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## Classrooms as Racialized Spaces : Dynamics of Collaboration, Tension, and Student Attitudes in Urban and Suburban High Schools Lisa M. Nunn

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What is This?

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Lisa M. Nunn

#### **Abstract**

This article interrogates the construction of ethnoracial categories in everyday classroom life and how ethnoracial classroom dynamics contribute to larger patterns of inequality in achievement and unequal college futures for minorities. The study compares one urban and two suburban schools. Drawing on observation data from six classes and 57 in-depth student interviews, I find that ethnoracial categories are continually reconstructed through teachers' pedagogical styles and students' interactions. In addition, metainstitutional structures such as curriculum tracks and nonacademic dynamics foster ethnoracial tensions between classmates. While the urban school successfully alleviates ethnoracial stereotypes, the suburban schools exacerbate ethnoracial divisions among students.

### **Keywords**

high school, race, ethnicity, classroom environment, curriculum tracking

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Existing literature demonstrates that Latino and African American students have lower academic achievement in high school compared to their White counterparts, which has consequences for how likely they are to graduate high school and attend college (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Espenshade & Radford, 2009; Greene & Forster, 2003). While there are multiple mechanisms that contribute to these outcomes (Herman, 2009), scholarship tends to focus on structural factors, such as the fact that ethnoracial minorities are often concentrated in lower performing schools (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 2005) and that this happens even when districts attempt to alleviate the issue by offering school choice or magnet programs (Devine, 1996; Wells & Crain, 1997).

Families are a second structural factor that is often explored as an explanation for why African American and Latino students have lower academic achievement compared to Whites. This line of research demonstrates that ethnoracial minorities often receive insufficient family support in their home lives for the demands of the educational system (Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997; Lareau, 1989; Teachman, 1987). Lack of family support is often rooted in social class differences, as lower income families have fewer resources to dedicate to their children's learning (Chin & Phillips, 2004). Lareau (2003) shows us that it is not only a story of resources but also parents' ideas about school are an important part of this dynamic. Middle-class parents in her study fostered learning opportunities at home, such as playing word games with their children and coaching them on how to use evidence and details to back up their opinions, even in everyday conversations. Meanwhile working class and poor parents saw school, not home, as the place for learning, and saw teachers, not themselves, as their children's academic guides. While Lareau claims that parents' ideas are class-based rather than race-based, we know that African American and Latino students are disproportionately more likely to be from low income families, so we can expect Lareau's findings to apply to them more often than to Whites.

While families and school districts do impose constraints on minority students' lives, if we limit our investigation of academic achievement to such structural factors, we miss the importance of students' own interactions and attitudes in the educational realm. Certainly students' everyday experiences in their classrooms and schools contribute to their achievement patterns as well (Mehan, 1998). As schools are known to exhibit cultural bias in their expectations for students' skills and cultural competencies, implicitly requiring White and middle-class cultural sensibilities and behaviors (Bloom, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Mercer, 1974), we should expect that many African American and Latino students might have difficulties being viewed by their teachers as academically competent simply because they do

not interact with classmates and authority figures the *right* way (Mehan, Hubbard, Villanueva, & Lintz, 1996; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999).

In addition, this pervasive cultural bias of schools results in White and middle-class cultural cues, such as speech patterns, being associated with academic success. A consequence of this, which is examined regularly by scholars of education, is that some ethnoracial minority students pressure one another not to "act White," meaning that they should not behave in any way that might bring high academic achievement because school success is viewed as a prerogative of Whites (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Brody, 1992; Fordham & Ogbu, 1987; MacLeod, 1987; Tyson, 2002; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). The extensive literature in the "acting White" debate demonstrates clearly that students of color do not uniformly experience peer pressure to resist or oppose school (Downey, Ainsworth, & Qian, 2009; Harpalani, 2002; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Tyson et al., 2005). Nonetheless, this literature tends to focus rather narrowly on the issue of whether and when students feel peer pressure to resist school success to avoid "acting White." It does not offer much insight into any other types of tensions that students of color might experience between their race/ethnicity and school success.

Like the "Mexicano" and "Mexican American" students in Matute-Bianchi's (1986) study, the ethnoracial minority students in my sample do not assert that "acting White" is a concern for them. As Matute-Bianchi argues, this does not mean their school lives are free of tension between their skin color and their academic success. School adults' ideas about minorities and classmates' ideas about minorities shape their academic environments. Unlike Matute-Bianchi's study, which includes "Chicano" and "Cholo" students who see academically successfully Latinos as "wannabe" Whites (1986, p. 240), I do not find any student in my sample who resists or opposes school success. Thus, anchoring my respondents' experiences to the "acting White" thesis would leave us with a distorted perspective on the issues they face. Instead, I examine the ethnoracial dynamics that confront minority students in their own classrooms and schools, and allow them to discuss and define the relationship to school success in their own terms, without imposing the framework of school opposition or "acting White" on their experiences.

We can expect students to largely dismiss structural explanations for the lower academic performance of Latinos and African Americans since such factors are often invisible to students themselves, who instead rely on achievement ideology to explain school success and nonsuccess (Barnes, 2002; Downey et al., 2009; MacLeod, 1987; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994; Valadez, 2000). Achievement ideology, also called Meritocracy ideology (Lemann, 1999), and American Dream Ideology (Hochschild, 1995; Johnson, 2006),

posits that anyone who works hard enough can earn success and, by this logic, failure to garner success is due to the individual neglecting to put in the necessary hard work. Although scholarship on education undermines achievement ideology by identifying structural factors that contribute to the systematic lower academic performance of minority groups, students themselves often see academic achievement only at the level of the individual. To comprehensively understand the issue, we must study students' own perceptions of it.

I offer a subject-centered view of school success from students who are, by and large, pursuing success—not avoiding it, or even considering avoiding it due to ethnoracial pressures not to "act White." The students at the three high schools in my study hold distinct understandings of the role that race plays (or does not play) in school success. I locate students' ideas about school success inside their classrooms and schools, paying particular attention to cross-ethnoracial collaboration efforts and instances of ethnoracial conflict that arise in each classroom context. I find each of the six classrooms in my study to be racialized spaces. Yet, the structure of each classroom shapes the interethnoracial interaction in distinctive ways. Some classrooms encourage dynamics that lead students to overcome ethnoracial stereotypes of school success, while other classrooms foster dynamics that exacerbate ethnoracial divisions and stereotypes regarding school success. Some classrooms are further able to cultivate cross-ethnoracial friendships among students, while other classrooms reinforce ethnoracial social divisions among schoolmates.

It is critical to recognize how classroom dynamics exacerbate or alleviate ethnoracial tensions for students if we want to better understand how minority students can overcome obstacles to academic achievement. The goal of having African American and Latino students equally represented on college campuses starts with their academic achievement in high school (Bowen et al., 2009; Espenshade & Radford, 2009; Rosenbaum, 2001). If minority students are excluded from or discouraged in their pursuit of advanced, college preparatory academics, their futures will continue to be bleaker than their White counterparts'.

# Research Design and Method

As this research is firmly rooted in the notion that school context matters for students' experiences, I take a comparative approach to studying classroom dynamics. By contrasting students' everyday classroom experiences in an average performing suburban school, a low performing urban school, and a high performing suburban school, I am able to leverage insights into the impact

of each school's structural arrangements on those experiences. Another benefit of comparative analysis is that it provides an opportunity to examine how one group, for example, Latinos, is perceived and treated by teachers and classmates in two separate school environments, or in two separate spaces within the same school. I included three school sites in my study and two classrooms within each school.<sup>1</sup>

I used qualitative methodology to study both classroom dynamics and student attitudes in high school since qualitative methods are well suited to capturing students' perspectives (Kaplan, 1999). To study classrooms, I conducted daily observations for three consecutive weeks in each of the 6 classes in this study. I sat in the front of the room, off to one side, and took field notes while the classes were in session. I was silent unless directly called on in an effort to minimize my intrusion on the ongoing interactions. To investigate student attitudes, I conducted 57 in-depth one-on-one interviews with high school students (9th, 10th, and 11th graders). Interview respondents were drawn from the classrooms where I observed. The data were collected in 2005 and 2006.

The interview sample includes approximately 19 respondents per school, split evenly between general curriculum and honors/Advanced Placement (AP) tracks in the two schools that practice curriculum tracking. Interviews lasted from 40 minutes to more than 2 hours, the majority were approximately an hour and a half long. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo software. Codes were thematic and were developed out of themes and patterns as they emerged in the data, highlighting similarities and differences at the three sites.

Each of the three schools is located within the same metropolitan area in California. The purpose of studying three dissimilar high schools is to provide points of comparison at three points along the continuum of school performance: an average performing school, a low performing school, and a high performing school. The three school sites are summarized briefly below using data compiled from each school's School Accountability Report Card (SARC), annual public reports on school performance that are mandated by state and federal legislation.

1. Comprehensive High: A typical California high school, as measured against statewide performance averages on achievement measures such as the California Standards Test and the SAT. Comprehensive High's student population also reflects state averages overall in terms of racial/ethnic composition at just above 50% Latino, and approximately 35% White. However, less than 3% of the student body is African American, as opposed to the state average of 8%.

The percentage of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged is above 40%. Socioeconomically disadvantaged is defined by California as annual earned income less than US\$35,798 based on a family of four for 2005-2006. The percentage of students who are "English Learners," which means that their native language is not English, is above 20%. The student population is just under 1,500.

- 2. Alternative High: Although Alternative High is not a charter school, it operates on a nontraditional educational model through its status as an alternative school in its urban district. Alternative High has been open just 2 years, thus its student body is comprised of a freshman and a sophomore class only. Even so, the student body is small, fewer than 110 total students, who are drawn from low performing urban neighborhood schools in the district. The student body is slightly more than 35% Latino, slightly more than 35% African American, fewer than 10% Asian, and nearly 20% White. Nearly 55% of the student population is socioeconomically disadvantaged, as defined by the state; and 1% is English Learners. These students choose Alternative High for its nontraditional approach to secondary education, for example, attending school only 3 days a week and spending the other 2 days at job internships. On performance measures such as the California Standards Test, Alternative High scores are just below state averages in English and History, and are drastically below state averages in Math and Science.
- 3. Elite Charter High: A high performing high school located in an upper-middle class, largely White neighborhood. Elite Charter High emphasizes academic rigor and excludes many traditional high school elements such as sports teams and cheerleading squads. The school offers 22 AP courses (as compared to 8 at Comprehensive High). The school's California Standards Test scores and SAT scores are well above state averages. The student body is nearly 85% White; just more than 10% Latino, and less than 1% African American. Only 5% of students are socioeconomically disadvantaged, as defined by the state; and 2% are English Learners.

In this article, I investigate the relationship between classroom experiences and students' attitudes regarding race/ethnicity and school success, and discuss its relevance to minority students' futures in higher education. I present data from field notes in classrooms at each of the three schools in the study, the same classrooms from which I drew the interview respondents. I focus on structured cross-ethnoracial collaboration in classroom activities,

including spontaneous collaboration among classmates; pair and small group work that is organized by teachers; and group discussions led by teachers. In addition, I look for evidence of cross-ethnoracial friendships or tensions among classmates. Students' perceptions of each other are formed within the particular environments of their own high schools, therefore it is critical to situate students' comments within the social and structural contexts of each high school institution (Herman, 2009). Moreover, it is critical to position these dynamics as consequences of metainstitutional structures, such as curriculum tracking, which create or restrict opportunities for students to have ethnoracially diverse classrooms to begin with.

## **Findings**

Comprehensive High: Ethnoracial Atmospheres Vary by Curriculum Track

Distinct identities exist at Comprehensive High between students who consider themselves honors/AP and students who do not. Part of that distinction is an ethnoracial one, as the general curriculum (low track) is perceived to be heavily occupied by Latino students, and honors/AP is perceived as heavily occupied by White and Asian students, despite the school's well-established and thriving Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID targets high potential students who are ethnoracial minorities and supplements their curriculum with academic mentoring and tutoring, which helps secure placement for AVID students in honors and AP courses.

The prevalent distinction between honors/AP students as predominately White or Asian and "regular" students as Latino is a dynamic that contributes to Comprehensive High students being attuned to the ways in which race and ethnicity play a role in school success. Nearly half of the students I interviewed here acknowledge that race/ethnicity matters for school success. Many of these responses, however, cast Latinos in negative positions as poor decision makers or as culturally impoverished. For example, Claire, a White freshman in honors courses, says, "I think it's easier for Latinos to fall into the whole gang situation . . . a lot of them don't really value education. I don't know why—their families . . . come over here and they try to give their kids education and they don't take advantage of it, which confuses me . . . I don't want to sound like a horrible person." Like Claire, several students I spoke to expressed awkwardness or ambivalence about voicing negative statements about Latino classmates, which exposes an additional layer of ethnoracial awareness and tension at Comprehensive High. White students recognize that

their comments might sound racist or "horrible," yet such negative explanations for poor academic success among Latino classmates are often the only explanations that make sense to them. Their perspectives reflect widely shared myths and stereotypes that Latinos do not value schooling, despite research that shows Latinos to have high levels of commitment to education (Marx, 2008; Valencia & Black, 2002)

Latino students themselves voice different explanations than White students for low academic success among Latinos; however, their explanations also tend to be negative, portraying Latinos as poor decision makers. Sandra, a Latina sophomore in general curriculum, for example, criticizes her fellow Latino schoolmates but offers some insight into the incentives for abandoning school for other pursuits:

I think like the Mexican people, they just see that most of the other parents, their friends, their brothers and sisters, have just gone off into construction . . . they think that's a career and they're going to make a lot of money in that line. They could actually be like the other people and go to class, be there on time, do their homework, turn it in and actually be more than a construction worker.

Recent work by Van Hook and Bean (2009) finds a strong cultural work ethic among Mexican immigrants in the labor market, which might explain Sandra's schoolmates' preference for quick entry into gainful employment such as construction over the delayed rewards of educational attainment. Nonetheless, Sandra is typical of the students I interviewed at Comprehensive High in her condemnation of fellow Latino students for not making academic achievement a higher priority.

Other students, albeit few, such as Diana, a White sophomore in general curriculum, suggest that the ethnoracial differences in school success have more to do with structural advantages that White students enjoy, rather than Latinos' deficient decision making. Diana says,

I think that most of the white kids have it easier [in school], not because they are white, but because most of them are from these prosperous families and they have someone at home that helps them and someone to pay for them to go to tutors . . . they have more resources available to them.

While Diana's is a more sympathetic perspective, it nonetheless demonstrates the pervasiveness of the understanding at Comprehensive High that Latinos are lower academic achievers than whites. At this high school, race/

ethnicity is far from irrelevant to school success in students' minds. Instead "White" and "Latino" are categories that students associate with distinct levels of academic achievement.

## AP English Class: A White Space

In this ethnically charged environment at Comprehensive High, I find stark differences between the AP English class and the general curriculum world history class I observed. The AP English class is a relatively small class, with 22 total students, comprised of 10 White students, 7 Latinos, 4 Asian Americans (including one Korean immigrant), and 1 African American. While Latinos' representation here is not drastically disproportional, they are slightly underrepresented since they comprise more than 50% of the student body, and only 7 out of 22 (32%) here. Interestingly, the Latino students I talked to in the class perceive it to be overpopulated with Whites, along with their other AP courses. René, a Latino junior describes it this way: "Another thing I've noticed is that with AP it's like 90% White people, a couple of Black people and a couple of Hispanic people—not 90% White, but a mix between Asians and Whites."

Yvonne, a Latina junior, makes a similar assessment and offers an explanation that implicates teachers and administrators at her school:

I don't know if you have noticed, but the AP classes are full of White students and that makes me uncomfortable. Lots of my [Latino] friends are plenty smart to be in AP classes, but they just don't know about it, or haven't been encouraged to go into them.

Yvonne and René both are describing their AP classes in general here, and in other moments of the interviews, they make it clear that their AP English class is not an exception to their perceptions of AP classes as "full of White students" even though the English class has only 3 more White students than Latinos.

Based on my observation data, I suggest that one reason that students such as René and Yvonne perceive their AP classes as overpopulated by Whites, even though non-White students are well represented, might be because the space of the classroom *feels* White. By this I mean that the styles of interaction, modes of humor, and general sensibilities that dominate the classroom space are aligned with White and middle-class values.

The atmosphere in the AP English classroom is very interactive, which seems to be a positive goal of the teacher's pedagogy. Students continually collaborate with each other and the teacher in developing points and fleshing

out definitions and examples. In general, students are comfortable jumping into an ongoing discussion without raised hands—though this comes with the usual consequence of less assertive students (of all ethnoracial groups) being left out of the verbal interaction. However, three White students, Stephanie, Erin, and Brett, dominate the verbal space of the classroom. They set the pace and timber of the majority of the open interaction, in much the same way that Adler and Adler (1996) explain that popular students can control classroom climate, including how comfortable other students feel to call out answers in class.

These three, Stephanie, Erin, and Brett, exhibit a strong sense of entitlement, what Annette Lareau (2003) posits is a byproduct of "concerted cultivation" child rearing strategies of middle-class parents. Lareau argues that middle-class youngsters are taught to feel comfortable confronting adults as relative equals and "to put pressure on persons in positions of power in institutions to accommodate their needs" (2003, p. 163). While Lareau finds this to be a characteristic of middle-class children's upbringings, a feature that crosses racial categories, in this particular AP English classroom at Comprehensive High, these characteristics are embodied exclusively in White students. Non-White middle-class students such as René, who is quoted above, and Sierra, the only African American student in the class, behave in perceptively different ways. They are more restrained in their interactions and more traditionally respectful to the teacher.

The entitlement that White students exhibit in this class often takes the form of complaints, negotiations about class work, or playful banter with the teacher, where students show their comfort in addressing the teacher as a relative equal. For example, one morning, the class settles in to a multiple-choice exam, and the teacher sits at her table, opening a copy of Cliff Notes to *Romeo and Juliet*. "Hey," Stephanie calls out to the teacher playfully, "why do you get to read when we have to take this test?" Brett adds, smiling, "If the students have to put in the work, the teacher should too!"

Similarly, on another day Erin nearly yells at the teacher when the teacher admits that she has still not graded exams they took a month earlier: "What!? You didn't grade the benchmark [practice for the California Standards Test]. That's an outrage!" Erin's tone is friendly, but also heavily accusatory. Erin calls the teacher "lazy" and offers to run the papers through the scantron machine for her.

While it might be tempting to see this teacher as weak or bullied by her students, this would be a misreading of the scene. Rather, the teacher seems to believe in open interactions and collaborative discussions as valuable pedagogical tools. To achieve a free-moving dialogue, she is willing to accommodate some extraneous commentary, and even some irritating

behavior. Moreover, the teacher's interactions make it evident that she too endorses the middle-class philosophy of "concerted cultivation" childrearing, as outlined by Lareau. She encourages her students to debate and disagree with her in a clear effort to stimulate their intellectual growth and self-confidence.

One of the consequences of this lively, open verbal space that the AP English teacher fosters is that non-White and non-middle-class students must conform to the norms of interaction there, or be relegated to near silence, which is most often the case with Sierra, Yvonne, and René, whom I mention above. This dynamic is similar to what Ochoa and Pineda (2008) find in their college course: Latino students refrained from verbally challenging their White peers' domination of discussions, even when Latino students passionately disagreed with their classmates' comments. Ochoa and Pineda explain that their self-restraint was due to Latino students feeling intimidated and linguistically unprepared to "talk like the middle and upper-middle class white students" whose backgrounds and educational training allowed them to be more articulate, academic-sounding speakers (2008, p. 50).

In the AP English class at Comprehensive High, some Latino students do jump into ongoing discussions occasionally. However, these students more often take unassertive roles in class. They are not exactly passive, they simply do not stake out territory, so to speak, in the verbal space of the classroom. For example, one morning the teacher asks an open question to the class, and Ricardo answers it quietly to his neighbor, a White boy named Derek, rather than shouting it out. Hearing no responses to her question, the teacher answers it herself aloud, using nearly the identical words Ricardo just whispered to his friend. Ricardo is very pleased at having known the correct answer, and he congratulates himself proudly—but again quietly—to his neighbor Derek. All of this passes without the teacher taking notice.

Although atypical for the class in general, Ricardo's more quiet participation in the lesson is typical of the interaction styles most often employed by non-White and non-middle-class students in this class. While White students comprise less than half of the total number of students (10 out of 22), the class dynamics and environment are dominated by White and middle-class sensibilities, making the class *feel* like it is "full of white students," as Yvonne characterizes it.

## General Curriculum World History: A Latino Space

The classroom dynamics are markedly different in the general curriculum world history class I observed. While the AP English class *feels* White, the world history class is a space at Comprehensive High where Latino

sensibilities dominate. It *feels* Latino. In this class, it is the White students who are more often noticeably silent.

Part of the difference between these two classroom spaces is due to the pedagogical approaches of the two teachers. The world history teacher creates a much more structured environment. He does a fair amount of lecturing from slides on an overhead projector and runs discussions by calling on raised hands. Thus, there is a great deal less open interaction in the world history class compared to the AP English class, and no oligarchy of student personalities dominate the verbal space of this classroom. Furthermore, students here do not exhibit the same sense of entitlement as do students in the AP English class; they do not outwardly embody characteristics of "concerted cultivation" child rearing. The differences between the two classes correspond to findings in the literature on curriculum tracks, which suggest that upper-track classes have students and teachers who expect the class to be managed in a discussion-oriented, collaborative way; and lower-track classes tend to have both students and teachers who expect the class to be managed in a more disciplined, top-down way (Metz, 1978; Oakes, 1985).

The teacher dominates the verbal space of the world history class. However, Latino students largely perform the action in the room as well as any student interaction that does take place in the verbal space. Latinos make up 21 of the 37 total students, the rest are White (15); with the addition of one Asian American. What I mean by "the action in the room" is that during the course of the class period, if students are milling about the room, they are almost always Latino students. They sharpen pencils, stretch their legs, retrieve items from the teacher's worktable, borrow paper from a friend across the room, and so on. During free moments many classmates chat amongst themselves in Spanish. The room is visibly and audibly populated by a Latino presence. Importantly, Latino students are comfortable in this space: Spanish chatter is not confined to hushed voices, nor are Latino students' bodies confined to seats and desks.

Also, several students eat iconic Mexican treats during class, often a powder candy dispensed from a small plastic bottle. This item is particularly visible because to eat it one pours the powder into one's palm and then licks it off. While there is nothing distinctively Latino about eating food in class, the high visibility of distinctive Mexican items being consumed does help create an atmosphere of a Latino *feel* to the room, as opposed to the AP English class for example where I often saw students eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, a more typical food item of Whites. The Mexican candy, free physical movement, and Spanish conversations all contribute to a Latino *feel* to the space of this classroom.

Moreover, if students are ejecting comments or jokes into the teacher's lectures, it nearly always comes from Latino students, Sebastián in particular. He sits in the back corner of the class, and his attempts to joke with the teacher can be (purposefully) heard across the entire room. For example, when the teacher catches Sebastián copying a neighbor's paper and asks Sebastián to move to the front row, Sebastián explains loudly—with a half-cocked smile—that he could not see the board well enough to write down the questions, so he had to copy those from his friend instead. Sebastián regularly makes his presence known and takes such opportunities to entertain himself and his classmates.

Sebastián's clowning is evidence of how comfortable Latino students feel in the world history class, as opposed to the AP English class where Yvonne, for example, says that the Whiteness of the classroom space makes her feel "uncomfortable." Latinos' comfort in world history is also evident in students' chosen seats. Most of the 15 White students in the world history class sit in seats that are not congregated near other White students, but instead are isolated from one another. Latino students, on the other hand, do congregate. In fact, classroom collaboration is organized around several clusters of Latino classmates who routinely work together, such as four Latinas who sit in the very front of the room and begin each class period by dragging their desks closer together to facilitate collaboration and chatting.

Another detail that exemplifies the Latino feel of this classroom is that most of the Latino students do not call the teacher by his name, Mr. Rockport. Instead, they call him "Mister." Only Latino students do this, but it is a frequently heard form of address in the class, for example, "Mister, I have a question," or "Mister, is this due tomorrow?" or "Mister, this test was hard." It is clearly used as a respectful form of address, akin to the use of "Señor" in Spanish. The teacher is not Latino himself; he is White. However, Mr. Rockport exhibits sincere interest in his students' lives and engages his Latino students in conversations about their recent vacations in Mexico, their opinions on the then-current immigration rights protests happening in California, and other topics during free moments. Thus, he actively fosters a pro-Latino atmosphere in the class. Mr. Rockport's rapport with his students can best be described as what Valenzuela (1999) refers to as "authentic caring," which garners both respect and devotion from the class (Noddings, 1984, 2005). Research on caring shows teachers like Mr. Rockport to be an important source of validation and encouragement in students' lives, particularly for Latino students who are often marginalized in school (Garza, 2009; Marx, 2008; Pizarro, 2005).

# Tracks and Pedagogy Exacerbate Stereotypes and Low Latino Achievement

Even though Latinos make up the majority of the student body at Comprehensive High and White students do not outnumber non-White students in the AP English class, the class is experienced just as the literature on curriculum tracking depicts honors and AP courses: as White and middle class (Gamoran, 1992; Hallinan, 1994; Mehan et al., 1996; Oakes, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1976). To be clear, it is not the case that Latino students never dive into the ongoing stream of interaction, it is just more rare. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that both of these classrooms are sites where Latino and White students cooperate with one another. During my observations, I did not witness any instances of visible racialized conflicts or tensions among students. Quite the opposite, I noticed many occasions when Whites and Latinos spontaneously chose to work together on assignments; shared jokes; or commiserated on school issues. Nonetheless, the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that exists at Comprehensive High must be taken in the context of larger classroom dynamics, and I find those classroom dynamics to be highly racialized. The AP English class is a decidedly White space, while the general curriculum world history class is a decidedly Latino space. This means that Latino comfort is relegated to the low curriculum track and that Latino discomfort dominates the high track, which undoubtedly deters Latino students from pursuing AP/honors curriculum. This ethnoracially charged environment, then, contributes to the continual reproduction of Latinos' positions at the lower end of the achievement hierarchy, which in turn helps secure their places at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy once they have left high school.

# Alternative High: Support for Overcoming Cross-Ethnoracial Tensions

Alternative High is also a majority-minority school; however, unlike Comprehensive High where Latinos make up the majority with Whites as the second largest population, the proportions of African Americans and Latinos are roughly equal, just above 35% of the total student body each, while Whites comprise less than 20%. Alternative High structures cross-ethnoracial collaboration effectively by creating intimate, family-like environments among classmates. This is accomplished largely through the structure of homeroom groups. Alternative High does not practice curriculum tracking. Students spend the entire school day surrounded by 20 or so homeroom

classmates and a homeroom teacher. Subject-specific teachers, for example, the math teacher, come into each homeroom to deliver lessons. Keeping students integrated in the same college preparatory curriculum is part of Alternative High's educational mission, and the school day is designed to have enough flexibility to accommodate students' individual learning speeds without stratifying the curriculum.

Similar to many school reform efforts, Alternative High aims to transform its low-performing urban students into students with college futures. As Kaplan (1999) describes it, it is no small endeavor to make "social change possible for people who begin their educational process with so few resources" (p. 184). She acknowledges that "the idea of teaching students the necessary habits of the mind and character, as well as the traditional academic skills needed to do well in college, is a daunting task for any educational program" (p. 184). One critical element of this process at Alternative High is to openly address ethnoracial stereotypes and tensions that its students face in their everyday lives.

Students I interviewed at Alternative High are very aware of race, perhaps partly due to the fact that 80% of the student body is non-White. However, most of the students I talked to express confidence that race does not matter for how successful someone can be in school. For example, when I ask Keesha, an African American sophomore, whether or not different races or ethnic groups have an easier or tougher time in school, she replies, "Everybody is in the same boat. Why would it be any different?" Her classmate Sheena, who is also African American, says something similar: "It's not like Blacks have it better or Whites have it better, it's not like that at our school at all. Because I don't think nobody's ever focused on race there."

The mission of Alternative high explicitly encourages an attitude that race does not stand in students' way, and teachers and administrators actively endorse this attitude in their daily interactions with students. Several students I talked to espouse this attitude as well. Enrique, a Latino freshman, gives a typical example. When I ask Enrique whether different races or ethnic groups have a tougher or easier time in school, he responds curtly: "No. That's just an excuse."

Other students, like Monique, an African American sophomore, acknowledge that the potential exists for race to complicate students' educational experiences, however, she also dismisses it as an excuse. She explains, "Some people might claim that it is harder. They might feel like 'my teacher is White and we're Black folks, so they're all racist'... and 'why do we get all the bad grades and the people like your kind get the high grades?' I personally [say] 'you guys are dumb. I have A's'... Some people just make up excuses."

While these comments capture the prevailing sentiment at Alternative High that race does not matter to one's ability to pursue school success, I also witnessed episodes of racial tension between students at Alternative High. It seems that race is not immaterial to students' lives here even though they express confidence that it is irrelevant to scholastic achievement.

## Racial Tensions Outside of Academics

Interestingly, I only observed racial tension in the ninth-grade class in my sample. As students are not separated into curriculum tracks at Alternative High, I observed in one 9th-grade class and one 10th-grade class to be able to make comparisons within the school. In my observations I found the pace and atmosphere of both classes to be remarkably similar, except on the dimension of racial dynamics. Conflict was not evident in the 10th-grade class. This is perhaps due to the fact that the ninth graders are newer to Alternative High. Many of the African American and Latino students attended nearly all-minority middle and elementary schools, where getting to know White schoolmates—and getting *along* with White schoolmates—was not part of the educational goal.

Like all homeroom classes at Alternative High, the ninth-grade class I observed was in a small, intimate setting. The class is comprised of 4 White students, 1 Asian American, 7 African Americans, and 8 Latinos; 20 altogether. Several of the African American ninth graders exhibit distrust of and distaste for their White classmates, who, to make matters more provocative, are more economically well-off than the rest of the class. The most remarkable example of racial tension I witnessed happens early one morning before school, while the teacher is out of the room. Several students are hanging out inside when Jaynah, an African American classmate enters the classroom, puts down her backpack and calls out loudly in an agitated voice: "You need to turn that White boy music off. It is giving me a headache!" Two White males, Peter and Jesse, in the back of the room glance up surprised and silently comply by reducing the volume on Jesse's computer. Neither boy responds verbally to the challenge, but the volume is left at a high enough level to still be heard across the classroom, signaling a refusal to be completely pushed around. Jaynah, for her part continues to rant—mainly to herself—about the intolerable qualities of "White" music. In private interviews with me, each of these boys expresses disappointment and some astonishment that they are targets of racial frustration, feeling that they have done little to warrant animosity from classmates.

For Jaynah's part, while she was often outspoken, she was not typically aggressive during the weeks I observed in her class. She interns as a tutor for English language learners at a nearby middle school, and plans to be a Spanish teacher after finishing college. Generally she is a person who enjoys other people's company. In our interview, she talked about her contentious relationship with her mother, with whom she lives and argues often, a problem that many teenagers endure. The episode over music might easily have been a spillover from a frustrating morning at home. What is important to this analysis is that her emotions took the form of a racialized outburst in the space of the classroom. This is evidence that racial tensions are part of the environment at Alternative High, even though students here do not associate race with academic performance.

While Jaynah's outburst occurred while the teacher was out of the room, racialized exchanges between classmates do not always escape the teacher's attention. One morning the ninth-grade homeroom teacher has the students sit in a circle to discuss an event that has happened the previous afternoon at the bus stop. Deshawn, an African American, got into an argument with Maya, a Latina, and a heated exchange ended in Deshawn calling out "you dominatrix!" at the top of his voice as he ran off to board his bus. Maya does not know what "dominatrix" means, but she is suspicious that it is somehow an insult to Latinas. Maya's friends later reported the insult to the homeroom teacher.

Deshawn is generally a quiet, studious boy in class, although a bit of a know-it-all when he does interact with others. He tells me in our interview that he does not have any friends, neither in school nor outside of school. His and Maya's argument at the bus stop might have been the result of his social awkwardness, or even perhaps the aftermath of Deshawn being teased by schoolmates. Again, what is relevant here to my analysis is that Deshawn's and Maya's exchange developed into a racialized conflict, which was subsequently addressed in the space of the classroom.

In their morning discussion, the homeroom teacher defines the word dominatrix for the class—it turns out that Deshawn did not know the meaning of it either—and spurs dialog on building harmonious relationships with classmates, specifically relationships across ethnoracial lines. Deshawn makes it clear that he had no intention of disparaging Maya for being a Latina and apologizes publicly to her in front of the class. From my perspective, the homeroom teacher's skill in leading the class discussion successfully diffused the racially charged dynamic from Deshawn's and Maya's quarrel, even though the two of them remained on unfriendly terms.

# Homeroom Families and Pedagogy Diffuse Ethnoracial Tensions in the Classroom

Working through ethnoracial issues like this in the 9th grade might be an important part of the reason why no visible racial tension surfaced during my observations of the 10th-grade homeroom group. The 10th graders have already spent an entire year together as 9th graders, and now they carry out daily classroom life in ways not unlike a large family. Not everyone gets along well, and the same people do not necessarily get along with each other every single day, but by and large the students and teacher fall into familiar work routines and everyone seems to know what to expect from everyone else in the room.

Strong evidence of the cross-ethnoracial congeniality in this class lies in the fact that multiple pairs of 10th-grade classmates profess to be best friends, and many of them are cross-ethnoracial pairings. For example Keesha, an African American can hardly be separated from her best friend Reina, a Filipina. Sherie, an African American and her best friend Tammy, who is White, sit next to each other every chance they get. Even students who do not claim to be best friends exhibit high levels of comfort with classmates of different ethnoracial groups. During silent reading time, some students lie down on the carpet to read and it is not uncommon to see Latasha, an African American, use her White classmate Samuel's shoulder for a pillow.

While racial dynamics confront students daily at Alternative High, it seems that their classroom experiences of cooperation contribute to more embracing cross-ethnoracial attitudes overall, and often to deep friendships. This helps allow Alternative High students to decouple race from academic success. Of the three schools in this study, Alternative High is the only one that fosters attitudes that associate school success equally with African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Whites alike. However, we must put this accomplishment into the wider context. Alternative High is a low-performing school. Though its mission is to prepare its students for college futures, it is a daunting task given their poor performing middle schools and the fact that they only attend classes 3 days a week. Thus, while students do not experience tensions between their race/ethnicity and academics at this school, they are not likely to parlay that freedom into the kind of high achievement that will secure them college success.

## Elite Charter High: Classroom Collaboration Reinforces Ethnoracial Divisions

At Elite Charter High, classroom activities structure impressive levels of collaboration among classmates. I observed in an AP Chemistry class and in a

remedial English class, and in both contexts the teachers successfully got their students to work together. Ultimately, however, for very different reasons, neither class' collaborative efforts help build cross-ethnoracial relationships among students nor do they help improve one group's understanding of the other group in ways that might help dissolve pervasive ethnic stereotypes at this school. Overall, the classroom experiences I observed contribute to White students' perceptions of Latinos at Elite Charter High as inferior both academically and socially.

Elite Charter High's student body is nearly 85% White. Latinos make up approximately 10%, and Asians 5%. From the perspective of many students I interviewed, Whites and Latinos are the only two appreciable ethnoracial categories on campus. African Americans comprise less than 1% of the student body.

In the AP Chemistry course I observed, one student is Asian American and one has a Spanish surname, though in appearance his ethnicity is ambiguous. The remaining 33 students are White. The course is fast-paced and demanding; most students are continuously taking notes and working through formulas. They sit in desks that are crowded together, which is conducive to collaboration. When not lecturing, the AP Chemistry teacher encourages students to help each other on homework and labs.

The teacher promotes a very open atmosphere, and the room has a cooperative and collaborative dynamic. Shouts of "Ah hah!" or "HOW did you get that?" are common to hear during homework sessions. Students' close interaction with each other on assignments also helps foster a competitive spirit among classmates. I observed students openly rejoice when they outperform others on exams—while others publicly swallow defeat. In private interviews with me, many students express their heavy emotional involvement in the classmate rivalry in the AP Chemistry course. These exciting dynamics cannot be heralded as cross-ethnoracial collaboration, however, because the class is almost exclusively White. Furthermore, I argue that the competitive spirit of advanced courses such as the AP Chemistry class has a negative effect on ethnic relations at Elite Charter High. Their sense of rivalry carries over to AP students' perceptions of general curriculum students as lesser students and lower achievers.

# Tracks and Academic Competition Fuel Negative Perceptions of Latinos

The Latino population at this school is small, approximately 10%, which makes them less visible in classes. In addition, many Latino students are placed in general curriculum classes rather than honors and AP courses. AP students

I talked to have generally come to the conclusion that Latino students are inferior academically. Jenny, a White sophomore describes it bluntly: "I guess, like not being racist or anything, but like Mexican—like families—tend to be on like the lower skill of doing well in school." Brandon, a White junior, holds a similar impression; specifically that Latinos are not honors/AP students. He says, "I don't really have any Latino people in my classes. And then like when I see them around school, they're always like acting like the people who are in the normal [non-AP] classes." Brandon's and Jenny's comments are far from atypical. Most students I talked to suggest that Latino students academically underperform.

A few students, like Alexis, a White AP sophomore, offer structural explanations for Latino schoolmates' lower academic levels. Alexis says, "a lot of their parents might not be as educated . . . maybe it's a support issue . . . [or] an experience issue, like they haven't had that [college] experience so they're not as like focused on it for their kids." Others, however, are less generous in their explanations. Jackie, a White AP sophomore says, "I think the Latinos have it a lot harder. From what I've seen is that a lot of them don't try."

Certainly Latino students can be found in advanced curriculum courses at Elite Charter High, and the school has an established AVID program. Nonetheless, the perception of Latino students as being inferior academically persists among most of the White AP students I talked to. For example, Rebecca, a White AP sophomore describes a Latina classmate in her honors English class:

Honestly, like I have one Latino girl in—who I'm friends with—but she's in my English honors class and, you know, we are all like "whoa, you know, there's a Latino-uh-Spanish speaking person in here." And like wow, she is very quiet; she doesn't say anything in the class. And I don't know if she really belongs there or if they didn't have room for her somewhere else and they just stuck her in class or something, right—or they wanted to make themselves look better. I have no idea . . . but there definitely is some separate thinking like, "oh, what is she—or how is she in this class?"

Rebecca's comments here illustrate how heavily ethnicity colors students' perceptions of classmates' academic abilities. In a school that prides itself on high achievement (e.g., stellar California Standards Test scores and a 98% college-going rate), students who are visibly Latino are associated with inferior academic success. These ethnoracial dynamics undoubtedly have a negative effect on Elite Charter High's Latino students' educational potential. Their

presence in high track classes is met with disbelief and even scorn by their White classmates, as Rebecca's comments clearly demonstrate. Such an intimidating environment can discourage Latino students from pursuing honors and AP courses, which affects their ability to graduate with competitive college applications.

White AP students' unflattering perceptions of Latinos' school success at Elite Charter High is part of larger pattern of sentiments in California that are often at best ambivalent toward Latinos and at worst staunchly anti-Latino (Baldassare, 2000; Berg, 2009; Cornelius, 2002; Jiménez, 2008; Jones, 2001; Simon, 1993). Latinos, particularly new immigrants, are often accused of putting a drain on public services, including deteriorating the quality of public schools in the United States by flooding districts with non-English-speaking students (Martin, 1995; Suarez-Orozco, 1996). They are also widely associated with undocumented status and menial work as day laborers, as Jackie notes, "I see a lot of Latinos doing yards and that type of thing, and so they are just kind of being forced into that lower way of life." The neighborhood surrounding Elite Charter High supports this perception of Latinos as struggling laborers. Multiple parking lots and gas stations in this suburb serve as unofficial labor depots where large groups of Latino males wait for contractors or others to drive up and offer work. This is known to be a cause of anxiety and irritation among locals in such neighborhoods (Eisenstadt & Thorup, 1994).

Larger economic and social dynamics are clearly at play in Elite Charter High students' perceptions of their Latino schoolmates. While bringing White teens and Latino teens together at school has the potential to break down ethnoracial misperceptions and social barriers, this does not seem to be happening at Elite Charter High, at least partly, I argue, due to the separation of students in curriculum tracks, where Latinos can be visibly identified as belonging to lower curriculum as well as lower socioeconomic class status. As Denise, a White sophomore observes, "basically in the California school range, like the poorer kids would generally be considered the Hispanics. Because that's just how it's been." White Elite Charter High students by and large come from financially comfortable homes, and this adds to their perception of Latino schoolmates as not only different, but socially inferior.

# Deliberate Efforts and Missed Opportunities in the Classroom

The remedial English class I observed is a great opportunity for students at Elite Charter High to bridge ethnic boundaries. There are only 8 students in

the class, and unlike literature on tracking would predict (Metz, 1978; Oakes, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1976), the remedial English teacher takes great pains to create a comfortable, encouraging environment where these students can feel competent in language. Five of the eight students are English learners, all Latino, and three are White students who suffer from mild learning disabilities or simply struggle tremendously with reading and writing. There are four girls and four boys in the class. Such a warm, intimate space with so few students could easily allow the group to build friendships, perhaps even to become a close, family-like environment similar to what I find at Alternative High.

The teacher rather loosely controls the verbal space of this classroom. Her pedagogy focuses on self-expression and self-confidence, and she tolerates and accommodates a great deal of calling out by students. Extemporaneous class discussions are almost exclusively dominated by the White students, and by two boys, Ralph and Gary, in particular. As these boys are native speakers of English, they are not inhibited in verbal communication. Although Latinos outnumber Whites 5 to 3 in this classroom, the native speakers of Spanish tend to contribute shyly to class discussions if they contribute at all.

An additional layer to the class' dynamics lies in the fact that four of the five Latino students are female. The four Latinas sit together on the far side of the room and are passive during class discussions, often completely silent unless the teacher directly calls on them. The teacher expresses concern to me on several occasions about how quiet and shy her four female students are, however her concern centers on the issue of a gender divide in the class; she never once suggests that the girls might be ethnically intimidated by the verbally dominant White males in the class. In efforts to break the gender divide, the teacher purposefully assigns boy—girl pairs to work together, which inadvertently creates cross-ethnic collaboration in the class as well, since the three White boys are necessarily paired with Latina classmates.

I observed excellent cooperation between the Latina–White pairs of students during these activities. However the collaboration on these academic assignments did not take on the character of friendship-building exercises. Instead, what I saw was the White boys taking disinterested and largely passive roles in the pair work. For example when Maria and Ralph are paired together, for each item on their worksheet, Maria suggests a possible answer and Ralph agrees by saying, "sounds good to me." Ralph does not pull out a pen or pencil, and Maria must take the initiative to write in all their responses herself. While Ralph is not outwardly rude or uncooperative, he does not volunteer answers and his body language and interaction with Maria is lackadaisical. He twists around in his seat, so that his head is more or less facing

the worksheet and his partner, but the rest of his body is oriented away from Maria and from their assigned task.

During other class activities, Ralph is easily distracted and fidgety, so his body language here is not necessarily uncharacteristic. However, he contributes boisterously to class discussions and he frequently volunteers answers aloud to academic questions the teacher asks. Thus, it is his passivity in the pair work with Maria that is uncharacteristic. While he is perfectly comfortable engaging in discussion and debate with the teacher and others in the open space of the classroom, he seems much less comfortable, or at least much less willing to invest himself in one-on-one interaction with Maria.

I cannot claim that examples like this one are instances of ethnic tension or discomfort. There are multiple factors involved, and it is difficult to separate out what the root might be: gender dynamics; ethnic dynamics; more general teenage awkwardness; or even feelings of inadequacy in the grammar task at hand. What I would like to emphasize here, however, is that these structured activities in the classroom are excellent opportunities for crossethnic collaboration to build friendships, or at least opportunities to improve understanding and mutual appreciation between Latina and White classmates. Yet, such desirable results do not seem to come about. Instead, I characterize it as cooperation that does not yield changed perspectives for students at Elite Charter High.

While none of the 8 students in this remedial English class, White or Latino, are enrolled in college preparatory curricula, this is largely due to learning dysfunctions for the White students. The 5 Latinos' only handicap is that Spanish is their native language. By enrolling them in this class, the school is effectively treating their native language as a learning disability. School practices like these, while ostensibly aimed at providing an encouraging space for these Latinos to gain competency in English, contribute to the wider sensibility at Elite Charter High that being Latino is an educational handicap. This pervasive attitude sets limits on their potential academic success.

### **Conclusion**

The two suburban school environments in this study foster dynamics of academic success that are ethnoracially charged: Comprehensive High and Elite Charter High. Ethnoracial tensions surrounding academic success are shaped by a combination of classroom collaboration experiences among students; teachers' leadership; and wider attitudes about race/ethnicity that are prevalent in each high school context.

At Comprehensive High, I suggest that the tension between race/ethnicity and academic performance is only partially relieved. By this I mean that in the general curriculum world history class I observed, Latino students did not express concerns that participating in class and endeavoring to do well were in any way at odds with their identities as Latinos, and my observations of the class demonstrate that Latino students felt very comfortable there. However, in AP class environments at Comprehensive High, Latino students do experience these tensions between race/ethnicity and academic performance. They perceive AP classes to be White spaces, where they feel uncomfortable, which hinders their participation. My observations of the AP English class support their perception of the class as a white space, largely—though not entirely—due to the teacher's allegiance to educational practices that privilege White and middle-class sensibilities in the classroom. The AP teacher is White, and this likely prevents her from recognizing "practices that perpetuate inequality" in schooling for minority youth (Weisman & Hansen, 2008, p. 655).

Furthermore, scholars such as Marx (2008) demonstrate that White teachers can successfully relate to their Latino students and foster classroom environments where they feel included and valued, despite facing what Marx describes as the "limitations of whiteness." At Comprehensive High, the general curriculum teacher I observed was able to accomplish this while the AP teacher was not. The resulting racialized dynamics in these classrooms intensify existing curriculum track inequalities, where Whites tend to be placed in advanced courses at higher rates than non-White students. This has a profound effect on the educational futures of Latino students at this school. If low track classrooms are the spaces where Latinos feel most comfortable, it effectively attracts them to courses that colleges will view as low achieving. This is a disservice to Latino students, one that maintains their underrepresented status on prestigious college campuses.

At Elite Charter High, I find that tensions between race/ethnicity and academic performance are not relieved for students, not even partially. Elite Charter High's practice of curriculum tracking and the competitive academic spirit among high achieving students serves to increase ethnoracial tensions around school success by fueling White students' negative perceptions of Latino students' academic abilities. The remedial English teacher is perhaps best positioned to help alleviate these tensions for her five Latino students, but her classroom activities fall short of making meaningful change. Similar to the AP teacher at Comprehensive High, this teacher also is unable to relate to her students in the ways that Weisman and Hansen (2008) and others argue is critical for teachers of non-White students, particularly Latinos. As Garza (2009) asserts, "teachers are especially challenged to understand Latino

students' cultural, social, and linguistic assets. Therefore, teachers must make a conscious effort to know their respective community of learners and respond to them in a culturally responsive way" (p. 301). While this teacher exhibits sincere concern for her students' academic progress, and warmly embraces their use of Spanish words and phrases in their written work, she systematically undermines these students' ability to contribute to classroom discussions because she pedagogically privileges outspoken, aggressive verbal self-expression. This also undermines the sense that they are valued members of the class.

At the urban school, Alternative High, tensions between academic success and race/ethnicity are largely relieved for students. Efforts by teachers and by the school institution help students consciously overcome negative ethnoracial stereotypes regarding school success and help foster cross-ethnoracial relationships among classmates. Of the three schools in this study, Alternative High serves the most resource-needy population of students and has the lowest standardized test scores. Yet through its mission for school reform through individualized learning, and its philosophy of directly addressing urban students' social and economic struggles, Alternative High outperforms its suburban counterparts on this measure. Unfortunately, this success is mediated by the fact that Alternative High students are still poor academic performers overall.

This study demonstrates that the structure of classrooms in all three schools continually reconstructs ethnoracial categories and meanings in students' everyday lives. Teachers and administrations who overlook the ethnoracial tensions their students experience foster classroom dynamics that exacerbate those very tensions. On the other hand, teachers and administrations, such as those I observed at Alternative High, who take opportunities to openly discuss and resolve enthnoracial tensions that their students experience, empower students to better overcome ethnoracial stereotypes in their personal lives.

Importantly, these classroom dynamics contribute to persistent patterns of inequality in academic achievement. African Americans and Latinos are relegated to low track curricula or relegated to near silence in high track classrooms at both the high performing and average performing suburban high schools in this study. In the urban high school, African Americans and Latinos are given the same encouragement and curriculum as their White classmates; however, as a low performing school, this equality does not yield high academic achievement for these students. In all three schools, then, minority students' achievement potential is hindered, making it more difficult for them to pursue college futures. In this way, racialized classroom dynamics in high school serve to perpetuate the problem of underrepresentation of minority

students on college campuses, especially elite colleges (Espenshade & Radford, 2009; Stevens, 2007).

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#### Bio

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