THE IMPACT OF STUDENT TRACKING ON LATINO/A STUDENTS AT WHS

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BACKGROUND ON TRACKING

• What Is Tracking?
  “Tracking is the practice of dividing students into separate classes for high, average, and low achievers; it lays out different curriculum paths for students headed for college and for those who are bound directly for the workplace”

• “Mode of Class Reproduction”
  • “College-Bound” and “Non-College Bound”

• Tracking Tends to Vary Among Schools Serving Students of Different Backgrounds

• Poor and Minority Students Disproportionately Placed in Lower Tracks
RELEVANT LITERATURE

• Jennifer Lucko, *Tracking Identity* (2011)
• Rebecca Callahan, *Tracking and High School English Learners* (2005)
SIGNIFICANCE

- 48.4% Latino Population in Washington City
- 64.7% Latino Student Population at WHS
- Promoting an Awareness of the Implications of Tracking at WHS
  - 35% Latino Enrolled in Higher Tracks, 65% in Regular Track
  - Unequal Instruction
  - Less Demanding Course Load in Lower Tracks
  - Implications for Higher Ed
- Latino Population=Fastest Growing in U.S. Over Last 10 Years
  - 15.2 Million Population Increase (43% Increase)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What has been the experience, both socially and academically, of the Latino/a student population in different tracks at Washington High School?

• Are Latino/a students aware they are being tracked?
• Are these students aware of the implications of tracking?
METHODOLOGY

• Observations at WHS
  • 1 x per week over a 1 month period
  • 1 x per week over a Semester long period

• Interviews and Focus Groups with Latino/a Students
  • Current Students (1 Hour)
  • Former Students (1 Hour & via Email)

• Interviews with Teachers and Academic Coordinator
  • 30 Minutes
  • Access to Questions Post-Interview
I argue that the experience of Latinos/as in the higher tracks (AP/Honors) has been a daunting, stressful and often intimidating experience with hope of it being beneficial down the road, while Latinos/as in the standard tracks feel more at ease and demonstrate an unawareness of the future implications of being in these less demanding classes.

I also argue that involvement in sports has helped Latino/a students decrease the pressure in the environment of the higher tracks, while having Latino/a role models and the feeling of wanting to represent Latinos/as in a positive light; motivates these students to defy the negative assumptions and stereotypes that surround the Latino/a population and forge pathways for others.
DATA AND ANALYSIS

Observations

- 3 AP Classes, 24.3% Latino/a
- 4 Honors Classes, 23.5% Latino/a
- 4 Standard Classes, 65.4% Latino/a

Interviews With Teachers

- Mr. Crown and Mrs. Lee

Interview With Academic Coordinator

- Mrs. Smith
DATA AND ANALYSIS CONTINUED

STUDENT PROFILE:
JUANKI TORRES

• Current Student
• AP/Honors Classes
• “It was very intimidating being in these classes...”
• Pressure
• Acting White

STUDENT PROFILE:
JULIO HERNANDEZ

• Former Student
• Honors Classes
• “I felt like I didn’t belong at first because I realized there were only a handful of us... I knew I had to represent for us.”
• Sports
• Dual Identity
DATA AND ANALYSIS CONTINUED

Interviews With Students

• Themes

  • “Pride” and “Culture” (The Fight)
  • “Proving Them Wrong” (Defying the Stereotype)
  • “Unaware” (I Can Move Up?)
  • “The Racial Divide” (The Lunch Room)
    • ”Lingies”, “athletes”, and “white kids”
  • “Sports” (Bridging the Gap)
  • “Seeing More Latinos Do Their Thing” (Role Models)
CONCLUSION

• Relatively Short Study

• Latino/as Remain Underrepresented

• Educate & Increase Awareness
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