



RateMyProfessors.com at UWEC:



Instructor Ratings by Instructor Gender, Discipline, and Academic Degree Status

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Background

- RateMyProfessors.com (RMP.com) is a public forum where students rate instructors on several characteristics:
 - Clarity
 - Helpfulness
 - Overall Quality (Clarity & Helpfulness)
 - Easiness ("how much work it is to get a good grade")
 - Attractiveness
- RMP.com was launched in 1999 and has ratings on 1,000,000 instructors from more than 6,000 schools
- Previous (but limited) research on RMP.com suggests that students' ratings are similar, in pattern, to those seen on traditional student evaluations of instruction. For example, distribution of ratings is more positive than negative, easiness and quality ratings are positively associated.
- Given instructors' distrust of ratings on RateMyProfessors.com, we conducted this study to investigate trends in ratings of UWEC instructors.

Method

Participants

- RMP.com lists 632 instructors at UWEC
 - 571 non-redundant instructors have 1 or more ratings
 - 322 non-redundant instructors have 10 or more ratings
- Data in this study are from 322 instructors with 10 or more ratings (mean number of ratings = 26.5); open-ended responses were not included in analyses
- Instructors are from across UWEC:
 - *Arts & Humanities (119, or 37%)
 - Art, Music, Languages, English, History, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Dance, Theater
 - *Pre-Professional (37, or 11%)
 - Nursing, Business, Education, Kinesiology, Communication Disorders
 - *Social Sciences (77, or 24%)
 - Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Communication, Geography, Political Science
 - *Math & Natural Sciences (89, or 28%)
 - Math, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Geology

Instruments

- We used pre-existing mean ratings of UWEC instructors, as listed on RMP.com as of July, 2008.
- In addition, we recorded instructors' number of semesters at UWEC since 1999 (when RMP.com was launched) and their academic degree status.

Procedure

- Correlational study design using archival data

Results

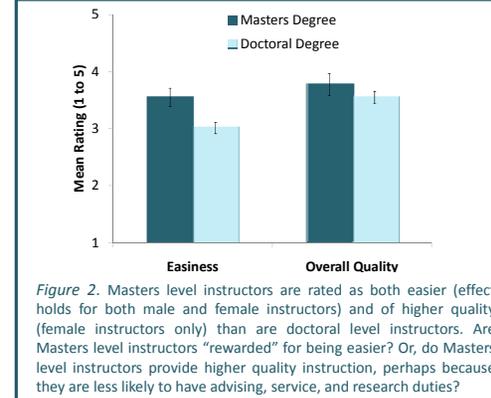
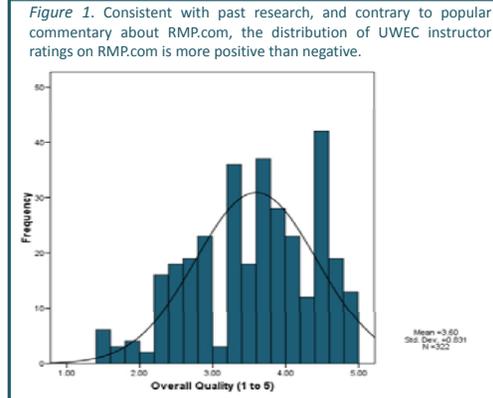
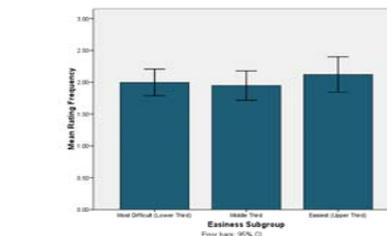
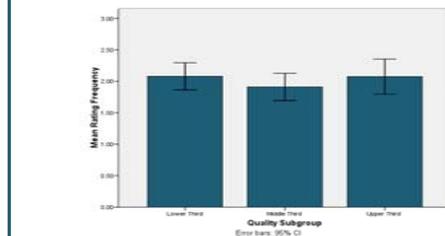
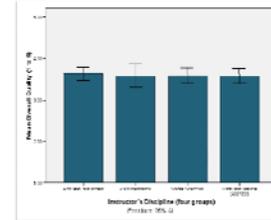
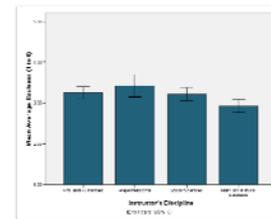
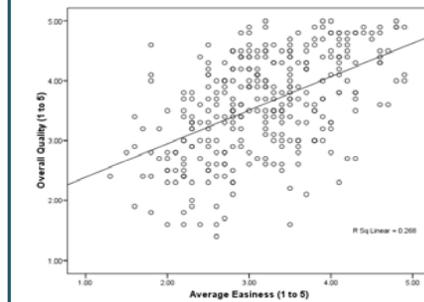


Figure 3. Easiness and quality ratings are positively associated, $r(322) = .52, p < .001$. As shown in the scatter, there are exceptions: 16.3% of the "easiest" instructors are also rated among the lowest third in quality (bottom right of scatter); and 8.4% of the "hardest" instructors are also rated as among the highest third in quality (upper left of scatter).



Discussion

- As documented with traditional student evaluations of instruction, quality and easiness ratings on RMP.com are positively associated.
- However, students are not treating easiness and quality synonymously.
 - Instructors rated as very easy do not have more ratings than other instructors, nor do instructors rated as very difficult.
 - Instructors in math and the natural Sciences, despite being rated as more difficult, receive quality ratings on par with other instructors. Further analyses need to be conducted with the RMP.com database to determine if this effect is unique to UWEC.
- Future research could investigate several issues that have not been addressed in any published literature, in an attempt to determine the validity of RMP.com as a source of information for students:
 - The percentage, and characteristics, of students who post on RMP.com, and their reasons for posting;
 - Correlations between RMP.com ratings and traditional student evaluation of instruction scores, for a sample of instructors;
 - Interrater reliability of different students' ratings about the same instructor.

References

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Acknowledgments

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