

**Don't Promote Communism, Don't Be So Biased, Stop Playing Out America As The Bad
Guys, Don't Accuse White Males As Being The Evil In This World: The Consequences of
Teaching Critical Sociology on Course Evaluations**

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express our gratitude to Nicole Qualley for her indispensable data entry assistance.

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Abstract

While there has been a great deal of literature addressing students' perceptions of bias in the classroom, there has been little in the way of examining the relationship between the student evaluations and the pedagogy employed to examine sociological issues in class. In the wake of the sanctioning of professor Jammie Price for her lecture content (and other notable examples), the examination of the chilling effect of student comments on professors' content is necessary. In the context of this "academic repression," we conducted a case study that reviewed and coded the written comments on Professor Prew's Introduction to Sociology course evaluations in the 2008-2009 academic year. We assessed whether there was a correlation between the quantitative feedback on evaluations and the open-ended comments regarding the professor's critical sociological perspective. Using means, correlations and regression, we specifically tested to see if students who left qualitative comments that contain overtly negative assessments of Professor Prew's critical sociological perspective evaluated the course more negatively than those that are neutral or complimentary regarding his perspective. The findings show a positive correlation between negative attitudes regarding critical sociology and lower evaluation scores.

Keywords

critical sociology, critical thinking, academic repression, pedagogy, scholarship of teaching and learning, course evaluations

INTRODUCTION

“I caution you to think about your actions because they will not go unchecked forever. ... If I was you I would fear this day very much because the punishment you will receive will be one you can’t even fathom and will last forever. I can’t even fathom how bad that would be. Imagine burning for a minute, let alone for eternity. ... Think about it, you’re going to be dead a lot longer than you will be alive. It would be wise to figure out where you’re going.”

Student Email - September 14, 2007

Professor Prew received the above email from a “friend” of someone in his Introduction to Sociology course. What is particularly disturbing about this email is that Professor Prew’s brother and sister died in a home fire before he was born. It is not clear how much this student knew about his family history, but its effect is chilling. Every term, Professor Prew has come to expect a few of these responses to his critical sociological approach, whether it be verbally, via email, or placed in his course evaluations. While teaching in Oregon in 2003, someone offered Professor Prew this advice in an anonymous email, “You Sally Ass wieners should be the first we toss out of the b-2’s at Iraq [sic].”

In this article, we focus on similar comments in course evaluations and argue that they are part of a broader process of academic repression (Nocella II, Best and McLaren 2010). Academic repression is the deliberate targeting of academics, almost exclusively progressive and left-leaning (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:30), to force a change in perspective either through sanctions, dismissal, denial of tenure or promotion, and/or self-censorship in lectures

and publications. Academic repression has a long and well-documented history (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:72-75). Notable examples of academic repression include Ward Churchill (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:61,71-72; Churchill 2010; Frosch 2009; Johnson 2005) and William Robinson (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:75; Preston 2009). While the attack on Ward Churchill originated in the media with conservative pundits, William Robinson's case originated with students who reached out to Zionist groups to attack the professor's perspective in the classroom.

As we write this article, Dr. Jammie Price at Appalachian State University has been put on administrative leave after students complained about her comments regarding student athletes and the showing of a film critical of pornography (Buie 2012; Choate 2012; Moore 2012). As the result of student complaints, the university endeavors to impose oversight on Dr. Price under the guise that she creates a "hostile environment" (Buie 2012). Dr. Price's case is a textbook example of academic repression. Because the administration is willing to sanction Dr. Price, students are given immense power to determine the content of their courses if it disagrees with their own worldviews. As Parenti (2010:121) states, "What they are really protesting is their first encounter with ideological diversity, their first exposure to a critical perspective other than the one they regularly embrace." In the case of Dr. Robinson and Dr. Price, the student complaints brought university-wide and/or national attention. "Academic repression can be blatant and heavy-handed in this manner, but it can also be subtle or invisible, taking the shape of normalizing influences that pressure professors to conform to apolitical conventions or to widespread prejudices that 'true' scholarship is always objective, detached, and impartial, and never partisan, political, and linked to society and practice" (Best, Nocella II and McLaren

2010:31). Part of this invisible pressure is the institution's reliance on course evaluations as an indicator of teaching quality.

While others have pondered the effect of the attack on higher education in popular media (Bérubé 2006; Bérubé and Nelson 1995) and the issue of academic repression (Nocella II, Best and McLaren 2010), we examined the effect of teaching introductory sociology using a critical sociological perspective and how Professor Prew's college students evaluated the course based on their perception, reception, or rejection of the critical sociological perspective. What effect does teaching critical sociology have on the more mundane aspects of our professional assessment, specifically course evaluations? Academic repression is exercised through institutional processes such as the student evaluations used in tenure and promotion decisions, or it may also include more subtle influences, for example when faculty amend their course content to reduce negative feedback. Academic repression acknowledges the effect of student complaints to the administration and the media, but what if students do not go directly to administrators or the press? Our research asks, "How much can students who disagree with the critical sociological perspective negatively effect professors' evaluations?" Would academic repression be discernable in the negative evaluations of the critical sociological perspective?

We critically evaluate the literature on students' perception of bias and balance in the classroom. While there tends to be some support for the idea that the perspective of the professor does have an effect on professors' evaluations (Dixon and McCabe 2006; Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2006; Tollini 2009), we focus more specifically on critical sociology. To understand why a professor may be targeted for academic repression, we describe the concept "critical sociology" (Buechler 2008b) and tie it to the approach Professor Prew takes in the classroom. For this paper, we analyze qualitative responses on evaluation forms for perceived

bias of the professor. After coding these qualitative responses, we test to see if there are significant correlations between students who perceive bias and how they evaluate Professor Prew's Introduction to Sociology course.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most prior research of bias in the classroom (Dixon and McCabe 2006; Tollini 2009) tends to focus on bias related to professors providing balance and alternative viewpoints, but at least one study (Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2006) investigates how both professor and students' perspectives affect evaluation outcomes. In one study of bias, Tollini (2009) attempts to differentiate what behaviors students would classify as political bias. There were a number of behaviors that the majority of students considered bias. When the professor did not present, criticize, or allow viewpoints in the classroom other than the professor's own views, the majority of students were likely to consider these behaviors biased. In contrast, behaviors that few students found biased included discussing political or controversial topics in class. Despite the fact that fewer students felt discussing political or controversial issues was an example of bias, between 13 and 27 percent did. Tollini's (2009) study tends to suggest that even though some behaviors are not considered bias by the majority of students, some students feel that the mere mention of political or controversial issues is bias. These findings are particularly interesting in that a small but noticeable number of students (up to 27 percent) can perceive bias in the discourse, even if the information was presented within the context of the discipline.

Another study focused on the issue of viewpoints provided by the professor. According to Dixon and McCabe's (2006) study of student evaluations, the classes tended to perceive their

instructors as balanced, especially in terms of discussing points of view other than their own and inviting criticism of their ideas. When professors discussed viewpoints other than their own, their classes tended to give them higher evaluations. Dixon and McCabe (2006) also found some correlations between students' expected grades and how well the students evaluated the course and instructor effectiveness. Dixon and McCabe (2006) concluded that balance is not the most important element in the classroom, but indicated that it is a significant aspect of the classroom experience.

Another research study in political science by Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2006) targets the political perspective of the student and the perspective of the professor. Students are asked to provide an assessment of the political orientation of the professor and also their own political ideology. These assessments were then used to see if they had an impact on evaluation criteria. The authors concluded that the more disparate the perceived difference between the professor's views and those of the student, the lower the evaluation scores. This suggests that students' estimations of balance or bias are also influenced by their own biases and ideological views.

Similar to Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2006), some studies do address the issue of students' reactions to course material. Research in disciplines other than sociology documents some of the reactions faced by professors attempting to teach critically (Bérubé 2006; Seibel Trainor 2002). Students react negatively to the course content despite the efforts of the professor to provide an inclusive environment and a variety of views. When these views clash with the students', they lash out, sometimes in highly inappropriate and disruptive ways. Some students may react negatively to material that clashes with their worldview and then refuse to meet the course material on its own terms. The students may bring their own perspectives into the

academic discussion of the material, derailing what is an intellectual exercise and transforming it into a polemical debate.

Michael Bérubé (2006:2) begins his discussion of the purported liberal bias in higher education by outlining a particularly troublesome student that reacted negatively and antagonistically to the content of his postmodernism and American fiction course. The student staunchly took an assimilationist stance regarding African-Americans and unilaterally defended the Japanese internment camps in the United States during World War II (Bérubé 2006:2,15). The student consistently dominated the course in an effort to be the “only countervailing conservative voice in a classroom full of liberal-left think-alikes,” as Bérubé (2006:5) perceived it. Another author, Seibel Trainor (2002), outlines her own experiences with a difficult student. When professor Seibel Trainor showed pictures of police officers beating migrant workers during a strike, a student “thought the photos were ‘biased’ and [argued] that if ‘you want to learn about history, you have to have objective sources’” (Seibel Trainor 2002:642). This kind of attitude is difficult to address within the classroom because it is extremely challenging to make the act of police brutality or other social ills “objective.” There are certain historical truths that are difficult for some students to accept, but does their very inclusion in a course mean that the professor and the course are hopelessly biased? Some students who disagree with these facts would argue in the affirmative. However, general education goals are aimed directly at introducing these issues into the classroom and exposing students to issues of civil liberties, discrimination, and oppression (see below).

As the quantitative research above (Dixon and McCabe 2006; Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2006) tends to suggest, some students will react negatively to the mere mention of issues that differ from their own views. Additionally, Tollini’s (2009) research tends to suggest

that the mere mention of a politicized issue will inflame a minority of students to decry the content as biased. If professors are to honestly incorporate general education goals, or by extension critical sociology, into their classroom, they will inevitably offend this minority of students.

Our research deviates from previous research in that it specifically targets critical sociology. Prior research tends to address issues central to the critical thinking model (discussed below): discussing contrasting viewpoints. For example, previous studies focused on the students' perceptions of whether the professor "discusses points of view other than his/her own" (Dixon and McCabe 2006:116), provides an "objective presentation" (Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2006:497), or presents a "position," "view," or "side" of a political or social issue (Tollini 2009:383). A critical thinking approach may increase the student's perceptions that the class is balanced by creating the impression that they are exposed to a variety of viewpoints regardless of how "critical" these views may be. The prior research does not distinguish between professors who specifically take a critical sociological (or other disciplinary) perspective from those that encourage critical thinking or do not take a critical approach at all. In fact, the research of Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2006) appears to suggest that bias is in the eye of the beholder. Whether the professor is viewed as objective is directly correlated with how similar the student is ideologically to the professor.

Critical Sociology Versus Critical Thinking

To understand the specific issue in this paper, it is necessary to outline critical sociology and how it is integrated into Professor Prew's Introduction to Sociology class. His approach to

teaching enjoys an indefatigable lean towards critical sociology as defined by Buechler (2008a; 2008b). With respect to critical approaches in the classroom, there has been a great deal of discussion of radical approaches in sociology (Ballard 1998; Gaianguest 1998; Gimenez 1998; Long 1998; Sweet 1998a; Sweet 1998b), and critical pedagogy (Callero and Braa 2006; Fobes and Kaufman 2008; Jay and Graff 1995; Kaufman 2006; Monchinski 2008; Seibel Trainor 2002). In this paper, we focus specifically on critical sociology, in large part, because Professor Prew's Introduction to Sociology class regularly enrolls between 110 and 160 students in each section. While attempting more interactive approaches, the class does not approach the dialogue method mentioned by critical pedagogy writers (Callero and Braa 2006; Fobes and Kaufman 2008; Freire 1996; Sweet 1998a). For this reason, we will focus on a critical sociological approach.

Before we discuss critical sociology, we have to draw a clear distinction between critical sociology and critical thinking. While the notion of critical thinking is becoming increasingly popular, it is essentially depoliticized. Critical thinking is inherently uncritical in that it does not necessitate an understanding of why social phenomena occur, nor does it challenge status quo explanations. Critical thinking is merely the development of analytical ability, but it does not demand we demystify the social forces governing our lives. Critical thinking may provide the skills to aid in the understanding of our social world, but it alone cannot tell us why social phenomena occur. Critical sociology is distinguished from critical thinking in that critical thinking is a "decontextualized, generic skill applicable to virtually any issue" (Buechler 2008b:318) while critical sociology is a deeper critical analysis specifically addressing issues of inequality and power. Steven Buechler (2008b) outlines the critical sociological perspective which closely mirrors Professor Prew's pedagogical approach in the classroom. In general,

sociology is critical in that it “is critical to our ability to define, analyze and respond to pressing social issues,” scrutinizes “familiar truths and established facts,” and “is explicitly based on the values of freedom, equality, and justice” (Buechler 2008b:319). While mainstream sociology may contain an inherent “debunking” quality that incessantly questions the status quo, critical sociology goes beyond this cynicism to focus specifically on issues of inequality and power. For critical sociology, the notion of objectivity in the physical sciences is not necessarily transferable to social sciences. When applied to the social sciences, objectivity is inherently tied to the acceptance of the status quo relationships of inequality in society. Acknowledging that dispassionate objectivity is problematic, the critical sociological perspective demands that commonly accepted social practices supporting inequality be critically analyzed and understood. “Critical sociologists deliberately focus on relations of domination, oppression, or exploitation because they so obviously violate personal freedom and social equality” (Buechler 2008b:324).

Using an example by Mollborn and Hoekstra (2010), we can highlight the difference between critical sociology and critical thinking. Mollborn and Hoekstra (2010) outlined a critical thinking exercise dealing with gender roles in an article in *Teaching Sociology*. We acknowledge that Mollborn and Hoekstra (2010) were not attempting to surpass critical thinking, but were focused on the difficult task of engaging students in large lecture formats. Their exercise revolves around students’ ideas about who does more housework in their family and contrasting their ideas with a critical examination of the human capital explanation. The students are asked to “identify shortcomings in the human capital explanation” (Mollborn and Hoekstra 2010). Instead of requiring the students to challenge the contemporary gender relations, “students are ... prompted to think critically about the extent to which sociological theories and concepts *fit* the experiences of ‘people like me’” (Mollborn and Hoekstra 2010:23 emphasis

added). Students are expected to identify the “fit” of the theory and not *why* contemporary gender arrangements are inequitable. As Buechler (2008b) argues, this technique tends to fall into the category of critical thinking because it fails to contextualize the broader power relationships and historical development of gender inequality over time. Their example is reduced to an intellectual exercise of evaluating a perspective, which may increase the perception among students that the professors are providing more than their own views to the class, but it does not fundamentally address the issues of inequality and power. It does not demystify the contemporary arrangements to allow the student to challenge the contemporary inequitable gender arrangements.

Compared to critical thinking, critical sociology may appear radical to some, but it is essentially the pedagogical realization of university goals to be more inclusive, forward-thinking institutions. Given the attacks on progressive scholars and academics, it may be surprising to find the core tenets of critical sociology found in university mission statements. Minnesota State University-Mankato is no exception in this regard. In fact, the focus of the critical sociologist is incorporated explicitly in the general education goals (see Appendix 1) at Minnesota State University-Mankato (2009). Based on the general education goals, Professor Prew’s course must challenge students to, “develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues,” “analyze specific international problems illustrating cultural, economic, ... social, and political differences which affect their solution,” and “acquire a substantive knowledge base to identify the impact of oppression for individuals from diverse populations” (Minnesota State University - Mankato 2009). The issues of equality and justice in critical sociology are explicitly outlined in the general education requirements, “Purple courses allow students to explore basic concepts such as oppression, prejudice, discrimination, racism

and ethnocentrism and responses to each” (Minnesota State University - Mankato 2009).

Professor Prew uses critical sociology to promote the general education goals of the university.

CRITICAL SOCIOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

In his Introduction to Sociology course, Professor Prew focuses on issues of inequality and demystifying the students’ contemporary social world. Early in the course, Professor Prew challenges the students to develop an understanding of the various barriers to accurate information by examining the role of media as a vital agent of socialization. The students do not merely survey the research and findings with respect to the media. They use theory to identify why there is a difference between media accounts and actual events. We begin by discussing a homework assignment asking them to summarize a news article from CNN (Wallace 2003). After discussing the content, we watched the actual events unfold as documented in the film, *Death in Gaza* (Miller 2004). After discussing the egregious difference between the CNN account and the actual events, Professor Prew then turned to the theory of the “filters of propaganda” by Herman and Chomsky (1988) to explain how the two accounts could differ so widely. Students are then challenged to apply the filters to issues presented in the film, *Outfoxed* (Greenwald 2004). Students take the five filters of propaganda and are asked to apply them to issues and events in the film to understand why the information they receive from the media is profoundly limited and distorted. We discuss how the different filters fit the actions and structure of the Fox News Channel. Because we use theory to understand the media, students are encouraged to apply the filters to other media outlets, not only Fox News, once they leave the classroom.

To encourage the greatest possibility for learning, Professor Prew weaves together these exercises, lectures, and film. He creates interest through the first exercise because of the vast gulf between what was reported and what actually occurred. Then he explains, theoretically through the filters of propaganda, how the media operates to present a limited and distorted view of reality. Finally, he walks the students through their attempts to apply these theoretical concepts. In this way, Professor Prew maximizes comprehension and retention through examples, theory, and application by the students with the intent of encouraging the students to leave the classroom more informed and critical citizens.

In a more active and participatory exercise using the technique of “role taking” mentioned by Buechler (2008b:328), Professor Prew begins the issues of race/ethnicity by conducting a small-group in-class exercise. In the exercise, the students are asked to contemplate how they would feel, and what they would do, if their grandparents were subject to a zoning law that devalued their property dramatically while increasing the property values of neighboring residents (see Appendix 2). After dividing the class into small groups, Professor Prew gave figures for property values as well as wages based on the inequitable education systems in the two communities. Students were asked to discuss their feelings about the effects of the inequalities created by the zoning law. After returning from the small groups, Professor Prew led a discussion with the entire class and collected responses using a “clicker” personal response system. The questions ask how they feel about the situation and what they feel would be necessary to remedy the problem (see Appendix 3). After collecting their responses, we watch the third part of the film, *Race the Power of an Illusion* (Smith 2003), dealing with redlining and block busting after World War II. We then discuss the implications of how we define race over time, and the effects of structural inequality like segregation.

Using the clicker devices again, Professor Prew asked the students a new set of questions dealing specifically with housing inequality in the United States (see Appendix 3). The results are interesting and are used to demonstrate both how students learn from the exercise and how some students will view the same issue differently when it involves race/ethnicity. In the results, there is a tendency for more students to agree that people should be compensated for lost property values *and* they should make the school districts equal. From the perspective of critical sociology, students have become more sensitive to the institutional constraints placed on people of color as a result of the history of structural inequality. Consistent with the goals of critical sociology, some students have changed their attitudes to be more consistent with the sociological research findings, and many are better equipped to understand the causes of inequality in the world around them. Unfortunately, there are also slightly more people who tend to say that only removing redlining and block busting is enough to solve the problem of inequality.

To place the increase in responses favoring less intervention in context, Professor Prew expresses to the students that this is part of the issue facing people of color. While most students are in favor of addressing housing inequality in general in the first exercise, there are a few people in this group who change their minds when it becomes intertwined with race/ethnicity and now feel that simply banning overtly discriminatory practices is enough. This shift in thinking is characteristic of racial/ethnic discrimination. Some of the students' attitudes are less favorable of equality when the issue is specifically linked to race/ethnicity. Professor Prew links this issue to a later discussion of inequitable treatment of people of color in the health care profession to demonstrate the continued influence of discrimination. Health professionals tend to treat patients differently based on racial/ethnic markers, and the health outcomes are worse for people of color as a result (Smedley, Stith and Nelson 2003). In both situations - desegregation and

discrimination in health care, differential treatment continues to occur solely based on racial/ethnic markers.

Returning to the example of critical thinking by Mollborn and Hoekstra (2010), their critical thinking approach differs in significant ways from Professor Prew's critical sociological approach. The example from Professor Prew's course forces the students to contemplate their own feelings about racial/ethnic inequality by placing them in the shoes of the exploited, and then demonstrates how the same process happened to others based on their racial/ethnic background. Mollborn and Hoekstra (2010) are asking the students to examine the issue of household labor externally by evaluating the fit of a theoretical perspective. In Professor Prew's course, the institutional forces that gave rise to contemporary racial/ethnic inequality are described both historically and theoretically through the discussion of institutional racism. In order for the students to dismiss institutional discrimination, they must dismiss their own feelings of injustice that they felt in the first exercise. Contrasted to Mollborn and Hoekstra (2010) where students are not asked to develop feelings of injustice, Professor Prew's class required that the students experience their own feelings of inequality before learning about the inequality of others. While a few do not accept the evidence regarding institutional discrimination, others are able to grow from the exercise and develop a new understanding of racial/ethnic inequality as well as a better appreciation for the experiences of others.

Describing in detail how Professor Prew's course follows a critical sociological perspective is important to understanding why professors following a critical sociological perspective may be more likely to receive negative comments. Students may perceive critical thinking exercises favorably by creating the impression that professors are providing balance in perspectives and views other than their own. Notions of providing alternative views are central

to some research studies of bias (Dixon and McCabe 2006; Tollini 2009). Comparing and contrasting a variety of theoretical perspectives while not challenging the “social arrangements that create conflicting interests between people” (Buechler 2008b:324) is less likely to provoke students to charges of bias than a critical sociological perspective that clearly identifies the source of these inequalities.

The critical sociological perspective will, by very definition, offend students looking for “bias” in their classrooms. When students comment on the perspective of the class, they are not critiquing the veracity of the content, only the presentation of information that differs from their own. “Accusations of partisanship hurled by the student reactionaries are themselves intensely partisan, being leveled against those who question, but never against those who reinforce, conservative orthodoxy” (Parenti 2010:121). By commenting on the perspective, the intent is to repress that perspective, to change the very content being covered in the course. Commenting on a professor’s perspective is inherently a partisan project and not an academic one. As a result, including a variety of perspectives in the classroom may not be enough to ensure that students do not perceive the class as biased. Even though some literature (Dixon and McCabe 2006) demonstrates that the presentation of diverse perspectives is associated with higher evaluations, other literature (Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2006) shows that the difference in perspective between professor and student are important predictors of evaluation scores. Thus, having diverse perspectives in the classroom may be necessary, but not sufficient, for higher evaluations if students’ perspectives differ from their professors’. Students with rigid worldviews will tend to cling to their own perspective (Nyhan and Reifler 2010) and will refuse to recognize the diversity of perspectives offered in the course, leading to lower evaluations of the course

Given the complaints targeting academics, the purpose of this paper is to focus on the critical sociological approach and document its effect on course evaluations. While there are limitations to a case study approach including only Professor Prew's class, the perspective of the class is known and can serve as a starting point for future comparative research. We hope to promote research that begins to address pedagogical differences as the source of student perceptions of bias. This paper is an attempt to begin research into the pedagogical influences on students' perceptions of bias.

METHODS

The data for our research is taken from evaluation forms collected in Professor Prew's Introduction to Sociology courses in Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. Of the 662 students enrolled in the classes, 473 completed evaluations for a response rate of over seventy percent. The evaluations included both quantitative and qualitative sections (see Appendix 4). The quantitative portion of the evaluations included questions that addressed the course in general and other questions that were more specific to the professor's pedagogy. The students could choose a number between one and five, one being low and five being high. On the back of the evaluations, students were asked to provide open-ended, qualitative comments on the course pedagogy.

We coded the written comments for inclusion of remarks addressing the professor's critical sociological perspective. In the process of coding the evaluations, we developed codes for critical thinking, positive comments, mixed comments, and negative comments. Since students do not possess the lexicon to describe critical sociology, they tended to use the terms

and ideas associated with critical thinking. A critical thinking comment would include statements like the following, “Helps critical thinking, [sic] the different Sociological perspectives helped with that greatly.” They tend to focus on seeing things from different perspectives and often use the term, critical thinking. Positive comments regarding the perspective would resemble the following: “Receiving the clear cut, unbiased truth [sic]. ... I loved this course. Presentation of current events & social issues [sic].” Mixed comments blurred positive and negative comments regarding the perspective in the classroom. They tended to identify bias, but still saw the approach in the class as beneficial. For instance, the “instructor is bias [sic] to what he teaches, but everyone likes to show their views on topics. I think that understanding these social problems and learning from a different perspective than my own was extremely beneficial.” An example of a negative comment would be, “He didn’t teach sociology! He taught what he thought was soc! He also only showed one side of the stories!” This comment includes two components that we looked for in negative comments on the perspective. First, we looked for comments that argued the class was biased or “showed one side.” Second, we looked for comments that argued that the class was another discipline or not sociology. We included these ideas in the coding because some students seem to have a confused idea of what sociology really is. For example, a student exclaimed on an evaluation, “I thought I was in ethnic studies / political science class. NOT sociology” [sic]. For some students, critical sociology is not only biased; it does not even qualify as sociology because it does not fit their preconception of the range of sociological topics. We will refer to this variable as Student Written Comments.

Our main hypothesis is that students who provide negative comments regarding the professor’s critical sociological perspective will tend to negatively evaluate the course as a

whole. Our dependent variable is a measure on the evaluation form that asked the students to rank “the course as a whole” (Course as a Whole). We looked at other independent variables that may influence Course as a Whole, such as grade expected in the class, the student’s class standing (freshman, sophomore, etc.), and if the class was in their major. We included the grade expected in the class because previous research (Dixon and McCabe 2006:116) found a link between grades and course evaluations. The year in school may influence evaluations if students who are further along in their education take it more seriously than new students. Students in the major may evaluate the course more favorably because they are more familiar with the material and interested in the subject.

To assess the relationship between the Student Written Comments and Course as a Whole, we ran means for Course as a Whole based on the various categories in Student Written Comments. To test the strength of the relationships, we also ran correlations for the Student Written Comments and a number of variables from the evaluations, including Course as a Whole, “The instructors contribution to the course,” “Student confidence in instructor’s knowledge,” “What grade do you expect to receive?,” “Class,” and “Is this course: in your major, not in your major but required for a program, an elective, other.” Lastly, the variable Student Written Comments was ordered in a way to allow regression analysis. Although the data does not tend to fit the assumptions of linear regression (Cohen and Lea 2004:91), regression analysis allows comparison of the relative strength of the independent variables. While the results of the regression should be interpreted with caution, the relative strength of Student Written Comments can be compared to other independent variables. Negative comments regarding the professors’ perspective was coded as “1,” no comments were coded as “2,” comments provided that did not include negative or positive comments regarding the perspective

were coded “3,” mixed positive and negative comments were coded “4,” positive comments were coded “5,” and critical thinking comments were coded “6.” To get a sense of the relative explanatory power of the independent variables on the Course as a Whole, we ran two regression models. The first model included only Student Written Comments, the grade expected in the class, and the class of the student (freshman, sophomore, etc.). To avoid multicollinearity, the second model included a number of variables in the quantitative portion of the evaluations that were less likely to be dependent on how the student viewed the perspective in the course. In addition to the above variables, the second model included “Course organization,” “Sequential presentation of concepts,” “Evaluative and grading techniques,” “Use of class time,” “Instructor’s enthusiasm,” “Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements,” “Answers to student questions,” “Clarity of instructor’s voice,” and “Instructor’s interest in whether students learned.”

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results tend to support our hypothesis that students who comment negatively on the critical sociology perspective in Professor Prew’s classroom have a negative effect on the course evaluations. To begin, the means of the Student Written Comments contrasted with the variable, Course as a Whole, show a pattern consistent with lower evaluations scores associated with negative comments. While the total mean for Course as a Whole is 3.74, the mean for students who leave negative comments regarding Professor Prew’s perspective is 2.82.

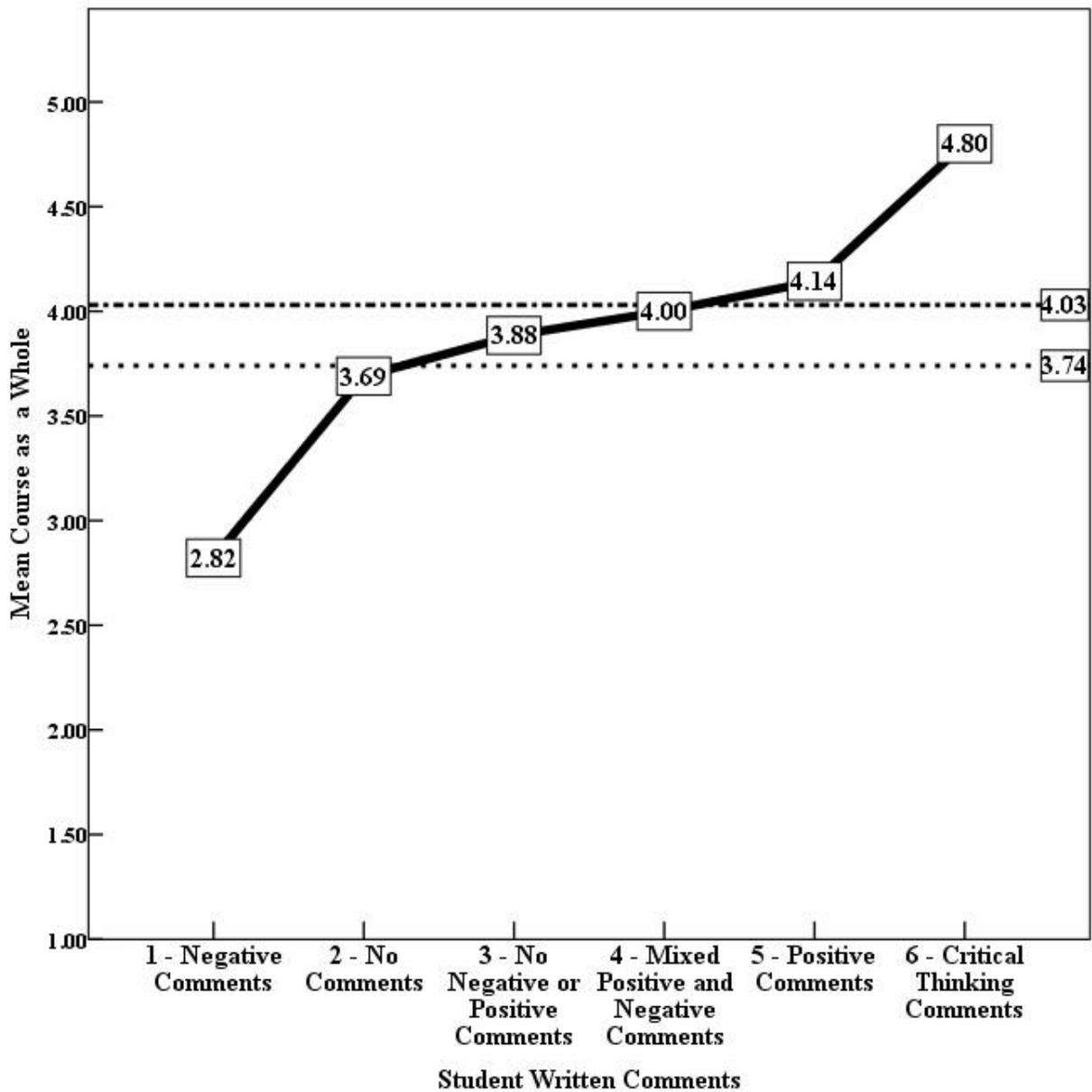
Table 1. Means: Course as a whole by student written comments

Course as a Whole

Student Written Comments	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Negative Comments	2.8214	56	1.09722
No Comments	3.6897	87	.81141
No Pos. or Neg.	3.8846	312	.91054
Mixed Comments	4.0000	6	.89443
Positive Comments	4.1429	7	1.06904
Critical Thinking	4.8000	5	.44721
Total	3.7378	473	.98020

Out of a 5-point scale, this is nearly a full point lower. On the other hand, students who comment that they appreciate the critical thinking in the class have a mean of 4.8 (although the N is very low at 5 cases). For a graphic representation of the difference in means, see Figure 1. Students who leave negative comments regarding the professor's perspective dip sharply below the overall mean for the class and the university. As the graph progresses toward positive comments and critical thinking, the graph line moves above the class and university mean. Some of the difference between Professor Prew's average evaluation scores and the university in general may be explained by the fact that his course is arguably more difficult than other large lecture courses. For example, the number of students expecting A's in Professor Prew's class is 23 percent of those filling out evaluations compared to 42 percent in the university large lecture courses and 55 percent in other large lecture Sociology courses for the 2008-2009 academic year.

Figure 1. Means: Course as a whole by student written comments



University mean — . — . — . — .

Professor Prew's mean

The correlations tend to demonstrate a significant relationship between the students' ranking of Course as a Whole and the comments regarding Professor Prew's perspective in the classroom. Of all of the factors listed on the evaluation form (See Appendix 4), Student Written Comments was most closely correlated with "The instructor's contribution to the course" (.362) followed by "Student confidence in instructor's knowledge" (.340). Next, both "The course as a whole" and "Would you recommend the course?" (not shown in table) have a significant correlation of .334 with Student Written Comments. Other correlations of note (not shown in table) include "Explanations by instructor" (.322), "Amount you learned in the course" (.311) and "Answers to student questions" (.300).

Table 2. Correlations

	Comment	Course	Contrib	Know	Grade	Class	Major
Student Written Comments		.334**	.362**	.340**	.027	.021	-.023
Course as a Whole	.334**		.680**	.548**	.222**	-.009	.074
Instructor's Contribution	.362**	.680**		.669**	.065	.034	.079
Instructor's Knowledge	.340**	.548**	.669**		.067	-.010	.083
Grade Expected	.027	.222**	.065	.067		.020	-.059
Class/Year in School	.021	-.009	.034	-.010	.020		.035
In Major, Elective, etc.	-.023	.074	.079	.083	-.059	.035	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The close tie of these survey items to Student Written Comments can be related to how students view the course. First, there is a close tie to how the student evaluates the content provided by the professor in the form of confidence in the instructor's knowledge, contribution to the course, explanations, and answers to questions. If a student were reacting negatively to the critical sociological perspective, it would be expected that the student would not agree with the

theories and research findings presented in the class. The student may also find the explanations and answers to students' questions unsatisfactory because they do not agree with the student's worldview. Consistent with the correlations found here, evidence in prior research tends to suggest that students who hold dogmatic ideological viewpoints are not only less likely to accept factual information, they are more likely to believe more strongly their own misperceptions (Nyhan and Reifler 2010).

Second, the Student Written Comments are closely tied to evaluations of the course in terms of how they feel about the course as a whole, what the student learned, and whether they would recommend the course. Students who perceive bias in the class would disapprove of the course as a whole and state that they did not learn in the class. Because it differs from their own preconceived worldview, the students will reject the course material, leading them to the impression that they did not learn and the course was not worthwhile. For example one student who self-identified as being in the major stated, "The strengths were [sic] that he was confident in what he was saying[,] but his weakness was that the only opinion that he ever portrayed throughout the course was his own[,] & he was not open to others. He let his liberal views run the course rather than teaching true curriculum. I felt as if I learned nothing & that I learned more in sociology in high school by a teacher assistant[,] who was 18, then [sic] him. [K]eep the professor's bias, [sic] liberal agenda out of the curriculum." This attitude about the class may be explained by the difference between critical sociology and non-critical approaches. In contrast, another student recently expressed gratitude to Professor Prew for his critical sociological approach because the student's high school course taught what happens when "someone farts in an elevator." Certain types of sociology, especially taught in the restrictive environments of secondary education, may focus on issues like the elevator example above. The reliance on

breaching experiments and humorous insights is termed “whoopie cushion sociology” by Professor Prew. If the students are having fun, they perceive that they are learning, but if they are made to feel vulnerable, then they feel that the discomfort they experience is not conducive to learning. Students may get a distorted impression of the wide range of sociological topics if instructors do not stray too far from safe topics that make students giggle. When they do take a class that teaches sociology using a critical sociological perspective, students may embrace or reject the change in approach depending on their own preexisting biases, consistent with Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2006).

The correlations also reveal some interesting non-significant results. First, a major charge of “liberal” higher education is that left-leaning professors will make it more difficult for non-liberal students to earn higher grades (Giroux 2010:105), or even that the professor will lower grades for students who disagree with their perspective (Bérubé 2006). Student Written Comments was not significantly correlated with “What grade do you expect to receive?” (see Table 2 above) indicating that even though some students felt Professor Prew’s class was “liberal” or “not sociology,” they did not feel that it affected their grades. There is also no correlation between Student Written Comments and whether the class was in their major, or an elective, etc. While it may be assumed that sociology majors would tend to be more liberal and less likely to view the class as overtly liberal, crosstabs revealed that two students who identified as majors, did express negative comments about the perspective in the class and two others expressed mixed comments. “He seems to have done a lot of research on the subject matters[,] and he seems to really care about said subject as well, but he is far too biased and opinionated to fully trust as an informational source. I almost expected the instructor to burst out into a rant about the man. Ironically, I agree with most of what he says, but he seems to [sic] close-minded.

[B]e more open-minded to others' view points. The world is not black and white.” Another student in the major stated, “Some [sic] of the major strengths of the professor is his knowledge[,] but one of his weaknesses is that he isn't [sic] bias [sic] about certain issues.” In many cases, like these comments, it is difficult to understand the students' concerns since the course emphasizes the complexity of social life and eschews simplistic, often ethnocentric, explanations.

To get a relative sense of the explanatory power of some of the variables included in the evaluations, the regression equations tended to continue to support the idea that students' negative comments regarding the perspective in the classroom are related to the overall evaluation of the course. In the first model including only Student Written Comments, the grade expected in the class, and class standing, Student Written Comments had the greatest explanatory power. Overall, the explained variance is small (.159) but significant. In the second expanded model, Student Written Comments was still significant and had a standardized coefficient near the middle of the variables included. While Student Written Comments would not be expected to be the most predictive of the evaluations, it is still one of the stronger variables included in the equation. Overall, the r-square is .536 and demonstrates that students' attitudes about the perspective of the class and their expected grade do play a significant role in determining the outcomes of evaluations.

Table 3. Standardized regression coefficients for course as a whole:
Fall 2008 to Spring 2009

	Model 1	Model 2
R square	.159	.536
N	470	467
Student Written Comments	.329***	.142***
What grade do you expect to receive?	.217***	.133***
Class (freshman, sophomore, etc.)	-.019	-.023
Course organization		.197***
Sequential presentation of concepts		.194***
Evaluative and grading techniques		.165***
Use of class time		.156***
Instructor's enthusiasm		.134**
Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements		-.103*
Answers to student questions		.072
Clarity of instructor's voice		.028
Instructor's interest in whether students learned		-.041

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Based on our results, we tend to find significant relationships between the negative comments regarding the critical sociological approach and the outcome of the course evaluations. Prior literature suggests a connection between perceived imbalance in the classroom and course evaluations, but is it possible that professors who provide a variety of perspectives in the classroom are still perceived as biased simply because they use a critical sociological perspective? Bérubé (2006) and Seibel Trainor's (2002) research would suggest that professors can strive to be inclusive and provide a variety of perspectives, but still be perceived as biased. Professor Prew included guest speakers as well as covered a variety of topics outside of his area of core interest. The list of perspectives covered in Professor Prew's classroom is long, and he does not agree, nor identify, with all of them. To introduce students to the various theoretical perspectives in sociology early in the course, he applies functionalism,

interactionism and conflict theory to the same social issue. Using the example of genocide in Rwanda, Professor Prew demonstrates (without denigrating those perspectives with which he disagrees) how all three perspectives would contribute to the understanding of the issue. Later in another portion of the course, Professor Prew outlines the goals, intentions, and actions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) from the WTO's perspective based on its own documents. Students are then asked to contemplate the effects of those goals in the nations where it operates. In this way, students are exposed to both the claims to benefits by the WTO as well as a critical sociological analysis of the effects of WTO policies. Despite the fact that Professor Prew provides both the WTO perspective and the critical sociological critique, students may look past the different perspectives offered and perceive bias anyway. "This is because views that contradict those on the right are considered biased, whereas right-wing positions are considered neutral and form the universal backdrop against which the definition of bias is constructed" (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010). Thus, it is not *just* that the professor does not provide a variety of perspectives, it is more that those perspectives provided, including critical sociology, do not sympathize with the students preexisting worldview.

Experience tells us that some students feel Professor Prew presents only one side, and his class is strongly biased, for example, "he has a lot of knowledge but seems to be pretty biased to one side of each argument and discussion." This is troubling, but even more so because other classes are decidedly rooted in the professor's perspective but are not identified by the students as one sided or biased. Part of what impelled us to do this project was comparing students' comments regarding Professor Prew's course to an economist's course on ratemyprofessor.com. While Professor Prew received frequent biting comments regarding his perspective, the

economist only received occasional references to his perspective, almost exclusively extolling the virtues of his neo-liberal approach.

Nocella, Best, and McLaren (2010) would suggest that academic repression carried out on college campuses and in the media are largely responsible for the blinders to conservative bias at the same time progressive voices are challenged and silenced. The predominance of claims of a liberal bias in the media and from conservative organizations constructs the impression that liberal professors are presenting their views while conservative professors are providing facts (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:67). This tends to be confirmed by the strong correlation in our research between Student Written Comments and “Student confidence in instructor’s knowledge.” This correlation is very interesting, especially given that seven students specifically acknowledged the breadth of Professor Prew’s knowledge, but argued his class is too biased. “He knows topic well but[,] he is biased & very opinionated.” Thus, some students agree that Professor Prew knows the correct information, but still argue that he must provide an alternative to this correct information. For these students, they obsess over the idea of portraying different sides of the issue to the exclusion of what is truly accurate information. Balance is lauded over social scientific findings. “Not only is the concept of ‘balance’ vague, it is an impossible ideal to achieve; it revives discredited positive ideologies that professors can adopt a neutral (rather than always-already biased) stance and always give equal time and consideration to opposing viewpoints. The concept of ‘balance’ and ‘equal’ time are absurd if one is required to teach the KKK along with Martin Luther King Jr., flat-earth approaches in addition to contemporary astronomy” (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:68). Given that many students who complain about the critical sociological perspective concede Professor Prew’s knowledge base, criticisms of one-sidedness are not really about balancing the perspectives

within the course because accurate information has already been communicated in the classroom; these criticisms are really about changing, fundamentally, the content of the course. To comment on a professor's perspective is largely a repressive mechanism to move the university curriculum to one that is more consistent with the preconceptions of the students complaining about the course. If complaints about bias are truly about providing balance and contrasting perspectives, we would expect to see complaints more evenly distributed across disciplines. This is simply not the case, and Nocella, Best and McLaren's (2010) text documents the lopsided nature of the complaints.

What is disturbing about these results is that many of the comments by the students criticizing the perspective are inaccurate characterizations of the course, and sometimes, outright fabrications. These mischaracterizations resonate with Best, Nocella, and McLaren's (2010:66,77) analysis of claims against professors. Academic repression is largely, if not wholly, constructed on fabrications and distortions. Some of the more extreme comments paint a very disturbing portrait of Professor Prew's course. One student claimed he was "biased and racist towards white males[.] [What aspects of the course were most beneficial to you?] Honestly nothing, the course was unbelievably biased. Don't promote communism, don't be so biased, stop playing out America as the bad guys, don't accuse white males as being the evil in this world, use logical arguments [sic]. (saying race wasn't real made you lose quite a bit of credibility) Don't be so biased (accusing the right side of being retarded)." Professor Prew obviously did not refer to the "right side" as "retarded" and the student missed the entire point of the discussion regarding race. The class discussed how genetic differences between different perceived races are so small as to be inconsequential while the effects of racism are real. What is also interesting about these types of comments is that Professor Prew actively focuses on

theoretical, historical and empirical data to create the foundation for course exercises and lectures. While the choice of topics and issues covered is influenced by Professor Prew's theoretical and research interests, Professor Prew withholds much of his personal attitudes since his attitudes are actually much more progressive than those discussed in the class.

Another tactic is to claim that the information in class is constructed to fit Professor Prew's narrative. For example, a student had this to say, "Paul gives the appearance that he knows about what he's talking, and if I hadn't known better about some of the subjects, I would have believed him. However, upon talking with him, he pretty much admitted that he skews facts and figures to make his point – which gave me no faith in the remainder of the class." A different student made a similar accusation, "His strengths are that you can tell he is very knowledgeable and enthusiastic, but a weakness is that he tends to screw the information to fit his personal opinion." Again, students construct conversations and interpretations of what happens in the classroom. The notion that the course material is "skewed" or "screwed" to fit an opinion is a fabrication to justify dismissing the course content. No conversation in which Professor Prew "admitted that he skews facts" ever took place. The inaccurate comments of students tend to belie a more fundamental social problem than the bias of the professor. Students are so terribly misinformed from other sources (Kull et al. 2003) that accurate information appears to be propaganda. These students' perspectives are so ideologically grounded that the information in the class appears distorted and exaggerated, consistent with the findings of Nyhan and Reifler (2010). People with strong political convictions are not only resistant to new, more accurate information, but cling more tightly to their misperceptions.

The use of these exaggerated or fabricated comments are part of the broader issue of academic repression. Students' comments can have the effect of limiting the content in the

classroom. These comments can take a variety of forms: public media attacks, private comments in evaluations, meetings with supervisors, and organized networks of surveillance. In addition to highly publicized accounts of academic repression, students have been organized to complain about the content of courses that diverge from their worldview (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:61,77; Giroux 2010:105). Students do not have to be organized by outside groups to have the same chilling effect on academic freedom as Dr. Price's experience demonstrates. We assert that even the comments in evaluations by students, whether fully consciously intended or not, can persuade instructors to alter the content of their courses. While not as visible or direct a confrontation as a media assault or disciplinary process, student comments in evaluations can portend more ominous consequences for pushing the critical sociological perspective. "When faculty who are tenured, who have decades of experience, and who are internationally-renowned scholars can be hassled, threatened, defamed, imprisoned, and fired for holding critical views on controversial topics such as US and Israeli state terrorism, one can imagine the chilling effect this has on assistant or associate professors with far less experience and status, to say nothing of those toiling in part-time, adjunct, or rotating contract positions and whose fears and insecurities are exponentially magnified in depressed job markets and a recessionary global economy" (Best, Nocella II and McLaren 2010:75).

CONCLUSION

We consider the results of this study to be both illuminating and disturbing. While only a small portion (about 12 percent) of students actively voiced negative attitudes toward the perspective in the class, they do constitute a group of students who "sleepwalk" their way

through the course and actively reject the general education goals of identifying oppression and examining the concepts of ethnocentrism, discrimination, and racism. The general education goals at Minnesota State University - Mankato are well suited to a critical sociological perspective, but some students reject the attempt to seriously engage those goals. Based on their prior experiences, others, even sociology majors, have distorted impressions of what constitutes sociology. In this sense, sociology professors, like many other faculty from other disciplines, do not seriously engage the general education goals because it affects how they are evaluated as demonstrated in Professor Prew's class. Thus, many faculty tend to water down the critical sociological analysis, putting them in a more advantageous position when it comes to evaluations and other institutional rewards. Given the laundry list of social problems facing the world today, it is necessary to challenge current students to understand their world more deeply. Without the ability to "develop alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues" (Minnesota State University - Mankato 2009), students will be ill-equipped to address the problems they face.

The presence of students in our classrooms who reject general education goals, or critical sociology specifically, intentionally or unintentionally presents unique challenges. In the classroom, students cannot avoid or opt out of their professors' critical sociological approach. Accepting course content that addresses inequality, oppression, and civil liberties may be hard for some students because it contrasts with their understanding of why such issues persist. Their understanding tends to be rooted in the popular notions of individual explanations and personal motivations. When students are exposed to the critical sociological perspective, they might experience cognitive dissonance (Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2006). One solution is to withdraw from controversial issues in the classroom and hide the fact that, as a scientist, the

professor has an obligation to present the most accurate and contemporaneous research possible. Due to the pressures of institutional rewards, many faculty succumb to simply presenting various perspectives, as opposed to challenging the students understanding of the causes of social problems. When professors do not go beyond merely presenting various perspectives, this leaves the impression that one perspective is just as good as another, thus not challenging students and their understanding. Just as the reality of climate change has remained in a limbo of “debate” over its existence, students may leave the classroom assuming that the research regarding wealth inequality as a result of segregation is also debatable and believing that racism, inequality, etc. in the United States is a result of the individual, and not the system, because our system is an open and equal system based on merits only.

The critical sociological approach asserts that social science evidence, regardless of its status as controversial, should be communicated. As a result, the critical sociological perspective will inevitably prompt ire in those whose belief systems disagree with contemporary social science evidence. One student clearly expressed his discomfort with the critical sociological approach, especially the discussions of repression and agent provocateurs. “While the instructor brings passion to his teaching, he fails in teaching important class concepts and instead opts for stressing his own political beliefs. He uses ‘a new and controversial learning style that may make you uncomfortable’ as his reason. The professor should stick to teaching important class concepts & not his personal viewpoint. He had many negative and dangerous lectures about his negative views on law enforcement. This was not conducive to a learning environment.” Like the claims against Dr. Jammie Price, this student is implying that Professor Prew’s classroom creates a hostile environment. What these students are asserting is that ethnocentrism, alienation, filters of propaganda, repression, gender inequality, institutional racism, climate change, etc. are

the professor's personal views and not "important class concepts," but roles, norms, interaction, deviance, identity, and other inoffensive terms are.

Simply because some students emphatically deny social scientific evidence, professors should not be goaded into watering down their courses by sticking to "important class concepts" to make everyone feel comfortable. As Howard Zinn (2002) so famously asserted, "you can't be neutral on a moving train." As a result of viewing a critical sociology or other disciplines as politically charged, professors may argue that they are not trying to "effect a change in the political opinions of its students" (Jay and Graff 1995:206). To us, this is an odd stance to take in that critical sociology is no more (or less) an expressly political project than other disciplines like mechanical engineering, anthropology, physics, or economics. In opposition to Kelly-Woessner and Woessner's (2006:500) admonitions to "strive for political balance," we suggest that focus should move away from the issue of the political orientation of the professor to a broader understanding of the social climate that creates intolerant students.

There is a distinct fallacy of balance that pervades the rhetoric of the attacks on higher education, and researchers like Jay and Graf (1995) and Kelly-Woessner and Woessner (2006) reinforce this fallacy. Cries for balance are a bludgeon used to direct course content into areas more consistent with the worldview of those who complain. Critical sociology will make students with rigid worldviews based on misperceptions uncomfortable, but it is our assertion that teaching styles that do not incorporate the critical sociological perspective are less "conducive to a learning environment" because they do not challenge the students to confront their social reality. Some students with rigid worldviews may be driven away by the critical sociological perspective, but others are exposed to alternative explanations for the social issues they face everyday. The critical sociological approach may be much better situated to address

the problems identified in the study, *Academically Adrift* (Arum and Roksa 2011). Avoiding controversy and making students comfortable could very well contribute to the lack of progress achieved by the students in the study.

More specificity of what students are actually reacting to needs to be observed in the research in this area. Administrators and supervisors should be aware of the effects of the students' prejudices on the evaluations of professors who take a critical sociological approach. While Bérubé (2006) and others (Nocella II, Best and McLaren 2010) look at the influence of the radical right to influence what is taught on college campuses, research could also focus more specifically on how this media assault on academic freedom has created intolerance among students, especially those required to take general education courses.

Our research is a case study and only provides a limited insight, however it does provide guidance for future research. A more ambitious project could be developed to analyze the content of Introduction to Sociology courses to determine the level of critical sociology in the course. Differences in the application of critical sociology could be contrasted with the degree to which students criticize the perspective in the classroom and the evaluation scores of the professor. Further studies could be expanded to other disciplines. While previous studies tended to focus on a balance of views in the classroom to accommodate students as opposed to challenging their individualistic perspective, new research could be reoriented toward attempting to understand how much the student's own bias influences the evaluation outcomes. Despite its limitations, our study does demonstrate a direct connection between students' negative evaluations of the professor's critical sociological perspective and lower evaluations of the course as a whole. These results have profound implications for the faculty's pedagogical choices

and how they affect the institutional system of rewards within the academy, such as tenure, promotion, grants, course releases, sabbaticals, etc.

Appendix 1: Introduction to sociology general education goals

Goal Area 5: History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences

Goal: To increase students' knowledge of how historians and social and behavioral scientists discover, describe, and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events and ideas. To challenge students to examine the implications of this knowledge and its interconnection with action and living an informed life.

Students will be able to:

- a) employ the methods and data that historians and social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition;
- b) examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods and cultures;
- c) use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories;
- d) develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.

Goal Area 8: Global Perspective

Goal: To increase students' understanding of the growing interdependence of nations, traditions and peoples and develop their ability to apply a comparative perspective to cross-cultural social, economic, and political experiences.

Students will be able to:

- a) describe, analyze, and evaluate political, economic, humanistic, artistic, social and cultural elements which influence relations of nations and peoples in their historical and contemporary dimensions;
- b) demonstrate knowledge of cultural, social, religious and linguistic differences;
- c) analyze specific international problems illustrating cultural, economic, artistic, humanistic, social, and political differences which affect their solution;
- d) understand the role of a world citizen and the responsibility world citizens share for their common global future.

Diverse Cultures - Purple (Content-Based)

To prepare students with course content and the analytical and reflective skills to better understand diversity in the United States and in other societies across the world.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Master an understanding of diversity as defined by Minnesota State Mankato.
2. Acquire a substantive knowledge base to identify the impact of oppression for individuals from diverse populations.
3. Obtain the analytical skills necessary to make links between historical practices and contemporary U.S. societal issues of diversity.
4. Apply the same method for interpreting diversity issues in the United States to understanding issues of diversity in other societies across the world.
5. Develop an understanding of historical and contemporary social relations in specific societies across the world.

Satisfying Purple Courses for Goal 1

1. Purple courses meet the outcomes associated with Goal 1 and are primarily aimed at helping students learn content.
2. Purple courses allow students to explore basic concepts such as oppression, prejudice, discrimination, racism and ethnocentrism and responses to each; civil liberties in the context of economic, political, social, religious and educational issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class and disabilities in a pluralistic society.
3. Although Purple courses may focus primarily on one diverse group of people, the course content should relate the basic concepts and issues discussed to a variety of groups.
4. Purple courses must meet at least 3 of the learning outcomes identified for Goal 1, including Learning Outcome 1.
5. Purple courses may have experiential and reflective components, but the primary focus is on content.

Appendix 2: Housing inequality interactive assignment

For this exercise, read the scenario and answer the questions below. Once you have answered the questions, find 2 or 3 other people and compare your answers. *Come to a consensus about Questions 4 and 5 on what you would like to be done.* We will discuss what conclusions you agree upon.

Imagine that your grandfather lived in a town divided into two different neighborhoods. Your grandfather lived in the East neighborhood. At a certain point, the people living in the West neighborhood gained control of the city council. They then enacted a zoning regulation that devalued the properties in the East neighborhood. The residents of the West neighborhood saw the values of their properties increase as a result of the new zoning regulation. The West residents on the city council worked with their friends in the local real estate and banking businesses to discourage or refuse people from the East moving into the West neighborhood.

As a result of the new zoning ordinance, property values of the East residents fell from \$100,000 to \$25,000 over the course of 15 years, and have remained low ever since. The West residents saw their property values rise from \$100,000 to \$400,000 in the same time period. West residents enjoy a better tax base and primary schools. Using the value of their homes, some can afford to send their children to private high schools. East residents do not have the tax revenue to provide a quality education to their youth. With the better schools and private education, West residents attend better colleges and average \$52,000 salaries. East residents, on the other hand, make only about \$32,000.

The grandchildren of the East residents have discovered the zoning law and are now filing a lawsuit against the city. They are suing for damages in relation to their property values and lost wages. Because **your grandfather was a resident of the East**, you can participate in the lawsuit. What do you do?

Place your answers on the back of this sheet.

1. Having discovered this zoning law, how do you feel about what happened?
2. What would you say if someone from the West told you that it was all in the past and you should “just get over it”?
3. Would you support trying to remove the zoning law? The law is perfectly “legal,” so what would be your argument to get rid of it?
4. Some of the grandchildren are asking for compensation. What would be your argument to support or oppose their actions?
5. Who do you think should be held responsible: no one, the city council, the residents, the bankers, real estate agents, etc.? Explain the reasons for your decision.
6. **What is the consensus of your group about what to do about Questions 4 and 5?**

Appendix 3: Interwrite PRS “clicker” questions

- 1) Having discovered this zoning law has a great impact on your income and education, how do you feel about what happened?
 - a) I am angry.
 - b) It does not matter.
- 2) Would you support removing the zoning law?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
- 3) In terms of fixing the problem, what solution would you most support?
 - a) I think removing the zoning law would be enough
 - b) I think the school districts should use funds from both communities to make the schools equal
 - c) I think the West community should have to pay the difference in property values to the owners and their offspring
 - d) I think the West community should pay for lost property values and make the school districts equal
- 4) In terms of fixing the problem discussed in the film regarding housing inequality, what solution would you most support?
 - a) I think ending redlining and block-busting is enough.
 - b) I think the school districts should use funds to make the schools equal.
 - c) I think those affected should be paid the difference in property values to the owners and their offspring.
 - d) I think they should be paid for lost property values and make the school districts equal.

Appendix 4: Instructional evaluation

LARGE LECTURE

MINIMUM CLASS PARTICIPATION

Rate the instructor and course on a 5 to 1 scale
(High) 5 1 (Low)

SECTION 1: To provide a general evaluation, please rate:

1. The course as a whole
2. The instructor's contribution to the course
3. Use of class time
4. Instructor's interest in whether the students learned
5. Amount you learned in the course
6. Evaluative and grading techniques (tests, papers, projects, etc.)
7. Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements

SECTION 2: To provide feedback to the instructor, please rate:

8. Course organization
9. Sequential presentation of concepts
10. Instructor's use of examples and illustrations
11. Clarity of instructor's voice
12. Student confidence in instructor's knowledge
13. Instructor's enthusiasm
14. Explanations by instructor
15. Answers to student questions

BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

16. Would you recommend the course? no, majors only, anyone interested
17. Is this course: in your major, not in major but required for program, an elective, other
18. Class: Fr, So, Jr, Sr, Grad, Other
19. What grade do you expect to receive? A, B, C, D, P, F/NC

PLEASE COMMENT ON THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- A. What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the instructor?
- B. What aspects of this course were most beneficial to you?
- C. What do you suggest to improve this course?
- D. Comment on the grading procedures and exams.

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