

Problem Set Asynchronous – Teacher Diversity and Student Outcomes

This assignment is asynchronous. Type your responses and submit a single PDF. Word ranges are guidance, not hard limits – but answers well outside them usually signal that a question has been misread. Cite which source you are drawing on when you make a claim.

Required Materials

Complete all three before answering the questions. The order below is the order I recommend.

1. **Podcast.** [EdNext Podcast, Ep. 63: “School Suspensions and Teacher Race”](#) (December 2016). Marty West interviews Constance Lindsay about her work with Cassandra Hart on teacher race and exclusionary discipline in North Carolina.
2. **Book talk.** [“Teacher Diversity and Student Success: Why Racial Representation Matters in the Classroom”](#) (American University School of Public Affairs, April 2021). Seth Gershenson, Michael Hansen, and Constance Lindsay discuss their book.
3. **Article.** Anna J. Egalite, [“What We Know About Teacher Race and Student Outcomes”](#) *Education Next*, Winter 2024. A review of twelve rigorous studies published between 2004 and 2023.

Optional background, if you want the underlying research:

Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, and Papageorge, [“The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers,”](#) *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 2022. The Project STAR study the book talk returns to repeatedly.

[“Teacher diversity in the classroom”](#) – a short, non-technical summary of that paper published by the American Economic Association.

Lindsay and Hart, [“Teacher Race and School Discipline,”](#) *Education Next*, Winter 2017. The written version of the study discussed in the podcast.

Part 1: Working Through the Sources

Short answers. The goal here is to confirm you have the details straight before you argue about them.

1. Lindsay and Hart study exclusionary discipline. What specific outcomes do they measure, and what comparison allows them to attribute differences to teacher race rather than to the kinds of students or schools involved? What do they find, and for which students are the effects largest? (75–100 words)
2. In the book talk, the authors argue that “teacher diversity is teacher quality.” Identify one benefit of a diverse teaching force that they claim operates **beyond** the direct effect of matching a student to a same-race teacher. Explain the mechanism they propose. (75–100 words)
3. Egalite reviews much of the same evidence but reaches a more measured conclusion. Identify one **specific** point on which her reading differs from the book authors’ – a magnitude, an outcome, a limitation, or a policy inference – and describe the evidence she uses to support it. “She is more cautious” is not an answer; name the point of difference. (75–100 words)

Part 2: What We Know and What We Don’t

4. **What do we know?** Drawing on all three sources, state the two or three findings in this literature you consider best established. For each, say what makes the evidence credible – the research design, the data, whether it has been replicated in more than one setting. Be precise about **which outcome** each finding concerns: test scores, discipline, attendance, and educational attainment are not interchangeable, and the evidence is not equally strong across them. (200–250 words)
5. **What don’t we know?** Identify at least two important open questions. These might concern mechanisms (*why* does the effect happen?), generalizability (which students, which subjects, which states, which decade?), magnitude, scale (would the effect survive if the policy were adopted everywhere?), or outcomes no one has measured yet. For each, explain briefly why the existing research design cannot answer it. (200–250 words)

Part 3: From Evidence to Action

6. **What research would you like to see?** Propose one study that would move this literature forward. Specify:

- (a) the question it answers;
- (b) the data you would need, and whether such data plausibly exist or could be collected;
- (c) how you would identify a causal effect – or, if you are proposing a descriptive study, why description is the right goal here;
- (d) what we would learn that we do not already know.

Be realistic. A study that requires randomly assigning children to teachers by race for a decade is not a proposal. *(200–250 words)*

7. **What policies would you pursue?** You are advising a mid-sized district. Its student body is 70 percent students of color; its teaching force is 80 percent white. The superintendent has read one news article about this research and wants to know what to do.

Recommend **two** concrete actions. For each one, address:

- (a) what the evidence you reviewed actually supports, and what it does not;
- (b) what would have to be true – about the district, the labor market, or the mechanism – for the action to work;
- (c) what you would measure to know, within three years, whether it worked.

At least one of your recommendations should be something the district could begin within the current school year. *(250–300 words)*