Off Track: Classroom Privilege for All (video). Michelle Fine, Bernadette Anand, Markie Hancock, Carlton Jordan, and Dana Sherman. New York: Teachers College Press, 1998. 30 min.

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Tracking has long been an issue of debate among educational researchers. However, it is not simply an educational issue. It has a political dimension. Its political dimension is revealed in the way it reproduces existing power relationships and social structures that are found in U.S. society. Tracking is primarily used in schools that have diverse student populations. The more heterogeneous a school is, with respect to social class, ethnicity, and race, the more likely tracking will be a prominent element in the school structure. It is not surprising that tracking frequently results in homogeneous classrooms in heterogeneous schools. In *Off Track*, Michelle Fine and her colleagues confront both the political and the educational dimensions of tracking. Viewers are given a glimpse of what schools could be, what students could learn, and what teaching might become.

In addition to the visible images of diversity and the multiple voices, the soundtrack for *Off Track* emphasizes the theme of diversity. Jazz musicians subliminally communicate how disparate chords can come together in unexpected and harmonious ways to create something new. The result is powerful.

The setting for *Off Track* is an honors world literature course in an urban high school. Untracking the world literature course was a project envisioned by Bernadette Anand, principal of the Renaissance School. Anand envisioned a class in which young men and women from all social classes and ethnic and racial groups could receive a high-quality rigorous education. *Off Track* documents the results of her vision.

The video begins with a statement noting that after two years of vigorous public debate in which educators, parents, and community members expressed their deep concerns and fears about untracking, the school board voted to untrack the honors world literature course. The video does not include comments from parents and community members who opposed untracking the course. This is unfortunate because parents can be formidable allies or foes in efforts to untrack classes. Viewers are left to wonder what lessons were learned by parents and members of the community during the two years of debate and subsequent untracking of the world literature course. For example, questions about how parents and community members who opposed untracking feel about what happened and the extent to which they currently support untracking are left unanswered.

Viewers experience teaching and learning at their highest levels as they see teachers and students interact and listen to them compare and contrast their experiences in tracked and

untracked classes. Students speak about the untracked classroom not only as a site of increased insights and heightened understanding of the intended curriculum; they speak of coming to know themselves and their classmates in a new way and of gaining unexpected insights into what it means to be "smart." The video also reveals the insidious way tracking segregates students and limits their ability to develop relationships with people outside their tracks. The students talk about how the untracked classroom has afforded them opportunities to get to know people they would have never spoken to in the past. New friendships were made as students learned to look beyond surface differences and see the character and essence of the people around them. Even more remarkable is the significance students placed on diversity as a key factor in teaching and learning. Throughout the video students articulate the role diversity has played in creating a stimulating intellectual environment. They note that being able to interact with people who are different from them sharpened their critical thinking skills, opened new insights for them, and made their classes more challenging and stimulating.

Carlton P. Jordan and Dana Sherman, two teachers who taught the untracked world literature course, share their students' enthusiasm and note that in an untracked classroom labels used to identify students who are capable and those who are not as capable are meaningless. Students move in and out of leadership roles. Leadership roles are exchanged so seamlessly that it is impossible to know who is "gifted" and who is not. As teachers, Jordan and Sherman are energized by the enriched classroom discourse and increased student interest and motivation. Viewers see them using multiple instructional approaches including group work, critical pedagogy, large group discussions, and small group instruction. Most importantly, viewers see two teachers who like, respect, and appreciate their students. Jordan and Sherman are present in their classrooms in a way that says serious work is taking place. They are prepared to give their best to their students, and in return they expect the best from them.

Off Track will have wide appeal as a means to illustrate the power of the untracked classroom. The visual images and the voices of students and teachers offer a unique and authentic view of an untracked classroom. I highly recommend *Off Track* to university faculty for use in a wide range of courses including curriculum and instruction, multicultural education, teacher education, and foundations. School administrators as well as policy makers will also find it a helpful resource.

Even though *Off Track* is powerful example of the kind of learning environments that can be created when classes are untracked, the debate surrounding tracking will undoubtedly continue. *Off Track* does, however, add new voices to the debate—those of students and teachers. Coming from individuals who are at the center of the debate, their reasoned, thoughtful, and insightful voices deserve to be heard.