



Instructor Diversity in Student Evaluations

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What are course evaluations?

- ▶ Questionnaire distributed to students at the end of a course
- ▶ Students rate: instructor, course materials, content, and TAs

Teacher/Course Evaluation Form

What is your class/major?

Class: _____ Major: _____

The facilitator was prepared for class.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The facilitator demonstrated knowledge of the subject and communicated the subject matter effectively.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The facilitator shows respect towards students and encourages class participation.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The facilitator response to student questions in class was satisfactory.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The recommended textbook or reading material was useful and entertaining.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The facilitator issued a fair amount of homework and/or exams.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The grading of homework assignments and exams were fair.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

The facilitator maintained a friendly environment for the learning and sharing of ideas.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

Why do course evaluations matter?

- ▶ Presented as opportunity for students to provide feedback
- ▶ Used when making decisions about teaching awards
- ▶ Used when making decisions about hiring, tenuring, and promoting

Are course evaluations any good?

Students and faculty value different qualities in an effective teacher.

▶ Faculty value:

- ▶ Using a variety of teaching methods
- ▶ Love of subject matter
- ▶ Organization

▶ Students value:

- ▶ Sense of humor
- ▶ Ability to keep interest
- ▶ Ability to relate material to their lives

Take-Away:

- ▶ Course evaluations are a better measure of student satisfaction than teaching effectiveness
- ▶ If faculty and students value different qualities in a teacher, then why do we use student evaluations for evaluating teaching effectiveness?

Implicit Bias in Course Evaluations

- ▶ Students rate courses poorly when taught by non-native English speakers
- ▶ Latina/o faculty receive lowest ratings overall
- ▶ Faculty of color receive lower ratings than their white colleagues when teaching the same course
- ▶ The research is complicated for women:
 - ▶ Some have shown that female faculty, regardless of race, receive lower course evaluations than male faculty
 - ▶ But these results may be discipline specific or depend on the types of courses taught

Consider an interesting project:

Gendered Language in Teacher Reviews

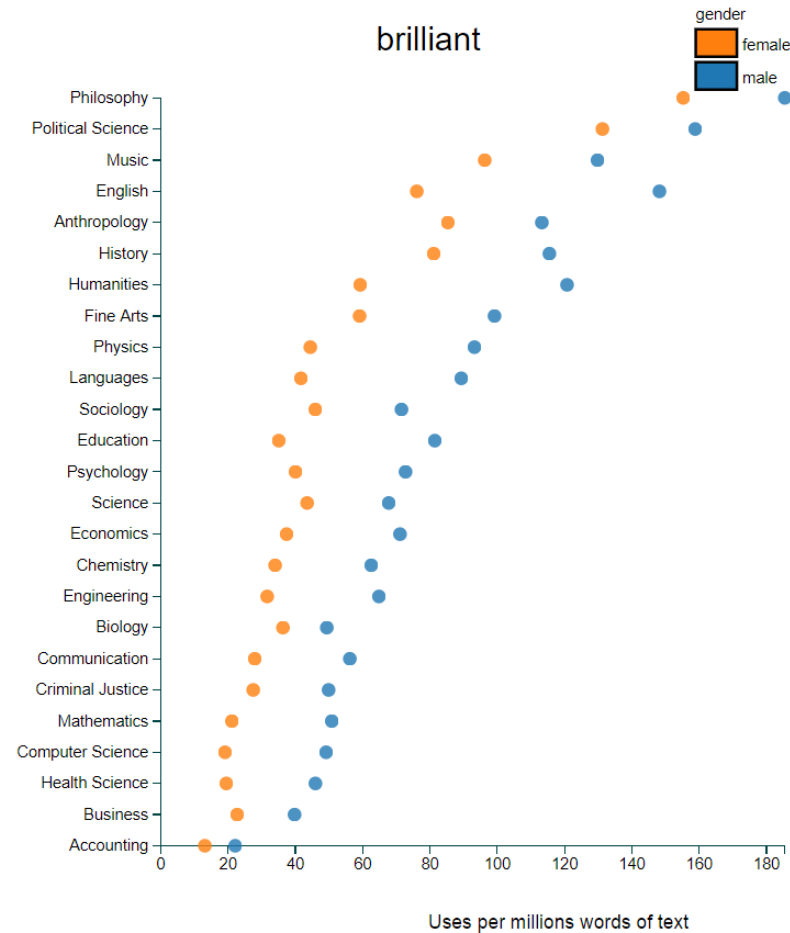
This interactive chart lets you explore the words used to describe male and female teachers in about 14 million reviews from RateMyProfessor.com.

You can enter any other word (or two-word phrase) into the box below to see how it is split across gender and discipline: the x-axis gives how many times your term is used per million words of text (normalized against gender and field). You can also limit to just negative or positive reviews (based on the numeric ratings on the site). For some more background, see [here](#).

Not all words have gender splits, but a surprising number do. Even things like pronouns are used quite differently by gender.

Search term(s) (case-insensitive):
use commas to aggregate multiple terms

All ratings Only positive Only negative



<http://benschmidt.org/profGender/>

Written Comments

- ▶ Course evaluations typically have spaces for written feedback from students
- ▶ Student bias often appears in the written feedback
- ▶ For example, students comment on a female instructor's appearance or a non-native speaker's English skills

Are there any things which stand out as noteworthy about your TA?

- ▶ Its hard to ask a TA who doesn't speak English well to translate a class on translating logic to English and vice versa
- ▶ She sounded constantly bored and condescending
- ▶ She doesn't speak perfect English
- ▶ Homework feedback is short, unkind, and critical
- ▶ She's cute

What might your TA do to improve her performance?

- ▶ Get a little more energy and enthusiasm for the coursework
- ▶ Learn how to modulate voice and not sound condescending
- ▶ Garner a better understanding of the English language
- ▶ Keep practicing dat English pronunciation [student's spelling]

Questions:

- ▶ What are your experiences with course evaluations?
- ▶ As Ph.D. students thinking about the academic job market, should we talk about our course evaluations in a way that brings attention to these biases?
- ▶ Do we ask our letter writers to do this?
- ▶ As future committee members, is there any way for us to modulate our expectations when considering course evaluations?
- ▶ If we know that course evaluations are full of bias, and we use them for hiring, tenuring, and promoting faculty, are we not guilty of discrimination?

Do you have any questions for us?