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Bonus Chapter in *Picture a Professor*

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Figuring Out Student Feedback on Teaching:

Strategies for Reducing Potential Personal and Professional Harm to Faculty

There's an elephant trampling through every chapter of *Picture a Professor: Interrupting Biases about Faculty and Increasing Student Learning*.¹ It's not a cute cartoon elephant eating peanuts or a gentle giant majestically traversing the Serengeti. No, this is a massive nightmare creature with razor sharp tusks, rampaging through the pages of our book and trumpeting in rage.

The elephant in the room is anonymous end-of-the-term student evaluations.

From rigorously designed and implemented scholarly studies to moving personal essays to heartfelt outpourings on social media, a mountain of evidence powerfully documents the ways that student evaluations of teaching (SET) can be personally and professionally damaging to faculty, especially to faculty from historically marginalized populations such as women faculty of color. Scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and teaching advice for college instructors as a whole frequently fails to adequately address what sociologist Roxanna Harlow terms the “disparate realities” of college teaching,² that is, how systemic racism, sexism, ableism, and other types of discrimination, along with employment status, creates teaching labor inequities. In marked contrast, there are an abundant number of articles and studies documenting how students' racial and gender biases impact anonymous teaching ratings and evaluations.³

SET reflect student biases and the way that almost all universities utilize anonymous end-of-the-term SET to evaluate teaching efficacy as part of making employment decisions notably

contributes to unjust and inequitable working conditions in higher education.⁴ However, a variety of student *feedback* on teaching (SFT) can be an important source of insight and information on teaching efficacy when the questions and the survey instrument are designed, administered, and interpreted carefully. It's complicated. No wonder that the authors in *Picture a Professor* do not delve into SFT and/or SET in any detail. This topic demands its own dedicated chapter.⁵

There is increasing awareness in academia about the proven ways biases impact anonymous end-of-term SET.⁶ Some institutions have added an introductory statement on their SET form that defines implicit bias and reminds students to give only constructive, course-related feedback.⁷ One notable advance is that some colleges have a policy which allows instructors to permanently remove from their employment file any student comments that are racist, sexist, deliberately demeaning, or in other ways inappropriate.⁸ Teaching portfolios that draw on numerous types of teaching assessment and documentation of teaching efficacy, instead of focusing solely on SET, are more commonly used now to assess college teaching.⁹ Yet the notoriously slow-to-evolve culture of higher education is just barely beginning to reckon with student biases and other systemic discrimination in higher education when it comes to evaluating teaching efficacy. Such a reckoning could, conceivably, even eliminate SET altogether.

There are compelling reasons to assert that useful feedback on teaching cannot be extricated from all the attendant biases and systemic prejudices shaping anonymous SET whenever the instructor fails to fulfill students' gendered and intersection expectations and assumptions about academic expertise and authority, particularly regarding race. Scholar of urban education H. Richard Milner argues that

[W]hen structures and systems are in place to maintain white people's privileges and whiteness, we must carefully probe why teaching evaluations can actually do more harm

than good in the overall cycle of feedback to faculty to improve their practices. Or perhaps, more importantly, are teaching evaluations actually designed as mechanisms to intentionally push out particular faculty in order to maintain a white-centric, male majority university?¹⁰

Milner is not asking a rhetorical question when he suggest that within the context of higher education systems and culture, student evaluations substantively reinforce racial discrimination and other intersectional hierarchies.¹¹ Student evaluations can reinscribe in a real way the violent maintenance of these racial exclusions onto instructors. As professor of education LaVada U. Taylor writes:

Institutional practices that use course evaluations—in very punitive ways—further marginalize faculty of color by relying on a very subjective measure of teaching effectiveness based on student perception of experience. In so doing, systemic racism is perpetuated on college and university campuses as administrators ignore the influence of race and racism in students' evaluative feedback.¹²

Taylor is pointing out that SET is deeply, perhaps irrevocably, enmeshed in higher education's systemic racism. Scholar of curriculum and professor of education Donyell L. Roseboro summarizes the problem: "Absent a complete eradication of systemic racism ... we face the very real possibility that student perceptions of teaching not only do not measure 'good' teaching but actually reinforce assumptions about who is smart/qualified/capable enough to teach in the academy."¹³ Those assumptions about who is "smart/qualified/capable enough to teach in the academy" are precisely what the authors in *Picture a Professor* are working to deconstruct in the college classroom.

Like those authors, I am very aware that any discussion about pedagogical practices must pay close, nuanced attention to how embodied identity matters to teaching and learning. But also like every author in this collection, I want to provide readers with some practical ways to navigate and contend with teaching inequities while also successfully facilitating student learning. In the case of student evaluations, I'm also attentive to supporting faculty's own individual career advancement because so many institutions give SET disproportionate power when making employment decisions. This chapter aims to directly address unjust and inequitable teaching conditions by offering some concrete ways instructors can empower themselves professionally and personally when it comes to reflecting on, documenting, and assessing their teaching efficacy via student feedback.

I'm a college instructor who experiences students' sociocultural gendered expectations and certain assumptions about disciplinary expertise in my scholarly field (history) and, as I discuss in later in this chapter, I've been harmed by SET. But as an instructor, I directly benefit from what Resmaa Menakem terms "white body supremacy," as well as other advantages as a cisgendered able-bodied heterosexual tenured humanities professor, with a small teaching load and small classes.¹⁴ With that in mind, I'm wary of echoing previous work on SET that discusses it as a reality that just exists, period, and that we have to accept reality. There's a subtext to that type of comment, like "Yeah, sure, anonymous student evaluations totally do contribute to gender, racial, and a whole host of other hierarchies in higher education but oh well, what are you gonna do? LOL *shrugging emoji*"

In this chapter, I describe three strategies for mitigating some of the worst ways SET are routinely administered and used in higher education: Strategy #1.) Ask students questions about teaching that they can productively answer. Strategy #2.) Frame all student feedback as

formative, not summative. Strategy #3.) Position student feedback as only one small portion of a much larger and multifaceted teaching assessment process. These actions at the individual level can, at a minimum, lessen the personal and professional harm SET may wreck on college educators who do not conform to the normative racialized, gendered, and other embodied ideals of academic expertise and authority.¹⁵ Applied more broadly, they could improve SFT and teaching assessment at a comprehensive level.

These three strategies are by no means the only thing we can do, individually and collectively, regarding SET.¹⁶ Everyone in higher education should advocate for systemic reforms in evaluating teaching efficacy that better account for teaching inequities, including continually learning exactly how student biases and assumptions impact SET. Even if you just happen to perfectly fit the profile of the stereotypical professor, you should work to improve and make more just and equitable how we assess college teaching. When describing who would benefit from reading her chapter in *Picture a Professor*, "Empowered Strategies for Women Faculty of Color Navigating Teaching Inequities in Higher Ed," Chavella Pittman convincingly summarizes why all faculty, administrators, educational developers and consultants working in higher education need to cultivate their knowledge about disparate teaching realities:

Don't belong to any marginalized groups? *Pay attention*. This is an opportunity for you learn about teaching inequities so you understand how embodied statuses impact teaching practices and how your women of color colleagues cannot implement teaching practices in the exact same way nor with the same outcomes as their White male or male privileged peers.¹⁷

I would add that because SET can significantly damage personal teaching self-efficacy¹⁸ and professional employment prospects, it is especially urgent that everyone in higher ed "pay

attention,” as Pittman writes, to the inequitable teaching contexts in which we administer and interpret student evaluations or ratings of teaching.

Importantly, the strategies I outline in this chapter are premised on creating, soliciting, and interpreting multiple types of SFT (student feedback on teaching), at multiple times throughout the term. The term SFT deliberately decenters and deemphasizes the most potentially damaging type of student feedback—anonymous, end-of-term student evaluations or ratings of teaching.¹⁹ Methodically redefining our communications with students about teaching as ongoing (formative) feedback at a single moment in time, rather than a comprehensive or definitive judgement about teaching skills, is a vital part of reducing the harms that standard anonymous SET can have on instructors.

That shift in terminology is also in keeping with the idea, expressed and demonstrated throughout *Picture a Professor*, that we can and should fully acknowledge student biases while at the same time empowering teaching self-efficacy. The contributors to *Picture a Professor* show that although we must identify biases and discrimination in the classroom, we must simultaneously maintain faith in the transformative power of education and the ability of students to learn. In this bonus chapter, I argue that the same is true for creating, administering, and interpreting student feedback on teaching.

Strategy #1: Ask Questions That Students Can Answer

Pop quiz: What can constructive and thoughtful student feedback, elicited via a well-designed questionnaire, tell you about your course design and teaching practices?

- A. If you’re a good teacher
- B. If you’re bad teacher
- C. If students learned a lot

- D. Nothing because students aren't experts in your field or on teaching
- E. How one student in one class at one specific point in time and as an individual deeply embedded in their own complex academic experiential context—a context shaped by numerous personal, sociocultural, economic, and other factors on campus and outside your classroom, including their unconscious biases and their assumptions and expectations about professors and about college—perceived and reacted to some aspects of your class, some interactions with you, and some aspects of your teaching practices

Step one in figuring out student feedback on teaching is to accept that the correct answer is "E."

Gathering, interpreting, and applying useful student feedback on teaching is, in a word, complicated. Very, very complicated. Anyone who says differently is selling something. It's complicated and full of contradictions, such as the fact that student feedback can, but not always, contain virulent, demeaning, utterly inappropriate, and profoundly wounding comments about an instructor and, at the same time, student feedback can, but not always, contain extremely valuable insights which help enable instructors to improve their teaching practices. Classroom power dynamics, traditional grading systems, the consumerization of education, and the highly individualized interpersonal and emotional aspects of teaching and learning, occurring within systemic racial, gender, and other intersectional hierarchies, make student feedback on teaching efficacy complicated in innumerable ways.

Yet many employment review systems do not account for these complexities and most people in most college teaching contexts must administer and include in their employment files a standard SET form, usually an anonymous end-of-the-term form completed online. All too often, such surveys were slapped together by a long-defunct committee with little in-depth knowledge or expertise in constructing, administering, and interpreting statistically meaningful and

constructive student feedback about teaching. As a result, instructors may very well be stuck with mandatory questions that, at best, won't yield good data and, at worst, can damage our employment advancement opportunities and our own teaching self-efficacy. That's the bad news.

The good news is that often these forms allow instructors to add some of their own questions. The even better news is that many instructors can create and administer their own SFT survey instruments in their classes and include that additional data in their employment or review files. For instructors who have repeatedly experienced students' racialized and/or gendered attacks on their expertise via SFT and SET this might not sound like good news at all. Create *more* opportunities for students to say discriminatory, demeaning things about me? Um, no thanks! This is where acknowledging the complexity of the process can be helpful. Most of us need to proactively solicit more regular student feedback because to figure out something so complicated, we need all the information we can get and we need it when we can actually maybe even use it, that is, while a class is happening, not after its conclusion. We need to ask better questions when we're asking for student feedback.²⁰

For example, consider what seems like a simple question: "Did you learn in this class?" This is not a simple question at all. Learning is always an emotional and cognitively convoluted process that can take years.²¹ A student may very well not be able to completely and accurately assess, at the moment of completing a class, all the skills they've gained or the learning they did.²² Throw in an outside factor such as, say, an unprecedented global pandemic. That would (and did) have an enormous impact on everyone's ability to learn because a brain that's scared, in a body that's fearful, hungry, stressed or traumatized, is not going to expend its valuable energy on learning new things.²³ That has implications at all times, not just in the midst of a pandemic, because at any given moment, a student may be struggling with trauma or dealing

with food or housing insecurity.²⁴ Their brain's physiological ability to absorb new information and build new knowledge is compromised, and a question about their learning may not sufficiently account for this contextual reality.

Another common question on SET forms is something like "Was this class intellectually engaging?" Compared to what? Engaging for who? And is "intellectually engaging" a positive or negative description? For some students, "intellectually engaging" is not the compliment we in academia may assume it is. And, again, in any case, an individual student can only assess to what degree they themselves found the course "intellectually engaging." Similarly, a single student can't usually accurately comment on whether or not an instructor "returned all assignments in a timely way." They could comment on their own individual experience but they can't make any broader assessment claim. There's another big problem with that question: what does "timely" mean? If student and instructor don't agree on this, the feedback is flawed. A better question is "How long, on average, did it take for the instructor to grade your assignments?" In my view, an even better wording for this question would be "How long, on average, did it take for me to give you feedback on or grade your completed assignments?" One thing we can do to potentially mitigate the latent harms of SFT is to humanize the process by using "me" or "Professor Neuhaus" instead of "the instructor," discouraging kneejerk negativity or overt hostility that more distancing, depersonalized language more easily enables.

A good SFT question is as specific as possible. Sweeping, overly general questions about all facets of any aspect of teaching or the class do not elicit useful student feedback.²⁵ As one of the best known researchers on SET, statistician and scholar of teaching and learning Ronald Berk states: "The single rating of a global item can be (a) unreliable, (b) unrepresentative of the domain of teaching behaviors it was intended to measure, and (c) inappropriate for personnel

decisions according to U.S. professional and legal standards.”²⁶ As a rule of thumb then, questions about course characteristics yield more meaningful information than questions eliciting emotive responses or general comments or qualitative comments about the class or professor. Some examples of course characteristics that students may be able to more productively comment upon include alignment between learning goals and required work; the instructor’s use of differentiated instruction (different types of in-class instruction and activities); clarity of course objectives; punctuality of instructor; and what types of resources the instructor provided in order to help students improve.²⁷

Questions about some specific student perceptions at key points in a class can yield useful and productive feedback. Notice my word choice: perception. One way to reduce the potential personal and professional harms student feedback can do is to emphasize this nuance. SFT does not always capture objective reality but it can capture student perceptions, and student perceptions are important. To take one essential example, do students perceive an instructor as approachable and willing to offer assistance? As a socially awkward introvert, I do not always readily radiate approachability to my students, even when I’m deeply committed to my students’ success and very willing to assist them. The reality is that I want students to approach me for assistance but if students *perceive* me as projecting a “Don’t talk to me, I am way too intellectual for mere mortals to bother me with their petty academic shortcomings” vibe, then the reality *becomes* that I’m not approachable. In order for students to see me as approachable and helpful, I have to enact teaching practices that a more extroverted instructor might not have to use. SFT can help me gauge and plan for this.

Of course, in addition to an instructor’s individual personality traits, student perceptions are always shaped by sociocultural biases and expectations. For instance, in order for students to

perceive me, a cisgendered woman, as "helpful," I have to enact additional teaching practices that my male colleagues do not. In this obvious example of disparate teaching realities, students have different gendered expectations for "helpfulness" and the expectations for women are more demanding and appreciably harder to fulfill than expectations for men, and this will influence their perceptions and, in turn, their SFT.²⁸ One of the major reasons students should not be asked to evaluate or even comment on an instructor's expertise in the field is not only do they lack the training and knowledge to make that assessment but just as significantly, their perceptions of "expertise" are substantially defined by sociocultural stereotypes and assumptions about the embodied identity of professors.²⁹

There's no magic wand we can wave to eliminate those student biases in SFT. Trying to pretend they don't exist will exacerbate the harm. But asking more, and asking better questions, when we ask for student feedback, with the understanding that we're checking for certain perceptions that we do actually have some power to productively address, is a way to reduce the harm they can cause. I recommend, at minimum, a short survey at the end of the first class meeting; a two week (in a semester) check in survey, and a survey at the midpoint of the term and/or shortly before the first major assessment activity or assignment.³⁰ For example, at the end of the first class I usually ask questions such as: "What are you looking forward to in our class this semester? Which of the Student Learning Outcomes for our class sounds most interesting to you and why? Do you have any concerns or questions about our class at this point? Is there anything else you'd like me to know?"

At the two week mark, I often ask questions such as: "What questions do you still have about your [upcoming assignment] due on [date]? In what ways are the other students in our class supporting your learning? What aspects of your work so far do you hope to improve or

keep doing well? What aspects of our class are you most enjoying? Is there anything that is unclear or confusing to you about our class assignments, our in-class activities, or any of the feedback that I've given you about your work so far? What additional information or specific supports could I provide or continue to provide to make sure everyone in our class feels included and able to learn effectively? Is there anything else you feel that I should know about our class meetings, LMS site, assignments, or student interactions?"

There are many ways you can effectively productively solicit SFT at the midterm.³¹ I frequently use a modified version of the Stop-Start-Continue format:³² "Is there anything we as a learning community together should stop doing / start doing / continue doing in order to help students learn and succeed in this class? Is there anything you should stop doing / start doing / continue doing in order to help yourself learn and succeed in this class? Is there anything I (Professor Neuhaus) should stop doing / start doing / continue doing in order to help students learn and succeed in this class?" These are just a few examples of asking questions that students can productively answer and that I could subsequently address as the class continues, making some course adjustments or clarifications when possible.

Crucially, asking SFT questions that students can productively answer should always include asking students to identify and reflect on their own roles, actions, and responsibilities as learners. Obviously this does not guarantee that all students will be able to automatically realize and thoughtfully reflect on their own agency as learners and their own individual responsibilities in making a class successful. But in my experience, if given regular, frequent opportunities to identify and reflect on their own actions without fear of penalty, many students can apply honest self-assessment to their academic work habits. These types of questions can give you more data and documentation, which in turn may mitigate the damage SFT can do to your teaching self-

efficacy and teaching assessment in an employment context. For instance, sometimes when a student has not done well on a big assignment, I offer the chance to revise and resubmit it as long as the resubmission includes a brief summary of what, according to the student, went wrong the first time, how they improved this time around, and what they can do in the future to avoid making similar mistakes. I use these student self-reflections to assess the revised assignment but also as a means of documenting some of the complexities around student learning and progress; complexities that need to be accounted for when assessing my course, assignment design, and actions as the instructor.

Another example would be including questions about students' time management in your SFT form. Many students will readily admit to struggling with procrastination when given the chance to reflect on their own learning. General questions along these lines could add an important piece of information to your SFT: "What did you learn about your own individual time management skills in this class? Do you think procrastination had a negative impact on your ability to successfully demonstrate your learning in this class? If procrastination was an issue for you, what steps could you take in the future to improve in this area?" Including questions about how the student is budgeting their time and what strategies they could implement to avoid procrastination in the future could help ensure that the feedback is not solely focused on the instructor's actions but also addresses student actions and responsibilities.

To take another example, returning student work in a timely way is an important part of effective teaching and SFT can be a good way to ascertain if an instructor is doing this, but only if students are consistently accessing, reading, and understanding an instructor's feedback and graded work. For instance, my midterm SFT form sometimes includes this question:

"Have you been reading all my detailed feedback in Moodle and applying it to your next assignment? Is my feedback clear to you? (check one)

- I always read and understand Professor N's feedback. I know how to apply it in order to keep improving my work.
- I usually read and understand Professor N's feedback. I mostly know how to apply it in order to keep improving my work.
- I have been reading Professor N's feedback but don't always understand it and am not sure how to apply it.
- I don't know how to access Professor N's feedback. I haven't been reading it."

This type of question encourages students to notice and reflect on their own responsibility in the learning assessment process as well as giving me important information that I can directly address to improve student learning. If more than one or two students checked "I don't know how to access or apply it," I could dedicate more in-class time to reviewing the LMS or offer drop-in help sessions. After I return an important assignment, our class meeting time could be allocated for students to read my feedback, asking me for clarifications as needed, and plan for how they are going to apply it to their future work.

This type of SFT is information that I could include alongside any summaries of student feedback on my teaching practices, perhaps even as a corrective if the anonymous, end-of-the-term SET suggested erroneously that I did not provide timely feedback on student work. But in addition to this practical reason to include questions about students' own action in any SFT form, there is a compelling pedagogical reason to ask students to identify and reflect on their own actions and responsibilities: most college students need to build and strengthen their own academic agency as learners. Many people arrive to college disempowered and disconnected as

students and learners. Again, this isn't to excuse or minimize the damage students can do to the personal and professional work lives of instructors from historically marginalized groups. But I would argue that students' reiteration of biases in SFT may be due at least in part to student's past experiences of education that reinforced a top-down "banking" model and focused on high stakes standardized tests instead of authentic learning that requires repeated practice, making mistakes, getting feedback, making incremental improvements, and gradually over time building new skills. As I write this in January 2023, there's also increasing evidence that for a variety of pandemic era reasons, college students as a whole are becoming even more disengaged and disempowered.³³

One of the complexities we need to acknowledge in soliciting and interpreting SFT is that many students don't understand and haven't practiced viewing their learning experiences as active participants. They believe, quite incorrectly, that learning happens *to* them rather than is something they have to *do*. This misunderstanding directly undermines many students' ability to give productive, thoughtful feedback on teaching. I encourage students to build their reflection skills and academic self-efficacy throughout the semester by assigning required, low-stakes assignments that students can submit as written assignments, videos, or voice recording in which they identify their progress, steps they've taken to improve, study strategies that didn't work well, those that did, and so on. That way, by the time the end of the semester arrives and they're answering my end-of-term SFT survey, they've already had to regularly think about and describe the different things they've done to help themselves learn and to succeed. When they get to the questions "In what ways did the class structure help you learn?" and "What aspects of my teaching supported your learning?" they've already had multiple occasions to consider "What did *you* do to help yourself learn?"

As the above example suggests, just as we should facilitate student reflection on their own progress and help them build their academic agency, so too must we facilitate student feedback about the things we're doing well as teachers. We have to ask questions that encourage students to better identify the effective teaching practices we are implementing. We have to directly, proactively, counteract the negativity bias at work in SFT, particularly since most anonymous high stakes SET forms are administered at the end of the semester when everyone is awash in negativity; when students (and instructors) are the most stressed out they've been all year and may well be thinking primarily of all the things that went terribly, terribly wrong and only dimly remember, if at all, the many things that went very, very well.³⁴

I'm not advocating stacking the deck with loaded questions to get good results. ("Explain why Professor Neuhaus is the most awesome, most wonderful, most perfect professor ever. Use additional pages if necessary.") But SFT should always include questions that ask students to specifically identify positive aspects of our teaching practices and course design. Because you are reading this, consulting the SoTL to continue improving your teaching practice, I know you want to be an effective educator. So I can assert with complete confidence that there are things you're doing well as an educator. There are aspects of your course design that work well, and that students perceive as useful and helpful. But students might not, unless you ask them directly and specifically, clearly identify those things in their SFT, especially if you're required to administer a poorly designed standardized anonymous end-of-the-term survey and if their biases and stereotypes are getting in the way. So we need to regularly and proactively request feedback that speaks to our teaching strengths. Just like good feedback to students always points out what they're doing well and where they've made progress, good SFT identifies what instructors have

been doing well and, if applicable, where they've made adjustments or improvements during the class.

Here are some sample questions along this lines, based on forms I've used in my previous classes: "What aspects of our class did you find enjoyable? List one aspect of our class that you found challenging but worth your time and energy to do. List one specific way that I supported your learning in this class. What academic skills did you build in this class and how will you use them in your future classes? What are some things I should continue doing if I teach this class again?" Admittedly, every once in a while a student will answer these types of questions as negatively as possible: "Nothing, I hated everything. She knows nothing and shouldn't be teaching." (And it's always "she," never "you," or even "the professor.") But these are the outlying comments, the ones that by and large should not be counted or weighed heavily in statistical analysis, and to the extent it's possible, in our own personal views of our teaching abilities.³⁵

One way to avoid the "she did nothing right" answer is to phrase the question as multiple choice. For instance: "Which of the following aspects of my teaching practices helped you succeed this semester? Check all that apply. Starting and ending class on time Providing notetaking guides ahead of time Posting recorded lectures on Moodle In-class work and help sessions Offering the option to revise and resubmit the research paper assignment Grading rubrics for major assignments Meeting with you outside of class for extra assistance My enthusiasm for the course content and for student success." I can attest from personal experience that no boxes checked for this question is not as personally harmful and hurtful as reading the words "there was nothing good about this class." The point here is not that we should go on a fishing expedition to force students to sing our praises but rather that we need to help our

students better name specific positive teaching practices that, as students (not to mention being really tired and stressed-out students at the end of the semester), they have little practice or training in describing.

As instructors, we also need to fight our own negativity biases and get in the habit of recognizing and finding ways to concretely document the things we're doing well pedagogically. It's far too easy when teaching to focus on what's going wrong. Routinely and regularly asking students to reflect on what is working is a concrete strategy for building resistance—in instructors and in students—to the trap of having our attention catch only on the failures and frustrations. I'm not suggesting we don't wear rose-colored glasses or naively ignore what we need to improve or disregard the fact that student feedback can be unproductive and harmful. But I am asserting that one type of question that students can answer, when we ask them, is about what we're doing right and what is working well.

Strategy #2: Frame SFT as Formative

Before I began my tenure track career at SUNY Plattsburgh, I had a one-year appointment as a visiting lecturer at a small liberal arts college in Ohio where, that same year, a tenure track job in my field opened up. For a little while, it looked like I had a very good chance of getting the position. As a visiting lecturer, I was killing it. I was doing a ton of department service; my first book was published; I was enjoying teaching; and I was getting a lot of positive reinforcement from the department Chair. Then, overnight, everything changed. What happened? My anonymous end-of-semester student evaluations came in and they weren't great. After the Chair read them, a glacial pall fell over my interactions with the entire department, and when they informed me that they were hiring someone else, I'd already started packing.

At the time, it was devastating, but looking back it's also infuriating. It was ridiculous to judge my entire potential as an effective educator solely on the basis of one-time anonymous SET from approximately 50 students. In addition, the interpretation of these comments and ratings ignored all the complexities of student feedback. For instance, at no point in the process was there even a passing acknowledgement that students' gendered biases could be at work in at least some of the SET. Another thing I notice looking back now is the college generally, and the department specifically, provided zero support for professional development or opportunities for reflecting on and improving teaching practices in a meaningful way. Freshly hatched from my doctoral program with no pedagogical training whatsoever, I was nonetheless expected to be endowed with all the teaching skills I'd ever need, just because I'd earned a Ph.D. They interpreted that SET as a summative, not formative, assessment of my teaching abilities.

In my case, the major professional damages wrought by this single set of SET framed as summative rather than formative did not ultimately derail my career as a college educator nor my personal teaching self-efficacy. But I was exceptionally lucky. SUNY Plattsburgh offered me a tenure track job that year, and, fortunately, the school turned out to be an excellent fit for me as a scholar and teacher. It also gave me the opportunity to get support from the campus teaching center for reflecting on and building my teaching skills. Furthermore, a personal need to prove the historians at this Ohio liberal arts college wrong about my teaching potential directly fueled my subsequent work in SoTL and dedication to building my scholarly teaching skills.³⁶ I tell this story not just because I want share my own experiences with the real harm SET may cause when interpreted poorly but also because my experience illustrates one of the most damaging fallacies about student feedback and way it is utilized in academic employment decisions: framing it as

summative, not formative, feedback about teaching when, in reality, student feedback is always exactly the opposite.

In my book *Geeky Pedagogy: A Guide for Intellectuals, Introverts, and Nerds Who Want to Be Effective Teachers*, I define formative and summative assessment this way:

“Formative assessment: Checking and reviewing progress in teaching and learning with actionable feedback enabling learners and teacher to demonstrate progress and improvement; includes low-stakes assignments or checks on learning towards the summative/final produce of teaching and learning. Summative assessment: An ‘end product’ review and evaluation of teaching and learning such as a final exam (student) or employment decision (teacher).”³⁷

Formative assessment is never the final word on someone’s skills and abilities. It is embedded into a process of ongoing learning, reflection on and review of learning, application of feedback, and further demonstration of progress and improvement. It aims to provide productive, useful input and guidance, including encouragement about what’s being done well, and specific, actionable insights into how to build and improve skills and abilities. Summative feedback and assessments are the conclusion of the feedback process, and the final summary of what has been learned or achieved.

Student feedback cannot be a summative assessment of anyone’s teaching abilities because as participants in one class, at one point in time in the instructor’s teaching career, students do not have the information needed to make a summative assessment. When the survey instrument is carefully designed and interpreted, and biases are fully accounted for, students can provide formative feedback focused on some specific aspects of teaching and learning. But students don’t have access to information that must be included in any summative assessment of

anyone's teaching, such as what types of professional teaching development the instructor has completed; what specific improvements the instructor has implemented in their course design and pedagogical practices over time; any SoTL research the instructor has completed; and in what ways the instructor has had to navigate student biases and stereotypes.

Framing SFT as formative means that one important criteria for interpreting SFT, with harm reduction firmly in mind, is to always ask: "Does this student comment and/or response give me formative feedback for my teaching?" If the answer is "no," then it should not be viewed as a viable or useful part of assessing teaching. Unfortunately, instructors are almost always required as part of their employment reviews to address SET that does not meet this criteria. However, I believe we can reduce the potential professional and personal harm SET can do by insisting by whatever means possible that SFT must be framed as formative. When interpreting SFT ourselves and when responding to it as part of broader assessment of our teaching, we can work to systematically and meticulously define SFT as formative.

Take a student comment such as "This class was a waste of my time and money." Ouch. This one always hurts. But read it again through the framing question "Does this student comment and/or response give formative feedback for teaching?" No, it really doesn't. If a statistically relevant number of students made this comment about a class taught by many different instructors, across many semesters, it could be meaningful feedback about the course for the Curriculum Committee to consider. But there is no actional feedback here for improving teaching. It is not formative feedback that an instructor could use to reflect on and plan for how to keep improving their pedagogical practices. Framing all SFT as formative feedback won't eliminate the shot to the heart that hurtful student comments like this can inflict upon instructors

who care about teaching and student learning but it can serve as a kind of shield to at least reduce the harm caused to our teaching self-efficacy when we read a comment like this.

Non-formative feedback could still, perhaps, with careful interpretation, yield some useful information about the student population or overall student perceptions of college and learning. We might ask how the comment, though not formative feedback for teaching, is an example of overall student disengagement or lack of academic agency or biases about academic expertise or widespread misunderstanding of how learning works. What I want to emphasize is that these types of comments do not provide formative feedback regarding the specific instructor's actual teaching practices and are most definitely not a conclusive summary of an instructor's teaching efficacy.

Rigorously and consistently framing SFT as ongoing formative feedback rather than summative assessment has implications beyond how we as individuals contend with specific student comments. It is one of the main reasons we should be implementing regular and routine surveys and check-ins with students, as described in the previous section, and not relying solely or even mostly on end-of-the-term anonymous surveys. Framing SFT as formative reinforces that the feedback process about any type of work and learning is complicated, and doing it well requires a lot of information, data, and understanding of broader issues and contexts. Not incidentally, demonstrating to students that you care about their ongoing formative feedback helps them better understand the formative feedback you will be giving them about their learning: it helps cultivate a classroom culture of feedback.

Perhaps most significantly, framing SFT as formative feedback helps powerfully define teaching efficacy as an ongoing process, for ourselves and for outside assessors. Contrary to the popular myth of some people being "born to teach" and to the popular imagery of the Super

Teacher, learning how to teach effectively is a career-long process of ongoing learning, reflection, and making changes and adjustments.³⁸ From our first class to our last, everyone always has to keep learning how to effectively facilitate student learning and in this way, we need to cultivate a teaching growth mindset, viewing our teaching practices as skills and abilities we can always keep building and improving.³⁹ This can be an especially useful technique for reducing the harm SET can do to our teaching self-efficacy, a way to sift out and shake off the feedback that is not formative.

When we get feedback that is truly formative and suggests specific things we can do to improve, it really helps to see this not as our failure to live up to an impossible Super Teacher ideal—an ideal that is very much enmeshed in stereotypes and biases about academic expertise—but as part of the necessary learning we do as educators who are always adding new things to our pedagogical toolkit. In this way, SFT can be one part of how we are always reflecting on our teaching practices and considering how to best facilitate student learning. It is, however, only one part of what should be a large, multifaceted teaching assessment process.

Strategy #3: Put SFT In Proportion

In all the permeations of all the various debates and discussions about SET in SoTL, one conclusion clearly emerges: We need multiple sources of information in order to assess teaching efficacy.⁴⁰ Wherever you may fall on the scale of how you see SET in college teaching, from “Never useful, too problematic to even factor in at all” on one end to “Student voices are so crucial, their every word is gold” on the other, we do actually all agree that accurate assessments of teaching efficacy should *never* be based solely on SET or SFT, particularly as part of employment decisions. As one group of researchers bluntly stated: “Using one measure to make an important decision about a person’s career is the cardinal sin of psychological and educational

measurement."⁴¹ The very worst thing we could do—the “cardinal sin”—when trying to measure or assess teaching efficacy would be to rely solely on SFT or SET.

Everyone in higher education who has any role whatsoever in assessing teaching, and anyone who plays any part in using teaching assessments to make employment decisions, should insist that reviews or assessments of any instructor’s teaching always include numerous types of feedback, reflection, and evidence of teaching effectiveness, with SFT given some but only limited weight.

This is probably the most important way to begin to reduce the professional harm SET and SFT can do and should not be viewed as a momentous rethinking of teaching assessment. Yet I realize that making concrete changes to the employment review process in any one department or university could actually be pretty daunting, depending on how much red tape, inertia, and, frankly, ignorance is at play. Culture eats strategy isn’t an empty axiom. Entrenched aspects of campus culture can devour the best, most necessary change with a few quick chomps. However, my point is that there is virtually universal agreement on the fact that 1.) teaching efficacy can be difficult to define and to measure and therefore 2.) many different types of evidence should be used when we are trying to assess teaching efficacy. For this reason, it shouldn’t be considered a radical or groundbreaking move to require that any college educator’s employment review consist of numerous types of evidence of teaching skill; evidence such as peer review, self-reflection documenting growth and improvement over time, scholarship of teaching and learning, and completed professional development. But given how difficult it can be to move the dial on higher education policies, we may encounter systemic resistance to this strategy.

Putting SFT in proportion is not easy to do at the individual level either. For instructors who have worked hard on their classes, pouring a lot of time and energy into teaching, a carelessly worded comment or deliberately cruel statement from even one student can become lodged in our brains for years, undermining our teaching self-efficacy and our desire to keep building our teaching skills. For instructors from historically marginalized groups, the potential harm of SFT is even more profound. But implemented routinely and regularly, the strategy of putting SFT in proportion for ourselves can build up some protection against these harms. If we consistently remind ourselves about what types of questions students can answer and what questions they cannot answer, the outlying comments or rankings may be less permanently scarring. If we consistently document and give weight to what we've been doing well, it will be a little easier to view unproductive, even harmful student feedback as more of a blip on our radar than a boulder on our back.

Try thinking of your teaching assessment as a big beautiful pie and SFT as just one small slice, more a sliver really, of that pie. The work you've done implementing the first two strategies I describe—ensuring that you have more feedback from students thus minimizing the import of anonymous end-of-term SET and framing student feedback as always formative—give you so much more to work with when you're assembling that pie. All the many, many other ways that you are reflecting on your teaching, building new teaching skills, and adding to your pedagogical content knowledge—those are the ingredients that should constitute the majority of your assessment pie, keeping SFT in its proper perspective and proportion.

Conclusion

"Strategies" are not "permanent perfect solutions that fix everything" and "reducing harm" doesn't mean "totally eliminating every potential damage." The three strategies I suggest

here—ask questions that student can productively answer, frame student feedback as formative, and put SFT in proportion—can reduce the possible harms of SET and SFT but of course they can't lessen systemic racism or demolish once and for all the intersectional assumptions about academic expertise and embodied identity. Personally and professionally, SET and SFT can hurt us, and it can hurt some of us more than others.

There is no just way to make soliciting, interpreting, and applying student feedback on teaching a simple process when teaching and learning—and the human beings who teach and learn—will always and forever be complex and complicated. Fortunately, many of us in academia are comfortable with complexity. We've spent many years training our big brains and using them to tackle the most perplexing problems of our field. As fraught and problematic as it can be, SFT does not have to wield unlimited power. We can redefine it, reframe it, and put it into proportion. Just as the professoriate become ever more diversified, as we increasing challenge and slowly start to change what a professor is "supposed" to look like, so too can we challenge and slowly start to lessen the professional and personal damage that SET and SFT can do.

Teaching Takeaways

- Soliciting and interpreting student feedback on teaching (SFT) is extremely complicated, not least because of the way that SFT is administered and utilized in higher education frequently contributes directly to unjust and inequitable work conditions.
- We should regularly and routinely solicit SFT throughout the term but only ask questions about teaching and learning that students can productively answer.
- SFT should always include questions asking students to reflect on their own actions and responsibilities as learners.

- SFT should always include questions asking students to identify the instructor's teaching strengths.
- Frame all student feedback as formative assessment. Student feedback cannot constitute summative assessment of teaching.
- SFT can only be one small part of assessing teaching skills and abilities. Proportionally, it is only a single item of information as part of a much larger, multifaceted body of documentation on teaching.

¹ Jessamyn Neuhaus, ed., *Picture a Professor: Interrupting Biases about Faculty and Increasing Student Learning* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2022).

² Roxanna Harlow, "'Race Doesn't Matter, But... The Effect of Race on Professors' Experiences and Emotion Management in the Undergraduate Classroom,'" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2003): 362.

³ See for example Mara S. Aruguete, Joshua Slater, and Sekela Mwaikinda, "The Effects of Professors' Race and Clothing Style on Student Evaluations," *The Journal of Negro Education* 86, no. 4 (2017): 494-502; Kerry Chávez and Kristina Mitchell, "Exploring Bias in Student Evaluations: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 53, no. 2 (2020): 270-274; Kristie A. Ford, "Race, Gender, and Bodily (Mis)Recognitions: Women of Color Faculty Experiences with White Students in the College Classroom," *The Journal of Higher Education* 82, no. 4 (2011): 444-478; Troy Heffernan, "Abusive Comments in Student Evaluations of Courses and Teaching: The Attacks Women and Marginalised Academics Endure," *Higher Education* (2022): DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/x10734-022-00831-x>; Troy Heffernan, "Sexism, Racism, Prejudice, and Bias: A Literature Review and Synthesis of Research Surrounding Student Evaluations of Courses and Teaching," *Assessment and*

Evaluation in Higher Education 47, no. 2 (2021): DOI:10.1080/02602938.2021.1888075;

Rebecca J. Kreitzer and Jennie Sweet-Cushman, "Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Review of Measurement and Equity Bias in SETs and Recommendations for Ethical Reform," *Journal of Academic Ethics* 20, no. 3-4 (2021): DOI:10.1007/s10805-021-09400-w. Other types of biases about an instructor's embodied identity, such as physical disabilities and nonbinary gender expression, and their impact on SET have not been well researched yet.

⁴ "Philip B. Stark and Richard Freishtat—of the University of California, Berkeley, statistics department and the Center for Teaching and Learning, respectively—concluded, 'The common practice of relying on averages of student teaching evaluation scores as the primary measure of teaching effectiveness for promotion and tenure decisions should be abandoned for substantive and statistical reasons: There is strong evidence that student responses to questions of 'effectiveness' do not measure teaching effectiveness.'" As quoted by John W. Lawrence, "Student Evaluations of Teaching are Not Valid," AAUP, May-June 2018

<https://www.aaup.org/article/student-evaluations-teaching-are-not-valid>. See also, for example, Anne Boring, Kellie Ottoboni, and Philip B. Stark, "Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness," *ScienceOpen Research* (2016): DOI: 10.14293/S2199-1006.1.SOR-EDU.AETBZC.v1; Henry A. Hornstein, "Student Evaluations of Teaching are an Inadequate Assessment Tool for Evaluating Faculty Performance," *Cogent Education* 4, no. 1 (2017): DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2017.1304016; Wolfgang Stroebe, "Student Evaluations of Teaching Encourages Poor Teaching and Contributes to Grade Inflation: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis," *Basic and Applied Psychology*, no. 4 (2020): 276-294; Bob Uttl, et al., "Meta-analysis of Faculty's Teaching Effectiveness: Students Evaluations of

Teaching Rating Student Learning are Not Related," *Studies in Educational Evaluations* 54 (2017): 22-42.

⁵ In the interest of including as many different voices as possible in the published book, I opted to write this as an open access bonus chapter, available for download as a PDF at <https://pictureaprofessor.com>.

⁶ See for example Kristen Doerer, "Colleges Are Getting Smarter About Student Evaluations. Here's How," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 13, 2019: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/colleges-are-getting-smarter-about-student-evaluations-heres-how/>; Roger Reinsch, Sonia Goltz, and Amy B. Hietapelto, "Student Evaluations and the Problem of Implicit Bias," *The Journal of College and University Law* 45, no. 1 (2020): 114-139

⁷ See for example David A. M. Peterson, et al., "Mitigating Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching," *PLOS* (May 15, 2019): DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216241>
See also Collen Flaherty, "Teaching Evals: Bias and Tenure," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 20, 2019: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/05/20/fighting-gender-bias-student-evaluations-teaching-and-tenures-effect-instruction>. On additional ways to help students give instructors constructive feedback on teaching, see for example Madeleine Elfenbein, "Teaching Students to Evaluate Us Better," Gradhacker blog, *Inside Higher Ed*, October 1, 2015: <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/teaching-students-evaluate-us-better>;
Towson University, "Course Evaluations: Providing Helpful Feedback to Your Professors," <https://www.towson.edu/provost/academicresources/10200395facultyevaluationflyer2.pdf>.
McGill University gives brief instructions to students about giving constructive feedback on teaching that include a short video about implicit bias and student evaluations of teaching at <https://www.mcgill.ca/mercury/students/feedback>.

⁸ For examples of this type of policy, see online guidelines at Boise State University, <https://www.boisestate.edu/policy/academic-affairs-faculty-administration/student-survey-of-faculty-instruction-comment-redaction-policy-policy-4690/>; McGill University, <https://www.mcgill.ca/mercury/about/equity>; and SUNY Stony Brook, <https://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/removing-a-comment-from-an-evaluation>. For an interesting research on automatic screening tool to remove abusive and inappropriate comments from SET, see Samuel Cunningham et al., "First, Do No Harm: Automated Detection of Abusive Comments in Student of Evaluation of Teaching Surveys," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* (July 2022): <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2081668>; Beth Daley, "We Have Developed a Way to Screen Student Feedback," *The Conversation*, July 18, 2022: <https://theconversation.com/we-have-developed-a-way-to-screen-student-feedback-to-ensure-its-useful-not-abusive-and-academics-dont-have-to-burn-it-185041>; Mathew Gibson et al. "Where's the Harm? Screening Student Evaluation of Teaching for Offensive, Threatening, or Distressing Comments," *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 38, no. 3 (2022): 35-48.

⁹ Teaching portfolios are a proven effective way to evaluate teaching but their widespread use has still not substantially shifted higher ed focus on SET in employment decisions. On the efficacy of teaching portfolios, see for example Judy Lombardi, "To Portfolio or not to Portfolio: Helpful or Hyped?" *College Teaching* 56, no. 1 (2008): 7-10; Ming Lai, Char Ping Lim, and Lixun Wang, "Potential of Digital Teaching Portfolios for Establishing a Professional Learning Community in Higher Education," *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 32, no. 2 (2016): 1-14; Peter Seldin, *The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion / Tenure Decisions Third Edition* (Anker, 2004).

¹⁰ H. Richard Milner, "Forward," in *Implications of Race and Racism in Student Evaluations of Teaching: The Hate U Give*, ed. LaVada U. Taylor (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2021), xii.

¹¹ See for example Debra Austin, "Leadership Lapse: Laundering Systemic Bias Through Student Evaluations," *Villanova Law Review* (2021):

<https://digitalcommons.law.villanova.edu/vlr/vol65/iss5/2>. Professor of teacher education Ramon Vasquez argues that in this context, even superficially positive student comments about faculty of color in SET may contain demeaning, damaging discourse: "[M]alicious fragments within partially positive comments function as forms of violence intended to injure BIPOC faculty. Students include these negative markers as a means of reasserting Whiteness as property and recentering the legitimacy of White methods and Euro-centered dominant epistemologies [in higher education]." Ramon Vasquez, "Wonderful Evaluations in the Face of Teaching Anti-Racism and Multicultural Education," in *Implications of Race and Racism in Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 90. Vasquez's point could also be applicable to additional intersectional biases in SET.

¹² LaVada U. Taylor, "Introduction," in *Implications of Race and Racism in Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 7.

¹³ Donyell L. Roseboro, "Dismantling the Architecture of 'Good' Teaching," in *Implications of Race and Racism in Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 44.

¹⁴ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Clark County, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017). Thanks to Michelle Cromwell for bringing this term to my attention.

¹⁵ I'm grateful to Cyndi Kernahan for her suggestion to frame some of the work I do as an educational consultant as "harm reduction."

¹⁶ This chapter focuses on individual strategies but there is an abundance of scholarship on recommended collective changes at the college and university policy level. For instance, “programs should create an assessment plan that outlines the results’ release time, a list of who will receive result summaries, and how the results will be used. Programs should also encourage faculty reflection, offer mentoring in results interpretation, coach faculty members to summarize and quantify comments and longitudinally track results using tables, and create an accountability action plan to address deficiencies” Melissa Medina, et al., “A Review of Strategies for Designing, Administering, and Using Student Ratings of Instruction.” *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 83, no. 5 (2019): 453. See also Ronald Berk, *Thirteen Strategies to Measure College Teaching: A Consumer’s Guide to Rating Scale Construction, Assessment, and Decision-Making for Faculty, Administrators, and Clinicians* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2006); Ronald Berk, *Top 10 Flashpoints in Student Ratings and Evaluation of Teaching: What Faculty and Administrators Must Know to Protect Themselves in Employment Decisions* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2013); Rebecca Kreitzer and Jennie Sweet-Cushman. “Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: Measurement and Equity Bias in Sets and Recommendation for Reform,” Catham University, 2021, <https://www.rebeccakreitzer.com/bias/>; Angela R. Linse, “Interpreting and Using Student Ratings Data: Guidance for Faculty Serving as Administrators and On Evaluation Committees,” *Studies in Educational Innovation* 54 (September 2017): 94-106; Alice Sun Shuting, et al., “Student Voice in Assessment and Feedback (2011-2022): A Systemic Review,” *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2156478>; David Varel, “How and Why Colleges Should Reform Student Evaluations.” *Academe Blog*, February 2, 2022: <https://academeblog.org/2022/02/02/how-and-why-colleges-should-reform-student-evaluations/>;

Joanna Wolfe, "Let's Stop Relying on Biased Teaching Evaluations," *Inside Higher Ed*, January 21, 2022: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2022/01/21/teaching-evaluations-reflect-colleges-commitment-diversity-opinion>

¹⁷ Chavella Pittman, "Empowered Strategies for Women Faculty of Color Navigating Teaching Inequities in Higher Ed," in *Picture a Professor*, 287.

¹⁸ Teaching self-efficacy is the knowledge and insight we have into how we as individual instructors are able to facilitate student learning.

¹⁹ On how anonymous surveys cause harm through the lens of gender discrimination, see for example Stacy Morford, "'Lose some weight,' 'stupid old hag:' Universities Should No Longer Ask Students for Anonymous Feedback on Their Teachers," *The Conversation*, January 9, 2022: <https://theconversation.com/lose-some-weight-stupid-old-hag-universities-should-no-longer-ask-students-for-anonymous-feedback-on-their-teachers-173911>

²⁰ In addition to the questions themselves, a variety of other considerations about the survey instrument impacts the usefulness of any student feedback including: too many questions; poorly designed ratings scales; an inadequate number of responses to draw any viable conclusions; and lack of transparency in the process.

²¹ See for example Sara Rose Cavanaugh, *The Spark of Learning: Energizing the College Classroom with the Science of Emotion* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2016) and Joshua Eyler, *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories Behind Effective College Teaching* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2019).

²² See for example Brian Jacob, Kevin Strange, and Peter De Vlieger, "Measuring Up: Assessing Instructor Effectiveness in Higher Education," *Education Next* 17, no. 3 (2017): 68-74; Bob Uttl,

et al., "Meta-analysis of Faculty's Teaching Effectiveness: Students Evaluations of Teaching Rating Student Learning are Not Related," *Studies in Educational Evaluations* 54 (2017): 22-42.

²³ See for example Phyllis Thompson and Janice Carello, editors, *Trauma-Informed Pedagogies: A Guide for Responding to Crisis and Inequality in Higher Education* (New York: Norton, 2022).

²⁴ See for example Stephanie Brescia and Cara Cuite, "Underestimating College Student Food Insecurity: Marginally Food Secure Students May Not Be Food Secure," *Nutrients* 14, no. 15 (2022): DOI:10.3390/nu14153142; Elise Gahan, Sara Farooqui, and Cindy Leung, "'You Feel Out of Place:' A PhotoVoice Study of the Impact of Food Insecurity on Collee Students," *Health Equity* 6, no. 1 (2022): 595-602; Olya Glantsman, "Risk of Food and Housing Insecurity Among College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Community Psychology* 50, no. 6 (2022): 2726-2745; Ronald Hallett, Rashida Crutchfield, and Jennifer Maguire, *Addressing Homelessness and Housing Insecurity in Higher Education: Strategies for Educational Leaders* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2019); Richard Rickelle et al., "A Comparison of Experiences with Factors Related to Food Insecurity between College Students Who are Food Secure and Food Insecure: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2022.08.001/>; Joachim Sackey et al, "A Review of Basic Needs (Food Security, Housing Security, and Homelessness) of U.S. College Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Current Developments in Nutrition* 6 (2022): 168.

²⁵ This just scratches the surface of problematic questions. Poorly designed ratings scales, vaguely worded questions, questions that use terms students may not be familiar with, and two-part questions are further examples of how bad questions elicit faulty feedback. See Berk, *Thirteen Strategies to Measure Student Feedback*, 67.

²⁶ Berk, *Top 10 Flashpoints*, 64.

²⁷ Varel, "How and Why Colleges Should Reform Student Evaluations." s

²⁸ See for example Sophie Adams et al., "Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching: 'Punish[ing] Those Who Fail to Do Their Gender Right,'" *Higher Education* 83 (202): 787-807; Elizabeth Hoffman and Chris Sahley, "How Students Think About Women Professors: Enforcement of Hegemonic Femininity in Students' End-of-Term Evaluations," in *Female Voices from the Worksite: The Impact of Hidden Bias Against Working Women Across the Globe*, ed. Marquita R. Walker (Lanham, MA: Lexington, 2021); Heather Laube, et al., "The Impact of Gender on the Evaluation of Teaching: What We Know and What We Can Do," *Feminist Formations* 19, no. 3 (2007): 87-104; Lillian MacNell, Adam Driscoll, and Andrea Hunt, "What's in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching," *Innovative Higher Education* 40, no. 4 (2015): 291-303; Andrew S. Rosen, "Correlations, Trends and Potential Biases Among Publicly Accessible Web-Based Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Large-Scale Study of RateMyProfessors.com Data," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 1 (2018): <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2016.1276155>

²⁹ See especially Gabriella Gutiérrez Muhs, et al., eds., *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2012) and Yolanda Flores Niemann, editor, *Presumed Incompetent II: Race, Class, Power, and Resistance of Women in Academia* (Louisville, CO: Utah State University Press, 2020). See also, for example, Dolores Bernal and Octavio Villalpando, "An Apartheid of Knowledge in Academia: The Struggle over the 'Legitimate' Knowledge of Faculty of Color," *Equity and Excellence* 135, no. 2 (2002): 169-89; Gary Perry, et al., "Maintaining Credibility and Authority as an Instructor of Color in Diversity-Education Classrooms: A Qualitative Inquiry," *The Journal of Higher*

Education 80, no. 1 (2009): 80-105; Chavella Pittman, "Race and Gender Oppression in the Classroom: The Experiences of Women Faculty of Color with White Male Students," *Teaching Sociology* 38, no 3 (2010) 183–196. On SET specifically, see for example Katherine Hendrix, "Student Perceptions of the Influence of Race on Professor Credibility," *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 6 (2016): DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193479802800604>.

³⁰ Rebeca Koenig, "Why Professors Should Ask Students for Feedback Long Before the Semester is Over," *EdSurge*, June 10, 2021: <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2021-06-10-why-professors-should-ask-students-for-feedback-long-before-the-semester-is-over>.

³¹ Karron G. Lewis, "Using Midsemester Student Feedback and Responding to It," *New Directions in Teaching and Learning* 87 (2002): 33-44; Rebecca L. Taylor, Kris Knorr, Michelle Ogrodnik, Peter Sinclair, "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Midterm Student Feedback," *International Journal for Academic Development* 25, no. 4 (2020): 350-362.

³² See for example Caitlin M. Cunningham and Theresa L. White, "What Are They Trying to Tell Me? Large-Scale Viability of the *Start, Stop, Continue* Teaching Evaluation Method," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 59, no. 1 (2022): 60-69; Alice Hoon et al., "Use of the 'Stop, Start, Continue' Method is Associated with the Production of Constructive Qualitative Feedback by Students in Higher Education," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 40, no. 5 (2014): 755-767.

³³ Beth McMurtrie, "A 'Stunning' Level of Student Disconnection," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 5, 2022: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-stunning-level-of-student-disconnection>; Jeffrey R. Young, "Student Disengagement Has Soared Since the Pandemic," *EdSurge*, December 13, 2022: <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-12-13-student-disengagement-has-soared-since-the-pandemic-here-s-what-lectures-look-like-now>

³⁴ See for example Melissa J. Himelein, "Pitfalls of Using Student Comments in the Evaluation of Faculty," *Academic Briefing*, 2017: <https://www.academicbriefing.com/human-resources/faculty-evaluation/pitfalls-of-using-student-comments-evaluation-of-faculty/>; Thomas A. Holme, "Can the Cognitive Processes of Reading Student Evaluations Influence Their Utility?" *Journal of Chemical Education* 98, no. 6 (2021): 1829-1830; Neuhaus, *Geeky Pedagogy*, 100.

³⁵ See for example Gilberto Sarfati, "We Can Work It Out: Faculty Interpretation of Student Evaluations of Teaching," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 46, no. 5 (2022): 708-720; Courtney Vengrin, "Engaging the Fear: How To Utilize Student Evaluations, Accept Feedback, and Further Teaching Practice," in *Teaching in the University: Learning from Graduate Students and Early Career Faculty*, ed. Donna Westfall-Rudd, Courtney Vengrin, and Jeremy Elliton-Engel (Press Books, 2022): <https://pressbooks.lib.vt.edu/universityteaching/>; Megan Weir, "Hitting Un-Mute: Let's Talk about the Impact of Abusive Teaching Evaluations," International Society of Critical Health Psychology Blog, November 2, 2021: <https://ischp.net/2018/11/01/hitting-un-mute-lets-talk-about-the-impact-of-abusive-teaching-evaluations/>

³⁶ Honestly, it was more like a burning need to make them rue the day they underestimated me. Hahaha, look me now, historians at an unnamed small liberal arts college in Ohio! I'm not just an effective teacher but a bonafide scholar of teaching and learning. Don't you wish you had hired me when you had the chance?

³⁷ Neuhaus, *Geeky Pedagogy*, 163, 167.

³⁸ Jessamyn Neuhaus, "Four Ways to Fight The Super Teacher Myth," OneHE, n.d. <https://onehe.org/resources/four-ways-to-fight-the-super-teacher-myth/>. On the big impact of

small adjustments to teaching, see James M. Lang, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning Second Edition* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2014, 2021).

³⁹ Neuhaus, *Geeky Pedagogy*, 150.

⁴⁰ On the need for multiple types of evidence when assessing teaching, see for example Constantina Constantinou and Marjo Wijnen-Meijer, "Student Evaluations of Teaching and the Development of a Comprehensive Measure of Teaching effectiveness for Medical Schools," *BMC Medical Education* 22, no. 113 (2022): <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-022-03148-6>; Dan Li and Steve Benton, "Creating Fair Student Evaluations of Teaching," *Anthology*. March 6, 2020: <https://www.anthology.com/blog/creating-fair-student-evaluations-of-teaching>

⁴¹ Li and Benton, "Creating Fair Student Evaluations of Teaching." See also Justin Esarey and Natalie Valdes, "Unbiased, Reliable, and Valid Student Evaluations Can Still be Unfair," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 45, no. 9 (2020):1106-1120.