

# Racial Mismatch in the Classroom: Beyond Black-white Differences

Patrick B. McGrady<sup>1</sup> and John R. Reynolds<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Previous research demonstrates that students taught by teachers of the same race and ethnicity receive more positive behavioral evaluations than students taught by teachers of a different race/ethnicity. Many researchers view these findings as evidence that teachers, mainly white teachers, are racially biased due to preferences stemming from racial stereotypes that depict some groups as more academically oriented than others. Most of this research has been based on comparisons of only black and white students and teachers and does not directly test if other nonwhite students fare better when taught by nonwhite teachers. Analyses of Asian, black, Hispanic, and white 10th graders in the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study confirm that the effects of mismatch often depend on the racial/ethnic statuses of both the teacher and the student, controlling for a variety of school and student characteristics. Among students with white teachers, Asian students are usually viewed more positively than white students, while black students are perceived more negatively. White teachers' perceptions of Hispanic students do not typically differ from those of white students. Postestimation comparisons of slopes indicate that Asian students benefit (perceptionwise) from having white teachers, but they reveal surprisingly few instances when black students would benefit (again, perceptionwise) from having more nonwhite teachers.

## Keywords

racial stereotypes, mismatch, oppositional culture, teachers

All students hope to be treated equally by their teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, and other social characteristics. Unfortunately, substantial scholarly evidence indicates that teachers—especially white teachers—evaluate black students' behavior and academic potential more negatively than those of white students (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987; Downey and Pribesh 2004; Ehrenberg, Goldhaber, and Brewer 1995; Morris 2005; Sbarra and Pianta 2001). Studies spanning several decades demonstrate that these more negative views of black students exist in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. Furthermore, white teachers' more negative views of black students—and perhaps other nonwhite students—are implicated in racial inequalities in education since teachers' perceptions of student deportment can

spill over into the academic grades they later assign (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987). However, because past research has focused mostly on black-white comparisons, it is unclear how much white teachers' views of other nonwhite students vary. Furthermore, past studies have implied but not directly tested a critical question: Would nonwhite students fare better if there were more nonwhite teachers? This article examines these

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<sup>1</sup>Florida State University, Tallahassee, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Patrick McGrady, Department of Sociology, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2270, USA

Email: [pmcgrady@fsu.edu](mailto:pmcgrady@fsu.edu)

two questions by testing for the effects of mismatch in a recent national study of 10th graders.

Like authors of past studies, we contend that mismatch effects arise from racial stereotypes. Many sociologists have speculated that the negative perceptions white teachers tend to hold of black students are rooted in racial stereotypes and racially charged micropolitical classroom dynamics (e.g., Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999). Evidence of the existence of such stereotypes comes in many forms, including studies that find teachers expect higher achievement from students with white-sounding names (Anderson-Clark, Green, and Henley 2008) and those that find black teachers describe their white colleagues as seeing less potential in black students (Foster 1990). To advance the research in this area, this article explores how white teachers' views of students vary according to different combinations of teachers' and students' racial/ethnic status. We conceive of mismatch effects in two distinct and equally important ways: (1) how white teachers view nonwhite students versus white students and (2) how white teachers view nonwhite students versus how nonwhite teachers view nonwhite students. The first has been the typical focus of past studies and is appropriate because most students are taught by white teachers (Snyder and Dillow 2010:Table 68). The second is important for verifying the first contrasts as an issue of teachers' race and for testing evidence of teacher bias. In addition, the second is important for identifying whether nonwhite students would fare better if they were evaluated by same-race and other nonwhite teachers.

Past studies of mismatch have nearly always focused on black-white differences in how teachers view their students. Limiting analyses of mismatch to black and white students omits around one quarter of the student-age population in the United States (Snyder and Dillow 2010:Tables 16, 41) and provides an overly simplistic view of racial dynamics in student-teacher interactions. The premise of this article is that racial stereotypes held by white teachers drive their more negative perceptions of black students as observed in past studies. By extension, the impact of mismatch on white teachers' perceptions of their students will vary across other racial/ethnic minorities. For example, Asian American children are sometimes held to a "model student" stereotype (Rosenbloom and Way 2004; Wong 1980), and some Hispanic children are perceived as uninvolved and having lesser ability (Valdes

1996). By moving beyond black-white differences, our analyses of the 2002 Education Longitudinal Study (ELS) confirm that not all nonwhite students are viewed more negatively by their white teachers as compared to white students. Considering more groups simultaneously provides a more complete assessment of mismatch effects, reaffirms that these effects are linked to stereotypes, and is more representative of the varying experiences of nonwhite students in U.S. schools.

Another limitation of past research on mismatch is that insufficient attention has been paid to an important policy implication of mismatch effects: Would nonwhite students fare better in terms of how they are perceived if they were taught by nonwhite/same-race rather than white teachers? Sometimes the answer is affirmative (Downey and Pribesh 2004:277), and other times the conclusions are more vague and state generally that "race matters" (Ehrenberg et al. 1995:560). We directly assess whether nonwhite students would benefit from having more nonwhite and same-race teachers by examining 12 perceptual measures reported by 10th graders' English and math teachers. In many ways, the results are more complex than what has been reported in past research. Although there is clear evidence of teacher bias when comparing how white teachers perceive white versus nonwhite students, we find much less evidence that having a nonwhite/same-race teacher would result in significantly better ratings for nonwhite students. On the other hand, this may depend on the organizational context. Ancillary analyses indicate that white teachers' perceptions of black students are most negative relative to black teachers' perceptions in predominantly black schools. We thus argue that the next direction for research on mismatch is to more thoroughly explore how the racial and socioeconomic compositions of schools shape classroom racial dynamics (Crosnoe 2009; Morris 2005).

## MISMATCH EFFECTS AND RACIAL STEREOTYPES

### *Evidence of Mismatch Effects*

Cultural capital theory suggests that mismatch complicates classroom interactions and undermines academic achievement, thereby contributing to the reproduction of inequality across generations. According to this view, interactions between teachers and students (or their parents)

from different racial/ethnic and class backgrounds are more constrained and ambiguous than such interactions when there is a racial/ethnic or class match (Bourdieu 1973; Lareau 1987, 2002; Valdes 1996). The potential interpersonal benefits associated with cultural match may be due to interactional ease that comes from familiarity of shared symbols, values, and knowledge (i.e., cultural capital). In addition, middle-class students and parents interact with teachers with more of a sense of entitlement rather than distrust or constraint (Lareau and Weininger 2003), and teachers may interpret this interactional style as indicating engagement or seriousness about school.

Mismatch poses a disadvantage for lower-socioeconomic-status and nonwhite students, argue many sociologists, because teachers and schools tend to embrace white middle-class standards of deportment and academic ability (Carter 2003; Morris 2005; Villegas 1988). Notably, though, there are few empirical studies of teachers' values (cf. Alexander, Entwisle, Cadigan, et al. 1987; Rong 1996; Tyson 2003). Difference becomes a disadvantage when nonwhite students become frustrated or unable to completely conform and receive constant reprimand from white teachers (Carter 2003). For example, ethnographic research in a first-grade classroom provides evidence of how student-teacher interaction is eased by similarity (Michaels 1981). Michaels (1981) observed that white students' "topic-centered" style of speech enhanced student-teacher collaboration while black students' wide-ranging style of speech tended to block collaboration.

Past studies of racial mismatch consistently report that black students face disadvantages relative to their white classmates when taught by white teachers. Specifically, black students receive lower average ratings from white teachers on both behavior and ability than white students (Downey and Pribesh 2004). For example, using the Beginning School Study of Baltimore students, Alexander and colleagues found that first-grade high-status white teachers typically rated their black and low-status students less favorably than white students on maturity and held lower expectations for black and low-status students (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987). The notion that teachers' standards of behavior reflect racially specific norms in the Beginning School Study was verified by comparing parents' and teachers' definitions of the behaviors that characterize a good student. Parents of white students

were more likely than parents of black students to rank higher with white teachers' standards of behavior (e.g., respect for self and others, good classroom citizenship, and taking pride in one's work; Alexander, Entwisle, Cadigan, et al. 1987:67). Black students are rated lower on classroom behaviors and ability than white students, but also these lower evaluations are predictive of lower grade point averages and reading test scores (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999).

Other studies employing nationally representative samples of students confirm that white teachers evaluate black students more negatively than white students. Downey and Pribesh (2004) found that black kindergarteners in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study were rated as having more externalizing problem behaviors (e.g., frequencies of arguing, getting angry, and fighting) than white kindergarteners when evaluated by white teachers, net of gender and socioeconomic status. However, when evaluated by black teachers, black students were rated as having fewer externalizing behavior problems than when assessed by white teachers. Parallel analyses of eighth-grade students also showed that the negative dynamics of racial mismatch—at least for the black students of white teachers—persist through middle school. White teachers rate black eighth-grade students in the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) as being more disruptive and putting forth less effort than white students. Downey and Pribesh (2004) concluded that white teachers tend to evaluate black students with a bias that favors white students' behavior over that of black students.

In the case of black and white students, mismatch confers disadvantages for black students, the vast majority of whom are taught by white teachers (as reported in this article and by Downey and Pribesh 2004). Conversely, students who match their teachers' socioeconomic or racial/ethnic backgrounds often enjoy more positive behavioral evaluations and grades, perhaps because they demonstrate the behaviors that most teachers recognize as appropriate (Entwisle and Alexander 1993). For example, in the Tennessee Project STAR class-size experiment, black and white students in classrooms with same-race teachers had higher gains in math and reading test scores, relative to black and white students with different-race teachers (Dee 2004). In a predominantly white teacher sample, teachers' behavioral evaluations remained stable during

the first two years of schooling for white students, while for black students, behavioral evaluations steadily declined during the first two years of schooling (Sbarra and Pianta 2001). In a national sample of black and white teachers, black teachers' ratings of their students' social behavior did not vary between white and black students, but white teachers rated their black students lower than their white students on leadership skills, social skills, and social desirability (Rong 1996). Other studies using NELS confirm that black and Hispanic students fare better with same-race teachers than with white male teachers on evaluations of behavior and ability (Ehrenberg et al. 1995) and that white, black, and Hispanic students have lower odds of being rated as frequently disruptive when evaluated by same-race teachers (Dee 2005).

### *Stereotypes of Nonwhite Students*

What are the theoretical implications of the finding that white teachers view black students more negatively than white students and more negatively than black teachers view black or white students? One possibility is that white teachers' perceptions of students are shaped by racial stereotypes and prejudice. More specifically, research has shown that teachers often equate whiteness with greater academic potential and perceive black students as uninvolved and not serious about school (Morris 2005; Staiger 2004; Tyson 2003). For example, Anderson-Clark et al. (2008) found that elementary school teachers in one school district rated students with African American-sounding names (e.g., Xavier) lower on behavioral evaluations than they rated students with white-sounding names (e.g., Ethan), regardless of the teachers' racial/ethnic status. Black teachers similarly report that their white colleagues often express and seem to accept stereotypes of black students as having fewer academic but more athletic skills than white students (Foster 1990). Thus, the generally accepted explanation of white teachers' lower ratings of black students is that white teachers are influenced by racial stereotypes that suggest black students have worse classroom behavior and less academic potential than white students.

Another possibility that is present but less prominent in the literature is that white teachers unconsciously act on in-group preferences that lead them to favor same-race (or same-class)

students. This general cultural mismatch interpretation is only partially supported by past studies since it would apply only to white teachers—if black teachers have an affinity for same-race students, it does not significantly color their perceptions and evaluations of white students (Downey and Pribesh 2004). One study of teacher satisfaction finds that white teachers who teach a majority of nonwhite students are significantly less satisfied with their jobs than white teachers who teach a majority of white students, while for black teachers, an affinity for teaching same-race students is not present (Renzulli, Macpherson, and Beattie 2011). A third possible interpretation that might be raised is that black teachers hold lower standards for black students. We do not explore this possibility, and the existing evidence makes it an unlikely explanation for mismatch effects. Research shows that many black teachers see black students' educational success as an important way to dispel racial stereotypes and accordingly strictly control black students' behavior and expect more from them (Foster 1990; Morris 2005; Tyson 2003).

Whether mismatch effects previously documented in the literature are consistent across all broad racial/ethnic groups is difficult to determine because most of the existing research on mismatch is limited to black-white contrasts. Other nonwhite students encounter racial/ethnic stereotypes in schools as well, and the message of these stereotypes varies greatly depending on the specific racial/ethnic group. For example, teachers generally have higher educational expectations for Asian American students, relative to white students, and lower expectations for black and Hispanic students (Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007).

Like black students, Hispanic students encounter stereotypes in the classroom that depict them as having lower academic potential and putting forth less effort than white students. These stereotypes are even more pervasive for immigrant Hispanic children, since ethnic stereotypes put them at a school disadvantage. For example, Valdes's (1996) ethnography of Mexican immigrant students explores the mismatch between immigrant parents' views of the educational system and the school's expectations of parents and teachers. Teachers approached the children of Mexican immigrants with caution, and according to the researcher, most teacher interactions with these students seemed awkward. Teachers interpreted their Mexican immigrant students' limited

interaction with teachers and other students as suggestive of lowered academic potential, which reflects negative stereotypes of Hispanic students.

In contrast to the generally negative stereotypes of black and Hispanic youth, many Asian students encounter a model student stereotype in the classroom. While evidence of mismatch effects for Asian students is limited, sociologists have found that teachers in elementary and secondary schools tend to rate their Asian students as more emotionally independent and academically competent than other students (Wong 1980). These stereotypes contribute to teachers' views of Asian students as model students requiring less effort and time in the classroom. For example, both black and white teachers in the Dallas Independent School District agreed that Asian students demonstrate better work habits and are far less disruptive in class than either white or black students (Farkas et al. 1990). Teachers also rate Asian students as more controllable (Chang and Sue 2003). Ethnographic evidence also suggests that teachers tend to describe their Japanese students as easier to teach and more eager in the classroom than other students (Nazaki 2000). In Nazaki's (2000) study, when Japanese students did not conform to teachers' expectations and were simply average, teachers considered these students unusual.

The results of research on mismatch are consistent: Both students' and teachers' racial/ethnic statuses are important for understanding teachers' assessments of students' behaviors and ability in the classroom. Studies on racial stereotypes experienced by black, Hispanic, and Asian students suggest that the consequences of racial and ethnic mismatch will vary considerably across groups. However, whether the effect of mismatch varies across these combinations has yet to be explored because almost all past research has considered only black and white students (cf. Ehrenberg et al. 1995). If mismatch effects are based more on racially specific stereotypes, broader cultural messages that favor Asian students as hardworking and negatively cast Hispanic and black youth as possessing little academic potential will emerge in the analysis. These effects are explored by examining the consequences of mismatch for teachers' perceptions of white, black, Hispanic, and Asian students in the 2002 ELS, a nationally representative survey of 10th graders. After exploring the consequences of mismatch, we test whether nonwhite students would be better rated,

in terms of behavioral and academic evaluations, by nonwhite and same-race teachers as opposed to being rated by white teachers. These analyses include controls for school context and students' academic ability as measured on standardized tests, and they extend past studies by looking beyond black-white differences.

## DATA AND METHOD

The data come from ELS. Conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, ELS is a nationally representative study of 15,362 high school sophomores designed to measure critical transitions of students as they pass from high school to the workforce, college, or other avenues. The data set includes student, teacher, and parent surveys about the student's behavior, cognitive skill, peers, and involvement in extracurricular activities and parents' and teachers' backgrounds. The teacher interviews were conducted with one math teacher and one English teacher per student respondent. School-level measures (public or private, urbanicity, size, percentage free lunch) are obtained from surveys completed by school administrators. The analyses are limited to Asian, black, Hispanic, and white 10th-grade students with valid data on teachers' perceptions of students' abilities and classroom behaviors. Native American students and students of other racial/ethnic groups are excluded due to the small number of respondents in those groups. These exclusions resulted in an analytic sample of around 9,000 students when examining English teachers' perceptions and around 9,500 students of math teachers.

In the multivariate analysis, it is important to note that the teacher effects are based on comparisons of ratings of English and math teachers who were asked to assess the in-class behaviors and academic ability of ELS respondents. Tenth-grade students, not teachers, are the primary sampling units, and the estimated mismatch effects are rarely if ever based on the same teacher's assessments of students of different races/ethnicities. To the best of our knowledge, this limitation is shared by all national surveys of elementary or secondary students.

### *Teacher Evaluations of Classroom Behavior and Scholastic Ability*

*Classroom behavior.* Both English and math teachers reported on four aspects of students' classroom behavior: working hard for grades,



relating well to peers, attentiveness, and disruptiveness. Teacher participants were asked, "Does this student usually work hard for good grades in your class?" and "Does this student seem to relate well to other students in your class?" For both of these questions, teachers responded either *no* (0), *yes* (1), or *do not know*.

Teachers were also asked, "How often is this student attentive in your class?" and "How often is this student disruptive in your class?" The response options for these questions are *never* (0), *rarely* (1), *some of the time* (2), *most of the time* (3), and *all of the time* (4). We reverse coded the measure of disruptiveness such that higher numbers are associated with a student's being perceived as less disruptive. Those who reported that they did not know for any of the measures are coded as missing (no more than 2 percent for each measure) and are not included in the analysis for that outcome.

**Scholastic ability rated by English teacher.** The English teachers in the sample were asked to rate the students on several dimensions of their writing ability in their classes. For each of the two abilities, "Ability to employ the conventions of English grammar and usage in your English class" and "Ability to organize ideas logically and coherently," teachers rated their students as *outstanding* (4), *very good* (3), *good* (2), *fair* (1), or *poor* (0).

**Scholastic ability rated by math teacher.** The math teachers rated the students' ability on two indicators of ability in the classroom: difficulty of the class and whether students had fallen behind in their work. Math teachers were asked, "Has this student fallen behind in school work?" The responses have been coded as *no* (1) and *yes* (0), such that we assess the tendency for teachers to report their students have not fallen behind. On the question, "Is this class too difficult, the appropriate level, or not challenging enough for this student?" responses have been coded as *too difficult* (0), *appropriate level* (1), and *not challenging enough* (2).

### Student-Teacher Racial Mismatch

To measure racial/ethnic mismatch, teachers are dichotomized as white or nonwhite, and then teachers' races are contrasted with students' races. This results in multiple dichotomous measures capturing whether Asian, black, Hispanic, and white students were taught by white or nonwhite teachers. Regression analyses use white teacher

and white student as the reference category. Ideally we would have kept teachers' racial identification more detailed and made distinctions among Asian, black, and Hispanic teachers. Low cell counts, particularly for Asian teachers, ruled out this approach (see Table 1). Thus, the analysis provides an assessment of white and nonwhite teachers' perceptions of 10th-grade students in four major racial/ethnic groups. Yet combining Hispanic and black teachers may obscure significant interracial mismatch dynamics among them. We find some evidence of this in ancillary analyses that drop Asian teachers and students and contrast the nine possible match combinations among black, Hispanic, and white teachers and students.

### Control Measures: School Characteristics

To account for school effects, we use a range of school characteristics as control variables. These include school control type, school neighborhood, the proportion of sophomores eligible for free lunch, and school size. School control has three categories: public, Catholic, and other private (the reference category in the multivariate analyses). School neighborhood is measured by whether each school is located in an urban, a suburban, or a rural area (the reference category). School administrators were asked to report the percentage of sophomores eligible for free lunch. Because eligibility for free lunch is directly related to the student's household income, the total percentage of sophomores eligible is a proxy for the socioeconomic status of the school. The measure is divided and dummy coded into *low eligible* (0-10 percent), *moderate eligible* (11-50 percent), and *high eligible* (51 percent or more), with the *low eligible* category being the referent. School administrators were asked to report the total school enrollment for October 2001. Enrollment is divided into four levels: *small school* (1-599 students, the reference category), *small-medium school* (600-999), *medium-large school* (1,000-1,599), and *large school* (1,600 or more).

### Control Measures: Student Characteristics

Other controls in the analysis consist of the student's gender, socioeconomic status, and cognitive ability. Socioeconomic status is a composite of five standardized and equally weighted

**Table 1.** Tenth-grade Students' Races by English and Math Teachers' Races (2002 Education Longitudinal Study): Counts with Weighted Percentages in Parentheses

	Student's race			
	White	Asian	Black	Hispanic
<b>English teacher</b>				
White	7,058 (96.3)	844 (83.2)	1,107 (73.8)	1,324 (79.8)
Nonwhite	273 (3.7)	170 (16.8)	394 (26.2)	335 (20.2)
Asian	35 (0.5)	60 (5.9)	7 (0.5)	38 (2.3)
Black	180 (2.5)	44 (4.3)	344 (22.9)	88 (5.3)
Hispanic	58 (0.8)	66 (6.5)	43 (2.9)	209 (12.6)
White + nonwhite	7,331	1,014	1,501	1,659
<b>Math teacher</b>				
White	7,274 (94.8)	876 (82.7)	1,158 (74.4)	1,213 (72.5)
Nonwhite	400 (5.2)	183 (17.3)	398 (25.6)	460 (27.5)
Asian	128 (1.7)	87 (8.2)	48 (3.1)	67 (4.0)
Black	146 (1.9)	55 (5.2)	306 (19.7)	116 (6.9)
Hispanic	126 (1.6)	41 (3.9)	44 (2.8)	277 (16.6)
White + nonwhite	7,674	1,059	1,556	1,673

variables from the parent's questionnaire, including mother's occupation and education, father's occupation and education, and household income. ELS imputed occupation prestige scores from the 1961 Duncan index for both mother's and father's reported occupations. To control for cognitive ability, we use standardized composite test scores in math (when examining math teachers' perceptions) and reading (when analyzing English teachers' perceptions).

### Analytic Strategy

We first examine the rate of racial mismatch between students and teachers (see Table 1). The reported percentages in Table 1 are weighted to reflect national levels. Following this, binary logistic and ordered logistic regression models, with Huber-White standard errors that adjust for the clustering of observations within schools, assess the effects of racial mismatch on English and math teachers' perceptions of student classroom behavior and ability (presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively). Contrasts in these tables compare assessments of white teachers with nonwhite students and nonwhite teachers with nonwhite students to the ratings of white students with same-race teachers. To assess whether the results were robust to technique, we also used Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal's (2005) "generalized linear latent and mixed model" techniques to fit multilevel logit and ordered logit models.

Results from those analyses were similar to those reported here and did not alter our conclusions.

The regression results in Tables 2 and 3 include one model for each outcome. Each model includes measures of racial mismatch as well as the school- and student-level controls. For space considerations, the tables omit the estimates for the control variables (results available on request). The slope coefficients were transformed into odds ratios, and as noted earlier, all dependent variables were coded such that higher numbers indicate more positive teacher perceptions. Also, white students with white teachers are the reference group in Tables 2 and 3. Thus, odds ratios greater than 1 indicate greater odds of being perceived favorably by a math or English teacher relative to how white teachers evaluate white students; numbers less than 1 indicate lower odds of being perceived favorably relative to how white teachers evaluate white students. In general, Tables 2 and 3 address whether white teachers evaluate white students differently than they do nonwhite students and if nonwhite teachers' evaluations of white students diverge from white teachers' evaluations.

What the regression coefficients in Tables 2 and 3 do not answer is whether nonwhite students would be better off if they were taught by nonwhite or same-race teachers instead of white teachers (the vast majority of all sophomores regardless of race are taught by white teachers, as we show in Table 1). To address this question, Table 4 summarizes the results of postestimation

**Table 2.** Binary and Ordered Logistic Regressions of Teachers' Evaluations of Classroom Behavior on Student-teacher Racial Matching: Odds Ratios with z Scores in Parentheses

Teacher-student racial match (vs. white teacher and white student)	Works hard for grades <sup>a</sup>			Relates well to others <sup>a</sup>			Is attentive <sup>b</sup>			Is not disruptive <sup>b</sup>	
	English	Math		English	Math		English	Math		English	Math
White teacher and Asian student	2.35*** (7.03)	1.62*** (4.74)		0.82 (-1.35)	0.85 (-1.06)		2.04*** (6.73)	1.55*** (4.43)		1.92*** (4.91)	1.82*** (4.55)
White teacher and black student	0.88 (-1.31)	0.87 (-1.63)		1.22 (1.64)	1.18 (1.31)		0.83* (-1.99)	0.82** (-2.63)		0.75*** (-3.26)	0.88 (-1.64)
White teacher and Hispanic student	0.97 (-0.32)	0.99 (-0.10)		1.20 (1.49)	0.95 (-0.40)		1.05 (0.60)	0.85* (-2.26)		0.99 (-0.13)	0.97 (-0.43)
Nonwhite teacher and Asian student	1.53 (1.78)	1.02 (0.10)		2.03* (2.07)	0.65 (-1.80)		1.51 (1.90)	1.01 (0.06)		1.12 (0.65)	1.66* (2.21)
Nonwhite teacher and black student	0.88 (-0.69)	0.99 (-0.07)		1.99*** (3.39)	1.01 (0.06)		0.88 (-0.76)	0.94 (-0.49)		0.65* (-2.23)	0.74 (-1.61)
Nonwhite teacher and Hispanic student	1.00 (-0.01)	0.77 (-1.63)		2.04* (2.32)	1.68* (2.15)		1.05 (0.40)	1.18 (1.24)		0.77 (-1.40)	1.09 (0.58)
Nonwhite teacher and white student	1.29 (1.52)	1.10 (0.59)		2.05* (2.20)	1.44 (1.60)		0.81 (-1.49)	1.04 (0.27)		1.05 (1.48)	0.72* (-2.09)
Wald $\chi^2$ (df = 19) [n]	727.91*** [8,995]	789.54*** [9,368]		127.86*** [8,931]	271.66*** [9,287]		651.04*** [8,982]	1049.16*** [9,420]		585.18*** [9,148]	734.10*** [9,513]

Note: Models include controls for school characteristics (urbanicity, control, size, percentage free/reduced-price lunch) and student characteristics (gender, family socioeconomic status, scores on reading and math tests).

a. Odds ratios are estimated from logit coefficients.

b. Odds ratios are estimated from ordered logit coefficients.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Table 3.** Binary and Ordered Logistic Regressions of Teachers' Evaluations of Scholastic Ability on Student-teacher Racial Matching: Odds Ratios with z Scores in Parentheses

Teacher-student racial match (vs. white teacher and white student)	English teacher		Math teacher	
	Uses good grammar <sup>a</sup>	Clearly organizes ideas <sup>b</sup>	Has not fallen behind <sup>b</sup>	Class is not difficult <sup>a</sup>
White teacher and Asian student	1.23* (2.19)	1.56*** (4.73)	1.49*** (3.60)	0.90 (−0.73)
White teacher and black student	0.77** (−2.93)	0.78** (−2.84)	0.88 (−1.36)	0.76** (−3.02)
White teacher and Hispanic student	0.89 (−1.44)	0.95 (−0.65)	0.84* (−2.08)	0.93 (−0.73)
Nonwhite teacher and Asian student	0.94 (−0.26)	1.40 (1.26)	0.83 (−0.87)	0.72 (−1.12)
Nonwhite teacher and black student	1.01 (0.04)	0.92 (−0.59)	1.02 (0.17)	1.01 (0.07)
Nonwhite teacher and Hispanic student	0.94 (−0.42)	0.98 (−0.11)	0.92 (−0.69)	0.79 (−1.33)
Nonwhite teacher and white student	1.02 (0.10)	0.85 (−1.11)	1.11 (0.72)	0.87 (−0.79)
Wald $\chi^2$ (df = 19) [n]	1555.47*** [9,102]	1724.02*** [9,126]	779.75*** [9,450]	437.11*** [9,533]

Note: Models include controls for school characteristics (urbanicity, control, size, percentage free/reduced-price lunch) and student characteristics (gender, family socioeconomic status, scores on reading and math tests).

a. Odds ratios are estimated from logit coefficients.

b. Odds ratios are estimated from ordered logit coefficients.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

comparisons of slopes that provide significance tests of the differences in ratings of nonwhite and white teachers for Asian, black, and Hispanic students across all 12 outcomes. A concern with these tests is that they do not truly get at the benefits of racial matching between students and teachers, since small counts led us to combine Asian, black, and Hispanic teachers into one group. To provide additional insight into the benefits (or costs) of racial matching for nonwhite students, we reran all of the regressions excluding Asian students and teachers and specified exact racial matches among black, Hispanic, and white teachers and students. The text briefly summarizes those results, which gauge the benefits of having a teacher of the same broad racial/ethnic background for black and Hispanic students.

## RESULTS

### *Prevalence of Racial Mismatch*

Table 1 reports the prevalence of mismatch between students' race and English and math

teachers' race. The top two rows for each teacher compare white and nonwhite teachers, while additional rows further break down nonwhite teachers into Asian, black, and Hispanic teachers. As others have reported, white teachers almost always teach white students; only around 5 percent of white 10th graders in 2002 had nonwhite English or math teachers. To the extent that English and math teachers are racially representative of all teachers, having a white teacher is also the normative experience for nonwhite students. Between 72 and 83 percent of Asian, black, and Hispanic 10th-grade students were instructed by white teachers. Among nonwhite students, black 10th graders are most likely to be taught by same-race teachers; 23 percent have black English teachers, and 20 percent black math teachers. Fewer Hispanic students are taught by same-race teachers, and Asian students are least likely to be taught by teachers of the same race—less than 10 percent. These differences among nonwhite students are mirrored in the percentage being taught by nonwhite teachers generally—black students are most likely and Asian students least likely to have nonwhite teachers.

**Table 4.** Nonwhite Students' Evaluations by Nonwhite Teachers Compared to White Teachers' Evaluations

Evaluation category	Student's race		
	Asian	Black	Hispanic
Works hard for grades (English)	0	0	0
Works hard for grades (math)	—	0	0
Relates well to others (English)	+	+	0
Relates well to others (math)	0	0	+
Is attentive (English)	0	0	0
Is attentive (math)	—	0	+
Is not disruptive (English)	—	0	0
Is not disruptive (math)	0	0	0
Uses good grammar (English)	0	0	0
Clearly organizes ideas (English)	0	0	0
Has not fallen behind (math)	—	0	0
Class is not difficult (math)	0	0	0

Note: + indicates more favorable evaluations by nonwhite teachers, relative to evaluations by white teachers; — indicates less favorable evaluations from nonwhite teachers, relative to evaluations by white teachers; 0 indicates no significant difference.

### *Teachers' Evaluations of Classroom Behaviors*

Given that racial/ethnic mismatch is a pervasive feature of many nonwhite students' high school experiences, it is important to gauge the extent of any consequences of mismatch for teachers' perceptions of their students' classroom behaviors and academic abilities—both in terms of a range of perceptions and across racial/ethnic groups for whom stereotypes greatly differ. Table 2 presents the odds ratios from analyses of English and math teachers' evaluations of students' four classroom behaviors. These models, while controlling for a range of school and student characteristics, reveal that the consequences of mismatch vary by both students' and teachers' races. The top portion of Table 2 highlights differences in white teachers' perceptions of nonwhite students compared to white students. Relative to white students evaluated by white teachers, black students have significantly lower odds of being rated attentive by white English and math teachers, a difference of about 17 percent. Hispanic students with white math teachers have a similar disadvantage, but not with white English teachers. In contrast, white teachers view Asian students more favorably than they view white students on three of the four perceptual measures: harder working, more attentive, and not disruptive. White teachers rate students of different racial/ethnic

groups equally in terms of how well they relate to their classmates, which is arguably the least academically relevant of the four behavioral perceptions.

The bottom half of Table 2 presents comparisons of nonwhite teachers' ratings of student behaviors, again as compared to the assessments white teachers make of white students. For two behavioral indicators—working hard and being attentive—nonwhite teachers rate students no differently than white teachers rate white students. But in terms of relating well to other students, nonwhite English teachers rate Asian, black, and Hispanic students more favorably than white teachers do white students. Yet this is not the case with nonwhite math teachers, which may reflect distinct pedagogies typically used to teach English and math. There is no clear pattern for nonwhite teachers' assessments of their students' disruptiveness, with some negative, some positive, but mostly nonsignificant contrasts.

### *Teachers' Evaluations of Scholastic Ability*

While teacher perceptions of student deportment and effort are important and potentially consequential for students' grades (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987), racial mismatch effects for how teachers view their students' scholastic ability may be a more telling indicator of teacher racial

bias. Perceptions that whiteness corresponds to intelligence and giftedness have been reported in multiple ethnographies of high schools and elementary schools (Morris 2005; Staiger 2004; Tyson 2003). Table 3 presents odds ratios that indicate the tendency for nonwhite teachers and white teachers of nonwhite students to report evaluations of scholastic ability that differ from white teachers' views of their white students' abilities. These associations are estimated net of the range of student-level and school-level controls, and the upper portion focuses on white teachers while the bottom portion turns to nonwhite teachers.

In three of four outcomes, white teachers rated black students as having less scholastic aptitude and Asian students as having more than white students. For example, relative to white students taught by white teachers, black students have 23 percent lower odds of being rated as using good grammar, and similar differences exist for white teachers' views of black 10th graders' abilities to clearly organize ideas in their English classes or level of difficulty with their math classes. There was no black-white difference in terms of having fallen behind in math class. When assessing Asian students—net of their abilities in English and math as measured by standardized tests—white teachers' reports suggest they have better grammar, have better conceptual organization, and are less prone to fall behind compared to white students. There is less evidence that white teachers' views of Hispanic students differ from their views of white students. The only significant contrast pertains to falling behind in math class. Furthermore, nonwhite teachers do not rate any major racial/ethnic group of students as more or less able than white teachers rate white students. No contrast in the lower portion of Table 3 is significant.

### ***Would Nonwhite Students Fare Better if They Were Taught by Nonwhite Teachers?***

The preceding results have provided tests of three fundamental questions: Do white teachers' perceptions of nonwhite students differ from those of white students? Are those differences group specific? and Do nonwhite teachers view students differently than white teachers view white students? So far the results indicate white teachers have somewhat more negative views but often equal views of black and Hispanic students compared to whites and typically more positive perceptions

of Asian students. In contrast, it is the exception to the rule, as nonwhite teachers' assessments of students almost never vary from those of white teachers' perceptions of white students. These results may signal bias among white teachers, and past work has viewed these contrasts as evidence of such bias (e.g., Downey and Pribesh 2004).

We argue that it is important also to test an implied comparison, namely, that nonwhite students would be perceived more positively in their schools if more teachers were nonwhite. Table 4 provides such a test. In Table 4, we report a summary of comparisons of the coefficients from Tables 2 and 3. For example, to determine if black 10th-grade students are rated equally attentive by nonwhite and white English teachers (see Table 2), we used a postestimation parametric test of whether there was a significant difference between the white English teacher and black student coefficient for attentiveness and the nonwhite English teacher and black student coefficient for attentiveness. Tests that indicated an advantage to being taught by a nonwhite teacher are represented by a plus sign, those that suggested the student is better off with a white teacher are represented by a negative sign, and tests that resulted in no difference are indicated with a 0.

By nature of typically being taught by white instead of nonwhite teachers, Asian students receive a net advantage in terms of teachers' perceptions of their classroom behavior and scholastic ability. In 4 of 12 cases, white teachers perceive Asian students more positively than do nonwhite teachers; in 7 instances, white and nonwhite teachers view Asians as equal to white students; and in just 1 case (relates well to others in English class), there is evidence of a disadvantage to being taught by white teachers. For black and Hispanic 10th-grade students, there is never a gain or advantage from having white instead of nonwhite teachers, there is sometimes a penalty (relates well in English class for black students, relates well in math and is attentive in math for Hispanic students), but most often there is no difference. The picture for black and Hispanic 10th graders is slightly modified when narrowing the comparison to the potential benefits of having a same-race teacher.

How sensitive are these findings to the fact that all nonwhite teachers have been pooled together into one group? To assess this question, we redid the analyses for black, Hispanic, and white students only to see if there are unique benefits to being taught by same-race teachers as opposed to simply

nonwhite teachers (results available on request). In addition to the significant and positive effects of having a nonwhite teacher in Table 4, black teachers viewed black students' progress in math more positively than white students ( $p < .036$ ), and Hispanic English teachers were more likely than white English teachers to agree that Hispanic students related well to others ( $p < .016$ ). Overall, these results clarify the nature of the impact of racial mismatch for nonwhite students—the evidence of teacher bias in Tables 2 and 3 does not necessarily mean black and Hispanic students would automatically gain from having more nonwhite teachers, although Asian students would experience somewhat less sanguine teacher perceptions of them if the high school teacher workforce were more racially diverse.

## DISCUSSION

Is the effect of student-teacher racial mismatch the same for all students? This study extends social scientific evidence related to this question by testing whether mismatch is consequential for teachers' evaluations of white, black, Hispanic, and Asian students. The results confirm the troubling racial dynamics found in past research: Black students evaluated by white teachers often receive more negative ratings than white students evaluated by white teachers, controlling for racial differences in students' test scores, family socioeconomic status, and a range of school characteristics (6 of 12 coefficients were significant). However, racial/ethnic mismatch effects vary across types of mismatch and evaluation. Specifically, white teachers' ratings of students' academic ability and behaviors in the classroom appear susceptible to the racial stereotypes that depict black and Hispanic youth as having lower academic potential and Asian youth as model students (Valdes 1996; Wong 1980). In contrast, nonwhite teachers' views of students appear to be much less susceptible to these racial stereotypes. For instance, nonwhite teachers rarely viewed white or black students significantly differently than white teachers perceived white students (see also Downey and Pribesh 2004).

Given that the majority of Hispanic, black, and Asian students are taught by white teachers, one pressing question that arises from these analyses is whether black and Hispanic youth would fare better and Asian students fare worse (in terms of teachers' views of them) if they were taught by

nonwhite teachers. We find that Hispanic and black students never receive worse ratings from nonwhite and same-race teachers, and in some cases they are rated more positively. There is somewhat more evidence to suggest that Asian students are worse off when taught by nonwhite teachers. Of 12 contrasts for Asians in Table 4, 5 are significant, and 4 of these indicate a disadvantage if students are taught by nonwhites. Given the relatively low numbers of Asian students and teachers in ELS, it was not possible to look at whether Asian students were perceived less favorably by same-race teachers. However, ancillary analyses that combined ELS and NELS indicated that Asian teachers do view Asian students' classroom behavior (attentive, not disruptive) less positively than do white teachers (results available on request).

What are the implications of mismatch and racial stereotypes in the classroom? Past research has demonstrated the possibility of strained student-teacher interaction between black and Hispanic students and white teachers (Carter 2003; Morris 2005; Valdes 1996). In Morris's (2005) study, teachers were more likely to discipline black students than white students, and the teachers in Valdes's (1996) study often expressed little optimism for Mexican American students' success in later grades. While Asian students appear to receive more favorable evaluations, possibly being evaluated under the model student stereotype, this perception does not always benefit Asian students (Kao and Thompson 2003; Nazaki 2000). Not only does this stereotype ignore within-ethnic variation among Asian students, but also it contributes to teachers' negative perceptions of Asian students who do not confirm the model student stereotype.

What of the possibility that these results are indicative of an oppositional culture among black students? Such an interpretation would put the onus on students rather than white teachers. The oppositional culture explanation would predict that white teachers' more negative views of black students can be partially explained by antischooling attitudes. Like other analyses of national data sets show (e.g., Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998), racial variations in the school-related attitudes measured in ELS do not reflect an oppositional culture among black and Hispanic 10th-grade students. For example, using the same predictors in Tables 2 and 3, we found that black (odds ratio = 2.40 for English, 2.46 for math) and Hispanic (odds ratio = 1.51 for English,

1.48 for math) students with white teachers have significantly greater odds of thinking grades are very important, relative to white students with white teachers. Thus, despite being perceived more negatively by white teachers, black and Hispanic students express more positive attitudes about schooling compared to white students, casting doubt on the idea that white teachers are merely reacting to an oppositional stance toward schooling among black and Hispanic students.

An important limitation of the present study (and all previous studies using national data) is that students and not teachers are the primary sampling unit. Therefore, the estimated effects of mismatch are not based on the different experiences of white and nonwhite students within the same classrooms but rather the averaged experiences of such students across high schools all over the United States. We have attempted to adjust for racial/ethnic differences in school settings and student backgrounds—including family socioeconomic status and test scores—that might otherwise appear as mismatch effects. Nonetheless, the results of this study are limited to between-classroom and not within-classroom differences. Another limitation is that we did not demonstrate empirically that teachers' evaluations of students are consequential for the students' academic performance and course grades. It would be worthwhile to determine if these subtle negative aspects of mismatch have broader negative consequences, as Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson (1987) found in Baltimore; Farkas et al. (1990) found in Dallas; and Dee (2004) found in the Tennessee's Project STAR class-size experiment. A third limitation relates to the use of broad racial/ethnic categories, which ignores cultural variation within each race/ethnicity status. It is very possible that students and teachers of different racial/ethnic statuses share similar cultural traits while students and teachers of the same racial/ethnic status may vary in attitudes toward schooling and appropriate classroom behavior.

What are we to make of the seeming contradiction that white teachers rate black students as having less ability than white students (see Table 3) yet black students are not predicted to fare any better in nonwhite teachers' classrooms (see the lower portion of Table 4)? The finding is puzzling because nonwhite teachers' perceptions of their black students' abilities are very similar to white teachers' views of white students. As one reviewer of this manuscript noted, this partly reflects the precision

of the conditional estimates—there are more than 7,000 white students with white teachers and only around 400 black students with nonwhite teachers. This numerical balance is significant and a consequence of the sampling frame of ELS. The finding also reflects the magnitude of the difference. Consider in contrast how positively white teachers perceive Asian students' abilities, attentiveness, and effort. Asian students in white teachers' classrooms rate at the very top of all students on these and to a degree that they are predicted to be perceived more poorly in nonwhite teachers' classrooms despite their low sample numbers (less than 200). Yet Asian students' social isolation is also reflected in these results as they have the lowest predicted odds of being perceived by white teachers as relating well to others.

Another possibility is that mismatch effects may vary by the racial and social class composition of schools. That is, teachers' perceptions of their students may change in schools where white students are not the majority. Morris's (2005) ethnography of a predominantly black school in Texas reported that white teachers often assumed the white students were from lower-socioeconomic-status or "trailer trash" families while the black teachers assumed the same students were middle class. Do teachers' views of black and white students differ in predominantly black schools? To explore this question, we examined teachers' perceptions of the disruptiveness of black and white eighth graders in NELS, where a measure of school racial composition is readily available. Those results (available on request) suggested that the gap between white and black teachers' perceptions of black students is even larger in schools where more than 40 percent of students are African American. Thus, an important direction for future research on mismatch is to map out the organizational contexts that shape the power of racial stereotypes.

Educational attainment in the United States is highly valued not only in terms of access to good jobs and higher income but also culturally as the primary avenue for achieving success. Yet educational institutions are not simply dispensers of knowledge and tools needed for the workforce; they are also shaped by broader, more racially charged, contexts that supply images of ideal students and troublemakers. The troubling implication of these results is that teachers' evaluations remain susceptible to racial stereotypes that disadvantage black and Hispanic students and favor Asian students, relative to white students.

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## BIOS

**Patrick B. McGrady** is a Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at Florida State University. His research interests include the sociology of education and gender and body image. His dissertation examines how gay men experience body image concerns.

**John R. Reynolds** is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Claude Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy at Florida State University. His research examines cohort changes in the stratification of educational ambition and attainment, and the implications of public school reform movements for educational inequalities in young adulthood.