

Teaching Is Poorer When Latino and Black Students Are the Majority in a Classroom

When minority students make up the majority in a classroom, teacher bias can result in a substandard education.

December 31, 2021 By Jeanette L. Pinnacle

Teachers are not only tasked with helping their students learn and grow—they are also responsible for discharging their duties fairly. However, internal biases can affect the quality of teaching in classrooms where most students are Black and [Latino reveal recent study findings published in the American Journal of Education](#). The findings were announced via a [press release](#) from New York University (NYU).

For the study, researchers assessed data gathered from the Measures of Effective Teaching database for the academic years 2009 to 2010 and 2010 to 2011 to ascertain the degree to which teaching quality differs between teachers due to either their credentials or personal biases.

Researchers selected English language arts (ELA) and math teachers of [students](#) in grades four through nine for the inquiry. To measure teaching quality, they used the Framework for Teaching and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System as well as upticks in students' scores on standardized tests.

Researchers observed that about half of the differences in the quality of classroom teaching could be attributed to teachers' credentials, while the other half were the result of their internalized biases. Researchers also noted that compared to ELA courses, math classes showed a more robust relationship between teaching quality and the racial demographics of the students.

“Our results uncovered a bias that aligns with work on [racial biases](#), and particularly anti-Blackness, that is pervasive in U.S. [education](#) and society and underscores the importance of better teacher training,” said Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, PhD, an associate professor of international education at NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development and the lead author of the study.

Interestingly, the authors of the study observed that educators of all races exhibited biased attitudes in the classroom. “We also found that teachers across racial/ethnic groups show the

same patterns in teaching that disadvantage Black youth, which suggests that all teachers, not just white teachers, can benefit from better training and development,” they noted.

In her 2018 article “[Checking Yourself for Bias in the Classroom](#),” published online by Learning for Justice, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Ellen Fracassini, who teaches ELA to seventh and eighth graders in the Philadelphia public school system, noted that educators judge and evaluate students constantly throughout the day.

“It’s worth being more deliberate and slowing down the process to further peel back any layers of unconscious bias we have and, most importantly, to always keep the care and connection with our students at the forefront of our decision-making,” she suggested. “If we aren’t diving into this work as deeply as we dive into curriculum, then what exactly is the purpose?”

To learn more about racial inequities in education, read “[Latinos Are Underrepresented in STEM Jobs](#).”

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