



Collective pedagogical teacher culture, teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch, and teacher job satisfaction



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ABSTRACT

Teacher job satisfaction is critical to schools' successful functioning. Using a representative sample of kindergarten teachers from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, we investigate the association among professional learning community and teacher collaboration, teacher ethno-racial group, teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch, and teacher job satisfaction. We find that White teachers are significantly less satisfied than African-American and Latino teachers, especially when they teach in majority non-White classrooms. However, the existence of a professional community moderates the negative influence of teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch on White teachers' job satisfaction. In effect, strong professional communities serve as a cushion to bolster teacher job satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

In the current educational climate, teachers are under a tremendous amount of public pressure to raise students' test scores. Teachers are frequently singled out in the popular media for their ostensible role in the decline of American schools. In addition, high stakes testing associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB)-the twenty-first century's initial educational reform initiative-has undermined schools' organizational cultures by altering teachers' working conditions. The negative consequences have placed immense pressure on teachers, increasing competition among them (Crocco and Costigan, 2006; Lankford et al., 2002; Nichols and Berliner, 2007). As organizations, schools are dependent on having teachers who are satisfied with their jobs and who work with one another to build a workplace community. Dissatisfied teachers may undermine educational goals, and dissatisfaction with teaching conditions may lead to higher teacher absenteeism, stress, and turnover (Perrachione et al., 2008; Renzulli et al., 2011).

While there are many factors that may influence the extent to which teachers are satisfied with their jobs, two factors that are particularly important are organizational culture and the socio-demographic composition of the school. First, schools' organizational cultures, which include the shared assumptions, rituals, values, climate, and behaviors within organizations, are critical because they define how teachers interact with one another and their students (Powers, 2009). There are significant differences in the profile of schools with strong and weak organizational cultures. Schools with strong organizational cultures usually have positive and charismatic leadership at the top, a clear sense of purpose, more formalized organizational structures, a tradition of recognition, appreciation and open communication among all members, collegiality among teachers, and higher expectations for students (Cheng, 1993). Teachers in these schools are also professionally interdependent and approach their work as a collective responsibility and strive to achieve common goals for student learning

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(Little, 1990). As a result, students are more engaged in these schools and their learning achievement levels are better (Lee and Smith, 1996; Louis et al., 1996). Schools with weaker organizational culture, on the other hand, are characterized by weak leadership, lack of clear organizational purpose, disengaged teachers and students, lack of teacher professionalism, higher turnover, and most importantly poor organizational performance (Cheng, 1993). Studies have suggested that the organizational culture of schools can have important implications for teacher job satisfaction (Gamoran et al., 2000; Lee et al., 1991; Lee and Smith, 1996; Louis and Marks, 1998; Perrachione et al., 2008; Renzulli et al., 2011). In fact, the organizational culture of schools has been found to be a stronger and more consistent predictor of teacher job satisfaction than many measures of teacher characteristics (Culver et al., 1990; Ma and MacMillan, 1999; Moore, 2012; Shen et al., 2012; Weiss, 1999).

Second, in addition to organizational culture, various aspects of the socio-demographic composition of the school are associated with teacher job satisfaction. One aspect in particular, namely the increasing diversity of the student population, has received popular and scholarly attention in recent years (Ingersoll and May, 2011a). Much of this attention has been driven by concern over the paucity of teachers of color relative to White teachers, who make up approximately 84% of teachers serving a population of students that is only 59% White (Ingersoll and May, 2011b). Indeed, several studies have indicated the increased challenges in interracial relations that come along with diversity in schools in general, and with teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch in particular (Farkas et al., 1990; McGrady and Reynolds, 2012; Mueller et al., 1999; Renzulli et al., 2011). It is abundantly clear, given other recent research on teacher job satisfaction, that teacher race and the racial composition of the school have interactive influences on job satisfaction (Renzulli et al., 2011). Much of this dissatisfaction may be due to issues surrounding student behavior. Several studies have found evidence suggesting that teachers, especially White teachers, tend to rate the behavior of students from a different race more negatively than that of White students (Downey and Pribesh, 2004; McGrady and Reynolds, 2012). Furthermore, typical student misbehaviors such as disrespect and inattentiveness are significantly related to teacher job dissatisfaction (Friedman, 1995). Similar findings were also reported in Grayson and Alvarez (2008).

What is not clear, however, is whether the prior effects of teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch at the school level extend to or underestimate the effects of teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch at the classroom level. In addition, although Renzulli et al. (2011) found that school organizational structure (in this case, whether the school was a charter or traditional school) moderated the effects of teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch, it is yet unclear whether schools' organization *culture* might do the same. Given demographic trends, it is critically important that schools and policymakers do what they can to ameliorate the potentially negative effects of teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch on teacher job satisfaction.

In this paper we investigate the association between organizational culture, teacher ethno-racial group, and teacher job satisfaction using a nationally representative sample of kindergarten teachers. We focus on Collective Pedagogical Teacher Culture, an aspect of organizational culture that includes teachers' perceptions of two components of the organizational culture – professional community and teacher collaboration. In this paper, we investigate the following research question: do teachers' perceptions of their schools' organizational cultures, including the extent to which they are characterized by professional community and teacher collaboration, moderate the influence of race-based factors, such as the match or mismatch between teacher ethno-racial group and classroom ethno-racial composition, on their job satisfaction?

1.1. Teacher satisfaction

There is a well-established link between worker satisfaction and various aspects of the organizations where they work (e.g., Pfeffer (1983)). Among teachers, of particular importance among the demographic factors shown to influence teacher job satisfaction are the teacher's ethno-racial group and the ethno-racial composition of the students in the school.¹ With respect to teachers' ethno-racial group, Renzulli et al. (2011) found that White teachers were slightly more satisfied with their jobs than were teachers of color, results that are echoed in studies of other White workers (Clay-Warner et al., 2005; Tuch and Martin, 1991), as well as teachers (Moore, 2012; Mueller et al., 1999).

Yet the relationship between teacher ethno-racial group and job satisfaction is not consistent across schools. In fact, there is a persistent link between school ethno-racial composition and teacher job satisfaction, with those schools with proportionately larger African-American and Latino students populations also having teachers with particularly low levels of satisfaction (Frankenberg, 2006). Indeed, Renzulli et al. (2011) also found that the ethno-racial composition of the school had a significant impact on White teachers' job satisfaction, such that White teachers in predominantly White schools were more satisfied than White teachers in more diverse schools. This effect was moderated by whether teachers were teaching in charter or traditional schools. Others have found similar findings with respect to the negative impact of teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch on job satisfaction (Fairchild et al., 2012), as well as the moderating impact of organizational factors on the relationship between school ethno-racial composition and the lower satisfaction levels of White teachers teaching diverse students (Mueller et al., 1999).

Yet all of these studies examine teacher–student ethno-racial mismatch at the school level, not at the classroom level. In other words, they do not include information on which students each teacher sees and interacts with the most in her/his own

¹ Although we recognize that there are many social relations in schools among multiple stakeholders, we focus here on the demography of student-teacher relationships, given the important role that the mismatch between school racial composition and teacher race has been shown to play in teacher job satisfaction (Mueller et al., 1999; Renzulli et al., 2011).

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