

# Study finds that classrooms with more Black and Latinx students receive lower quality of teaching

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In a new study, researchers find that classes taught by the same teacher receive a lower quality of teaching when they comprise higher

percentages of Black and Latinx students.

"Previous research has revealed different forms of racial inequality within the U.S. schooling system, including that youth of color tend to be taught by less experienced and credentialed teachers, but virtually no work has examined inequalities in the primary responsibility of teachers: How teachers actually teach," says Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, associate professor of international education at NYU Steinhardt and lead author of the study. "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](#)."

The researchers analyzed data collected during academic years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 from the Measures of Effective Teaching database to determine the extent to which differences in teaching quality are primarily due to differences among teachers (e.g., credentials) or within teachers (e.g., bias). The study focuses on English language arts (ELA) and mathematics teachers in grades four through nine.

The results are outlined in their article "Teaching Bias? Relations between Teaching Quality and Classroom Demographic Composition," published by the *American Journal of Education*.

The authors measured teaching quality using two in-classroom observational ratings (the Framework for Teaching and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System), and students' increases in standardized scores.

They found that roughly half of the differences in classroom teaching quality were driven by differences among teachers like their credentials, while the other half could be attributed to factors like biases within teachers. Between the ELA and mathematics courses, the relationship

between teaching quality and classroom demographics was stronger in mathematics classes. The authors suggest that this result could be caused by the perception of math as a natural ability and a greater [bias](#) among mathematics teachers found in previous research.

"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," the authors write. The authors explain that while there are different reasons for why teachers of different races teach in ways that disadvantage Black youth, their disparate reasons likely reflect the historical and racialized nature of teaching.

"The findings of the study also come at a time when legislators in the majority of states are seeking to prohibit the [teaching](#) of race," Cherng said. "Without these conversations, existing inequalities will only widen, as teachers—who as a profession are dedicated to serving future generations—will continue to be ill-equipped with the tools necessary to provide all youth an equal education."

In addition to Cherng, the study's authors include Peter F. Halpin, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; and Luis A. Rodriguez, an assistant professor of education leadership and [policy studies](#) at NYU Steinhardt.

**More information:** Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng et al, Teaching Bias? Relations between Teaching Quality and Classroom Demographic Composition, *American Journal of Education* (2021). [DOI: 10.1086/717676](#)

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