

Does Classroom Composition Matter? Tracking and Within School Diversity



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If diversity is a goal, we must

- Identify policies and practices that undermine diversity
- Key culprits:
 - ability grouping in primary grades
 - tracking in secondary grades



Why key culprits?

- **Diverse schools resegregated by ability grouping and tracking:**
 - **African American, Latino, working class students more likely in lower tracks**
 - **White, Asian American, middle class students more likely in high tracks**



Negatives of low tracks

- **Separate and unequal education**
- **Long-lasting negative effects because each year students further behind**
- **Tracks reproduce social inequality in larger society**



How tracking resegregates

- **Early identification for gifted program, special education**
 - **Note: Black males in special education**
- **Savvy parents ‘work’ the system**
- **Track placements correlated more with race and class than with ability**



Ability grouping and tracking

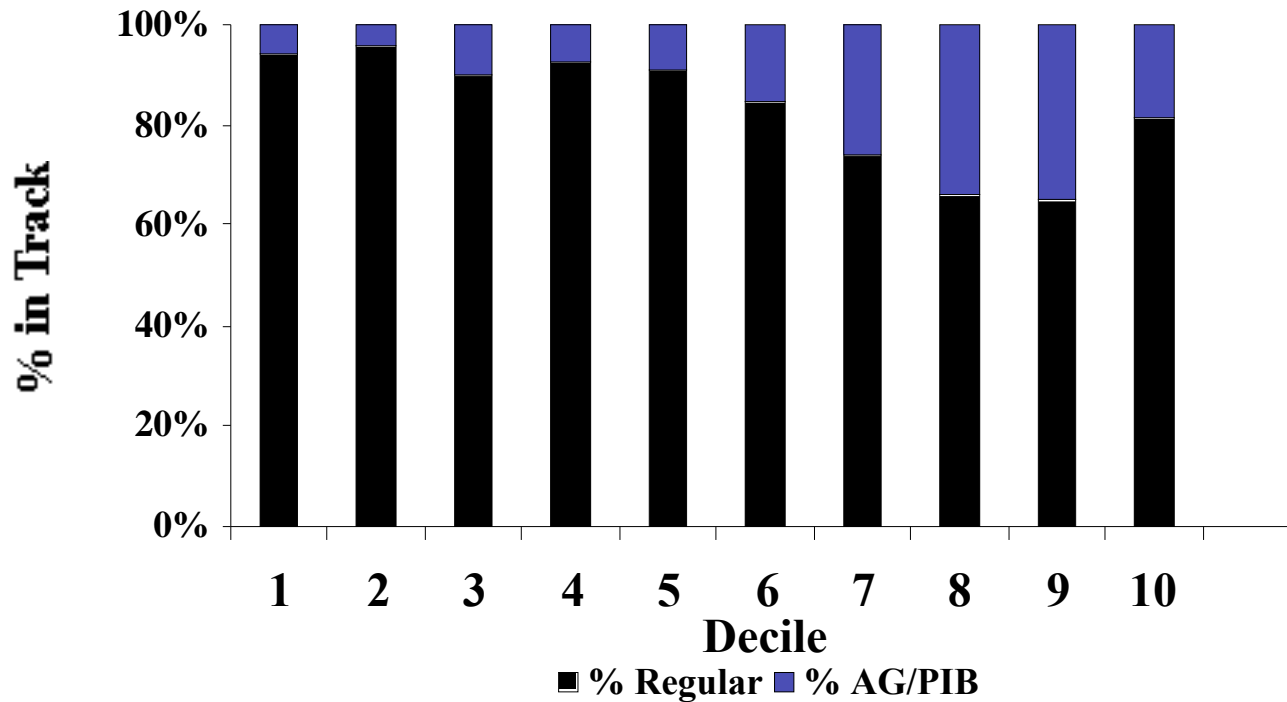
- Weaken the positive effects of attending diverse a school
- Undermine a school's capacity for
 - Equity
 - Excellence



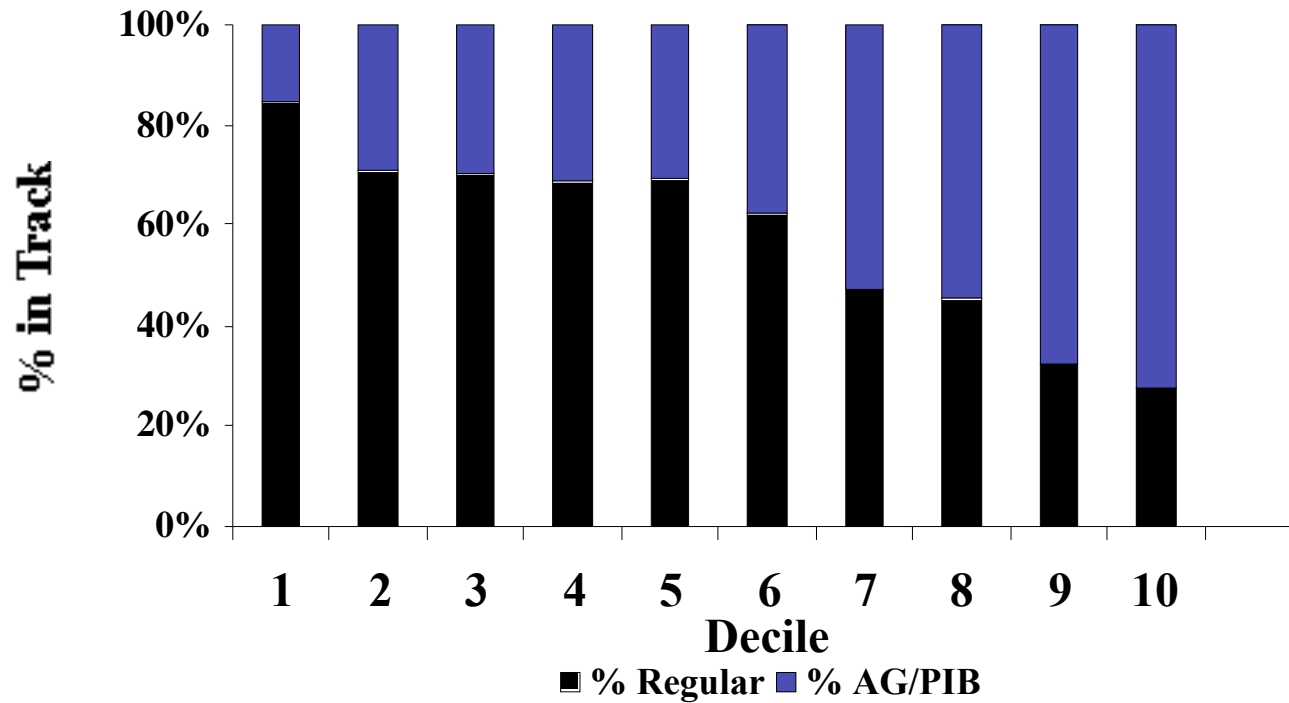
Example: The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC)

- From 1971-2002 CMS desegregating under *Swann*
- From 1970s to present, CMS tracks
- Tracking racially correlated
- Tracking undermined CMS's ability to meet *Swann's* mandate to provide equity and excellence for all students.

2nd Grade Language Battery and English Track Grade 8: Black Students



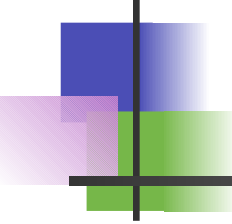
2nd Grade Language Battery and English Track Grade 8: White Students





Figures 1 & 2 show

- **CMS middle school tracks highly heterogeneous by “ability”**
- **Track placements racially correlated**
 - **20% of top decile Blacks in gifted English**
 - **75% of top decile Whites in gifted English**



Evidence on the Benefits of Heterogeneous Classrooms

Benefits for

- English
- Social Studies
- Mathematics
- Science
- Elementary & secondary schools



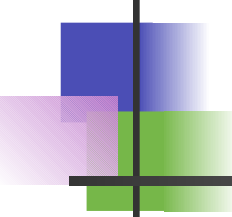
Example # 1: Preuss School

- Charter School on UCSD campus
- All college prep curriculum
- 700 students 6-12th grade
- All low income families
 - 57% Latino 6% White 3% Other
 - 14% Black 20% Asian



Preuss School [con't]

- Only rigorous courses
- Personalized learning environment
- For those without academic preparation
 - Intense academic support
 - Social support
- First graduating class
 - 80% 4 year college
 - 20% 2 year college



Example # 2: South Side High, New York

- 1987 Superintendent acknowledges tracking contributes to gap
- Goal: 2000= 75% Regents diploma
- Steps
 - Over 4 years, exclusive gifted program blended into each elementary classroom
 - Middle school English & social studies detracked
 - Middle school science & math reduced to 2 levels



Example # 2: South Side High [con't]

- **Multiyear plan to detrack the high school**
- **Results in South South High**
 - **By 2000 97% of students receive Regents diploma**
 - **76% of Special Education students receive Regents diploma**
 - **45% of graduates IB diploma candidates**



Thank you!
