The Latino Experience in the American Public Education System

Abstract

Education has long been considered to be the primary enabler of social mobility and personal fulfillment. According to the Pew Research Center, currently one in four students enrolled in public education are Hispanic, and the Hispanic and Latino populations are the largest ethnic minority in the United States. Generally stated, the purpose of this research is to review the Latino experience within American public schools. This study will specifically address factors influencing Latino Education in America while examining the current status quo of US Latino demographics. It will also examine US Latino literature such as *Almost a Woman* by Esmeralda Santiago; *Bodega's Dream* by Ernesto Quinonez; and Luis J. Rodriguez's work, *Always Running*. By looking to Latino literature as well as other sources of information, this study hopes to understand the cultural impacts of America's current educational systems on Latinos in the United States today.

Factors Influencing Latino Education

- **Economics**
  - “In a 2014 National Journal poll, 66% of Hispanics who got a job or entered the military directly after high school cited the need to help support their family as a reason for not enrolling in college, compared with 39% of whites.”
  - Pew Research Center

- **Gender**
  - “I get paid whether you learn or not,” they would tell us.”
  - *Bodega’s Dream*

- **Drop Out Factories**
  - The name that Dr. John Balfanz, from John’s Hopkins University, calls schools where over 40% of the students don’t graduate on time. He’s found more than 2,000 in the United States.

- **Teacher Apathy**
  - “I get paid whether you learn or not,” they would tell us.”
  - *Bodega’s Dream*

- **Curriculum Tracking**
  - “Students’ Investigation revealed a rigid tracking system at their high school, with Latino students significantly overrepresented in the lowest, least academically rigorous tracks.”
  - *What Latino Students Want from School*

- **Deficit Theorizing**
  - “The notion that poor student achievement is unrelated to schooling.”
  - *Funds of Knowledge.*

- **The Family and the Individual**
  - “Hispanics rated education above health care and immigration in importance.”
  - Pew Research Center

Latin/o Scholastic Literature and Films

- *Almost a Woman* by Esmeralda Santiago
- *Bodega's Dream* by Ernesto Quinonez
- *Luis J. Rodriguez's Always Running*

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