Examining Tracking and Students’ Perceptions of Teachers as Predictors of Academic Identity

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INTRODUCTION

- **Academic Identity** = connection between a student’s personal identity & role as a student.
- Positive academic identity is associated with better grades, higher motivation, & greater classroom participation.¹—³
- Few studies have examined predictors of academic identity.
- **Tracking** = the grouping of students into different classes based on perceived ability.
- Track placement is associated with achievement disparities.⁴—⁵

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does tracking impact sixth graders’ academic identity?
2. How do sixth graders’ perceptions of their math and English language arts teachers impact their academic identity?

PARTICIPANTS

- Sixth graders and teachers from 4 middle schools in middle-class Southeastern school district
- **Quantitative**: Students: N = 188; 108 Female
  - Honors: N = 102
- **Qualitative**: Students: N = 39; 19 Female
  - Teachers: N = 15; 8 Female

METHOD

- **Quantitative**: Qualtrics surveys in Spring 2017
- Multilevel Modeling Analysis using STATA
- **Qualitative**: Conducted and transcribed student and teacher interviews
- Coded interviews thematically using NVivo 11

RQ1 FINDING

Being in the accelerated math track—but not in the regular track—was significantly associated with having a stronger academic identity (b = .14, p < .05).

“[Accelerated math is] where all the really smart people go.” —David (Regular)

“Well, it’s ’cause all the really smart kids don’t go to the regular math class.” —Tina (Regular)

“...he’s funny and nice and so he’s, he’s a good teacher and I think that might be one of the reasons I might be better at math.” —Jan

CONCLUSION

- This study provides new evidence on predictors of academic identity.
- Students’ perceptions of teachers are important for academic identity development and school interventions.
- This study adds to the literature on how tracking contributes to disparities in students’ achievement outcomes.

REFERENCES


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