

Gender Bias and Race Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching

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I. Introduction

Student evaluations of teaching are an important tool used in university settings that contribute to promotion and tenure decisions, and there is some evidence to suggest that gender bias and race bias can indirectly affect these decisions¹.

- Studies conducted on the presence of gender bias in student evaluations of teaching thus far have had mixed results, with some finding clear evidence of gender bias² and some finding no evidence of gender bias³.
- Race can also affect student expectations in a classroom setting⁷.
- Many previous studies have shown there is strong evidence of implicit bias in the traits we expect to see from female and male professors, but these studies have been limited by how they identify the presence of bias^{4,5,6}.
- In face-to-face classrooms it is difficult to separate many confounding traits of a professor and of the semester as a whole from the gender or race of a professor. An online environment offers a unique opportunity to evaluate gender and race bias.

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II. Methods

- Participants will complete an online course module which consists of a powerpoint and narration by the professor.
- Participants will be randomized to a 2x2 factorial design where they will receive the narration voice of a male or female, and a picture of a black or white child. Otherwise, the content and visual presentation in the lecture remains constant between conditions.
- They will then be asked to complete evaluations of the lesson.

“This study demonstrates that gender bias is an important deficiency of student ratings of teaching. Therefore, the continued use of student ratings of teaching as a primary means of assessing the quality of an instructor’s teaching systematically disadvantages women in academia (MacNell, L., Driscoll, A., & Hunt, A., 2015).”

This proposed study will be conducted in cooperation with the Utah State University Psychology Factotum Lab.

III. Expected Results

The purpose of this proposed study is to investigate gender bias and race bias in student evaluations of teaching using an online, lab-based analog study focused on internal validity.

- We expect female professors to be evaluated less positively than male professors.
- We also expect race to impact these evaluations based on results of previous studies⁷.
- In order to increase our understanding of this decisive subject, more research of gender and race bias is needed in a controlled and reliable online environment.



IV. References

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