

# Attractiveness, Reciprocity and Students' Evaluation of Teaching (SET)

ANJA HELLMANN AND TOBIAS WOLBRING  
 Institute for Sociology  
 Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich

## I. Theory and Hypotheses

### Attractiveness

#### Productivity and Discrimination

- Recent studies report that more attractive instructors receive better SET. However, it remains unclear whether this is due to differences in productivity or the result of discrimination.
- On the one hand, the quality of the course could increase with the attractiveness of the instructor (productivity).
- On the other hand, the quality of the course could remain constant and nonetheless the SET gets better (discrimination).

#### Beauty-is-Beastly

- People attribute typical characteristics of one's sex to extraordinary attractive persons. So women should be for example less assertive than men.
- Thus, female instructors with an attractiveness over a certain threshold could get a poorer evaluation.

#### Intersexual-Attraction

- Due to sociobiological reasons, a person's attractiveness is more important for people of the opposite sex.
- Therefore, the influence of the attractiveness on the SET is stronger if the instructor and the student are of opposite sex.

### Reciprocity

#### Reciprocity and a Difficult Test

- If students evaluate a course after a difficult test, students will give poorer grades in their evaluation.

#### Reciprocity and Grading

- If students evaluate a course after a difficult test, their success has a positive effect on SET.

### Reciprocity and Attractiveness

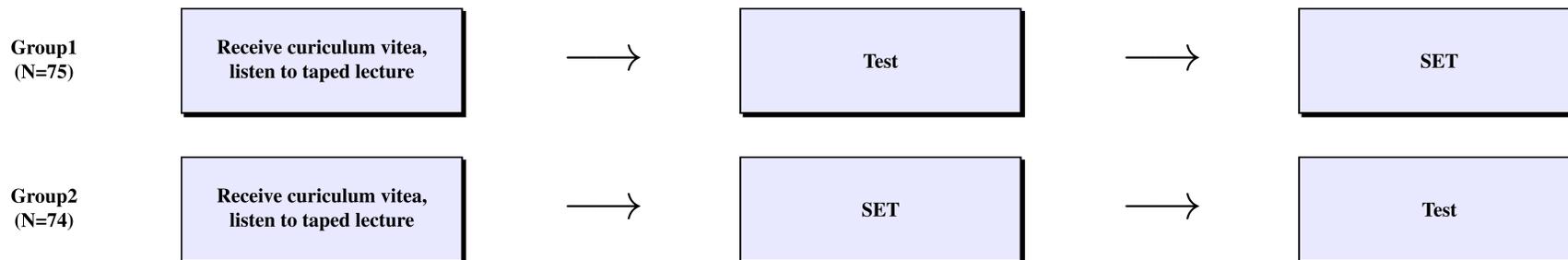
#### Glamour-Effect

- If the SET is conducted after a difficult test, the negative effect of poor test performance on SET is weaker for more attractive instructors than for less attractive instructors.

#### Beauty-Penalty

- If the SET is conducted after a difficult test, the negative effect of poor test performance on SET is stronger for more attractive instructors than for less attractive instructors.

## II. Experimental Design



The pictures of the instructors



## III. Empirical Results

Average SET by treatment

	Test following Evaluation		Evaluation following Test		summary
	female instructor	male instructor	female instructor	male instructor	
<b>high</b>	2,76	2,69	3,32	3,56	3,12
<b>low</b>	3,13	2,82	3,54	3,06	3,12
<b>summary</b>	2,97	2,76	3,42	3,31	3,12

### Attractiveness

#### Productivity and Discrimination

- The influence of attractiveness was lower than in similar non-experimental studies.
- There are small productivity effects as well as very low levels of discrimination.

#### Beauty-is-Beastly

- Against the theoretical expectation: Only male instructors with an attractiveness over a certain threshold got a poorer evaluation than expected.

#### Intersexual-Attraction

- If instructors and students are of the same sex, the SET become worse.
- If instructors and students are of the same sex, the influence of the instructors attractiveness on the SET increases.

### Reciprocity

#### Difficult Test and Grading on Reciprocity

- There is a significant interaction between the number of correct answers in a test and the timing of test.
- By adding students' interest, sex and prior knowledge, the interaction in the model gets stronger. So there is no indication for a spurious correlation.

- The results show a clear and strong influence of a difficult test and of grading on reciprocity.

#### Alternative Explanations can be excluded

- SET do not reflect learning success.
- The grading effect is not due to the attribution of failures to others and of successes to oneself.

### Reciprocity and Attractiveness

#### Beauty-Penalty and Glamour-Effects

- The results seem to show a beauty-penalty and not a glamour-effect.
- After a difficult test, both male and female instructors with above average attractiveness were punished in the SET.