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How undergraduates perceive their professors: a corpus analysis of Rate my Professor.

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Summary: While many may disparage the online website Rate my Professor, it remains a popular public evaluation site for students to post their evaluations and commentary on their professors. What implications can be drawn about students' perceptions of instruction and what are the implications of students' perceptions for professors and their work? Using the folk pedagogy theory of Jerome Bruner, I examine students' perceptions of what constitutes quality instruction as expressed on the Rate My Professor website. Issues attendant to the worldwide cultural embrace of public evaluation are also examined. The extant research on the validity of traditional student evaluations, the debate on Rate My Professor's validity, and the cultural phenomenon of academic consumerism are examined. Simple concordancing is used to analyze the language of student evaluations and how forms of folk pedagogy concerning quality education are expressed. Results suggest that students favor professors who are demanding, yet helpful and attentive, and a class that is rigorous, fair, and informative, and thereby perceive quality teaching and learning to comprise the same.

Classification: C25 C75 D69

Keywords: student evaluations; online evaluation; student attitudes; beliefs; teacher characteristics; teacher role; teacher student interaction; university teaching; research

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