Who Has A Same Race Teacher in Kindergarten? Comparing Students With and Without Disabilities

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Background

- Students of color exceed 50% of the public school population, yet white women make up 68% of the teaching workforce
- 80% of students receiving IDEA services are students of color
- Teachers of color have stronger connections and higher expectations for their same race students, causing students to rise to those expectations
- Teachers of color provide a higher quality of instruction and decrease chronic absenteeism among same race students
- Students with a same-race teacher in kindergarten are more likely to excel academically and socially, increasing their odds of graduating high school and attending college
- Students with disabilities (SWDs) are more likely to be chronically absent than their not disabled peers, and having a same race teacher decreases chronic absenteeism among SWDs
- Students attending schools with many teachers of color are less likely to receive a special education referral or over-receive services

Research Questions

1. Do White, Black, Latinx, or Asian American students have different chances of having a kindergarten teacher of the same race or ethnicity?
2. Do students of various racial and ethnic backgrounds with a disability have different chances of having a teacher of the same race?

Data

Source: ECLS-K:2011
Sample: Nationally representative sample
    N = 15,560 kindergarteners
Outcomes: behavior, absenteeism, referral to and level of disability services
Dependent Variable: whether there was a racial or ethnic match between kindergartener and teacher
Independent variables: child, household, classroom, teacher, school variables

Methods

- Chained multiple imputation was used to create twenty imputed datasets to resemble the distributions of the original variables
- A linear probability model was applied to all students and SWDs to predict whether a student in a particular classroom and school shared the same race as the teacher
- A school fixed effect model was applied to modify the linear probability model to account for unobserved school differences, like a parent choosing to send their child to a school with many same race teachers. This model fixes the school to compare students only within the same school, making it the most robust model

Results

- While 60% of students without disabilities had a same race teacher, only 51% of SWDs had a same race teacher
- Across race and disability, black SWDs are the least likely group to receive a same race teacher
- Low income SWDs are no less likely to receive a same race teacher

Discussion

- In the short-term schools should foster community partnerships and utilize existing school personnel to create same-race mentorship programs
- In the medium-term administrators can lobby state governments for more Title II funding to support differentiated learning opportunities
- In the long-term more same-race teachers should be hired by addressing the traditional pipeline from high school to college to teachers as well as the paraprofessional to teacher pipeline, as paraprofessionals are more representative of a school's community

Thank you!
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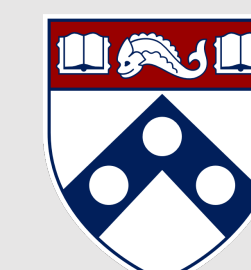
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