

Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness

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Student evaluations of teachers (SET) are used to

- ▶ Quantify teaching effectiveness
- ▶ Compare instructors across courses
- ▶ Make hiring, firing, and promotion decisions

Are SET a valid measure of teaching effectiveness?

No!

- ▶ SET measure “customer satisfaction”
- ▶ Ratings are biased against female instructors
- ▶ Biases are inconsistent across universities and disciplines; impossible to “adjust” SET

- ▶ Census of SET by first-year undergraduates, collected 2008–2013
- ▶ Students sign up for class times, don't know instructors; it's "as if" at random
- ▶ Male students tend to rate male instructors higher than females students do
- ▶ SET correlate with grade expectations but not final grades

- ▶ Randomized, controlled experiment of students' perceptions of gender in an online course
- ▶ Female-identified TA was rated lower in all categories (especially “fair” and “prompt”) on average
- ▶ Average “overall” rating in each section

	Female-identified	Male-identified
Male instructor	3.75	4.00
Female instructor	3.625	4.333

Permutation tests

- ▶ Distribution-free tests, always give correct significance levels
- ▶ Compare assumptions:
 - ▶ Two-sample t-test: independent samples from normal distribution
 - ▶ Permutation test: randomization was fair
- ▶ Python package: `permute`
<https://github.com/statlab/permute>

- Anne Boring. Gender biases in student evaluations of teachers.
Document de travail OFCE 13, OFCE, April 2015.
- L. MacNell, A. Driscoll, and A. N. Hunt. Whats in a name:
Exposing gender bias in student ratings of teaching. *Innovative
Higher Education*, pages 1–13, 2014.