

Study: Students Learn Better from Hot Teachers

When it comes to America's educational woes, maybe the problem isn't a "dumbed-down" curriculum or a lack of student effort...

Maybe the problem is that there are too many ugly teachers?

Okay, that's just a bit of an exaggeration.

However, a [new study](#) conducted by University of Nevada researchers and published in the Journal of General Psychology? *did* find that students learned more effectively from attractive versus unattractive instructors. As [the Wall Street Journal explains](#):

"Here's how the experiment worked. The researchers asked 131 college students to listen to a recording of a 20-minute introductory physics lecture. The students were randomly assigned to a male or female lecturer, each of whom read an identical text. While the lecture was playing, a computer displayed what the volunteers were told was a photo of the lecturer—who was highly attractive in some cases and not as fetching in others. (Earlier volunteers had rated some photos of possible 'lecturers' for attractiveness, enabling the researchers to pick the best- and worst-looking.) Taking notes was barred.

After the lecture, participants got a 25-item quiz on the material. For those with the attractive instructor, the average score was 18.27; for those with an unattractive one, the average was 16.68. That gap isn't huge, but it is statistically significant, the researchers said."

The article notes that the researchers didn't think sexual interest explained the results, which is not that

surprising—sexual interest would probably lead to distraction. Rather, it was simply that the students felt more “motivated” by the attractive teacher and assumed he/she was more intelligent and competent.

And according to one of the authors of the paper, that’s not surprising either:

“R. Shane Westfall, the lead author of the new paper, says that jurors are more likely to acquit accused murderers who are better looking. The benefits of good looks start early, he notes: Mothers pay more attention to good-looking babies (and babies pay more attention to better-looking adults). There is also evidence that more attractive people get paid better at work, have an edge in winning political campaigns and are more likely to be helped by others when in distress.”

In the 2014 case [Vergara v. California](#), nine students successfully sued the State of California for having “grossly ineffective” teachers. Perhaps in the future we’ll see a case where students sue for having “grossly ugly” ones. They can call Mr. Westfall as a witness.