

Who Believes in Me? The Effect of Student-Teacher Demographic Match on Teacher Expectations

Gershenson et al. (2016 EER)

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Why Do We Care?

- Policy: Demographic mismatch between teachers/students affects teachers' expectations for students' long-run educational attainment.
- Economics: How do conscious/unconscious biases affect the expectations signaled to a student?

Data

- Education Longitudinal Study (ELS) in 2002
- Subjective judgements from math/reading teachers on a student's future educational attainment

Methodology and Research Design

- Two observations per student allow for student fixed effects
- Controls for unobs. student heterogeneity



Contribution

- Causal evidence that demog. mismatch \implies mismatched expectations
- Non-black teachers have lower expectations of black students compared to black teachers.
 - Effect is worst for black male students
 - Math teachers are generally more discriminatory

Things I Liked

- Lit Review section tells a cohesive story of all the facets of a big problem.
- Descriptive stats tables show convincing correlations but don't claim causality

Concerns

- Subjective survey - results are likely a lower bound estimate

Extension

- Extend further into long-term effects (labor outcomes, college choice)