A Community College Instructor Like Me:

Race and Ethnicity Interactions in the Classroom

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“Our analysis is based on administrative data from De Anza College, a large community college that is located in the San Francisco Bay Area. It is part of the California Community College system, which is the largest higher educational system in the United States with 110 colleges and 2.9 million students per year. De Anza College has an average total enrollment of 22,000 students per year. It has a larger share of minority students than the nationally representative community college, reflecting the diversity of Northern California.”

**Important Findings:**

“We find positive interactions for all major racial groups with African American students experiencing particularly large and robust relative gains from being taught by a same-race instructor. Another important finding is that there is evidence of minority students benefiting from assignment to a minority instructor of a different race, e.g., Hispanic student academic performance improves from assignment to black instructors, rather than to white instructors.” Pg 2580

“The selection-on-observables model reported in column 1 of Table 6 suggests that raising the share of minority instructors by 1 standard deviation (0.25) would increase the relative retention rate for minorities by about 2.5 percentage points (relative to a minority base rate of 62 percent).” Pgs 2587-2588

“We find that minority students perform relatively better in classes when instructors are of the same race or ethnicity. Underrepresented minority students are 1.2–2.8 percentage points more likely to pass classes, 2.0–2.9 percent less likely to drop out of classes, and 2.4–3.2 percentage points more likely to get a grade of B or higher in classes with underrepresented instructors. All of these effects are large relative to achievement gaps, representing 20–50 percent of the total gaps in classroom outcomes between white and underrepresented minority students at the college.” Pg 2588

“We find evidence that an instructor’s race or ethnicity affects the likelihood of taking subsequent courses in the same subject and majoring in the subject. The share of minority instructors in the first quarter also affects a student’s likelihood of retention and degree completion.” Pg 2589

“Our results suggest that the academic achievement gap between white and underrepresented minority college students would decrease by hiring more underrepresented minority instructors.” Pg 2589