwestern United States (pseudonyms are used to protect privacy). Like many large cities, the district enrolled a substantial proportion of students whom it classified as low-income (82%) and “at-risk” (60%) at the time of this study. Nearly two thirds of AISD students were Hispanic, and close to one third were learning English as a second language. The schools selected for this study were located in a variety of neighborhoods, including a mostly European American, middle class neighborhood; an inner-city neighborhood that was in the process of gentrification; a mixed working class/ middle class neighborhood housing African Americans, Latinos and Whites; and two neighborhoods that were inhabited by primarily low-income Latino families consisting of recent immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America as well as second and third generation Hispanic families. *Aymes Two-Way Immersion Programs* AISD has offered bilingual education to Spanish speakers for a number of years. As research findings regarding effective programs have emerged (e.g., Ramírez, Yuen, Ramey, & Billings, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997), the district has adapted its model accordingly. Current program rationale, for example, cites Thomas and Collier’s (1997) conclusion that English language learners who begin kindergarten with no proficiency in English and who enroll in enriched academic programs such as two-way and one-way developmental bilingual education can reach grade-level academic standards in English by the end of elementary school and maintain this level of achievement throughout the secondary grades. Based on this research foundation, the district has transformed all of its bilingual education programs to better correspond with what is known about effective practice. One-way developmental bilingual programs (DBP) and two-way immersion (TWI) in Aymes follow an identical model, with the objectives of developing proficiency and high academic achievement in two languages, improved self esteem, and positive attitudes toward other cultures. What

distinguishes two-way immersion from all of the others is the integration of native English speakers together with native Spanish speakers in the same classrooms, whereas all other bilingual programs in the district enroll Spanish speakers only.

The first two-way immersion program in the district began in 1994 at McClure Elementary School. The program was considered so successful that it has expanded to 15 schools, including 10 elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools. The goals for AISD two-way immersion (TWI) program students include: (a) development of communicative competence and literacy in Spanish and English; (b) high academic achievement for all subject areas in both languages; (c) development of positive attitudes among groups and toward other cultures; and (d) improvement of self-esteem. Children in both language groups were expected to function at grade level in both languages by Grade 4.

Like the other bilingual programs in the AISD, TWI followed the 90:10 design, in which students received instruction primarily in Spanish during the early grades, gradually increasing the amount of instructional time in English until Grade 4 and beyond, when instruction was divided about evenly between the two languages. Within the early grades of TWI programs, students received reading and writing instruction and language arts, as well as most other subjects, in Spanish. In all grades, students were scheduled to receive 45 minutes per day of English through Art, PE, and Music, in addition to an English as a second language (ESL) or English language development (ELD) block which gradually increased in duration from kindergarten (30 minutes per day) to Grade 3 (60 minutes per day). The ESL/ELD component was integrated with Science and Social Studies. In Grade 4, the two languages were to be equally distributed, with 50% of instructional time in English and 50% in Spanish.

Sample

As principal investigator for this study, I worked closely with AISD Multilingual Office staff to select a sample of TWI programs that were both well-established (with a minimum of seven years since inception) and well-implemented (conforming to Multilingual Office guidelines for TWI programs). The final sample consisted of five programs located in three subdistricts of AISD. Because this investigation focused on the early grades of TWI, I selected teachers who had taught Grades K-3 to participate in the study. Fifty-eight of the original 66 K-3 teachers who had taught in the sample programs during the years from 1996-97 to 2002-03 completed surveys. Of these, 25 took part in in-depth interviews. I also interviewed six central office staff, five principals and five support administrators, including assistant principals, dual language coordinators, Title I coordinators and reading specialists. All of the teachers in this study held bilingual certification and, with two exceptions, were native Spanish speakers. The 300 children who had been enrolled in these programs during the study years consisted of 233 native Spanish speakers (NSS) and 67 native English speakers (NES). Ninety-six percent of the NSS qualified for free or reduced lunch (an indicator of poverty), while 67% of NES fell into this category. In terms of ethnicity, 100% of NSS were classified as Hispanic. The NES group was made up of 65% Hispanic, 22% White, 12% African American, and 2% Asian. Despite the high Hispanic composi-

tion, only 2% of the students in this latter group were proficient in Spanish at entry to Kindergarten.

These demographics were further distinguished in the ethnic and socio-economic breakdown by school. Four of the TWI programs enrolled a high poverty (92 – 100% free and reduced lunch), majority Hispanic (92 – 97%) student body, a demographic that generally applied to both NSS and NES groups. Due to these demographics and the difficulty of attracting English-dominant Hispanics to the program, only one school in this sample attained a 50:50 mix of NES to NSS. However, every TWI enrolled at least some NES. McClure Elementary School differed from the other four schools in that it was located in a neighborhood with a larger and more affluent European American (referred to by participants as “Anglo”) population, permitting the TWI to attract more native English speakers. The NES student body, in contrast to the other four schools, was 40% White, 15% African American, 2% Asian, and 43% Hispanic. Of the NES group, only 30% qualified for free and reduced lunch, indicating that the English-speaking students came from a higher socioeconomic status than the NES groups in the other four schools. McClure’s NSS students were also somewhat different from those enrolled in the other four schools, with 80% qualifying for free and reduced lunch, meaning that one fifth of this group did not come from impoverished families. Interview data indicated that the higher SES Spanish speakers at McClure may have been children of diplomats and foreign business people, presumably from families who had also attained greater levels of formal education than the low-socioeconomic status (SES) Spanish-speakers.

Data and Method

Findings reported here are derived from the exploratory phase of a larger investigation that examined the long-term bi-literacy achievement of English language learners in two-way immersion programs (Acosta, 2005a, 2005b). During the first phase, I conducted interviews with teachers and administrators in the five TWI sample schools in order to examine the sociocultural context for the investigation and to identify factors that might predict ELL literacy development in the programs. The scope of the larger study focused on the influence of teachers’ instructional practices on student outcomes, and thus did not extend to interviews with students or parents. The current investigation utilized qualitative data from the larger study in order to analyze teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of the interaction between the two language groups within the TWI classroom.

For purposes of the current study, I applied a critical, multicultural approach to qualitative analysis. This poststructural approach was appropriate because it allowed a more layered and multiculturally responsive level of analysis than some of the more traditional qualitative paradigms. Approaches such as positivism and postpositivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), in which empirical data are assumed to faithfully represent the world, may work relatively well when participants and researchers share a common set of cultural assumptions. The critical, multicultural approach, in contrast, permits a deeper analysis of race, class, and language issues among groups who hold divergent perspectives. Researchers using this approach examine the perceptive fil-

ters of participants for hidden, culturally-mediated assumptions and alternative interpretations of meaning. This framework further permits a focus on power relations among groups, whereby power is seen “not simply as one aspect of society, but as the basis of society (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 145).” The multicultural, critical approach thus allows the critical analysis of the perceptions and underlying assumptions of group members, as well as the ways in which each group is advantaged or disadvantaged by power relations.

I conducted teacher interviews collectively in most cases, in three schools as a whole group and in two schools by grade level. Only K-3 teachers were selected to participate because these early grades were considered pivotal to the students’ development of multilingual and multi-literate identities and to their development of attitudes and behaviors surrounding language, culture, and ethnicity. Participation was voluntary, with the permission of school principals, and identifying information was changed to protect confidentiality. Interview guides combined a structured set of questions with an informal conversational approach in order to assure that research questions were addressed across all five sites and to provide opportunities for unanticipated topics and issues to arise (Patton, 1987). Most interviews took place in English except for one case in which the teacher was a Spanish monolingual. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, translated by the author into English if necessary, and then coded for purposes of the larger study. At various points throughout the study I consulted with individual participants either in person or by telephone to clarify information and to assist interpretation. The data were then re-coded for the current investigation, attending to issues of race, class, culture and power within a grounded theoretical framework that was informed both by the participants’ and the re-researcher’s perspectives and by related research literature. During data analysis, data were triangulated when possible across multiple sources in order to increase the reliability and validity of the findings. I sought new themes that emerged from my data, as well as alternative explanations and contrary patterns that might invalidate my original thinking (Patton, 1987).

Findings

Quantitative Findings from the Bi-Literacy Study

Quantitative findings from the larger, bi-literacy study are briefly summarized here in order to provide context for the findings of the exploratory phase that form the focus of the current article. The bi-literacy study examined the long-term reading achievement of native Spanish speakers (NSS) and native English speakers (NES) in the five AISD sample TWI programs. In order to control for prior ability, scores on the Language Assessment Scales — Oral (LAS-0) at entry to the program were entered into a regression analysis together with post-test achievement scores. The pre-test scores indicated that NES students performed just under the proficient level ($M = 3.8$ on a scale of 1 – 5) in their native language, and not proficient ($M = .8$) in Spanish. NSS scored on average in the limited English proficiency range ($M = 1.8$) and, similar to many low-income Spanish speakers, only moderately proficient ($M = 2.8$) in their native language, with no indication that either group as a whole or on the schoolwide level exceeded norms for academic potential.

After program treatment, outcomes on standardized tests of reading indicated that both groups were achieving above grade level in Spanish throughout elementary school, with native Spanish speakers (NSS) scoring somewhat higher than native English speakers (NES). When students were tested for the first time in English at Grade 5, NES performed, on average, on or above grade level, and maintained this level of performance through Grade 7, the last year in which data were available. Native Spanish speakers achieved somewhat below grade level in their second language at Grade 5, and effectively closed the achievement gap by attaining grade level norms by Grades 6 or 7. (Acosta [2005a, 2005b] analyzes these data for the influence of three different early reading approaches on long-term outcomes in both languages.). These outcomes support previous findings (Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002) indicating that TWI is one of the few program models for ELLs that has succeeded in closing achievement gaps with native English speakers by the end of elementary school.

Qualitative Study

The qualitative findings fell into five over-arching themes related to how cultural capital differed for students, families and teachers from the two language groups, how the exchange of cultural capital occurred within the TWI, and the extent to which each group was advantaged or disadvantaged at school. The first theme, *Crossing borders*, discusses how negative attitudes on the part of some families and school personnel toward bilingual education changed when they observed the success of the native English speakers in the program. *Is it real?* addresses teachers' doubts about the "realness" of some of the two-way programs where only a few (mostly Hispanic) NES were enrolled, and why this mattered. *"Under the gun"* discusses Anglo and Latino parents' differing ways of becoming involved in the school, and *"Creating a monster"* follows what happened when Latino families exchanged cultural capital with Anglo families through a parent involvement program. The last theme addresses how TWI teachers came to believe that their students were *"twice as smart"* as students from bilingual programs that did not enroll native English speakers.

Crossing borders

What happens when native English speakers "cross the border" into the bilingual classroom? The formation of two-way programs in these five schools seemed to provoke conflicting attitudes about languages and language groups, particularly in the early years. Initially, some school personnel outside of the TWI opposed the program, reflecting the pervasively negative attitudes toward bilingual education in the community. "We English speakers really took a lot of heat from family members, from friends, from neighbors," reported the Anglo American coordinator of a TWI who had enrolled her own child in the program. "People telling us we're crazy, you're going to ruin your kid's education. Even my child's father wasn't real sure about this and he was a Spanish speaker, although he didn't speak Spanish much at home." Many teachers in the English strand at these schools reportedly agreed in the early years that "there's too much Spanish here anyway, these kids need to speak English." "I'm an Anglo ...and I love English. I thought it was sheltering [the Spanish speakers] in

Spanish, and that it was too much [of their own language],” a librarian at one school acknowledged. “But I was wrong.” After the program had been running for four or five years, these kinds of doubts seem to have been dispelled. This evolution in attitudes may have been at least in part the result of watching achievement scores rise. It may also have had to do with the status ascribed to learning Spanish by the native English-speaking families.

Once their children were enrolled, NES families, according to one school principal, often expressed their delight that their children were learning Spanish. “Pretty much the children are very comfortable and parents and grandparents come back and tell us, oh, my goodness. It has only been the second month and they are already saying all these words and they are teaching us. As we sit at the dinner table or we are driving down the road, they are naming things in Spanish.” As one teacher explained it, “The Anglo parents see the value of learning to speak a different language. They see it, they capitalize on that, I don’t have to send my kid to Europe to learn this, he can do it here. It’s like a status thing. It’s like get him in while it’s still hot.” It had even been suggested, according to another teacher, that the district form dual language classes without Spanish speakers (presumably a foreign language immersion program). This, in her view, was “a kind of discrimination” that would value bilingualism as an asset for English speakers and as a deficit for Spanish speakers.

Marta, a teacher at Esparza, reported that in the early years of her school’s TWI, an Anglo American parent stood up in a parent meeting to suggest that “‘this program is just for the Spanish speakers, because it is really in their language and they are getting all the information and they are learning.’ And then one of the Spanish speakers said, ‘Oh, wait a minute. I thought it was for the *English* speakers, that they were learning Spanish.’ So, they both kind of went, ‘ohhhh!’ ” This incident, said Marta, seemed to epitomize the way both groups began to realize that they needed each other in order to succeed. The Spanish-speaking children relied on their English-speaking peers in order to access instruction in English, and the native English-speaking children relied equally on the Spanish speakers to access instruction in Spanish. At the same time, the presence of NES seemed to raise the status of the program in the eyes of the community, many of whom had previously harbored doubts about bilingual education.

Is it real?

Because many schools in AISD were located in majority Hispanic neighborhoods, three of the five programs struggled to attain the 50:50 ratio called for by the two-way model. Some teachers expressed doubt that the programs in the highly Latino schools qualified as two-way immersion. “I think if you only have two or three English speakers in each dual language class, that doesn’t make it a real dual language program. It should be 50:50,” asserted Rosa, a teacher at Esparza, a school that was still struggling to increase its NES population. “I know that some schools get away with having Hispanic children having English as a native language and that’s how they can claim 50:50,” added Minerva, “but in my opinion it’s not.” Her TWI colleagues agreed when Minerva explained that she believed this because “I would have liked to have seen more cultures.” This belief, thus, provoked the question of how the presence of

native English speakers made a difference in the program, and whether the culture and ethnicity of the NES mattered.

Teacher participants mentioned the speed of English acquisition for NSS as one of the most observable advantages of integrating NES into the program. “One of the major things I saw different in bilingual and dual education,” observed Ana, a kindergarten teacher at McClure, “was that the [NSS] children began to speak English pretty fast at lunch time. Where before [in traditional Bilingual Education], they always had spoken Spanish when they were isolated with only Spanish speakers.” Sara, another McClure teacher, said she believed that teaching English to NSS was easier than teaching Spanish to NES because of the strong dominance of the language in the soci-cultural context. “It’s easier in a sense because the Spanish-speaking [children] here at McClure are so exposed to English in the world and in the classroom and playground and in the lunchroom.” Some teachers at other schools with a smaller NES enrollment agreed that even when there were only one or two NES in the classroom, NSS tended to shift toward English during informal social situations. “There is a lot of interaction ... and they talk a lot in English on the playground, at lunch, and even those who do not know a lot of English start developing it in a few months, [even if] it is broken English,” reported a third grade teacher at Hawthorne who had fewer than half NES in his classroom.

Even when their classrooms contained only a few NES, some teachers felt that these students served as important models for literacy and academic success. It was important for this purpose that the NES were academically strong. “Having [native English speakers] makes a difference providing they do come to the class and bring some skills from home or from another grade level,” suggested Antonio, a third grade teacher at Hawthorne. It didn’t matter if the NES came from a low-income family, he added, “but if an English-speaking kid doesn’t know how to read English what difference is that going to make in helping another friend, but if they do come and they do have some writing abilities of course that’s going to help.” Requiring both groups to learn academic content through a second language was also perceived as important for equalizing their status. “I think it helps children to not feel like they’re second class citizens if both English speakers and Spanish speakers are having the same trouble learning the other language, I think that helps with their self esteem,” suggested Juana, a kindergarten teacher at Boyd.

Another benefit teachers mentioned for integrating the two groups was the opportunity to exchange cultural knowledge. “I think it broadens the possibility of knowledge because of ... the way the groups are together, so they have more exposure to a broader content of knowledge,” added Imelda, a second grade teacher at Esparza. “The cultural background brings along knowledge. This morning [in my traditional bilingual education classroom], I was talking about foods and products of this country, [and] I just realized my Hispanic students have no idea.” If there had been native English speakers in the classroom, as in her TWI classes, she suggested, they might have been able to impart this important background knowledge.

This exchange of knowledge, furthermore, did not have to occur at the expense of losing students’ home culture. Native Spanish speakers “get to do a lot of activi-

ties to bring their background information from home and their culture and they get to share a lot of their knowledge,” asserted Silvia, a Kindergarten teacher at Hawthorne.” In this way, added Imelda, “the native Spanish speaker is at the same time discovering another culture, while she’s not losing the knowledge or appreciation of [her] own culture. So it’s enrichment.” In sum, the effect of including English speakers in their classrooms was perceived as quite positive. Both groups of students, according to their teachers, benefited through the development of their two languages, increased cultural understanding, enhanced self esteem, and equalized social status.

“Under the gun”

The integration of Anglo American families with Latino families in the TWI may have affected the level of expectations for both students and teachers. In four schools, English-speakers came predominantly from second or third generation Latino families who had assimilated to the dominant language but may have continued to maintain differing cultural capital that influenced the ways they interacted with school personnel. In the one school in which the English-speaking families were primarily Anglo American, these families seemed to become involved in their children’s education in a qualitatively different way than did the Latino families.

“There’s a huge difference,” observed a TWI trainer, “between those teachers that teach at the schools where the English speakers in the program are Anglos and the things that they say and the ones who teach at schools where the English speakers are also Hispanic.” Anglo American parents, in contrast with both English-dominant and Spanish-dominant Latino parents, seemed to apply a great deal of pressure to teachers regarding their everyday practices, according to reports from several participants. The dual language trainer, who worked with teachers from TWI programs throughout the district, was one of the first to notice this phenomenon as she interacted with teachers from schools in very different neighborhood contexts.

The teachers that are at the Anglo schools feel like they are under the gun all the time with their parents... The second grade teacher at [McClure, for example, where the English-speaking families tend to be Anglo]... is just inundated with concerns and why this is translated and how can I help my child at home. That has been a continual theme coming out of that school. We talked a lot about that [at the training] on Saturday. The others [who worked at schools where the English-speaking families were primarily Latino] really didn’t understand what we were talking about. It’s funny. I guess that is what cued me in is, they were sitting there and I could tell they were a little bored with the conversation. It just does not apply to them.

One of the effects of this constant parental pressure at McClure, according to several participants, was an unusually high teacher turnover rate at second grade, when teachers tended to feel inundated by parental interference in all aspects of their practice. Four consecutive second grade teachers in the TWI at this school each resigned after just one year. Several participants puzzled over the possible reasons for this pattern of teacher turnover. “My conclusion,” asserted McClure’s principal, “is that the English-speaking parents drive [the teachers] away.” This phenomenon seemed to

come to a head at second grade, according to one administrator, because “you are starting to make that shift at that point from learning to read to reading to learn. That is when the parents start to realize that they are in this for the long haul. The honeymoon has kind of worn off.” It is at this point that the Anglo American parents began to actively intervene, in large part perhaps out of the fear that they may not have been able to attain their desired level of control over their children’s educational experiences and outcomes. “The English-speaking parents, the affluent parents, are real compulsive about their kids,” the principal explained. “They get very upset if it’s a 93 and not a 94, and so on.”

Most TWI teachers, predominantly Latinos themselves, had never had to deal with Anglo American families before teaching in the program. An Anglo American administrator who also had a child in TWI speculated:

That is what is hard for these bilingual teachers to take, because they are not used to us [Anglos], culturally, a group of parents, doing that... Because traditionally, Hispanic families — they even have a saying. I give you my child. They give their child to the teacher to educate. They don’t question... A teacher is viewed, in the Latin American community, as esteemed. Whereas, in the upper middle class, White community, [it is thought that] you are a teacher because you couldn’t do anything else. They feel quite comfortable in questioning anything a teacher says, because if you had been competent, you would be a doctor like I am or a lawyer or whatever.

Conversely, however, some participants suggested that teachers who survived this pressure and decided to remain in the program tended to raise their expectations for themselves because they knew they would be held accountable for everything they did in their classrooms. It is quite possible that, because of this phenomenon, the programs with larger Anglo American enrollment may have experienced a corresponding increase in instructional quality as well as a difference in the school-wide culture of literacy. (Sample sizes were too small, however, to detect significant differences in achievement at the school level after controlling for enrollment in free and reduced lunch.) McClure, furthermore, housed a gifted and talented (GT) magnet program in addition to the TWI. Those parents, according to the coordinator, had “a tremendous regard for literacy and that has permeated throughout the school... And whereas our Spanish-speaking families came from a [lower] educational background, they came to see that when kids exchanged gifts, maybe they got a book, and they saw that books were valued in the community.”

Creating a monster

Teachers and administrators at McClure reported that one of the greatest obstacles in the first years of the program “was the reluctance of the Spanish-speaking parents to get involved.” Prior to the creation of the two-way program, for example, teachers reported that many Latino families were so uncomfortable about coming into the school that they used to wait a block away to pick up their children. So when the TWI began, school personnel obtained a grant to conduct a parent involvement program. After that, “we had a lot of parent training, a lot of parent activities, this is your school, come to school. And so those parents who started, really saw a different change and

then they did feel that they were part of the school.” [Our principal] had Make and Takes for parents. Standing watching it almost made you cry. People with advanced degrees were staying home with kids while Spanish-speaking parents were teaching and helping English-speaking parents and you could just see their self esteem rise. I almost cried when I would see these women helping the other parents and English-speaking parents taking to it. But after a couple of years we said we had created a monster here because we had taught them to be as aggressive and demanding as English-speaking parents...It was actually kind of nice to see. They are as likely to be in the principal’s office whining about something as the English-speaking parents are.” The Latino families “became very empowered and they were also beginning to question the teachers and the teachers were just ready to throw their hands up and scream,” the coordinator reported. When teachers would come to her to complain, she laughed and reminded them that “this is exactly what we wanted...to empower parents.”

Twice as Smart

Participating teachers from all five schools consistently described their TWI students from both language groups as “smart,” “academically gifted,” and “special.” “That group I had was a very smart group,” observed a first grade teacher. “They were probably all GT.” “You can tell a kid who’s smart,” added a third grade teacher, when “he is good in one language and the other, period, they just seem to get it.” These teachers had differing hypotheses about how the children became “smart.” A number of them seemed quite sure that the children must have been more gifted than their peers to begin with. “The children were special before they came into the program,” proposed Elaina, a teacher at Boyd. “When I started [in the early years of the program],” suggested her colleague Sandra, “they were supposed to be selected. That is part of the program. These kids are supposed to be — let’s just call them smart.” Some suggested that English speakers were particularly smart, and that this explained why many of them learned to read so quickly. “English speakers [in TWI] always started to read first. [Once they learned to read in Spanish] they were transferring the reading from Spanish to English with no English [reading] instruction at all.” Nelda, a teacher at Myers, observed that “there was a big discrepancy between the second grade dual language program and the Developmental Bilingual Program. [My counterpart in the DBP] would say, ‘[the DBP] class is so different, they just don’t get it. And oh, it’s so great when I have your [two-way immersion] kids ‘cause they can do everything and my kids can’t.’” Her explanation for this difference was that TWI students from both language groups must have been selected based on ability, and that DBP students were simply not as capable academically.

If there had been a selection process, students’ high academic achievement could have been explained as a result of prior ability. Data provided little evidence to support this explanation, however. Although a selection process was originally planned in three of the five schools, administrators reported that they did not ultimately implement it because there had been enough space in the TWI for every child whose parents applied. Pre-test data from the LAS, as described above, did not indicate any special academic or linguistic abilities prior to enrollment for either NSS or NES; in effect, oral language assessment scores for NSS, as for many low-income Spanish-

speakers, indicated that the children scored, on average, less than fully proficient even in their native language.

An alternative explanation is that the children's families may have self-selected; that is, the families who applied to the program may have done so because they were actively seeking a rigorous academic program for their children. Several teachers suggested that the TWI parents from both language groups already tended to be highly involved in their children's education when they enrolled them in the program. "These parents would have been involved with their children no matter what program they were in," suggested one teacher at Boyd, one of the schools that enrolled a high-poverty, high Latino enrollment. "I think that's why the students were so ahead of their peers," added another in the same school. As one teacher reported, "I know parents from both sides, some of the higher kids, are really involved and I have noticed that some of the low learners the parents are not involved at all." Teachers in all five schools agreed that parental involvement made a substantial difference for children from both language groups, and many agreed that it was a critical factor in the children's academic success.

There may be an additional explanation for teachers' perceptions that children were "smart." Teachers may have been influenced by the elite status of the program, which may have raised their expectations for all of the students. Furthermore, as Celia, a third grade teacher at Boyd suggested, TWI students were "twice as smart" because by building on the child's two languages, "you are molding and creating two people. You have the person that's going to go out to the world and be able to work in English in the English world and the person who's going out into the Spanish [world]. And then you have a well-rounded person because that person's going to be able to work in any situation." This explanation moved the discussion away from the child who was already "smart" prior to entering the program to the child who, through dual language instruction, would be able to live well in two worlds and to move easily from one world to the next. For those teachers who had not yet completed this conceptual transformation, however, it may have felt more comfortable to ascribe students' academic achievement to a preexisting "smartness."

Conclusion

Findings from the larger bi-literacy study (Acosta, 2005b) that followed the exploratory phase examined in the current article support the conclusion that the TWI made an important difference in students' social, academic, and linguistic development. In contrast with ELLs who participated in more traditional, deficit-oriented programs (Thomas & Collier, 1997; 2002), English language learners in this TWI program were able to continue developing their home language while closing the achievement gap in English. Concomitantly, native English speakers in the program performed well academically while also acquiring a second language. It was apparent that the languages and cultures of both groups were valued within the program, and that participation in the TWI helped equalize social status in the eyes of many participants. The programs in these five schools thus appeared to be achieving their goals of bilingualism, biliteracy, positive interethnic relations, and high self-esteem for both groups.

Of note, even TWI teachers who had previously taught in the Developmental Bilingual Program, which followed an identical design except for student enrollment, said they noticed a strong difference in both quality and prestige. Considering that the main difference between the two programs was the presence of native English speakers, the integration of the two groups may have had an important effect on program processes and outcomes. Findings from this study indicate, moreover, that the enrollment of dominant group members in the TWI may have helped to raise the status of the program, to the extent that teachers, students and their families felt “special.” European American families’ high regard for the program seemed to help transform negative attitudes about bilingual education (and Spanish speakers) and to elicit positive perceptions of the TWI. The involvement of these families may also have helped attract additional resources, professional development, attention, and a willingness on the part of teachers to work harder than they had in other bilingual programs.

Over a decade ago, Fern (1995) observed a similar phenomenon at the Oyster dual language school in Washington, DC. Like many TWI, the author pointed out, Oyster was perceived as a “public school of the elite,” an island of excellence in an otherwise decaying inner city school system. Because European American families placed such a high value on bilingualism for their own children, and because the school was considered one of the few high quality academic programs in the city, the program became highly sought after. Every winter, parents would camp out for days on the sidewalk outside for the chance to enroll their children for the following fall. This elite status “[drove] up the academic standards, attract[ed] the best teachers, increase[d] parental and community support, and generate[d] money and advocacy for the development of school projects” (Fern, 1995). The poor, Latino and African American families, argued Fern, thus appeared to benefit directly from the integration of middle class White families in the dual language program in ways they would not have enjoyed in more traditional educational programs.

The socioeconomic status and ethnicity of the native English speakers may have made an important difference in the extent to which Spanish-speaking children and their families were able to acquire some of the cultural capital important to their school success. While it was difficult to determine from this study whether it made a measurable difference in academic outcomes, it is quite possible that the *concerted cultivation* approach employed by Anglo parents at McClure may have raised expectations for both teachers and students. Interestingly, Latino parents at this school who learned to adopt the Anglo parenting approach may have compounded the effect for teachers, leading them to feel they were being held more accountable than they would have been under the *accomplishment of natural growth* approach, in which Latino parents typically entrusted their children to teachers without question. At the same time, Spanish-speaking parents who adopted a more Anglo style of interacting with their children may have exposed them to socialization practices that were closer to those of the dominant group — and to the culture of the school.

The presence of native English speakers combined with the valuing of both languages in the two-way program seemed to help reframe some teachers’ perceptions of which children were “smart,” “talented,” and “good students.” Popkewitz (1999) sug-

gests that teachers' discursive practices form a part of their systems for ordering and classifying students. These systems, in turn, "normalize" students by establishing categories to distinguish among "normal" students and "abnormal students;" students who are "capable" and those who are not; those who can succeed, and those who cannot.

The current findings suggest that when value was ascribed to their language and culture by members of the dominant group, the native Spanish speakers came to be perceived as vital members of the group. This paradigm shift, in turn, transformed the teachers' discursive practices surrounding "smartness" and raised their expectations of the children's capabilities. As teachers' conceptions were thus reshaped, they may have transformed their practices in ways that led to greater student success. To some extent, the dual language discourse of some participants and observers seemed to move away from the traditional conceptions of solving inequity by "helping" the marginalized to access the power of the dominant group by becoming "more like us" (Popkewitz, 1999). Instead, this discourse helped move the two language groups toward a different kind of equity in which power was assigned to difference, and in which the Spanish language as well as Latino culture were elevated closer to the status of the dominant language and culture. However, some teachers' tendency to attribute the success of their students to a pre-existing "smartness" reflected the more dominant class assumption in which "status, privilege, and similar rewards are 'earned' by individuals" (Lareau, 2003, p. 275) due to their superior abilities, efforts and skills rather than to a structural change in power relations.

As a final note of caution, these findings should by no means be construed to imply that the Anglo style of parent involvement was inherently superior to that of the Latinos. Ultimately, the choice of which parenting style gets valued is a function of "arbitrary" standards that schools establish, with the assumption that these standards are somehow culturally neutral and rational (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, as cited in O'Connor & DeLuca Fernandez, 2006). Furthermore, as O'Connor and DeLuca Fernandez (2006) argue, "the normative culture of the school ... places poor [and non-White] children at risk by privileging the developmental expressions more likely to be nurtured among White middle class children (pp. 8 -9)". The concerted cultivation approach appears to favor the kind of academic achievement that is normalized and measured on standardized tests; that is sought by many elite, competitive colleges; and that can lead to employment in prestigious professional work.

In conclusion, findings from this study suggest that two-way immersion programs are successful with low-income Spanish speakers not because the programs mitigate the effects of poverty for "at-risk" children (O'Connor & DeLuca Fernandez, 2006), but because TWI transforms the power relations between the two groups. In contrast to subtractive, deficit-oriented programs that ask students to relinquish their native language and culture in favor of the dominant language and culture, two-way immersion programs build on the prior knowledge, cultural identities, and languages that children bring with them to school. Two-way students thus maintain their own cultural capital while also acquiring some of the cultural capital of the dominant class, allowing them to become successful in both of their worlds. Thus, unlike their counterparts who attend more traditional U.S. programs for English language learners,

Spanish speakers in TWI programs are not forced to choose between maintaining their cultural identities and achieving success in society.

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