

Ethnicity and Teacher Expectations: Evidence from China

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Abstract

Many countries have reported that the academic performance of minority group students was not as well as that of European or Asian students. A vast body of empirical studies has supported the prediction that teachers have different expectations for students with varied ethnicity backgrounds, for example, lower expectations for Māori and Pasifika students, whereas higher expectations for White and Asian students in the New Zealand context. However, no study has examined the teacher expectations for minority groups in the Chinese context as the 55 ethnic minority groups in China consist of over eight percent of the overall population. This study aims to explore teacher expectations for two ethnic groups (the Yao and Hui) in an under-researched Chinese non-urban educational setting. The study compared the effect sizes of teacher expectations on student achievement in three specific domains, namely Chinese, Mathematics, and English. Data were obtained from 493 students and their 36 teachers who taught Chinese, mathematics, or English. The analyses generated two main results. First, multilevel regression analyses showed that Pygmalion effects were observed in all three domains and the effect sizes were not statistically significant among different domains. Second, this study found that teachers had biased expectations for minority groups controlling for students' previous achievement. Despite in different contexts, the findings of studies conducted in Other contexts were also reported in the Chinese context. These results indicate that teacher expectations might be one explanation for the achievement gap between different ethnic groups in culturally-specific contexts.

Keywords: Hui minority group, student achievement, teacher-expectation bias, the Chinese context, Yao minority group