Mainstream Teachers of English Language Learners: Potential Obstacles
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More ELL students in School

The Growing Numbers of Limited English Proficient Students
1994/95 - 2004/05

Majority of ELLs Speak Spanish

Figure 3. Students’ Non-English Language Background, 2000-2001 (n=28)
Languages with over 10,000 Speakers

Low ELL Student Achievement

NAEP Reading

Year

Avg Scale Score

8th grade ELL
8th grade non-ELL
4th grade ELL
4th grade non-ELL
What Are the Obstacles?

- Assessment
- Instruction
- Resources
- Communication
- Teacher variables
- Self-efficacy

Informal Classroom Assessment

- Structured
  - Checklists
  - Cloze tests
  - Criterion-referenced tests
  - Rating scales or rubrics
  - Questionnaires
  - Miscalculation
  - Structured interviews

- Unstructured
  - Writing Samples
  - Homework
  - Logs or journals
  - Games
  - Oral presentations
  - Brainstorming
  - Story retelling
  - Anecdotal records
  - Naturalistic
  - Exhibits

Instruction

- Basic Instructional Sequences
  - Pre-teach the language
  - Provide meaningful experiences
  - Model expectations
  - Group or pair students with other learners
  - Elaborate on short answers
  - Monitor and support comprehension

- Instructional Strategies
  - Dialogue journals
  - Learning logs
  - Literature circle
  - Language experience approach
  - Graphic organizer

- Instructional Techniques
  - Hands-on vocabulary practice
  - Mixer
  - Detective
  - KWL chart
  - Letter-writing

What else can teachers do?

- Resources
  - See handout
  - Seek help from other professionals

- Teacher variables
  - Assumptions
  - Knowledge of
    - Language backgrounds
    - Cultural backgrounds, including the students' beliefs and values
      - Value and build on students' home culture
      - Use culturally relevant materials

- Communication
  - Learn how students prefer to be addressed and pronounce correctly
  - Teach school rules and behavioral expectations
  - Express high expectations
  - Provide focused, meaningful feedback on English mistakes
  - English
    - Make directions short and concise
    - Pair with visual cues and gestures
    - Reduce language demands, not conceptual demands
Teacher Self-efficacy

- How teachers feel about their ability to teach students
  - Low
  - High
  - Is it realistic?

Teaching English Language Learners Survey (TELLS)

- Survey development to learn how mainstream teachers feel about their ability to teach ELL students
  - Phase 1: Initial design
  - Phase 2: Confirm survey

- Impacts
  - Teacher burn-out
  - Student achievement

“*They are able who think they are able.*”
Virgil

Thank You

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Latina/o Secondary School Student Climate Research: A Summary and Application

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Demographics

• By the year 2050, Latinos will comprise 29% of the US Population (Pew Hispanic Center, Fact Sheet, 2008)
• Missouri
  – Latinas/os comprise 2.8% of population
  – Changes
    • Rate of Increase in Latina/o Population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)
      – 1990-2000: 92%
      – 2000-2006: 36.9%

Latinos in Secondary Education

• Latino students comprise 17% of the U.S. secondary school population (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007)
  – Missouri
    • Latino student enrollment more than doubled between 1990-2000
    • Dramatic increases in rural areas
  • National statistics show Latino drop out rates are twice those of White peers
  • Latino high school students report less overall support from teachers, staff, peers

Latina/o Newcomer Student Experiences

• Large differences were observed between Latina/o newcomers compared to their White peers (Marx, 2008)
  – Did not feel as welcome in high school
  – Did not like their teachers
  – Did not like attending high school
  – Did not feel confident they were succeeding in high school
  – Did not feel that their home culture and language were valued by the school or included in their high school
  – Did not feel that school materials reflected people they could relate to

Latina/o Newcomer Student Perceptions

• Student Voices (Sheets, 2002)
  – Feelings of Alienation
    • “Give you looks to let you know that they don’t want you in their class...you’re just a kid that’s there...”
  – Discrimination, Prejudice, and Stereotype Threat
    • “Nothing has really ever happened to me that has felt good...They don’t treat you the same. If you have an accent, they think you can’t read.”
  – Xenophobia
    • “Administrators say ‘Don’t talk Spanish, if you do you’ll be suspended’ or ‘I can’t call your parents, because they don’t speak English’”
White Student Experiences

- Definitions
  - **Racism**: social structures’ use of superiority to address discomfort about difference (Pinderhughes, 1989)
  - **Color-blindness**: the belief that ideological and structural racism does not exist (Neville et al., 2000)
  - **White privilege**: systematic unearned benefits based on skin color

- White student experiences (Marx, 2008)
  - Mean responses for White students were favorable ($M=3-5$)

White Student Perceptions

- Student Voices (Marx, 2008)
  - Overt Racism
    - "Whites are better.", "Mexicans all group like they hate us and don’t pay attention."
  - Color-blindness
    - "NO!", "No, because ethnicity doesn’t really matter.", "It doesn’t matter what race you are to pay attention.", "No, because inside we are all the same." "reverse racism."
  - Obliviousness and denial
    - "Hot chicks.", "Less homework.", "More movies."

- Small percentage of students (5%) seemed to be aware of advantages they experience
  - "If you can’t speak English, you can’t learn.", "No, because I am White and speak English."

Implications of Prior Studies

- Validate Latina/o newcomer students’ feelings and experiences
- Acknowledge difference, but do not be afraid of difference
- Examine personal biases

Unanswered Questions

- Research largely conducted outside of the Midwest
- Combined data of Latina/o newcomers and 1-2 generation Latina/o students
- Research largely quantitative
- No studies have conducted in depth interviews on White and Latina/o newcomer student perceptions of school racial/ethnic climate
Proposed Study

• Population
  – High school in rural area of MO that has experienced recent rapid demographic changes
  – Latina/o newcomers now second largest racial group (5.6%) after Whites
  – 16-24 Latina/o and White students
  – Latina/o students likely to be from immigrant households

• Methods
  – Qualitative
    • 45-60 min interview
    » Questions regarding perceptions of school climate, teacher attitudes, peer attitudes, cross-cultural interactions, student suggestions for improving school climate

Practical Implications

• Communicate results of the study with school District
  – Provide administrators and teachers directives for creating more inclusive school climate
• Give voice to marginalized student population
• Add to the dearth of literature on secondary school racial/ethnic climate and Latina/o newcomers in secondary education
Overview

- Why study Latina/os in higher education?
- Cultural factors & psychological indicators influencing Latina/os’ academic success
- Latina/o families & the role of education
- Institutional (school) factors influencing Latina/o students’ academic success

Why study Latina/os in higher education?

- Majority are US citizens
- More likely to be 1st-generation college students than other undergraduates
- 29% of Latina/os in college have parents with a bachelor’s degree
  - 41% of all other undergraduate students

Why study Latina/os in higher education?

- 25% college-age Latina/os enrolled in college
  - 42% Whites, 32% Blacks, 60% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 52% Latina/o enrolled in 2-year institutions
  - 34% Whites, 40% Blacks, 38% Asian/P.I.
- 46% Latina/os graduate from high school
  - 26% of Latina/o h.s. students enroll in college
    - 17% community college
    - 9% 4-year colleges
- Only 8% will graduate with a bachelor’s degree
- Only 2% will go on to obtain professional degrees
- Only .02% will earn a PhD
Why study Latina/os in higher education?

Cultural & Psychological Factors: Assimilation vs. Integration

- What is being a bicultural student?
- Dimensions of Acculturation
  - Assimilation: merges with host community, leaving behind original culture and traditions
  - Separation: does not participate in the host community’s culture and traditions, but retains his or her original customs
  - Marginalization: avoids the host community’s activities and her or his own as well, but also experiences forceful separation (i.e. discrimination)
  - Integration: accepts the host community’s culture and tradition, while retaining hers or his home country’s culture

Acculturation: Bidimensional Model

Bicultural Latina/os in high school

- Qualities of a bicultural student
  - Mainstream identity vs. Ethnic identity
    - Components of ethnic identity
      - Self-categorization, commitment and attachment, & exploration
  - Research findings:
    - Strong ethnic identity related to high self-esteem (Umana-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bamaca-Gomez, 2004)
Positive Factors for Higher Ed Enrollment

- *Family support as a source of social capital*
  - Familismo value
- *Research on role of the family*
  - (Flores & O'Brien, 2002; Gandara, 1995; McKenna & Ortiz, 1988; McWhirter et al., 2007; Zalaquett, 2007; 2006)
- *Educational expectations*
- *Perceived support*
  - Ways family can help, despite low educational attainment levels

Institutional Supports to Latina/os’ Educational Success: High School

- *Rigorous curriculum*
- *Teacher mentoring & recommendations*
- *Access to information about college*
  - enrollment processes
  - financial aid
- *Curricular diversity & cultural sensitivity*
- *Supportive peer culture*

Institutional Barriers to Latina/os’ Educational Success: College Level

- *Hidden Curriculum*
  - “Myth of Meritocracy” & “Rugged Individualism”
  - Ideology hides structural inequalities & blames students for their failure
- *Lack of sufficient academic preparation*
  - Limited material resources
  - Tracking into general or special ed courses
- *“Institutional neglect & abuse”*
  - School agents expect Hispanic students to fail
  - Academic success equals “selling out” to peers

Fostering Persistence in Higher Ed: College Level

- *Faculty Mentoring*
  - Contacts, information, role modeling
  - Increase self-efficacy & academic goal setting
  - Increase connectedness to institution
- *Student Organizations*
  - Improve students’ interpersonal, leadership, & organizational skills
  - Provide “comfort culture” away home
Unique Institutional Strategies

- **Hispanic-Serving Institutions**
  - 276 HSIs in continental U.S. (14 states)
  - 86 four-year & 190 two-year
  - First-generation, low-income, nontraditional student populations

- **Collaborative Admission Agreements**
  - Increase underrepresented populations at selective PWIs
  - “Majority” student populations benefit from perspectives of diverse peers

Thank you

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