
How Two Education Policies No Child Left Behind and Bloomberg's A-f School Grading Have Managed to Close the Gap in the United States

No Child Left Behind and Bloomberg's A-F school grading were educational policies that impacted student's educational trajectory in applying to the best high schools. Currently, in the United States, 8th graders from immigrant and low-income backgrounds encounter difficulties when applying for high schools. Middle school guidance counselors do not provide enough knowledge and guidance. For example, guidance counselors in predominately Hispanic and African American populations focus on neighborhood school/zone school that is located within their poor neighborhoods thus reinforces the ideology of borders. Minority and immigrant children encounter financial difficulties in preparing for specialized high school exams. Gonzalez (2013) stated that if Latino students had proper resources and mentors, then their educational trajectories would be changed. This policy memo will address the difficulties that 1st generation 8th graders encounter by school administrators.

Introduction

High school choice determines whether the student would be admitted to college. The 1st generation eighth graders encounter numerous challenges such as their linguistic and cultural capabilities. This research is intended to identify factors that influence 1st generation eighth grade students who have limited access to the best high schools. The school administration directly impacts immigrant families in their perspective on choosing the best high school. It is extremely important for guidance counselor, teachers, and school administrators must understand each other in order to allow immigrant youth to realize their potentials.

Approaches and Results

My findings concluded that school administrators do not provide the necessary support for children from Hispanic backgrounds, resulting in them being negatively tracked and provided with the least amount of resources. The school staff does not teach immigrant children the proper social tools that are needed to thrive in the United States. The school staff usually shuns children from immigrant background. This creates a social reproduction cycle that keeps Hispanic, immigrant children in poverty because they are constantly looked down upon by the school staff. Secondly, guidance counselor's advice the 1st generation eighth grade students to apply for neighborhood schools that focus on addressing the language barriers. The

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neighborhood schools are located in predominantly low-income, under-resourced schools. Immigrant parents have a hard time in making sure that their children adjust to American schools despite not having the necessary social capital.

Pew Research stated that 3.2 million children had at least one unauthorized parent and the child was a United States citizen by birth (Cohen & Pasel, 2016). Also 725,000 students were undocumented themselves and this hurts their chances in receiving the best resources and being admitted into top universities. These statistics show these children grow-up in households that are attached to their culture and they do not grow up in an American household. This results in the child having a completely different set of cultural and social capital. Monkman explains that “the various forms of capital tend to reflect and reproduce stratification patterns in a class-based society such as the United States (Monkman, 2005). I have seen an example of this in my observation; two boys came from two different kinds of social capital and it showed up in their ideas in the Social Studies class. This stratification of knowledge often results in educational gaps but they could be repaired.

Hispanic students are able to overcome these educational obstacles such as teacher-student mentorship. However, we first need to understand the complicated structure that systematically causes social reproduction. Gonzalez gives an example of Conchas work that explains: “that school structure plays a crucial role in determining which students are given access to the information and resources necessary to achieve academic success and college access (Gonzalez, 2013) This statement is valid because the more inclusive the school the more likely the children of first generation in their family have proper education and become successful. However, the structure of the school explains the different paths that students take throughout their educational career. “These structures include school size, class size, curriculum, pedagogy, and tracks. Tracks are often not clearly defined or explained in schools, but are more easily seen as the sequence of courses students take” (Gonzalez, 2013). American schools put children on a negative track that could impact a child’s outcome and could be tracked out of the school. For example, when I went to P.S 83 I was being negatively tracked and I ended up going to a local high school, because we were informed to make a “safe” decision.

Despite, the horrible statistics children have defeated this oppressive system. For example, Puerto Rican children were able to obtain academic success and beyond because they had a supportive family network and resources and were able to get through mental rough patches. “The communication strategies consisted of maintaining family bonds that nurtured the maintenance of Puerto Rican values, such as the use of Spanish at home and encouraging a strong sense of Puerto Rican ethnicity” (Garrett, 2010). This social capital is instilled in the child and sets a standard of excellence in their academic standing by promoting their identity. Garrett shows that these families exercise resiliency and try to provide everything they can for these children that have potential and intellect.

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Implications and Recommendations

Despite the gravity of the situation in how Hispanic children are treated and educated and obstacle in front of these children there are solutions that could present progressive change. Here are three examples:

Cultural Sensitivity Workshops

In my observation of P.S.83 I witnessed firsthand how the teacher did not understand the term 1st generation. It is important to understand the background of the child and their families come from so that it could be easier for the parents and the teacher to have better communication to better service the child. These workshops should not only apply to the teachers who have the most contact but it should be applied to the school administration, staff and more importantly the principal. These workshops will be designed to break down any racial barriers or stereotypes and this could help remove bias.

More than one Guidance Counselor

It is extremely important to have more than one guidance counselor servicing the Hispanic student body not just for efficiency but to be another resource. I had noticed that the teacher I was observing could have taught her students the specific terms that were used in the high school selection book but it did not provide a proper foundation that could help them apply. If the teacher herself could not answer a specific about high school admission then they would be referred to Ms. LaTour. Having two guidance counselors would not only split the responsibilities but they would also act as another resource for the children.

High School process Workshops for Immigrant Families

The high school is a difficult and intricate process to deal with even for a parent that has good social and cultural capital. There should be workshops held by the school that should explain what is expected by the parent and the due dates as the semester progresses. If there is any opportunity that would give their children a chance to go to an elite school then parents should be notified and start preparing their children or any test-only admissions or auditions. These workshops should help guide the parent for any culture to pick schools that would best address their needs.

Conclusion

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No 1st generation 8th grader should be tracked negatively because they come from a different country or have a unique social capital taught by their parents. They should be given a fair education that would give them better life chances that their family could not afford back home. American schools need to stop creating borders and causing social reproduction amongst Latino youth because they are a huge minority and the United States need to start working with the families not exploiting the loopholes that Latino families are not familiar with, such as the expansive high school process. These policies have the potential to close educational gaps and produce leaders and intellectual; a future.

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