College Teaching ›

Volume 62, 2014 - Issue 1

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Professor Age Affects Student Ratings: Halo Effect for Younger Teachers

Janie H. Wilson, Denise Beyer & Heather Monteiro

Pages 20-24 | Published online: 08 Jan 2014

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2013.825574 Check for updates

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Abstract

Student evaluations of teaching provide valued information about teaching effectiveness, and studies support the reliability and validity of such measures. However, research also illustrates potential moderation of student perceptions based on teacher gender, attractiveness, and even age, although the latter receives little research attention. In the present study, we examined the potential effects of professor age and gender on student perceptions of the teacher as well as their anticipated rapport in the classroom. We also asked students to rate each instructor's attractiveness based on societal beliefs about age and beauty. We expected students to rate a picture of a middle-aged female professor more negatively (and less attractive) than the younger version of the same woman. For the young versus old man offered in a photograph, we expected no age effects. Although age served as a detriment for both genders, evaluations suffered more based on aging for female than male professors.

Keywords:

aging attractiveness gender professor rapport student evaluations

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