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EFP Takeaways

A Classroom Observer Like Me: The Effects of Race-Congruence and Gender-Congruence Between Teachers and Raters on Observation Scores

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The Study

To further understand the challenges of diversifying the teacher pipeline, the author examines how race and gender dynamics influence administrators' subjective assessments of teachers in the context of classroom observations. Specifically, this study considers whether teachers receive higher classroom observation scores as a result of sharing race or gender with their observers, who are typically school-based administrators. On a broad scale, if teachers benefit from being evaluated by observers who share their race or gender, this could place non-White and male teachers at a disadvantage, since both groups are underrepresented in the education sector in the United States.

Findings

Teachers, on average, experience small positive increases in their scores from sharing race or gender with their classroom observers. The magnitudes of these increases are roughly equivalent to 8%-10% of the average gain in observation scores demonstrated by novice teachers after an additional year of teaching. The author also explores whether these benefits can be explained by shared experiences between observers and teachers, such as similar prior teaching assignments, attendance at the same university, or a history of working together at the same school. No evidence found that the race- or gender-match effects are explained by these commonalities.

Implications and Recommendations

The presence of similar race and gender dynamics may disadvantage underrepresented teachers and applicants, who are less likely to be assessed by same-race or same-gender administrators. The dynamics that operate in the context of classroom observations may also play a role in other stages of the teacher pipeline where administrators rely on subjective assessments of teachers to make human resources decisions. Future research could examine how race- and gender-congruence between administrators and teachers impact the assessments of teachers during the processes of hiring applicants, renewing contracts, and making recommendations for promotions to leadership positions.

For more details:

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Chi, O. L. (2023). A Classroom Observer Like Me: The Effects of Race-Congruence and Gender-Congruence between Teachers and Raters on Observation Scores. *Education Finance and Policy*, 18 (3): 442–466.