



# The Added Value of Latinx and Black Teachers for Latinx and Black Students: Implications for the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act

Travis J. Bristol

University of California, Berkeley

Javier Martin-Fernandez

University of Akron

A research synthesis points to the *added-value*—benefits to social and emotional development, as well as learning outcomes—for students of color taught by teachers of color. Given ongoing education debates, policymakers can use this evidence base to craft legislation aimed at increasing the ethnoracial diversity of the U.S. educator workforce. To begin, historical research shows how Latinx and Black teachers have supported their Latinx and Black students' social and emotional development during state-sanctioned school segregation. Contemporary qualitative and quantitative research highlights how teachers of color improve social and emotional development, as well as learning, for their students of color. Implications for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act are discussed.

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## **The Added-Value of Latinx and Black Teachers for Latinx and Black Students**

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Travis J. Bristol

University of California, Berkeley

Javier Martin-Fernandez

University of Akron

### **Abstract**

A research synthesis points to the *added-value*—benefits to social and emotional development, as well as learning outcomes—for students of color taught by teachers of color. Given ongoing education debates, policymakers can use this evidence base to craft legislation aimed at increasing the ethnoracial diversity of the U.S. educator workforce. To begin, historical research shows how Latinx and Black teachers have supported their Latinx and Black students' social and emotional development during state-sanctioned school segregation. Contemporary qualitative and quantitative research highlights how teachers of color improve social and emotional development, as well as learning, for their students of color. Implications for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act are discussed.

Keywords: teachers of color; higher education; social and emotional development; student learning

## **The Added-Value of Latinx and Black Teachers for Latinx and Black Students**

The United States Congress, at this writing, is in the midst of debating the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Initially signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 as part of his larger Great Society and most recently reauthorized in 2008 by President Barack Obama, one of HEA's primary goals was to increase access and opportunity to higher education for our nation's historically marginalized students (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). While HEA provisions are more commonly associated with how students access federal funding to pay for college (i.e. Federal Pell Grants, work-study programs, and subsidized loans), the initial HEA and subsequent reauthorizations have had clear implications for pre-service teachers as well as for the institutions that these aspiring teachers attend. For example, Title II, which is named Teacher Quality Enhancement, focuses on a range of policy levers aimed at improving the preparation of pre-service teachers, as well as providing opportunities for in-service teachers to engage in ongoing professional development.

In reauthorizing HEA, Congress should bolster provisions aimed at recruiting teachers of color given the growing demands to increase the ethnoracial diversity of the teacher workforce (Bristol & Shirrell, 2019; Carter-Andrews, Bartell, & Richmond, 2016) by local (Waite, Mentor, & Bristol, 2018) and state policymakers (Dilworth, 1990; Murray & Jenkins-Scott, 2014), as well as teacher preparation programs (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Gist, 2016; Haddix, 2010). Consequently, the primary purpose here is to synthesize the long-standing research that points to the *added-value*, or benefits to social and emotional development, as well as learning outcomes for students of color when taught by teachers of color. A secondary aim is to provide policymakers who are working to reauthorize the Higher Education Act with an evidence base to craft legislation aimed at increasing the ethnoracial diversity of the U.S. educator workforce. Historically, Latinx and Black teachers have attended to and supported their Latinx and Black

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students' social and emotional development during state-sanctioned school segregation (Kohli, 2018; Philip, 2013). We provide more contemporary qualitative research that highlights how teachers of color currently improve the social and emotional development of students of color. We also discuss quantitative research that illuminates how teachers of color increase learning for their students of color. We end by providing recommendations for revising HEA (Title II—Teacher Quality Enhancement; Title III — Institutional Aid; Title IV —Student Assistance) to ensure that all preparation programs work to attract, support, and retain aspiring teachers of color.

While we use the term *students of color* throughout this piece, we focus exclusively on outcomes for Black and Latinx students. Given the in- and out-of-school outcomes of Black (Nelson 2016; Wallace 2017; Warren, 2017) and Latinx (Britton, 2019; Carey, 2018) students who underperform in schools relative to their White and Asian peers, the added-value matters for these students' social, emotional, and academic development, particularly for students when taught by a same-race teacher (Lynn, 2018; Milner, 2016).

To be clear, we do not suggest that the approximately 80% of White teachers who comprise the U.S. educator workforce have no place in working with students of color. Clearly, some White teachers create high-cognitive, demanding, engaging, and relevant content to historically marginalized students of color (Goldenberg, 2014). However, given the evidence, policymakers working on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act –and those enacting the HEA—must identify levers to increase the number of our nation's aspiring teachers of color.

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## **Social and Emotional Added-Value**

### **for Students of Color Taught by Same-Race Teachers**

#### **Latinx Students Taught by Latinx Teachers**

Studies on the added-value for students of color taught by teachers of color are not new (Hundley, 1965). Researchers have long documented how Latinx teachers have been able to attend to the social and emotional needs of their Latinx students (MacDonald, 2004; Ochoa, 2007). One particularly salient way that Latinx teachers enacted social and emotional support with their monolingual—and, in some cases, bilingual—Latinx students was through a shared value of linguistic diversity in the classroom (Gonzalez, 1990). The belief that Chicano students were not fluent in English became the alleged rationale for maintaining a separate and segregated school system prior to the desegregation of Mexican schools in California during the 1920s (Acuna, 1988; Muñoz, 2001; Strum, 2010). Since desegregation, the language shared between Latinx teachers and students has been recognized as a major factor in promoting effective learning (Acuna, 1988; Donato, 1997).

Despite teaching in historically under-resourced schools, Latinx teachers who share their Latinx students' cultural experiences create classroom environments that foster positive social and emotional support (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; MacDonald, 2004; San Miguel, 1987). Within the Latinx community, *confianza*—the establishment of trust and consequent willingness to share information with others—is central to the formation of lasting relationships (Weisman, Flores, & Valenciana, 2007). Within these relationships, people exchange both intellectual and concrete information, ultimately promoting the preservation and survival of households (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). In a school context, Latinx teachers and paraeducators establish these same relationships through sharing culture, language, and lived experiences (Monzo & Rueda, 2001).

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Consequently, these commonalities between teachers and students serve as one mechanism through which Latinx teachers support their Latinx students' social and emotional development as well as learning (Lopez, 2016).

For example, increasing Latinx teachers caused Latinx students to take more advanced placement and international baccalaureate courses, compared with Latinx students in schools with fewer Latinx teachers (Kettler & Hurst, 2017). In a nationally representative longitudinal survey of middle and high school students, Latinx students were more likely to report that they would graduate from college when taught by a Latinx teacher than by a Black or White teacher (Atkins, Fertig, & Wilkins, 2014). Researchers have posited that the increased representation of Latinx teachers improves Latinx students' aspirations and feelings of school connectedness (Flores, Clark, Claeys, & Villarreal, 2007).

Latinx teachers, functioning as role models and representatives of the school for students of color, support their Latinx students by developing positive school expectations, fostering a sense of belonging, and improving subsequent educational outcomes (Anthrop-González & De Jesús, 2006). As Flores (2017) argued, many Latinx teachers do not enter the profession with the intention of being role models, or what she termed "cultural guardians," but assume this position after seeing the absence of teachers who self-identify as Latinx. Therefore, increasing the representation of these Latinx teachers will positively support Latinx students (Villegas & Lucas, 2004).

In early elementary schools, Spanish-language use is associated with higher levels of emotional support during teacher-student interactions (Reese, Jensen, & Ramirez, 2014). Using Spanish helps Latinx students strengthen their socioemotional competencies in a way that not

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only protects them from academic risk factors, but also helps promote school engagement and consequent performance.

Given these findings, one may presume that bilingualism is criterion enough for diversifying the teacher workforce and meeting the socioemotional demands of Latinx students. Although shared language may mitigate some of the challenges experienced by Latinx students, researchers have documented ethnic matching as contributing to more positive teacher responsiveness, expectations, cultural sensitivity, and academic gains for Latinx students (Downer, Goble, Myers, & Pianta, 2016). This suggests a more complex manner in which Latinx teachers are better able to attend to the cultural dimensions of the classroom when compared to White teachers.

### **Black Students Taught by Black Teachers**

Similar to the research on the positive social and emotional influences of Latinx teachers on Latinx students, a long and established research literature shows how Black teachers contribute to the social and emotional development of their Black students (Anderson, 1988; Foster, 1997; Irvine & Irvine, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 2009). During *de jure* segregation, Black teachers taught in segregated Black schools that were drastically underresourced when compared to their White peers in more resourced schools (Ashmore, 1954). Despite these separate and unequal schooling conditions, Black teachers created learning environments that attended to their Black students' social and emotional development (Bond, 1966; Edwards, Royster, & Bates, 1979). Black teachers in one North Carolina school district during Jim Crow saw their work as integral to uplifting the Black race (Siddle Walker, 1996). One student, Daisy Durrah, remembered her Black teachers saying, "You can do anything you want to if you try hard enough. Not because you're black necessarily, but because you're you" (p. 151).

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More recent research has documented how Black students describe the unique ways their Black teachers care for them (Jackson, Sealey-Ruiz, & Watson, 2014; Madkins, 2011) and serve as role models (Goings & Bianco, 2016). After the percentage of Black math teachers increased, Black students were more likely to enroll in rigorous math courses, highlighting the race-based role-model effect (Klopfenstein, 2005). The characteristics underlying these relationships help explain the scope of socioemotional support that Black teachers provide to Black students. For example, Black teachers have a higher level of multicultural awareness, which fosters a more adaptive, responsive classroom environment for Black students (Cherng & Davis, 2016). Such multicultural aptitude comes in the form of culturally relevant pedagogy: Teachers remain committed to academic achievement while promoting student resilience and motivation (Mitchell, 1998).

This qualitative research has influenced recent quantitative work that measures the effect of Black teachers' added-value support of Black students' social and emotional development. In the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002, with 16,810 student-teacher dyads, researchers found that Black teachers hold higher expectations for their Black students, compared to those of White teachers (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). Across six districts (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the Dallas Independent School District, Denver Public Schools, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Memphis City Schools, and the New York City Department of Education), 50,000 adolescent students reported on 1,680 teachers. Compared to Black students taught by White teachers, Black students taught by Black teachers were more likely to report a desire to attend college and stated that their teachers cared for and motivated them (Egalite & Kisida, 2017). To show the positive impact Black teachers had on Black students' social and emotional development, previous research suggested one primary exploratory factor: Black teachers'

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“cultural understanding”— their capacity to design content that was culturally responsive and to serve as role models (King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

As a related mechanism, implicit biases influence teachers’ perceptions of negative student behavior (Downey & Pribesh, 2004), ultimately accounting for the higher levels of exclusionary discipline experienced by Black students (England & Meier, 1985). Administrative data collected from a 2007-2008 North Carolina sample of elementary, middle, and high school students revealed that Black students taught by Black teachers had fewer office referrals for misconduct, compared to Black students taught by White teachers (Lindsay & Hart, 2017). Overall, the presence of teachers who look similar and can relate to Black students may facilitate student engagement and motivation, further highlighting the need for a more diversified teacher workforce.

## **Learning Added-Value for Students of Color Taught by a Same-Race Teacher**

In addition to the added-value created by Latinx and Black teachers’ support of the social and emotional development of their same ethnoracial students, students of color taught by same-race teachers learn more (Andrews, Castro, Cho, Petchauer, Richmond, Floden, 2019). A causal relationship characterizes increased learning for Black students taught by Black teachers (Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1995: reanalysis of the 1966 study of Equality of Educational Opportunity, or the *Coleman Report*). An increase in the number of Black teachers in a school was associated with larger gain scores for high-school Black students: The inverse was true for Black students in schools with a higher percentage of White teachers. Although the “attitudes about and expectations for black and white students and teachers towards members of the other race” (Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1995, p. 2) presumably might differ 28 years after the data were collected for the Coleman Report. The research, however, suggests that little has changed.

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Students' performance on the Test of Economic Literacy (TEL), a standardized high-school exam that measures everyday practical knowledge about money, found that, for Black students, assignment to a Black teacher was associated with a 2.25 increase in performance, an improvement from the 29th to the 38th percentile. There were no statistically significant gains on TEL for students taught by same-gender teachers (Evans, 1992). Similarly, Black students taught by Black teachers performed better on vocabulary and reading standardized tests compared to Black students taught by White teachers. Hanushek concluded: "This result may reflect either that Black students do better with teachers of their own race or that the white teachers that are attracted to this setting are otherwise poorer" (Hanushek, 1992, p. 110).

The added-value for Black student-teacher ethnic matching was clear in a secondary analysis of Tennessee's Project STAR class-size experiment (Dee, 2004). State standardized test scores of students randomly assigned to same-race teachers showed that teacher-student racial matching for both Black and White students was associated with a 2% - 3% increase on math and reading elementary standardized tests. These increases in performance continued at approximately the same percentage, 2% - 3%, for each subsequent year a student was assigned to a same-race teacher.

More recent quasi-experimental studies have continued to amplify the benefits for Black students taught by Black teachers. An analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten through Fifth Grade (ECLS—K-5) pointed to increased learning on math and English scores for Black students when they were taught by Black teachers (Eddy & Easton-Brooks, 2011). The same nationally representative longitudinal data set found that teachers' perceptions of students' academic ability increased when the students were the same race as the teacher (Ouazad, 2014). There were no differences for students' grades based on teachers'

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gender. Other studies draw on longitudinal administrative data in North Carolina (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2011), Florida (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015), Tennessee (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017), and an urban district in Texas (Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien, & Rivkin, 2005) found increases in learning for Black students when their teachers were Black.

To date, no quasi-experimental studies have explored the impact on Latinx students' learning when taught by Latinx teachers. Given ongoing policy initiatives aimed at increasing the percentage of Latinx teachers in our nation's classroom, future research should examine the degree to which Latinx teachers, when compared to other teachers, improve their Latinx students' learning. However, the clear evidence about the impact on their Latinx students' social and emotional development should spur policymakers to bolster efforts to recruit Latinx teachers.

### **Implications for the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act**

Given the qualitative and quantitative evidence pointing to the added-value of Latinx and Black teachers for Latinx and Black students—coupled with Congress's current efforts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act—bolstering provisions aimed at increasing the ethnoracial diversity of our country's teacher workforce would seem prudent. To do this, Congress may want to focus its attention on Title II: Teacher Quality Enhancement; Title III: Institutional Aid; and Title VII: Graduate and Postsecondary Improvement Programs.

#### **Title II. Teacher Quality Enhancement: Increasing Teacher Residency Programs**

In future reauthorizations of HEA, Congress should create a permanent line item that funds teacher residency programs. During the 2008 HEA reauthorization, Congress allowed for the creation of Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants, which supported the initial development of teacher residency programs. In a teacher residency program, pre-service

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teachers, also known as residents, receive a stipend while spending one full-year working alongside an experienced teacher and taking graduate coursework, which leads to certification (Goodwin, Roegman, & Reagan, 2018). Teacher residencies enroll a larger percentage of people of color when compared to more traditional certification programs; moreover, over time, the students in residents' classes perform better on standardized exams (Papay, West, Fullerton, & Kane, 2019). Additionally, residents have higher rates of retention when compared to their peers trained in traditional preparation programs (Berry, Montgomery, Curtis, Hernandez, Wurtzel, & Snyder, 2008). A reauthorized HEA should include permanent funding to increase teacher residency programs, as well as support the development of current teacher residency programs, given the evidence of success that such programs have had recruiting teachers of color and the impact that teacher residents have had in increasing academic outcomes for their students relative to traditional preparation programs.

## **Title II. Teacher Quality Enhancement: Professional Development for Teacher Educators**

To enhance the quality of preparation that pre-service teachers receive—pre-service teachers of color, in particular—a reauthorized HEA must also include attention to deepening the capacity of teacher educators to prepare novice teachers. To do this, a reauthorized HEA should include block funding to institutions of higher education to develop an understanding of the dispositions and skills needed to prepare high quality teacher candidates. Teacher preparation program curriculum lacks coherence, as the result of teacher educators rarely having the time and space to co-plan and subsequently redesign their curriculum (Grossman, Kazemi, Kavanagh, Franke, & Dutro, 2019). Thus, incentivizing teacher preparation programs to provide access to professional development opportunities for teacher educators will be essential in order to enhance the quality of pre-service teachers entering the field. Moreover, to ensure that pre-

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service teachers of color have access to high quality teacher educators, a block grant competition set aside to grow the capacity of teacher educators should provide preferences to preparation programs that have demonstrated an ability to retain and graduate teacher candidates of color.

### **Title III. Institutional Aid: Strengthening Minority Serving Institutions' Teacher Preparation Programs**

A reauthorized HEA should include a new line item that provides institutional aid to Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs), Historically Black Graduate Institutions (HBGIs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) that commit to increasing the number of graduates entering the teaching profession. Similar to Title III's Part E: Minority Science and Engineering Improvement Program, which aims to increase the number of people of color who enter STEM related fields, the proposed Part H in Title III is intended to provide additional resources to traditional teacher preparation programs in Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). Awards should be based on grant applications in which teacher preparation programs receive funding to develop robust recruitment campaigns to attract prospective candidates into the profession. Grant funding should also include resources for faculty professional development and a stipend during pre-service teachers' practicum that equals the salary of a paraprofessional or assistant teacher in the school where the pre-service teacher is teaching. Priority should be given to MSI preparation programs that have a minimum of six months of student teaching required to receive certification.

### **Title IV. Increasing Grants to Students in Attendance at Institutions of Higher Education**

The reauthorized HEA should incrementally increase the TEACH Grant for eligible recipients from its current amount of \$4,000 to \$8,000 over the next five years. Teachers who receive the TEACH Grant commit to teaching high-need subjects in high-poverty schools for

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four years. Given the reality that Black and Latinx teachers are concentrated in high-poverty schools as compared to their White peers, increasing incentives to enter the teaching profession may serve as leverage for recruiting teachers of color (Milanowski, Longwell-Grice, Saffold, Jones, Schomisch, & Odden, 2009). Moreover, Black and Latinx students have a greater college debt burden than their White peers (Scott-Clayton & Li, 2016). Consequently, providing additional incentives, in the form of grants, to prospective teachers of color might increase the number of teachers of color who enter and remain in the profession—to everyone’s benefit.

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