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# The Multilayered Effects of Racism on Early Educators in California

## An Examination of Disparities in Wages, Leadership Roles, and Education

By Yoonjeon Kim, Lea J.E. Austin, and Hopeton Hess

*This report was generously supported through grants from the Heising-Simons Foundation, Blue Shield of California Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.*

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The views presented herein are those of the authors and may not reflect the views of the report's funders or those acknowledged for lending their expertise or providing input.

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### About CSCCE

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), founded in 1999, is the national leader in early care and education workforce research and policy. CSCCE provides research and analysis on the preparation, working conditions, and compensation of the early care and education workforce. We develop policy solutions and create spaces for teaching, learning, and educator activism. Our vision is an effective public early care and education system that secures racial, gender, and economic justice for the women whose labor is the linchpin of stable, quality services.

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# Main Findings

In late 2020, through the [California Early Care and Education Workforce Study](#), the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) surveyed approximately 2,000 center administrators, 3,000 home-based family child care (FCC) providers, and 2,500 center-based teaching staff members (see **Appendix 1** for more details on data and measures). A summary of our key findings follows.

## Inequitable Racial and Ethnic Representation Across Provider Types and Job Roles

- While Black educators make up about 8 percent of the overall ECE workforce, they represent a much higher proportion of FCC providers (13 percent), who are more likely to face resource shortages than center-based programs.
- White educators are overrepresented in director roles: they hold more than one half (54 percent) of these leadership positions, yet only make up about one third (35 percent) of the overall ECE workforce.
- Regardless of race and ethnicity, 71 percent of center-based teaching staff work in lead teacher roles. When examined by racial and ethnic groups, White teaching staff are the most likely and Latina teaching staff the least likely to hold a lead teacher position (81 percent and 64 percent, respectively).

## Racial and Ethnic Wage Gaps

- While the ECE workforce as a whole is poorly paid, racial and ethnic wage gaps disproportionately harm Black and Latina educators.
- In terms of median annual earnings, Latina directors are paid \$7,700 less and Black directors \$3,600 less than Asian or White directors.
- Among lead teachers, median hourly wages are highest among Asian educators (\$20.90), followed by White, Latina, and Black educators (\$19.50, \$19.00, and \$18.00, respectively).

## Educational Attainment and Inequitable Racial and Ethnic Representation in Job Roles

- White educators do not hold higher levels of educational attainment compared to early educators from other racial and ethnic groups, yet they tend to be overrepresented in leadership roles.
- Across nearly every job role, Asian and Black educators are more likely than other groups in the same position to hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Latina educators are the least likely among all racial and ethnic groups to hold a bachelor's degree, perhaps reflecting structural barriers and lack of support in the higher education system for this population.

## Educational Attainment and Racial and Ethnic Wage Gaps

- Black directors are more likely than White directors to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (82 percent and 72 percent, respectively), but they are paid lower wages than White directors (\$27.00 and \$28.70, respectively).
- Black educators in lead teacher roles are just as likely as White lead teachers and more likely than Latina lead teachers to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (56 percent, 55 percent, and 48 percent, respectively), yet Black lead teachers are paid the lowest hourly wages.
- When comparing median wages among educators with a bachelor's degree or higher (i.e., controlling for education), White educators are consistently paid higher wages than early educators from other racial and ethnic groups.
- Education pay premiums are not applied equitably across racial and ethnic groups: Black lead teachers are not rewarded with pay increases for obtaining higher educational degrees; and Asian lead teachers and directors are “punished” with lower pay for holding a higher degree.

The persistent low pay and the disparities that exist in the treatment and experiences of educators are a reflection of multiple forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, and classism. This oppression has been systemized and codified by policy and resource decisions, from slavery to the present day (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2022a, 2022b; Lloyd et al., 2021).

# I. Introduction

One of the greatest strengths of the early care and education (ECE) field is its diverse workforce. In California, women of color make up about two thirds (65 percent) of the ECE workforce, largely mirroring the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the children and families they serve. Despite the crucial role early educators play in young children’s development, the field has always struggled with poor compensation and inadequate support (McLean et al., 2021). The persistent undervaluation of the ECE sector and the labor provided by the nearly all-female workforce can be traced back to its racist roots, when enslaved Black women were forced to care for White children (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2022a; Lloyd et al., 2021).

In this paper, we show how racism continues to affect the ECE workforce. Racial disparities take many forms, from inequities in racial and ethnic representation across provider types and job roles to disparities in compensation. Black and Latina<sup>1</sup> educators, for example, routinely experience lower wages than their peers. Asian and Black educators tend to hold higher levels of educational degrees compared to other groups, but their credentials do not necessarily lead to job advancement or higher pay. Even in a state like California, where the majority of early educators are women of color, systems and policies are undermining their success.

Systemic racism is most often understood as a form of racism that is “pervasively and deeply embedded in systems, laws, written or unwritten policies, and entrenched practices and beliefs that produce, condone, and perpetuate widespread unfair treatment and oppression of people of color” (Braveman et al., 2022, p. 171). Yet, systemic racism also fosters an absence of systems or processes that provide recourse for discrimination or protection from inequities. For example, there is evidence of racial wage gaps driven by public funding and policy (Austin et al., 2019; Montoya et al., 2022; Ullrich et al., 2016; Whitebook et al., 2006), but no entity or agency has a directive to monitor and correct this inequity.

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<sup>1</sup> Because the early care and education workforce is overwhelmingly composed of individuals who identify as women, we use the gender-specific term “Latina” to describe members of the ECE workforce who identify as part of the Latin American diaspora. However, we know that data collection has not always accounted for gender diversity beyond a male/female binary. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of early educators who identify as men, nonbinary, or another gender identity and recognize that the gendered oppression of women in the ECE workforce is related to the gender-based oppression of nonbinary, trans, and genderqueer educators.

A transformed system could begin to repair the current injustices.

- For example, **if early care and education were treated as a public good, programs would be funded to reflect the true cost of care.** Public preschool and infant and toddler teachers would then be paid similarly.
- **A salary scale driven by a combination of years of experience and education** would reduce the vast pay gaps, especially between Black educators and their peers of other races and ethnicities with similar education and experience.
- **Professional pathway programs and mentorship initiatives could be designed specifically to expand access to leadership roles for underrepresented communities.** Efforts like apprenticeships, degree-completion programs, and fellowships have proven incredibly successful (Copeman Petig et al., 2019; Kipnis et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2023). However, such opportunities are not built into ECE systems, but are often pilots, demonstration projects, or very limited in reach (Malone et al., 2021).
- **Data to pinpoint disparities could track how or if they are reduced over time.** North Carolina, for example, routinely funds robust data collection, but it is unclear if and how identified disparities are acted on (Child Care Services Association, 2020).

## II. Inequitable Racial and Ethnic Representation Within the ECE System

### Racial and Ethnic Representation Across Provider Types and Job Roles

The ECE workforce is predominantly women, often women of color, but educators from the various racial and ethnic backgrounds are not represented equitably across job roles relative to their population within the workforce. Black educators are overrepresented among FCC providers, and in center director positions, Latina educators are underrepresented and White educators overrepresented.

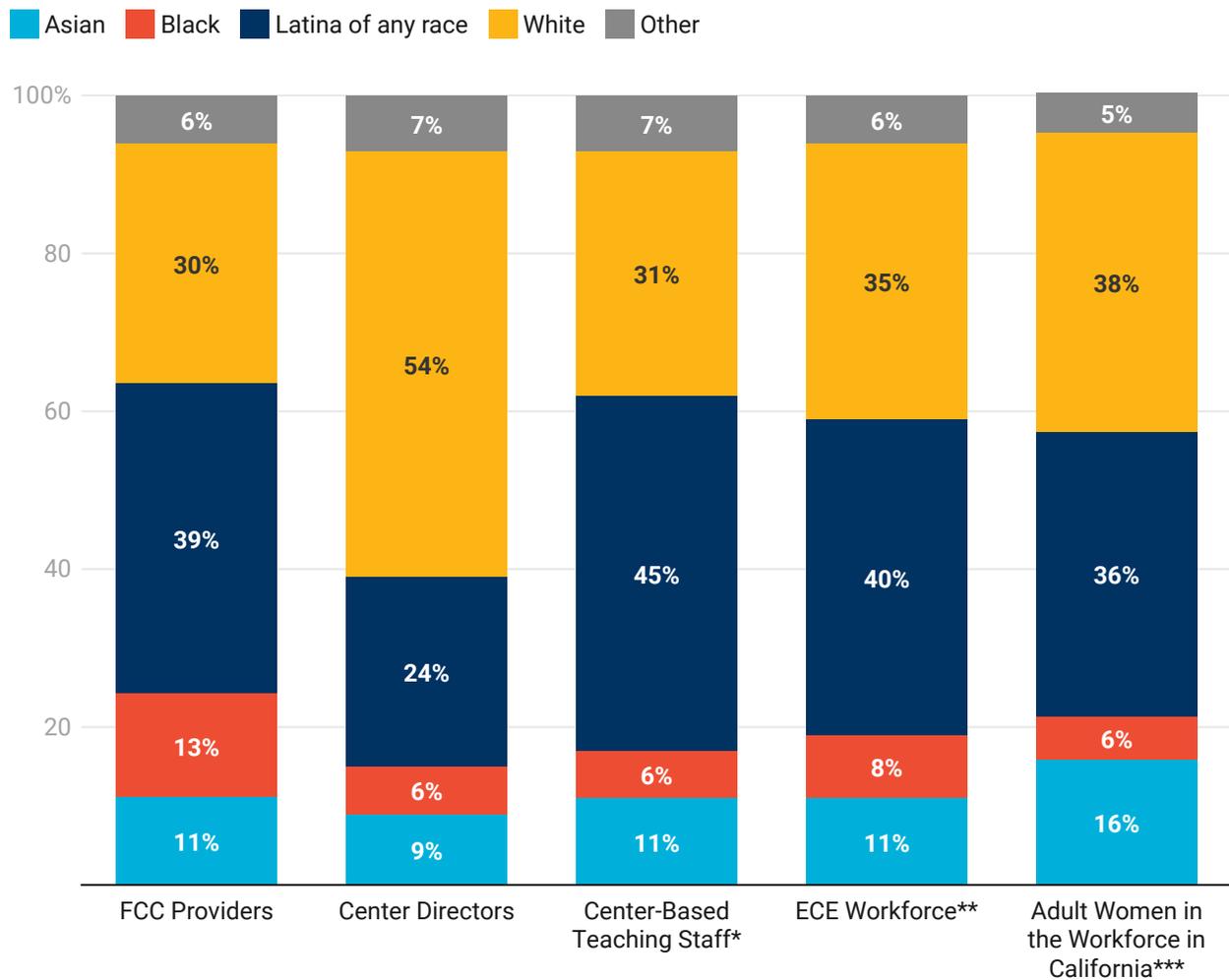
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**Black educators are overrepresented among FCC providers, and in director positions, Latina educators are underrepresented and White educators overrepresented.**

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**Figure 1** shows that Latina educators represent the largest portion of the overall ECE workforce (40 percent), but only make up about 24 percent of center directors. While Black educators comprise about 8 percent of the overall ECE workforce, approximately 13 percent of FCC providers self identified as Black. On the contrary, White educators make up about 35 percent of the overall ECE workforce, but hold 54 percent of center director positions.

**FIGURE 1. RACE AND ETHNICITY OF EARLY EDUCATORS, BY JOB ROLE**



FCC Providers N=1,986

Directors N=1,218

\* The racial and ethnic breakdown was based on the weighted total estimate of center-based teaching staff derived from directors' reports on the number of their staff in each of the racial and ethnic categories (N=83,800).

\*\* Total numbers of centers (N=9,500) and FCC providers (N=24,700) from the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (2019) and California Department of Social Services (2019) and the weighted total estimate of center-based teaching staff based on directors' reports (N=83,800) were pooled to derive the estimated size of ECE workforce.

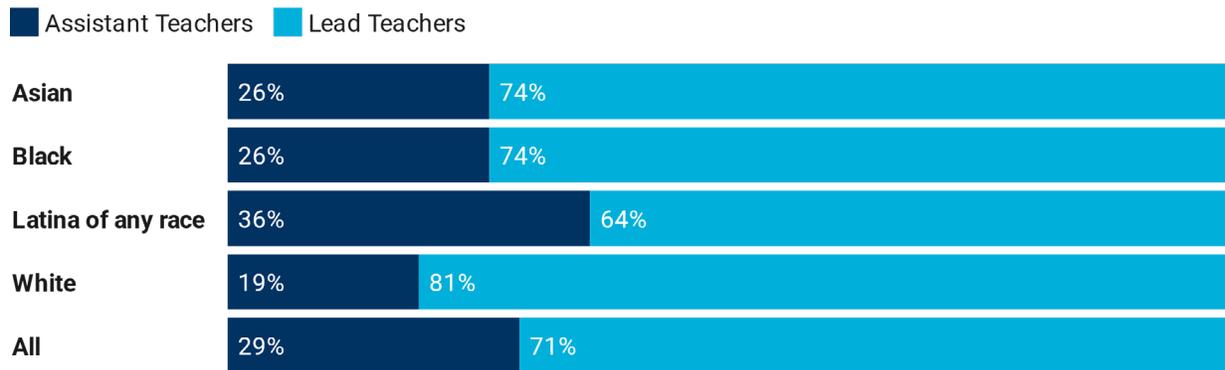
\*\*\* American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2016-2020) were used to derive the racial and ethnic breakdown of adult women in the workforce in California.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

A similar pattern of racial and ethnic representation is observed when looking at job roles of center-based teaching staff. Regardless of race and ethnicity, about 29 percent of center-based teaching staff serve in assistant roles, and about 71 percent are in lead teacher roles (see “All” at the bottom of **Figure 2**).

**When examined by racial and ethnic groups, White teaching staff are the most likely and Latina teaching staff the least likely to hold a lead teacher position (81 percent and 64 percent, respectively).**

**FIGURE 2. JOB ROLE OF CENTER-BASED TEACHING STAFF, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**



Asian N=195

Black N=100

Latina of any race N=941

White N=571

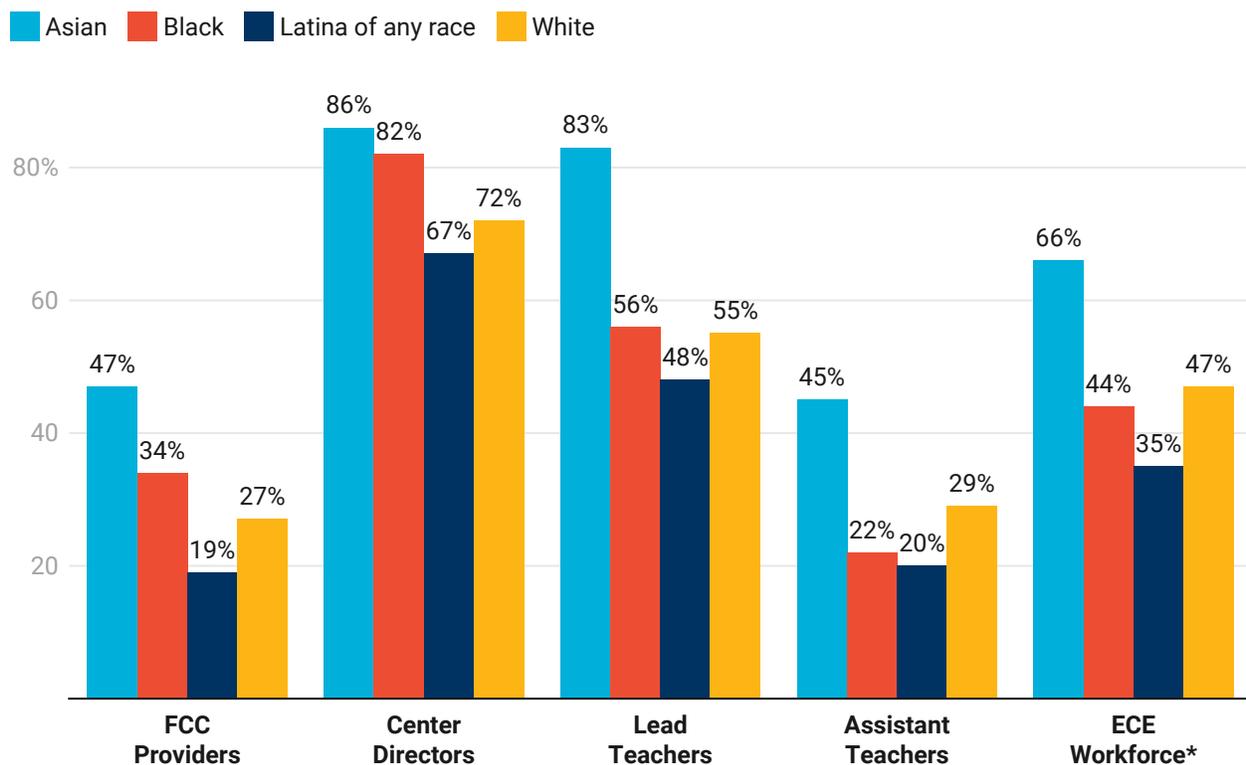
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

## Educational Attainment Across Race and Ethnicity

There is a longstanding misconception that the ECE workforce is insufficiently prepared or underqualified, even though data have consistently shown otherwise (Datta & Zapata-Gietl, 2023; Kim et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2021). Nonetheless, education credentials are often cited as explanations for higher pay and job advancement within the ECE sector. For example, one might think that overrepresentation of White educators (and underrepresentation of educators of color) in leadership positions could be due to differences in educational attainment across racial and ethnic groups. This assumption reflects biases about who is capable of participation in higher education and the belief that systems reward individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds equitably. Our findings show this is not the case.

Among all early educators, regardless of provider type, Asian educators were the most likely to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher (66 percent), followed by White educators and Black educators (47 percent and 44 percent, respectively). Latina educators were the least likely to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher (35 percent) (see the group of bars labeled “ECE Workforce” in **Figure 3**). White educators are not necessarily more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, yet they are most likely to serve in leadership roles.

**FIGURE 3. EARLY EDUCATORS WITH A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER, BY PROVIDER TYPE AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**



FCC Providers N=1,864

Directors N=1,135

Lead Teachers N=1,242

Assistant Teachers N=565

\* The estimates for the overall ECE workforce across racial and ethnic groups and the number of educators with a bachelor’s degree or higher were derived from pooling multiple data sources. For workforce size estimates of racial and ethnic groups, survey responses from center directors and FCC providers and weighted total estimates of directors’ reports of their staff were used. The estimated number of educators with a bachelor’s degree or higher were derived using self-reported educational attainment information and the estimated workforce size across job roles and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

When we look more closely at education levels by job role, in nearly every role, Asian and Black educators are more likely to hold higher educational degrees than their counterparts in the same position (see the first four groups of bars in **Figure 3**, above). For example, Asian and Black center directors are more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or higher than White directors (86 percent, 82 percent, and 72 percent, respectively).

Asian and Black educators were also more likely to hold a graduate degree than their White counterparts. For example, 42 percent of Asian directors and 45 percent of Black directors held a graduate degree, but only 31 percent of White directors were similarly educated. Among center-based staff, 20 percent of Asian lead teachers and 17 percent of Black lead teachers held a graduate degree, compared to 12 percent of White lead teachers. And in the case of FCC providers, 13 percent of Asian educators and 12 percent of Black educators held a graduate degree, compared to only 6 percent of White FCC providers.

These findings are in line with studies of racial disparities in the labor market showing that people of color and immigrants often need to have higher educational credentials than White people to achieve the same job prospects (Gaddis, 2015; Lu & Li, 2021). Racial stereotypes likewise cause employers to devalue the qualifications of people of color and hire people of color more reluctantly than their White counterparts with identical skills and experience in ECE settings (Boyd-Swan & Herbst, 2019) or in other sectors (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Pager et al., 2009).

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### Asian and Black educators are more likely to hold higher educational degrees than their counterparts in the same position.

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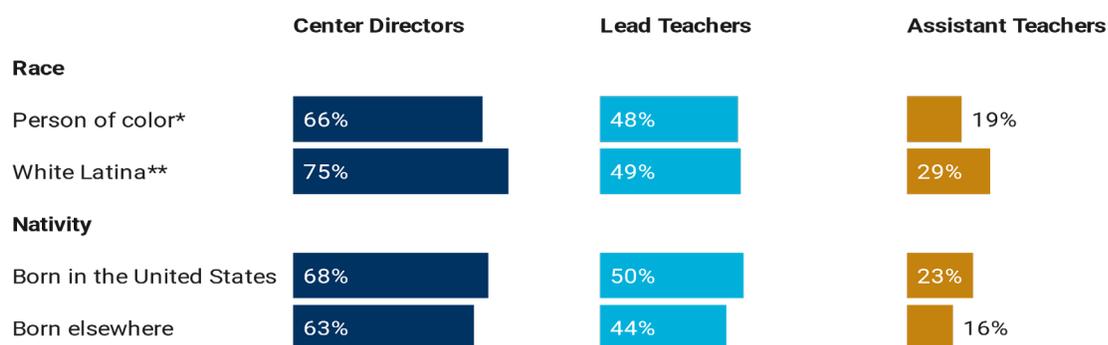
Consistent with the statewide educational attainment pattern in California (U.S. Census, 2021), Latina educators in our sample held lower levels of educational attainment than early educators from other racial and ethnic groups. This finding may reflect structural barriers and lack of support endured by the overall Latine<sup>2</sup> population in the higher education system (Teranishi et al., 2004). Our data indicate that Latina educators face different levels of barriers based on their racial identification (as a person of color or White) and nativity (**Figure 4**).

Latina educators who identified as White were more likely to hold a bachelor’s or higher degree than those who identified as a person of color. For example, 75 percent of White Latina directors held a bachelor’s degree or higher, while 66 percent of Latina directors of color held comparable degrees. In addition, Latinas who were born in the United States were more likely to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher than those who were born in another country, especially among center-based educators. The pattern indicates that among Latina educators, certain subgroups face more discrimination and barriers than others. Policies can repair racial injustices only when there is an understanding of how the existing system harms various groups and subgroups.

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<sup>2</sup> CSCCE uses the gender-neutral term “Latine” to refer to people who are from a Latin American or Caribbean country that speaks a Latin-based language (e.g., Spanish, Portuguese), whether they were born in that country or are part of the Latine diaspora. Because the term refers to cultural heritage and not race, Latine individuals may identify as people of color or as White. Earlier publications may have referred to this population using the terms “Hispanic” or “Latino.”

**FIGURE 4. LATINA EDUCATORS WITH A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER, BY RACE AND NATIVITY**



Directors N=293

Lead Teachers N=569

Assistant Teachers N=372

\* Person of color includes Latina educators who have selected race categories other than White or those who have only selected the Hispanic, Latina/o, or Latinx category.

\*\* White Latina includes Latina educators who have selected the White AND Hispanic, Latina/o, or Latinx categories. Small sample size for White Latina group (n<50), interpret with caution.

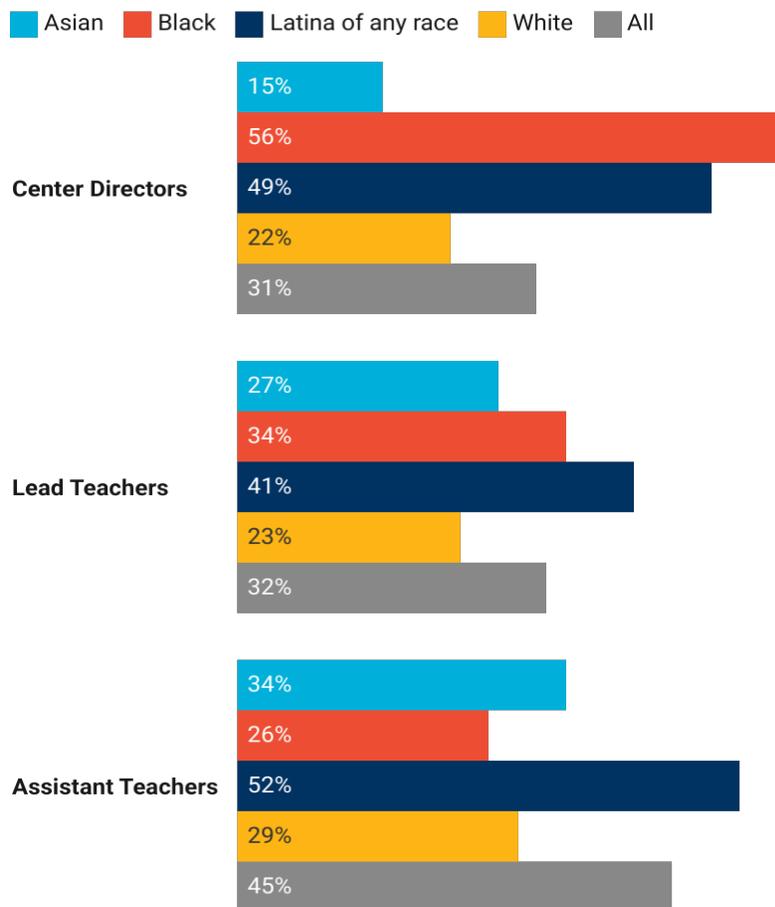
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

## Racial and Ethnic Representation Across Center Funding Type

Among center-based programs, those with contract-based funding (like Head Start or Title 5 programs) are more likely to have stable, predictable, and timely funding, compared to programs operating with portable vouchers or without public funding (Giapponi Schneider et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022). Perhaps due to their financial stability, centers with contract-based funding are more likely to pay higher wages and provide benefits like health insurance or retirement savings, compared to centers without contracts (Montoya et al., 2022; Whitebook et al., 2006).

About one third of center directors and lead teachers and nearly one half of all assistant teachers are employed in contract-based centers like Head Start or Title 5 programs (31 percent, 32 percent, and 45 percent, respectively). These overall employment patterns are illustrated by the gray bars in **Figure 5**, below. Yet, as the colored bars in this same figure show, there is not an equitable representation of racial and ethnic groups in these programs. Higher proportions of Black and Latina directors serve as directors in contract-based centers (56 percent and 49 percent, respectively), compared to their Asian and White counterparts (15 percent and 22 percent, respectively). We see a similar pattern among lead teachers, although the margins are smaller (see **Figure 5**). Among assistant teachers, higher proportions of Asian and Latina educators serve in contract-based centers (34 percent and 52 percent, respectively), compared to their Black and White counterparts (26 percent and 29 percent, respectively).

**FIGURE 5. EARLY EDUCATORS EMPLOYED IN HEAD START OR TITLE 5 CENTERS**



Directors N=1,135

Lead Teachers N=1,242

Assistant Teachers N=565

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Overrepresentation of educators of color in contract-based programs may be related to the geographical locations of these public ECE programs. Because key goals of both Head Start and state public preschools include serving children experiencing poverty and providing their families with comprehensive services (in the case of Head Start), these programs tend to have a greater presence in communities that are historically underresourced (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2016). Head Start also has a tradition of supporting women of color, which includes targeted recruitment of new early educators among the parents of the children served in their programs (Zigler et al., 1993). Contract-based centers are more likely than other centers to employ educators of color and promote them to leadership roles, reflecting the community contexts and programmatic approaches to staffing.

### III. Racial and Ethnic Wage Gaps

In the following section, we focus on workers within center-based programs to examine racial and ethnic disparities in wages. FCC providers are not exempt from racial pay gaps, but as self-employed workers and small business owners, the available data on their wages is quite different from the data on center-based employees. Indeed, the authors of this paper and our colleagues have explored some of these concerns in other California ECE Workforce Study publications related to the economic conditions and well-being of FCC providers (e.g., Montoya et al., 2022; Muruvi et al., 2023). While we recognize the need for further analysis of racial disparities in this sector, a close analysis of the wage gaps in family child care related to race and ethnicity lies beyond the scope of this report.

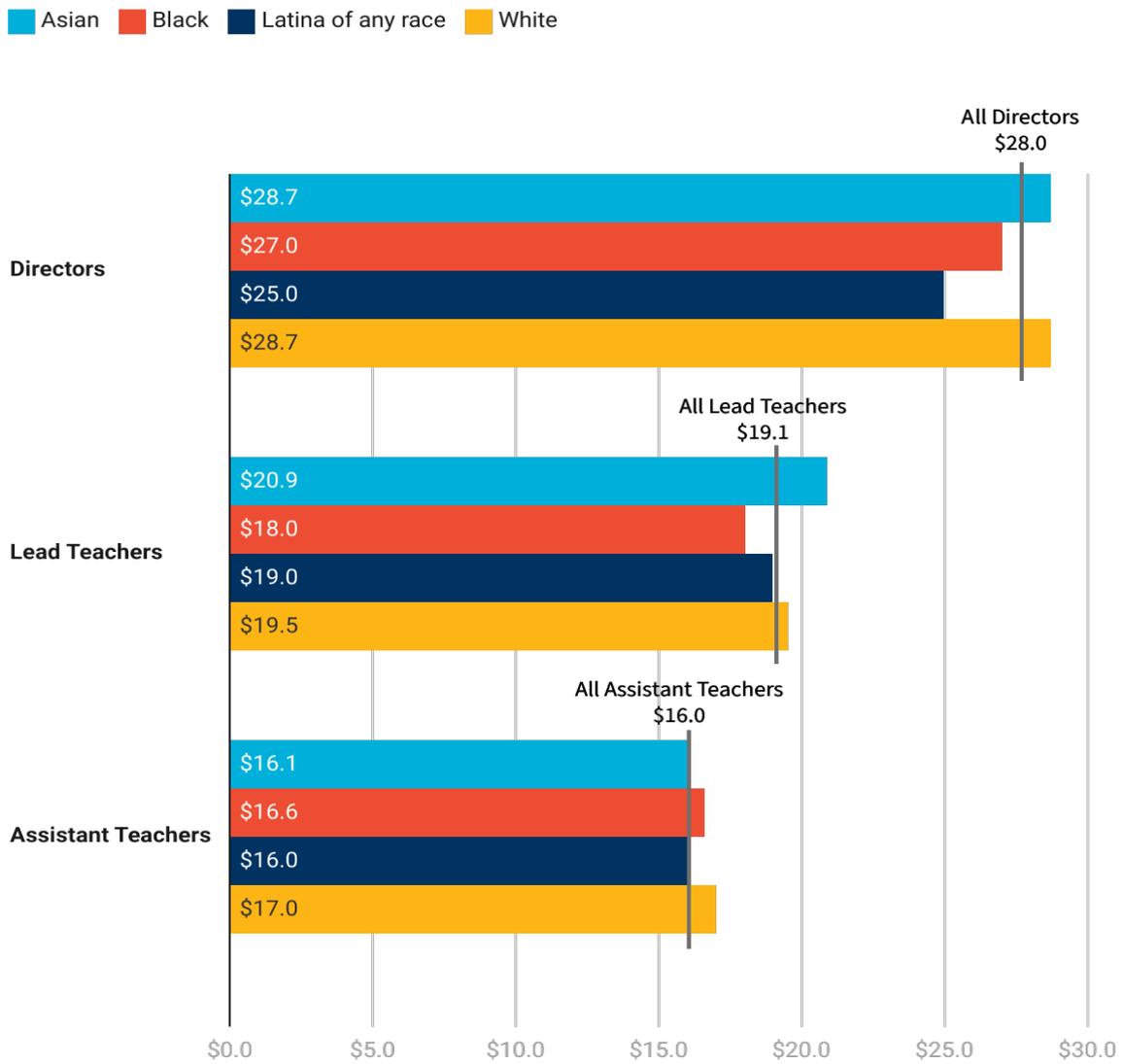
While the overall ECE workforce struggles with chronically low wages (McLean et al., 2021; Montoya et al., 2022), Black and Latina educators are consistently paid less than Asian or White educators across job roles (**Figure 6**). Among center directors, for example, Asian and White directors were paid a median hourly wage of \$28.70, while Black and Latina directors were paid \$27.00 and \$25.00 per hour, respectively. In other words, Latina directors make 87 cents and Black directors 94 cents for every dollar earned by White or Asian directors. In terms of annual earnings, these wage gaps translate to \$7,700 less per year for Latina directors and \$3,600 less per year for Black directors, when compared to Asian or White directors.

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**In terms of annual earnings, these wage gaps translate to \$7,700 less per year for Latina directors and \$3,600 less per year for Black directors, when compared to Asian or White directors.**

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**FIGURE 6. MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES OF CENTER-BASED EARLY EDUCATORS, BY JOB ROLE AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**



Directors N=761

Lead Teachers N=887

Assistant Teachers N=382

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Among lead teachers, median hourly wages were highest for Asian educators (\$20.90), followed by White (\$19.50), Latina (\$19.00), and Black educators (\$18.00). In other words, Black lead teachers make 86 cents, Latina educators make 91 cents, and White educators make 94 cents for every dollar paid to Asian lead teachers. Annualized racial wage gaps are \$2,800 less for White lead teachers, \$3,900 less for Latina lead teachers, and more than \$6,000 less for Black lead teachers, when compared to their Asian counterparts.

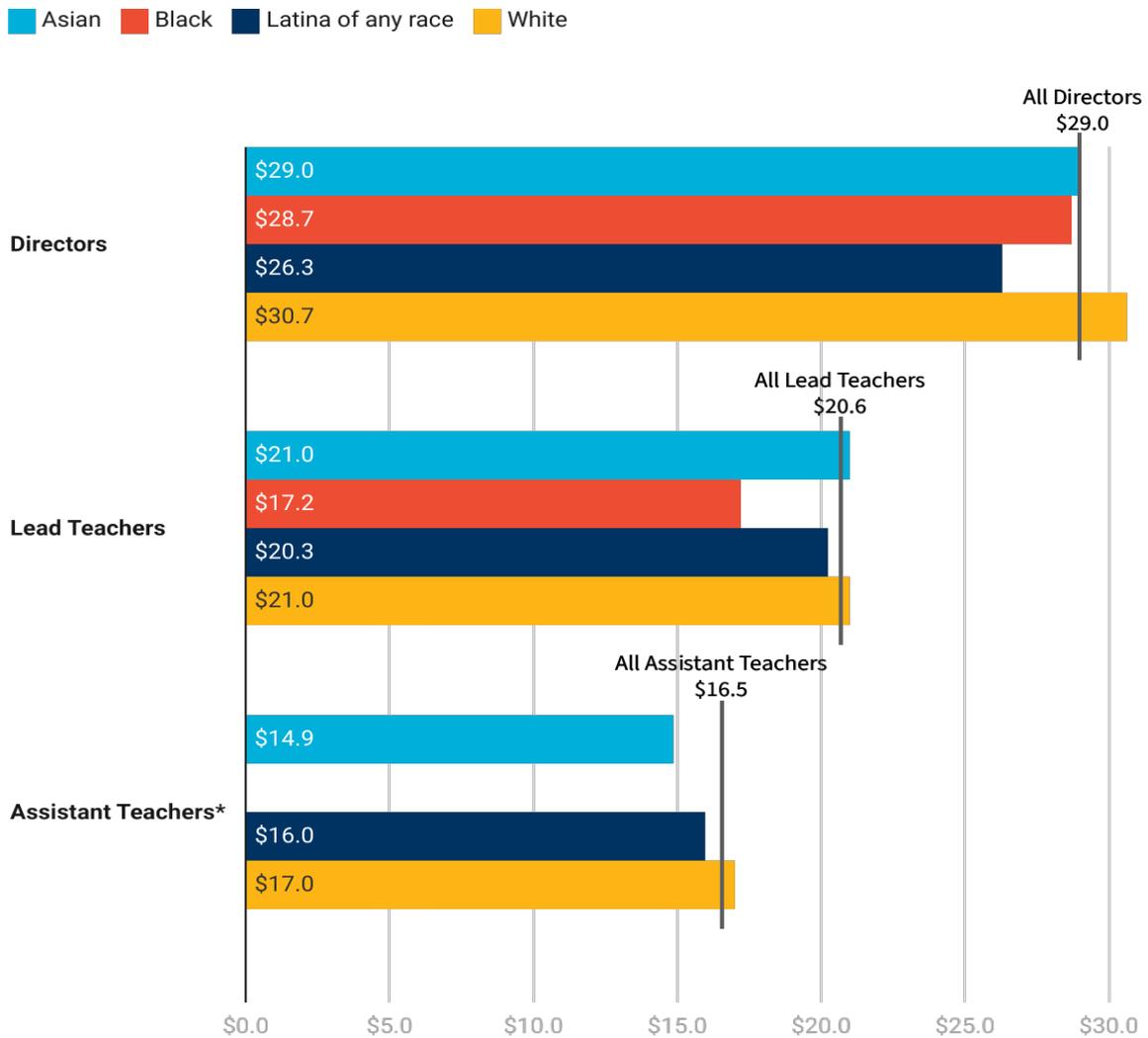
The racial wage gaps among assistant teachers were somewhat narrower than those observed in lead teacher or director positions. For every dollar paid to White assistant teachers, Latina assistants are paid 94 cents, Asian assistants 95 cents, and Black assistants 98 cents. Yet, the gaps are significant when viewed as annual wages. For example, Asian and Latina assistant teachers are paid about \$2,000 less per year, when compared to White assistant teachers.

Racial wage gaps reflect differences in educational attainment to some extent, but education is not a consistent factor for all wage differences across job roles and racial and ethnic groups. For example, the overall higher level of education among Asian educators (shown in **Figure 3**, above) may partly explain the higher median hourly wages among Asian lead teachers, yet higher levels of education did not lead to higher wages for Asian educators in director or assistant teacher positions.

For Black educators, college degrees do not result in higher wages. Black educators in lead teacher roles were just as likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher as White lead teachers and more likely than Latina lead teachers (56 percent, 55 percent, and 48 percent, respectively, as shown in **Figure 3**, above). However, Black lead teachers' hourly wages were the lowest among all the racial and ethnic groups. Black directors were even more likely than White directors to hold a bachelor's degree or higher (82 percent, compared to 72 percent) but were paid lower wages than White directors (\$27.00, compared to \$28.70).

In contrast, even though White educators were much less likely to hold a bachelor's degree or higher than Asian educators and less likely or just as likely as Black educators, they were often paid higher wages than Black and Asian educators. When comparing median wages among educators with a bachelor's degree or higher, White educators were consistently paid higher wages than most educators of color (**Figure 7**).

**FIGURE 7. MEDIAN HOURLY WAGES OF CENTER-BASED EARLY EDUCATORS WITH A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER, BY JOB ROLE AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**



Directors N=557

Lead Teachers N=498

Assistant Teachers N=85

\*Median wage for Black assistant teachers not displayed due to small sample size (N<10).

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Location of employment is unlikely to be the cause of these wage gaps. As shown earlier in **Figure 5**, Black and Latina educators are more likely than their White counterparts to work in contract-based centers such as Head Start of Title 5 programs, which are known to pay higher wages than centers without public contracts (Montoya et al., 2022; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2014; Whitebook et al., 2006). Yet even when Black and Latina educators tend to be overrepresented in centers with public contracts, their overall wages lag behind those of White educators. In other words, the wage gaps between Black or Latina and White educators would be even wider, if there were not an overrepresentation of Black and Latina educators in higher-paying contract-based centers.

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**Wage gaps between Black or Latina and White educators would be even wider, if there were not an overrepresentation of Black and Latina educators in higher-paying contract-based centers.**

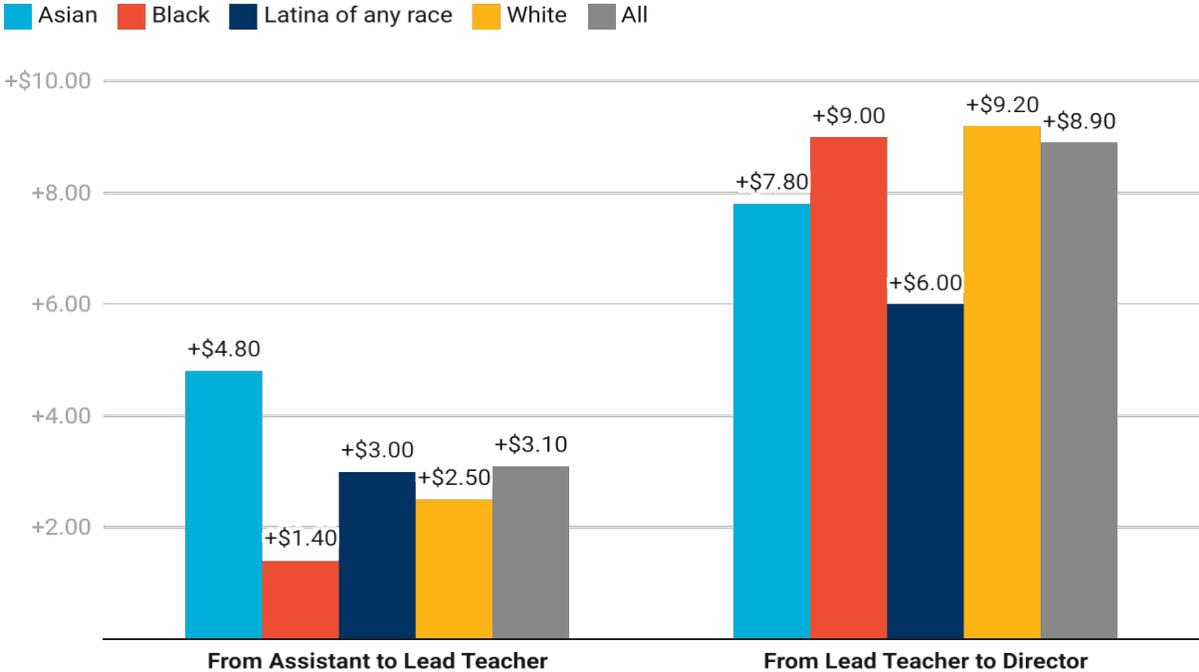
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## Racial Inequities in Wage Progression With Job Role Advancement

Early educators experience a wage bump with job role advancement, whether they move from an assistant teacher to a lead teacher or a lead teacher to a director position. Overall, wage increases are larger when moving from a lead teacher to a director position (+\$8.90) than when moving from an assistant teacher to a lead teacher role (+\$3.10) (shown as gray bars in **Figure 8**).

Nonetheless, wage progression varies by the educator's race and ethnicity. Wage bumps for advancing from a lead teacher to a director position were largest for White educators (+\$9.20) and Black educators (+\$9.00), followed by Asian educators (+\$7.80). The increase for moving from a lead teacher to a director position was substantially smaller among Latina educators (+\$6.00). Wage bumps for advancing from an assistant teacher to a lead teacher were largest for Asian educators (+\$4.80), followed by Latina educators (+\$3.00) and White educators (+\$2.50). The increase in pay moving from assistant teacher to lead teacher was smallest for Black educators (+\$1.40).

**FIGURE 8. CHANGES IN WAGE WITH JOB ROLE ADVANCEMENT AMONG CENTER-BASED EARLY EDUCATORS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**



Directors N=761  
 Lead Teachers N=887  
 Assistant Teachers N=382  
 Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

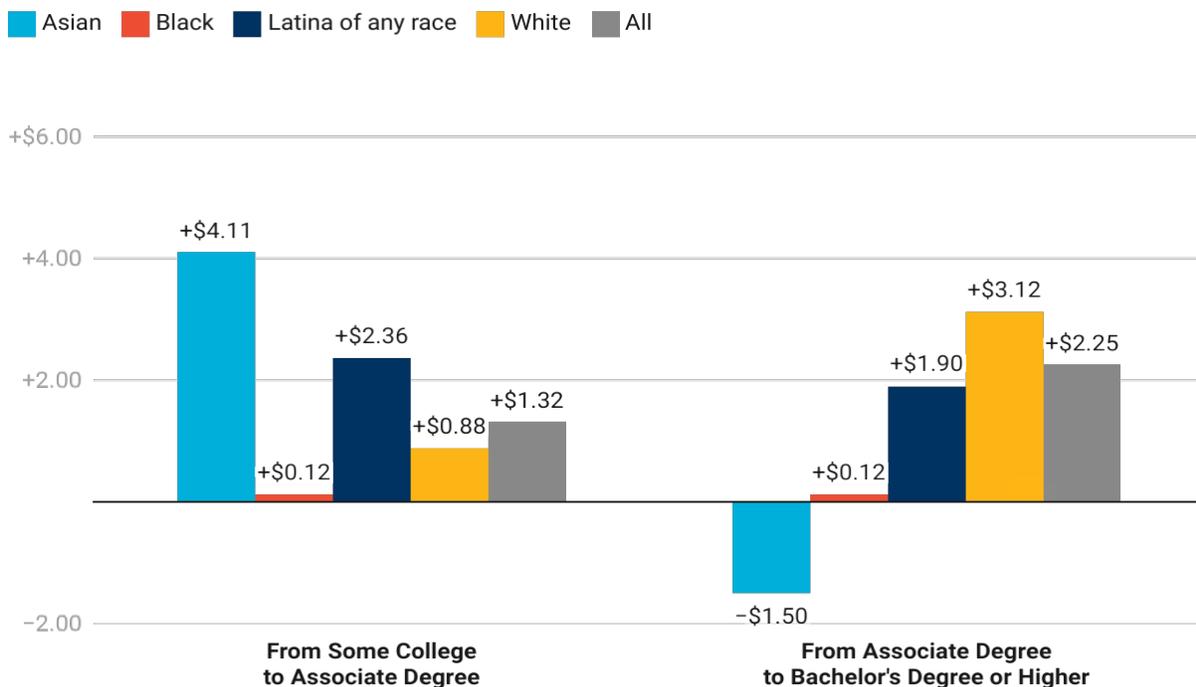
## Racial Inequities in Education Pay Premiums

Just as wage increases are expected with job advancement, further education is also typically associated with higher levels of pay (Hout, 2012; Montoya et al., 2022; Whitebook et al., 2018). This expectation holds even within the ECE sector where, notably, a degree in Early Childhood Education has the lowest return on education investment (Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 2023). Nonetheless, the premium for further education is not equitably applied across the various racial and ethnic groups within the ECE workforce.

Among lead teachers, for example, while Latina and White educators experience an overall increase in wages with educational advancement from no degree to a bachelor’s degree or higher (+\$4.30 and +\$4.00, respectively), Black educators see almost no education pay premium (+\$0.20). Asian educators experience a nonlinear change in wages: an increase of wages when advancing from some college to an associate degree (+\$4.10) and a decrease in wages when advancing from an associate to a bachelor’s degree or higher (-\$1.50) (**Figure 9**). In other words, education pay premiums do not reward Black lead teachers for obtaining higher educational degrees, and Asian lead teachers are “punished” for holding a higher degree.

**Education pay premiums do not reward Black lead teachers for obtaining higher educational degrees, and Asian lead teachers are “punished” for holding a higher degree.**

**FIGURE 9. EDUCATION PAY PREMIUMS AMONG CENTER-BASED LEAD TEACHERS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**

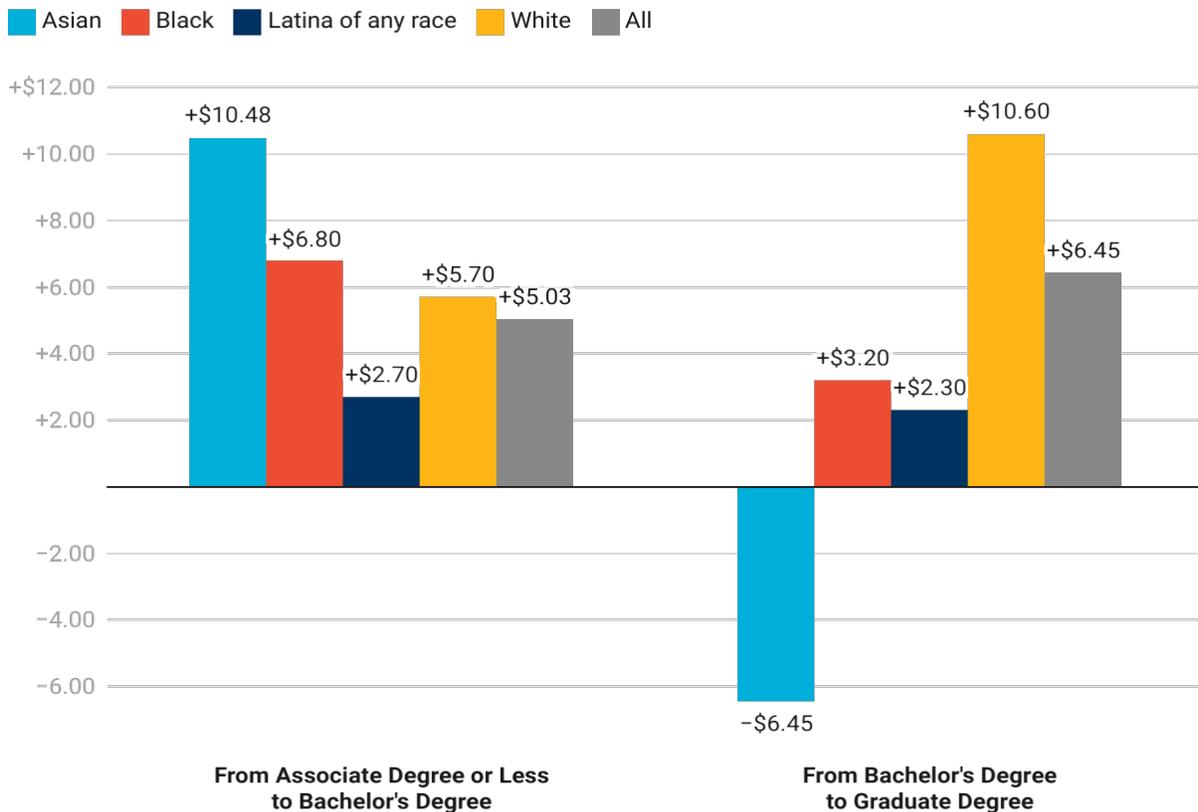


Lead Teachers N=887

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

Among center directors, White directors see the greatest pay premium for higher levels of education (**Figure 10**). The difference between wages for directors with bachelor’s degrees and those with graduate degrees is about \$10.60 per hour for White directors. In contrast, the pay premiums are only \$3.20 per hour for Black directors and \$2.30 per hour for Latina directors who have advanced degrees. Asian directors with graduate degrees are paid \$6.5 per hour *less* than Asian directors with bachelor’s degrees. Like Asian lead teachers, Asian directors are “punished” for having higher levels of educational credentials.

**FIGURE 10. EDUCATION PAY PREMIUMS AMONG CENTER DIRECTORS, BY RACE AND ETHNICITY**



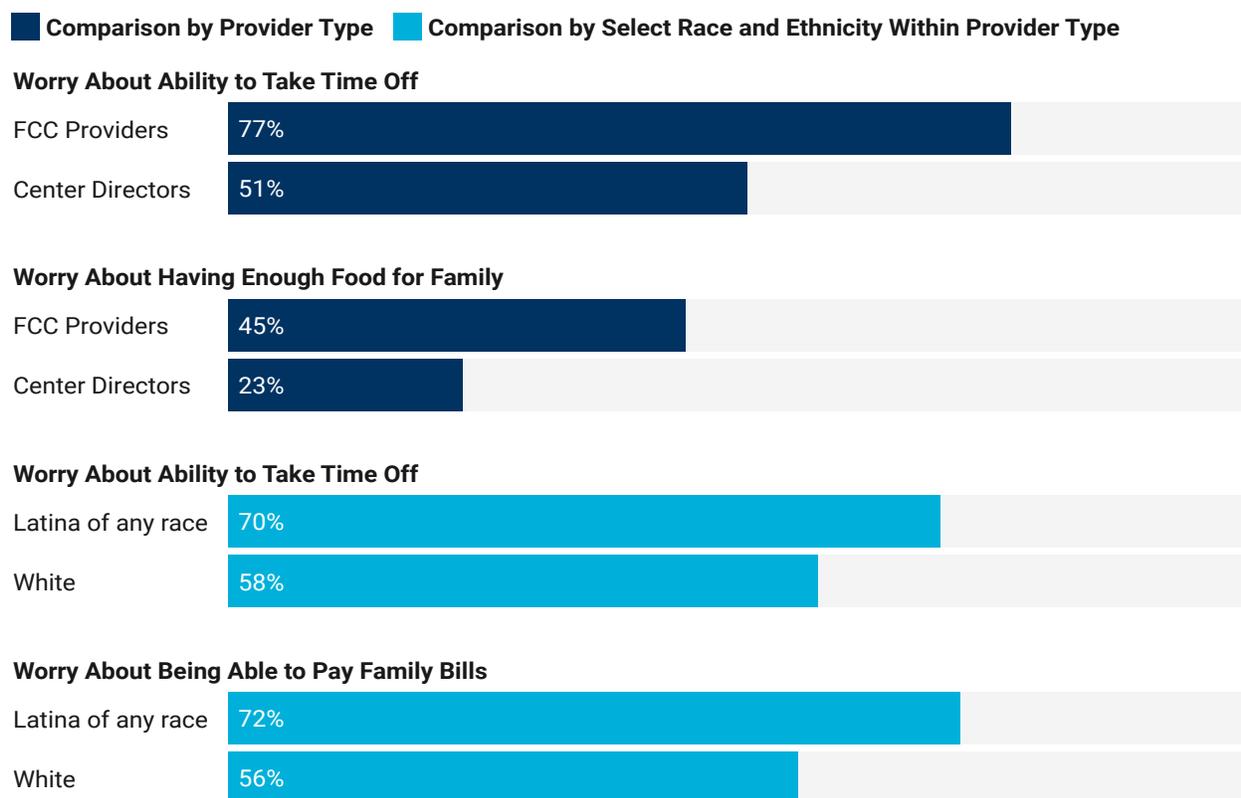
Directors N=761

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

# IV. Racial Disparities and Economic Well-Being

The racial and ethnic disparities in job positions and wages observed in the previous sections mean that the economic toll may weigh more heavily on certain groups. Overall, FCC providers are the most likely and center directors the least likely to report economic worries (see the top panels of **Figure 11**). For example, close to one half (45 percent) of FCC providers were worried about having enough food for their families, while about one fifth (23 percent) of center directors responded similarly. This pattern has direct implications for racial and ethnic equity since Black educators tend to be overrepresented among FCC providers and White educators overrepresented in director positions.

**FIGURE 11. EARLY EDUCATORS’ ECONOMIC WORRIES, BY PROVIDER TYPE AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**



FCC Providers N=1,522-1,768

Directors N=931-1,087

Latina Lead Teachers N=537-545

White Lead Teachers N=432-435

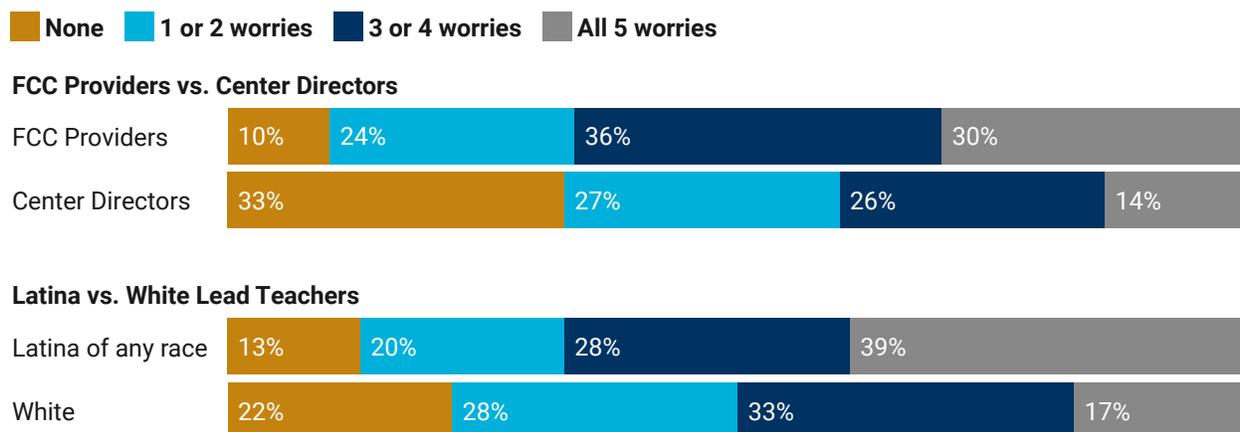
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

When comparing across racial and ethnic groups within job positions, educators of color (especially Black and Latina educators) were more likely to report economic worries than their White counterparts. Among lead teachers, for example, 72 percent of Latina teachers worried about paying family bills, while about 56 percent of White teachers gave the same response (see the bottom panels of **Figure 11**). See **Appendix 2.1** for the full figure, with data on all economic worry items analyzed by educators’ job role and race and ethnicity.

**Overall, FCC providers are the most likely and center directors the least likely to report economic worries, compared with other provider types. This pattern has direct implications for racial and ethnic equity since Black educators tend to be overrepresented among FCC providers and White educators overrepresented in director positions.**

Consistent with the variation across job roles seen above, center directors were the least likely of all early educators to experience multiple economic stressors (see the top panel of **Figure 12**). To identify the degree of multiple or compounded economic worries faced by early educators, we counted the number of items selected from a five-item list: worry about the ability to take time off; worry about paying family monthly bills; worry about paying healthcare costs; worry about having enough food; and worry about paying housing costs. For example, FCC providers were more than twice as likely to report that they experience all five economic worries, compared to center directors (30 percent and 14 percent, respectively).

**FIGURE 12. EDUCATORS WITH MULTIPLE ECONOMIC WORRIES, BY PROVIDER TYPE AND SELECT RACE AND ETHNICITY**



FCC Providers N=1,781

Center Directors N=1,094

Latina Lead Teachers N=550

White Lead Teachers N=446

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

When comparing racial groups of the same provider type, educators of color were more likely to face multiple economic worries than their White counterparts. For example, Latina lead teachers were more likely to report all five economic worries than White lead teachers (39 percent, compared to 17 percent) and less likely to not select any item (13 percent, compared to 22 percent)(see **Figure 12**, bottom panel). See **Appendix 2.2** for the full figure, with data on multiple economic worries analyzed by educators' job role and race and ethnicity.

## V. Conclusion

The prevailing racial and ethnic inequities within the ECE workforce in California are direct results of ECE policy decisions that reflect the systemic racism embedded in our society as well as racial biases held by individuals. Policy decisions can make a difference by ensuring that the ECE field is sufficiently funded and by addressing and narrowing racial and ethnic disparities in the field.

In the absence of a universally funded public system, programs are dependent on limited amounts of public funding, which perpetuates inequity. Through policies like formal career ladders or salary scales driven by a combination of years of experience and education, systems with adequate funding can help safeguard decision making from the effects of individuals' stereotypes and biases. Without this support, racial and ethnic disparities will continue to persist and widen.

California is actively making policy decisions that could disrupt—or conversely, entrench—racial and ethnic disparities. The [state's current effort](#) to update the reimbursement rate-setting methodology might be a step toward equity (California Department of Social Services, n.d.). In the new methodology, the state can include standards for salary scales that consider education level, tenure, and job role, ensuring that educators receive fair compensation regardless of program type, location of the service, or their racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Another example is the [PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Credential](#) (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, n.d.), which intends to create a robust workforce for teaching pre-kindergarten through third grade, including the state's expanded transitional kindergarten (TK). As of this writing, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing has made policy choices that privilege the current K-12 teacher pipeline (a traditionally White workforce) as well as early educators with greater financial means. It is not too late to [change course](#), eradicating current barriers to higher paying pre-K and TK teaching positions and creating a more equitable professional pathway for early educators, who hold the most experience and training working with four-year-olds (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2023).

We urge those responsible for making, refining, and implementing policies that impact the ECE sector to consider these questions:

- Is achieving equity a goal of the policy? If achieving equity is a goal, how is equity defined? And what are the steps to achieving this goal?
- How are decision-making processes centering the experiences of those most oppressed?
- Who does the policy include—and who is left out?
- Is the group most impacted by a policy included in spaces where the policy is being crafted and decisions are being made?
- Is there a plan in place to continually monitor, assess, and adjust the policy's impact?

State leaders, including policymakers, state and local representatives, and advocates, should use ECE workforce data to build an understanding of who benefits from specific policies and who is being excluded or harmed by these policies. The findings from this report, alongside other [California ECE Workforce Study](#) publications provide an opportunity that can inform current and future ECE policy and resource allocation in California.

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# Appendix 1: About the Data

From October through December 2020, CSCCE surveyed thousands of early educators for the [2020 California Early Care and Education Workforce Study](#) (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2020). We collected information from representative samples of approximately 2,000 center administrators and 3,000 home-based family child care (FCC) providers, as well as non-probability samples of about 2,500 center-based teaching staff members and 280 transitional kindergarten (TK) teachers.

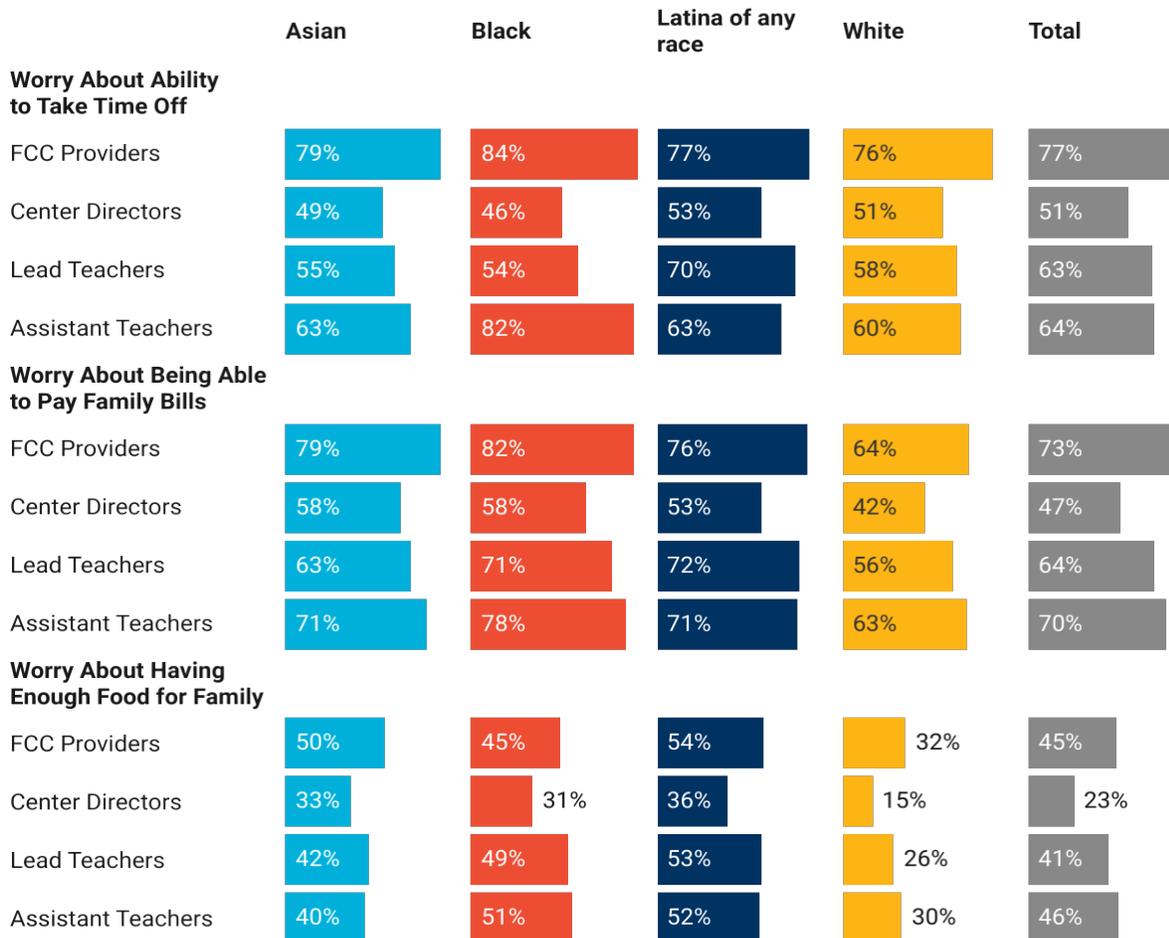
We administered four surveys of approximately 100 questions each, resulting in an extensive data set that includes program characteristics, characteristics of children served, program staffing and workforce demographics (including age, gender, race and ethnicity, education, experience, tenure, and compensation), as well as information on the economic well-being, work environment, and impact of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihood of early educators.

In this report, we examine the pervasiveness of racism in the ECE field—from racial representations across job roles and levels of education, to racial disparities in compensation—using the FCC provider, center director, and center-based teaching staff samples. All analyses are weighted to reflect population-level distributions for region, infant/toddler license, and center funding to adjust for unequal response rates.

Throughout this report, we focus on four provider types: FCC providers, center directors, center-based lead teachers, and center-based assistant teachers or teacher aides. Our analyses in this report focus on four racial and ethnic groups: Asian, Black, and White educators who report being only one race and are not Latina; and Latina educators of any race. In the surveys, we asked respondents to select all that applied among a list of options: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or of African descent; Hispanic, Latino/a, or Latinx; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; White; and Other race, ethnicity, or origin, with the option to write in origins. While we focus on the four largest racial and ethnic groups listed above, results from this report can serve as a starting point for examining the operation of racism in the ECE field with disaggregated data including educators with a broader set of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

# Appendix 2: Educators' Economic Worries, By Job Role and Race and Ethnicity

**FIGURE A2.1. EARLY EDUCATORS' ECONOMIC WORRIES, BY PROVIDER TYPE AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**



FCC Providers N=1,522-1,774

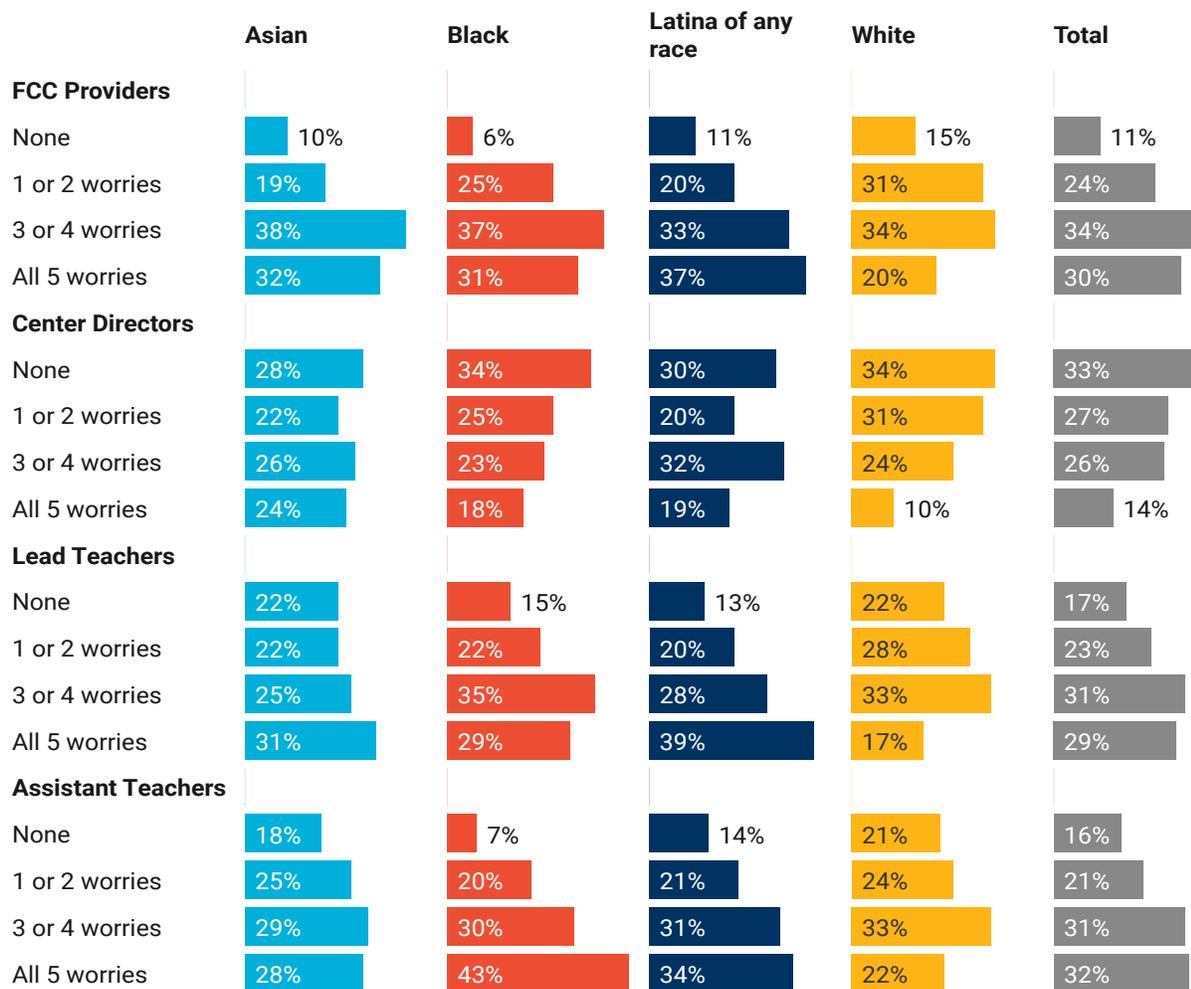
Center Directors N=931-1,087

Lead Teachers N=1,170-1,187

Assistant Teachers N=528-532

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

**FIGURE A2.2. EDUCATORS WITH MULTIPLE ECONOMIC WORRIES, BY PROVIDER TYPE AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**



FCC Providers N=1,781

Directors N=1,094

Lead Teachers N=1,206

Assistant Teachers N=543

Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

# The Multilayered Effects of Racism on Early Educators in California

## An Examination of Disparities in Wages, Leadership Roles, and Education

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