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# Does the Teacher's Gender Matter? Apparently Yes

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Thomas Dee, a professor at [Swarthmore College](#) and visiting scholar at [Stanford University](#), has released a study indicating that boys learn better when taught by men and girls learn better when taught by women.

Here is how his findings were reported in [USA Today](#):

*Dee's study is based on a nationally representative survey of nearly 25,000 eighth-graders that was conducted by the Education Department in 1988.*

*Though dated, the survey is the most comprehensive look at students in middle school, when gender gaps emerge, Dee said. He examined test scores as well as self-reported perceptions by teachers and students.*

*Dee found that having a female teacher instead of a male teacher raised the achievement of girls and lowered that of boys in science, social studies and English. Looked at the other way, when a man led the class, boys did better and girls did worse.*

Further:

*For example, with a female teacher, boys were more likely to be seen as disruptive. Girls were less likely to be considered inattentive or disorderly.*

*In a class taught by a man, girls were more likely to say the subject was not useful for their future. They were less likely to look forward to the class or to ask questions.*

Most of us have probably believed this was so for some time, and the finding illustrates the biblical pattern of older men teaching younger men and older women teaching younger women. In the public schools, the situation is made more acute by the fact that 80% of teachers are women (a situation that may not be much different in most Christian schools).

The bottom line — gender matters.

Dee has summarized his research in "[The Why Chromosome](#)," published in the Fall 2006 edition of [Education Next](#), a publication of the [Hoover Institution](#).

*Other theories, of special interest here, suggest that much depends on the gender of the teacher. One theory asserts that the teacher's gender shapes communications between teacher and pupil, while another says the teacher acts as a gender-specific role model, regardless of what he or she says or does. According to this second theory, students are more engaged, behave more appropriately, and perform at a higher level when taught by one who shares their gender.*

More:

*Adverse gender effects have an impact on both boys and girls, but that effect falls more heavily on the male half of the population in middle school, simply because most middle school teachers are female. My estimates suggest that, if half of*

*the English teachers in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades were male and their effects on learning were additive, the achievement gap in reading would fall by approximately a third by the end of middle school. Similarly, these results suggest that part of boys' relative propensity to be seen as disruptive in these grades is due to the gender interactions resulting from the preponderance of female teachers.*

Parents, educators, and churches should give this research a close reading. It just makes sense — and points to the fact that when men do not teach, boys suffer.

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