Student Ratings of Women Faculty: Research Summary

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Do students rate female and male faculty differently?
What we are told about student ratings: “No Gender Bias”

Studies of large samples across many disciplines consistently find no significant difference in student ratings of male and female faculty.
What women faculty perceive:
Gender Bias

Many women faculty, particularly in STEM disciplines, report that students view and interact with them differently than with male faculty.
Objectives

- Review purposes and typical uses of student ratings
- Review current research on interactions between gender and student ratings
- Discuss possible responses to suspicions of gender bias
Student Ratings Research

- Large-samples best reflect majority responses
- SRs typically used to identify common teaching behaviors
- SRs not used to identify student expectations
- SRs not designed to detect gender bias
- Statistical variance generally not explored by SR researchers
Gender Effects Research

Researchers analyze data from two primary sources:

- Field experiments (actual student ratings data)
- Laboratory experiments (simulated ratings contexts)
Gender Effects Research

When gender-effects are present, research indicates:

Male faculty are rated
  • the same by male & female students

Female faculty are rated
  • lower by male students
  • higher by female students
Why might male students rate female faculty lower?

- A possible mismatch in gender-related expectations
- A possible match between learning preferences and teaching styles used by male faculty (predominantly traditional lecture)
Professor Prototype and Student Expectations

Female Professor

Male Professor

Professor
Why might female students rate female faculty higher?

• A possible match between learning preferences & the teaching methods used by female faculty (typically more interactive)

• A possible response to positive role models
What could explain lower ratings for women faculty?

- Instructor’s teaching effectiveness
- Gender-based student expectations
- Contextual factors (which may be correlated with gender)
Recommendations for Administrators

- Avoid cross-gender comparisons
- Use multiple sources of data on teaching quality
- Use qualitative data to interpret quantitative data
- Base decisions on trends/patterns through time
- Provide faculty development support
Recommendations for Women Faculty

- Use multiple methods to collect data on student learning
- Choose appropriate ratings forms
- Annotate & interpret your own ratings
- Seek guidance from women faculty
- Identify & align expectations on the first day of class
- Work with teaching consultants