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"Seemingly on the inside ... but really on the outside": Reading for Mirrors in Mexican Whiteboy

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Since the publication of “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors” almost 30 years ago, scholars have drawn on Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop’s (1990) language to frame their own analyses and theories surrounding minoritized representation in children’s and young adult literature (Botelho and Rudman, 2009; Tschida, Ryan, and Ticknor, 2014; among many others). Dr. Bishop’s three analogies for reading—mirrors, windows, and doors—are useful points of departure, as Bishop provides apt metaphors for how white and nonwhite readers alike interact with texts. In keeping with the latter, as a scholar of Latinx children’s literature, I am interested in her first metaphor—the mirror—as a way to explore identity formation and validation in and through Latinx-centered texts. According to Bishop, reflecting the rich and multifaceted realities of minoritized children and adolescents is vital to their ability to realize their identities and to interact with the world around them. However, textual mirrors to support identity formation for Latinx child readers are scarce.

The numbers are symptomatic of a larger problem within children’s literature: the disproportionate representation of privileged peoples in the pages of books for young readers. This inequality is perhaps best illustrated by the disparity between the steadily increasing Hispanic population in the U.S., which has risen to approximately 17.8% in the last few years, and the 2.4% Latinx characters that appear in children’s books (The United States Census Bureau, n.d.; Huyck, Dahlen, and Griffin, 2016). Many journalists, bloggers, scholars, librarians, and authors have noted the negative effects of under-representation and misrepresentation of the Latinx experience in children’s and young adult literature (Bishop 1990; Ehrlich, 2017; Gangi, 2005; Jarema, 2017; Mathis, 2002; Meadows-Fernandez, 2017; Naidoo, 2011; Pérez, 2017; Rich, 2012; Torres-Rivera, 2014), signaling the urgency and complexity of this problem. Beyond having so few mirrors, Latinxs must also constantly confront a range of inadequate or false mirrors in media and culture. Debbie Reese (debreese, 2017) has referred to these as fun house mirrors, which throw back a distorted portrait of reality. Fun house mirror representation means that rather than seeing their lives rendered as sympathetic if at all, children of Latin American descent are told that they, and those like them, are criminals, lazy, and unwanted. This type of misrepresentation magnifies other issues of visibility in Latinx children’s literature, as it is also important to note that bi-ethnic, biracial, multiethnic, or multiracial (which I will heretofore refer to under the umbrella terms “multiethnic” or “multiracial”) Latinx children have even fewer mirrors (Chaudhri, 2013, p. 95).

The terminology underlying multiethnic and multiracial identities is “slippery” according to Nancy Thalia Reynolds (2009) in her analysis of mixed heritage peoples in adolescent literature (p. xi). This population is also troubled by questions of belonging or ownership over their identities because of the dual or mixed nature of their parentage. The terminology itself is imprecise; although I tend to consider “multiethnic” peoples to be born from unions between individuals of differing and multiple ethnicities and “multiracial” peoples from unions between individuals of differing and multiple races, these terms work differently in an anthropological context. There, multiethnicity or multiracial identity are even more complicated, because while “people may identify with being ‘mixed,’ what this means varies; sometimes it is multiracial, sometimes it is ‘cultural’ or ‘ethnic’; at other times it is a combination of both” (Paragg, 2017, p. 280). It is also important to recognize that race and ethnicity are not the same thing here, despite my oversimplified definitions above for the sake of brevity. Nor are the terms fully capable of describing the complex nature of identity for historically marginalized populations. For example, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (2007) illuminates the inaccuracy of folding Native populations into the field of ethnic studies, as they “are not ‘ethnic’ populations,” but are instead “landlords, with very special political and cultural status in the realm of American identity and citizenship” (p. 86). Even as such terms offer only vague generalizations of the complexity of these populations, they nevertheless produce real and often terrible effects, especially for people whose identities straddle two or more of these categorizations.

To be multiethnic or multiracial Latinx can, at once, suggest a bi-ethnic, Latinx-white identity, as is the case with Danny the half white, half Mexican protagonist of Matt de la Peña’s (2008) *Mexican Whiteboy*, which I center in this analysis of mirrors in Latinx youth literature. It may also signal a biracial, Latinx-Black (not to be confused with Afro-Latinx) identity—as embodied by Uno, Danny’s rival-cum-friend. But, beyond Danny and Uno, there are numerous other iterations of Latinx identities, which speaks to Reynolds’ (2009) explanation that the multiple possible variations of multiethnic or multiracial identities inherently necessitate careful attention to identity formation (p. xvi). In turn, this essay investigates the ways that *Mexican Whiteboy* deploys literary devices, such as the inclusion of mirror-imagery, to illustrate the journey of self-identification Danny undertakes. I want to be clear that my analysis of *Mexican Whiteboy* is rooted in this text’s setting as a way to explore Danny’s progress toward self-efficacy and to critically engage with difficult questions surrounding hybridized states of being.

Though Matt de la Peña shares Danny's mixed heritage identity, I deemphasize his place as the author, and instead highlight Danny's (and Uno's) position as a much-needed mirror for Latinx readers.

Though Danny represents an often-overlooked subset of Latinx readers, his unease with his hybridized identity captures the tenuous lived reality of many multiethnic or multiracial peoples. Amina Chaudhri (2013) terms this a "missing half story" because it spends much of its narrative space decrying Danny's disassociation with his Mexican heritage (p. 99). For most of the novel, Danny cannot reconcile the two halves of his identity, and he is not alone in this feeling of dislocation. Karen Sands-O'Connor (2001) and Sandra Hughes-Hassell (2013) both explore this anxiety and the difficulty of young protagonists to fuse multiple ethnic or racial identities. They contend that representations of mixed heritage peoples in children's and young adult literature are complicated when they must reflect two (or more) ethnic or racial identities at once. This bifurcated lived reality raises questions with no simple answers. Indeed the process of identity formation "is further complicated by the question, *What am I?*", which indicates adolescents' dissociation with both a sense of self and their embodied experience (Hughes-Hassell, 2013, p. 219, emphasis in original). Ultimately, when methodologies of belonging are disrupted by hybridization, the multiethnic or multiracial protagonist (and, ostensibly, the multiethnic or multiracial child reader) sees themselves as belonging in neither parent culture, thus rendering them outsiders.

While Danny's struggle for identity finds root in the tension between his parental cultures, he seeks unhealthy outlets to purge his feelings of displacement. Danny's inclination toward self-harm as catharsis for his internal pain makes present the necessity to normalize hybridized identities in children's and young adult literature. Danny's self-harming behaviors would never have reached such a calamitous peak if he had been reassured earlier in life of his belonging regardless of the hybridity of his identity. Thus, for mirrors to adequately reflect this tumultuous, liminal identity, they must embrace ambiguity and hybridity. While Bishop (1990) explains that mirrors in books are a way to seek self-affirmation, Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa (2007) underlines how mirrors facilitate the participatory act of "seeing and being seen" (p. 64). Ultimately, reading for mirrors in Latinx youth literature demands an attention to the ways that multiracial or multiethnic Latinx characters *actively* engage with constructing self-identity both by seeing themselves and in making themselves. For characters like Danny, this

process is slow and incremental, but eventually results in him asserting the power of his *mestizaje*, or his mixed/“mestizo” heritage. The transformative potential of embracing the hybridity of his *Latinidad*, the markers of his Latinx heritage, thus offers Danny’s process of identity-formation as exemplary for Latinx readers seeking mirrors.

Why Mirrors Matter

I want to pause here to explain more personally why I find these mirrors to be so profoundly significant. As the daughter of a Mexican American mother and white father, I had few books growing up that accurately reflected my lived experiences as a Chicana. Those books that did exist as supposed mirrors reproduced stereotypical images of Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Chicanxs, or other Latinxs. But it was those problematic books to which I clung as a child because, despite their misrepresentation, at least they *had* representation. When I was first introduced to *Mexican Whiteboy* in college, I realized that Danny’s story more accurately captured what it means to be of mixed heritage, even if Danny’s life is very different than mine. Regardless, Danny’s struggle for identity is something that I, too, feel deeply. I often wonder if my upbringing and my Anglo last name render me too separate from my Latinx heritage. Like Danny, as a non-Spanish speaking Chicana, I have come to understand that the dimensions of my *Latinidad* vary from the “norm”—my feet are firmly planted in the liminal space between my parental cultures. I also feel dislocation and have struggled to come to terms with the hybrid nature of being Chicana. Were I to have had Danny’s story earlier in life, I could have been able to read as “a means of self-affirmation” (Bishop, 1990, para. 1).

In using Danny as an example for the need for multiethnic or multiracial mirrors for those like Danny and I who feel dislocated, I assert that inclusive practices in Latinx youth literature redresses under-and-misrepresentation while also embracing the liminal positionality of its subjects. It is this liminality which I will explore first—addressing how Danny resists the dual nature of his identity. I will then turn to the many scenes in which Danny disassociates with his own reflection, using these moments to illustrate his futile attempts to self-fashion only one half of his hybrid identity. These two forms of identity *malformation* arrest Danny’s development, but his introduction to and blooming friendship with Uno, whose own hybrid identity stands in stark contrast to Danny’s, crystalize his eventual self-efficacy. In the end, Danny is able to overcome the self-imposed binary opposition of his bi-ethnic identity by recognizing the merit of hybridity. In this way, he is posed as a mirror reflecting the many and varied ways multiethnic or

multiracial individuals interact with and come to understand themselves.

Conflicting Cultures

While Danny's own low self-esteem exacerbates many of his identity crises, his imagining of his parents' relationship as analogous to the clash between his two ethnic identities catalyzes these problems. Different ethnicities or races can certainly coexist peacefully within the parental unit, but Danny's parents' relationship has dissolved before the book begins and Danny resultantly places his parental cultures in opposition (Glenn, 2012, p. 342). When his father leaves, Danny blames his mother, thinking that she is "the reason he's whitewashed and an outsider even with his own family" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 41). Notwithstanding that his mother *is* part of his family, Danny distances himself from her because of the string of white men she dates after her marriage to his father ends. Much like the multiethnic picture books Sands-O'Connor (2001) examines, Danny's narrative sees that his parents' "differences are emphasized over similarities" (p. 416).

According to clinical psychologist Nick Banks (2002), children turn to their parents to interpret their mixed heritage. However, in asking their parents—who are not multiethnic or multiracial—to make sense of their hybridity, these children often do not receive adequate answers to their queries about the complex nature of their identities. Banks (2002) cautions parents to provide their children with positive modes of self identification, otherwise their multiethnic or multiracial children may begin "to see 'difference' as negative" rather than as a means of making them unique (p. 222). I argue that this is complicated when multiethnic or multiracial children also lack mirrors in books. While parents can exert a powerful force on their children's self-efficacy, scholars like Bishop (1990) maintain that literature is an equally significant socializing tool. Danny's struggle to find a place within either of his families resonates with multiethnic or multiracial readers who must also contend with the transmutation of two (or more) cultural heritages into a third and separate culture—one that carries unique characteristics as well as tenets of both parent cultures. Books that act as mirrors for hybridized Latinx child readers should reflect what it means to simultaneously be a part of their parents' cultures as well as a culture all their own, but this is not a simple process. The mixed race/ethnic individual must recognize and reconcile the inherent contradiction of being at once Latinx-and-something else and neither Latinx-nor-something else.

Danny, however, cannot process this concept. His feelings of dislocation are compounded

when he is confronted with the reality that he is unlike either his mother's or father's extended families because he does not look like them and he does not speak like them. Although he starts the narrative attempting to learn to embrace his Mexican identity by spending the summer with his father's relatives, the Lopezes, his inability to communicate with them highlights his separation from his Mexican heritage. He immediately realizes that the Lopezes speak almost exclusively in Spanish, a language that he does not understand. Indeed, "all he had was his mom's English," but he asserts that "he didn't want [English] anymore" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 16). Anzaldúa (2007) explains, "ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (p. 81). If linguistic identity and ethnic identity are, as Anzaldúa (2007) says, intrinsically connected, then Danny's inability to speak Spanish troubles his (half) Mexican identity, and he allows this dilemma to consume him (Malo-Juvera, 2017, p. 44).

Though Spanish is an artifact of colonization, it is a key influence on the imagined community of Mexicans, whether they live abroad or still reside in Mexico; but it isn't the *only* influence. Indeed, Anzaldúa (2007) highlights that taking pride in one's language, however that language manifests, is key, but this is not a foregone conclusion for Danny. He regards his monolingualism with disdain, overshadowing any possibility of embracing hybridized linguistic systems. de la Peña (2008) writes:

He's thinking about the fact that he doesn't speak Spanish. He only speaks English. And it really starts to make him angry. He wishes his dad had never even married a white woman. Then he'd have grown up down here like everybody else in his family. In National City. He imagines how much different his life would be. How much better. (p. 88)

In conflating speaking Spanish with living a better life, Danny mistakenly equates his discontent with his bi-ethnic identity with the linguistic identity of his father. Try as he may to make sense of these contrasting identities, the absence of Danny's father complicates any possibility Danny has for self-efficacy. His father left because he was "sick of living in a city with so many white people, with a white wife, with two kids who were half white. [He] wanted to be around more Mexicans. [His] real family" (de la Peña, 2008, pp. 27-28). Though his father's motives for leaving Danny and his mother are at once selfish yet fueled by a sense of displacement within a space unaccepting of his racialized difference, Danny cannot reconcile his father's absence with

his own burgeoning sense of dislocation.

While Danny's desire to speak Spanish to connect with the Lopezes is certainly born from his wish to know his absent father, his father stands in for much more than just a linguistic identity or a homogenous family unit. de la Peña (2008) somewhat misleadingly characterizes Danny's stay with the Lopezes as a way for him to "track down his dad and spend some quality time with him. So they can get to know each other again" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 5). Yet, Danny does not so much want to get to know his father as he wants to get to know *himself*. Rather, his father is a synecdoche for Danny's unformed Latinidad. Danny's father represents what Danny wants for himself: freedom, autonomy, and a sense of self that is firmly established in a Mexican ethnic identity. Leveraging his father's absence as an excuse to connect with his heritage allows Danny to repress his own self-efficacy in favor of imitating his father. In fact, Danny spends much of his life attempting to fill his father's shoes—an effort that provides Danny with his first, tenuous mirror-image. As a child walking alongside his father, "[he] was trying to make [his steps] long enough so that the shadow of [his] steps matched with the shadow of [his father's]" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 26). But his father's long shadow, like the funhouse mirrors of books with poor Latinx representation, casts back an unattainable and undesirable image. While Danny's sense of identity dislocation may be rooted in the tension of his parental cultures and his absent father, it is magnified by his own misguided self-identification in these scenes.

The Man in the Mirror

Because his father overshadows him throughout most of the text, Danny attempts to find his father's reflection instead of his own when looking in the mirror. This futile search renders Danny unrecognizable, even to himself. Consequently, throughout *Mexican Whiteboy*, Danny is drawn to looking in mirrors even as he often feels alienated by his own reflection. For instance, "when he sees himself in a mirror it looks like his shirt is propped up by an upside-down coat hanger. Not a human body. Doesn't even look real" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 2). The unreality of Danny's body underlines the disconnection to his dual-heritage. When his body is not real, or is not perceived to be real, neither are his experiences, heritage, or identity. Likewise, the erasure of Latinx characters in children's and young adult literature reduces the Latinx experience to the realm of the imaginary. Far from a productive liminal or hybridized space, this space is characterized by the white-as-default ethos that permeates youth literature. Perhaps more importantly in this scene, de la Peña (2008) follows Danny's dissociative feelings of his physical

body with a description of his racialized body: “And Danny’s brown. Half-Mexican brown” (p. 2). de la Peña (2008) explains that this means that Danny is too dark complected to fit in with his white peers at school but is alternatively too light-skinned to be coded as Mexican. Rather than recognize the hybridity of his “half-Mexican brown” body, Danny sees his skin-color as a barrier. By making hybridity a challenge to be overcome, Danny distances himself from actualizing his true identity. Not only that, but he also curates a negative self-image which he perpetuates throughout the book whenever he sees his reflection.

Although Danny’s body is marked by race throughout the novel, this is not the only feature that he (mis)identifies in his reflection. Danny’s masculinity is similarly troubled by the mirror imagery de la Peña (2008) utilizes. Chicano author Rudolfo Anaya (1996) notes in his essay “‘I’m the King’: The Macho Image,” “macho has really gotten out of hand; in fact, it’s been perverted by those who use a false idea (ideal) of manliness to achieve their goals” (p. 64). And Anzaldúa (2007) concurs machismo has been negatively influenced by the stigmatizing reaches of “hierarchical male dominance” (p. 105). Like the racial divide that Danny must traverse, the gender hierarchy also poses a threat to his identity formation. Moreover, Anaya (1996) claims that boys “learn not only how to talk, act, respond, and think like men from the intimate clan of males in which [they] are raised, [they] also learn an attitude toward life” (p. 69). For Danny, his male relatives—father, uncles, cousins—represent the ideal, macho Mexican. His uncles are full of bravado and value the traditionally masculine things that Danny participates in, such as sports. But what Danny sees in the mirror contradicts this stereotype. At an optometrist’s office, Danny “slipped on a pair of sample specs and checked himself in the mirror. He looked soft with four eyes. Looked like a sissy. And a Lopez boy wasn’t supposed to look like no sissy. What would his dad have said?” (de la Peña, 2008, p. 85). Admittedly, this image is already distorted—because Danny is wearing glasses, which he does not normally—nevertheless, in recognizing that he is easily changed to look “soft” or like a “sissy,” Danny illustrates his difference from the normative machismo the other Lopezes adhere to. Further, when Danny questions what his father would think about him looking anything less than macho, he once again privileges his father’s image over his own. In other words, Danny once more seeks his father’s face in the mirror. Like when he matched his steps so their shadows would align, Danny attempts to fit his racialized, machista identity within the parameters set by his father. Therefore, while masculinity in Mexican culture is itself a contentious site, it is made more difficult when the

male subject must contend with a malformed racialized identity while simultaneously asserting his machismo.

From Self-Harm to Shifting Paradigms

Essentially, then, the disconnection between Danny's identity, gender, and ethnicity catalyze Danny's self-harming behaviors. While the novel centralizes Danny's struggle to get to know himself, de la Peña (2008) punctuates those difficulties with increasingly detrimental self-harming actions. According to Miskec and McGee (2007), "concepts such as control, escape, and relief are repeated conceits for teens cutting themselves," and "protagonists in these novels turn to sharp edges to help them deal with issues of control they lack in other aspects of their lives" (p. 169). Certainly, Danny's self-harming behaviors adhere to all three concepts: control, escape, and relief. He wants to control his identity, even if he does so by ill-advised means. He also feels the need to escape his mother's (white) culture, but this escape does not provide relief. Instead, he seeks relief and release elsewhere: in self-harm. Ultimately, Danny's "frustration with not fitting in leads him to stop talking and to engage in self-mutilation" (Hughes-Hassell, 2013, p. 220). Danny's selective mutism and self-harming behaviors manifest the strain on his mental health precipitated by his ethnic identity crisis. Danny cannot reconcile what he sees in the mirror with what he feels his identity should be, nor can he process his sense of dislocation. While it is easy for Danny to remove himself from these difficult situations by choosing not to speak—and not talking allows him power over his monolingual identity in some small measure—the choice to harm himself begins unconsciously through scratching and picking and escalates to active cutting.

In a shocking scene at the end of the text, Danny locks himself in the bathroom and engages in self-harming behavior, all while looking at his reflection. "He goes back and forth with the tweezers, again and again, staring at himself in the mirror, until the pain finally shoots up into his brain. He grits his teeth but then a strange sense of calm comes over his face. It hurts. He feels it" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 223). In this moment, Danny is not seeking his identity in the mirror—but is instead searching for something, anything that will bring him solace. Even if that something is pain, Danny seeks it unequivocally. Although he is hurt, that means that he can still engage, that he is still alive, still human. Unlike the first mirror images we see of Danny that are unrecognizable or unreal, this mirror image demonstrates the shifting paradigm in Danny's self-identity. It is in these moments when Danny is most vulnerable and his reflection most tenuous,

that he recognizes the need for change.

Even as his perception of self is shifting, Danny must also consider the myriad of ways identity manifests for others, particularly those in similar situations. Danny's mirror image is juxtaposed against that of Uno's—another mixed heritage character, whose mother is Mexican and father is Black. Like Danny, Uno's body is a contentious site. He, too, can “hardly even [recognize] himself in a mirror” (de la Peña, 2008, p. 8). But unlike Danny, what Uno sees in the mirror is not entirely displeasing: “he'd stare at his upper half—seemingly overnight he'd gone from skinny-ass mess-up to a six-foot-two seventeen year old with crazy cuts” (de la Peña, 2008, pp. 8-9). Uno's musculature and tall stature differentiate him from his peers and allow him to gain power on the baseball diamond, even while he is marginalized because he is half-Black. Even so, Danny bests Uno at baseball, leaving Uno unmoored. In turn, Uno picks a fight with Danny to reassert his superiority. Their fight, which should have separated the two, illustrates their similarities: they are both outsiders because of their hybridized identities. As the book progresses, Danny and Uno's journeys converge. While Danny is learning that his father is not living in Mexico, like he initially believes, but is instead incarcerated, Uno has been offered a place to stay with his own father but moving would mean leaving his mother and half-brother behind. Both young men struggle with the identities imposed on them by their fathers and by their dual-heritages. In the end, though, they must learn to rely on *each other* as mirrors. As both insiders *and* outsiders, Danny and Uno find symmetry in their hybridized states. Through their shared duality, Danny can begin to recognize himself.

On the Inside or the Outside?

Gloria Anzaldúa (2007) explains, “the *mestiza*'s dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness” (p. 100, emphasis in original). As we have seen, this restlessness spurs Danny to look for himself in all the wrong places. From his father to the Lopezes, Danny advances through various stages of misidentification and eventually finds a representation of his hybridized self in a fellow mixed heritage character, even if the mirror Uno offers is only partial. Ultimately, “because of his [multiethnic] heritage, Danny finds himself between two worlds, in some ways an outsider to both” (Ghiso and Campano, 2013, p. 50). For Danny who is “seemingly on the inside of *la familia de Lopez*, but really on the outside,” existing in both spaces produces a troublesome atmosphere for self-actualization (de la Peña, 2008, p. 48, emphasis in original). Like the difficult journey multiethnic or multiracial adolescents must

navigate to find mirrors of themselves in children's and young adult literature, Danny must traverse the divide between the physical and metaphorical borderlands. It is no mistake that Anzaldúa (2007) calls this space "*una herida abierta*", an open wound (p. 25, emphasis in original). Indeed, we know that this wounded, bleeding borderland catalyzes Danny's own self-harming behaviors; but it is also from this contentious space that Danny's true identity can grow.

Whereas Danny initially believes that "he's not really *Mexican*" or that "[he's] a white boy among Mexicans, and a Mexican among white boys," he is adamant about not wanting "to be a fake [Mexican]," even while he recognizes that even being a fake Mexican is an impossibility (de la Peña, 2008, pp. 90, 188, emphasis in original). For Danny, whose body and identity have seemed unreal, his desire to "be real" stems from his love for the Lopezes and his love of "the culture and the language and everything [his] gramma cooks and the way they live. [He's] always wished [he] was more like them" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 188). Bishop (1990) explains that "books can also introduce readers to the history and traditions that are important to any one cultural group" like the ones Danny so values in his Mexican family (para. 9). But even in cataloguing the things he loves and desires proximity to, Danny highlights his own separation. He loves *their* language, *their* culture, *their* food. But what Danny needs to understand is that he will never be the "real" Mexican that he thinks the Lopezes are. Notwithstanding that there are no "real" Mexicans in the sense that there is no single, monolithic Mexican experience, Danny privileges what he imagines to be the ideal Mexican Latinidad over the actual lived conditions of his hybridized existence. In placing one facet of his identity over the other, Danny refuses to see the merit of hybridity and further distances himself from having ownership over those cultural artifacts he so desires. But, while most of his experiences throughout the novel underscore "how separate the two races are," through his friendship with Uno and his realization of his father's flaws, Danny realizes that he can form his own identity not in spite of his difference, but because of it (de la Peña, 2008, p. 226).

In the end, "Danny tunes everything else out. Even his dad. It's not about him anymore. It's about something bigger" (de la Peña, 2008, p. 233). That "something bigger" connotes his hybridity and his self-identification. While we don't necessarily get the closure of Danny finally looking in a mirror and truly recognizing himself, we do see him come into his own as *Mexican Whiteboy* draws to a close. What's more, the importance of Danny's self-efficacy parallels the data: "researchers have found that adolescents of color and [I]ndigenous teens are more likely to

be actively engaged in exploring their racial and ethnic identity than are white adolescents” (Hughes-Hassell, 2013, p. 218). Additionally, Danny’s lack of adequate mirrors necessitates that he work more actively to cultivate his identity, as those around him do not reinforce it. While there are no particularly life-altering moments wherein Danny comes to the magical realization that his identity is worthwhile because of its hybridity, we do see Danny slowly ease into being comfortable with who he is. Not only is this more realistic but is a nuanced creative choice that requires close reading and engagement with the text to see the subtle progress Danny makes toward actualization. For him, self-efficacy comes in stages. Rather than experience a manufactured, *deus ex machina* that catapults him into accepting himself, Danny realizes that “‘I’m like *me*,’ ... ‘I’m just myself. That’s it’” (de la Peña, 2008, p. 241). And that’s enough.

So too might it be enough within Bishop’s (1990) framework in “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.” She explains, “some book, some story, some poem can speak to each individual child, and that if we have the time and resources, we can find that book and help to change that child’s life, if only for a brief time, and only for a tiny bit” (para. 12). Change is incremental. But Danny’s story demonstrates its necessity. Reading for mirrors in Latinx youth literature validates the need for more and better representation for minoritized audiences. Danny’s struggle for identity parallels the difficulties Latinx readers face in seeking mirrors in books. As the political *zeitgeist* furthers the divide between privileged and minoritized populations, mirrors in books become that much more important. Data still indicate that Latinxs have a long, uphill battle in rough terrain to gain a foothold in children’s literature. Regardless, Danny’s story gives me hope. If Danny can rely on his difference as a means to validate his sense of self, then we can certainly work subversively and strategically to open our windows and our doors to let people see us for who we really are. And, most importantly, we can forge more mirrors to validate the myriad experiences all Latinx youth embody, both today and in the future.

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