

Social Predation 101: Now Showing in Classrooms Near You

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"When you told me there were social predators teaching at the high school I thought you were a bit nuts -- I'd never heard of such a thing," the district administrator whispered. "But, I've since come to see you had understated the problem."

The administrator's discovery process had likely been triggered six months earlier when I used the word "predatory" to describe the practices of activist-teachers who were using their positions of authority in the classroom to recruit children into their personal, political, social, and religious agendas. These "teachers" were using the classroom to promote activism, not academics. Worse, they often exploited children to promote their personal interests by involving them in protests, meetings, and other activities that supported the teacher's convictions. They had become teachers to "make a difference" by using the government education system to indoctrinate children to their personal interests -- not to educate children to be contributing members of society.

Using the word "predatory" to describe the practice might seem harsh. But, what better word is there to describe an adult who uses a position of power to realign the minds and actions of an impressionable child with his or her personal interests -- with neither parental permission nor knowledge, and counter to the values of the child or family? Some might consider it predatory, others might consider it harmless, and a few might even prefer it -- as long as the indoctrinator is advocating beliefs and actions aligned with their own.

Regardless, people who know children in the government school systems might want to pay special attention to an entrenched movement that advocates social, moral, and political indoctrination of children as a teacher's civic responsibility. Bluntly: the government school system is being used as a recruiting ground for special interests; worse, parents are unwittingly, blindly, or willingly participating in the violation of their own children. Before you dismiss this as "a bit nuts", you might want to see for yourself Alan Singer's tutorial for activist teachers.

Getting kids to "critically think" into a one-mind paradigm

In "[Student Clubs: A Model for Political Organizing](#)" (*Rethinking Schools*, Volume 17, Number 4), Singer outlines for teachers how to promote personal agendas using students. While Singer bases his activist-indoctrinator model on his activities as a high school social studies teacher in New York City, similar models are actively used on K-12 campuses across the USA. By understanding how Singer's model is implemented, parents can gain insight into how they can recognize predatory practices in their child's school.

Singer starts by telling teachers that they have a responsibility to "act as models" for "questioning authority" -- starting with questioning the values by which the students are being raised. He justifies this position by evoking a strange interpretation of "critical thinking".

Critical thinking is vital for the lifetime success and survival of an individual; which is why most parents try so hard to implement critical thinking skills into their children. If anything, critical thinking helps the individual recognize right from wrong, the lie from the truth. More importantly, critical thinking helps the individual make correct choices -- even when everyone else is making wrong

choices. In other words, critical thought and independent action are vital skills that allow children to stand tall against peer pressure -- and to shield themselves from predators. However, when social predators say "critical thinking" they seem to mean something entirely different.

The "critical thinking" that Singer advocates is for students to "consequently question authority (starting with their parents)," and he advises other activist teachers to act as models for helping children to question their values and to accept the values inherent in the teacher's special interest. This is also commonly called "values clarification", a process by which predatory indoctrinators help align the child's values with their own -- for the greater good, of course. So, when activist teachers say "critical thinking", they apparently mean to think more like them -- and less like their parents. Ironically, "more like them" typically means to accept a one-minded collectivist philosophy that has zero tolerance for alternative viewpoints. (Which brings up an interesting side-note for people who *can* think critically: are not critical thought and collectivism mutually exclusive? Collectivism tends to create homogeneous cultures that allow little tolerance for critical thought and independent action.)

Social Predation 101: Using other people's children to promote a teacher's interests

Singer presents workshops and assemblies through which he helps teachers "understand their right to disagree with and protest against government policies" and "involve their students in political action" that promotes the teacher's interests. In other words, Singer seems to be teaching social predators how to use the classroom to recruit children to their personal perspective by supplanting the values taught at home with their own. The values that Singer says teachers should advocate to children are similar to those he promotes in his own classroom, including:

- Reproductive freedom, abortion access, and condom availability for minors;
- Opposition to laws requiring parental consent for abortions;
- Opposition to policies requiring parental consent for exposure to objectionable materials in the classroom;
- Opposition to American foreign actions and policies.

"One of my primary goals as a high school social studies teacher was to empower young people so that they could become active citizens and agents for democratic social change," Singer writes (For an example of what Singer means by "Democratic Social Change", see the [Democratic Socialists of America](http://www.dsusa.org/) web site at: <http://www.dsusa.org/>). "This approach requires that teachers... express views on controversial issues," and get students to be willing to take action in support of the teacher's values, Singer says.

For teachers who express concern that enlisting children for their own causes might jeopardize their jobs, Singer presents "a model [he] was able to use effectively to engage students as activists," while avoiding the legal and ethical issues involved in using the classroom to promote personal interests to children. Following are key excerpts from Singer's model:

Develop a student club for advocating social issues. "[Singer's club] provided students who were excited by classroom discussions... with a place where they could further explore their questions and act based on their beliefs."

Recruit students from the classroom to join the club, and encourage students to recruit others into the club. "Usually, the students who joined the club were from my classes, but they also involved their friends?"

Use the club to unite students around the teacher's values. "As the club's faculty advisor, I was able to both encourage students to see themselves as activists and to help them learn through experience how to organize for social change."

Charter the club so you can have access to the other students on campus and in the classroom. "As a chartered student group, [Singer's club was] entitled to receive some school funds; to do fundraising in school; to distribute a newsletter and leaflets; to hang up posters; to make and sell political buttons; and to use rooms, copying machines, and computers. It gave us access to other students, the ability to meet with parent groups, and the right to send speakers to classes to report on club activities."

Encourage student participation by giving students "community service credit" for participating in activist events. "An elected executive committee met regularly (sometimes daily during heated campaigns) and we tried to hold monthly meetings of the full club. Students actually received community service credit for their political involvement."

Build the impression that the club has an educational purpose. "As a student club, [Singer's club] had to have a clear educational purpose." "Academic" activities included being guided by the faculty advisor on how to do the following to develop and promote advocacy positions: "researching issues and presenting information in writing and on graphs, exploring the underlying ideas that shape our points of view, giving leadership by example to other students, and taking collective and individual responsibility for the success of programs", like getting news "coverage of pro-choice demonstrations" and other club activities led by Singer.

Develop methods and processes that protect the club activities from outside interference.

"Despite efforts... we were not completely protected from interference [from parents, administration, and others who might question his activities]," Singer writes, citing cases like the following as outsider attempts to obstruct his campus activism:

- Being pressured by the district to present alternative points of view in workshops led by select socialist speakers;
- Being "asked to invite an anti-abortion speaker to balance a presentation by the National Organization of Women";
- Having to "silence" a "small group of 'pro-life' students" and teachers during an abortion workshop for children;
- Being "pressured... to cancel a club trip to Washington to participate in a pro-choice demonstration." In this case, Singer writes that the district backed off when he had the students "[threaten] to take the issue to the newspapers".

When your ideas are too difficult even for your activist trainees to stomach, back off a bit.

Sometimes, when students don't agree with the activist teacher, "you have to back off," Singer advises. For example, when his students resisted his efforts to have them participate in "anti-war activities while troops were involved in military conflict", he decided to stop pressuring them. Singer even admits that taking students to protests puts them at risk; so much so that, once, he chose not to bring students to a protest because he heard there would be "hostile counter-demonstrators".

An indoctrination model that lasts

Singer has taken his activism-not-academics approach to Hofstra University, but there are plenty of teachers stepping in to fill his shoes. For example, one of Singer's former "students has successfully

used his own variation of [Singer's club] to promote student activism," through which he used his students to protest the pledge of allegiance in their school.

Singer may be only a single example, but he's representative of entire movements that seem to be enveloping our government school systems with programs to promote sexual, political, and social agendas to children -- frequently without parental knowledge. This movement is seemingly being institutionalized even in state and federal law. For example, during the week prior to his recall, California Governor Gray Davis signed into law [SB 71](#), which essentially allows special interests virtually unrestricted access even to kindergarteners.

Is it "a bit nuts" to advocate for our children?

At first blush, we might think ourselves "a bit nuts" when we start noticing that some activist-teachers are using the classroom as a recruiting ground to promote their personal interests -- especially while everyone else seems oblivious. But, like the administrator who came to realize that entrenched social predators were exploiting his students for their personal interests, we might find that the problem is far worse than we could imagine. Then, the absolutely insane approach would be for us to become silently complacent in the violation of our own children by entrusting them to social predators -- and allowing the social predators to operate with neither exposure nor opposition.

A more rational approach might be for us to stop abdicating our responsibilities to virtual strangers at a government facility, and to start taking primary responsibility for and heightened interest in the formal education of our children. In addition, we may want to start demanding that teachers exhibit competence and dedication to academic development of children. Most importantly, we may want to give our children the emotional and cognitive skills necessary to shield themselves from social predators, starting with being aware and involved ourselves. In short, we parents should join true teachers to promote education, not indoctrination; demand academics, not activism.