Reasoning Behind Sociology Exam

I have taught high school Sociology and Psychology for the past nine years. Two years ago I searched for a rigorous, contemplative, and applicable final exam that was not the stereotypical short response or multiple choice exam. Instead, I wanted to challenge my students’ creativity, content knowledge, and writing skills. I wanted them to produce something that could actually teach about sociological theories by telling a story – their story.

I adopted and adapted the exam from Trinity University’s David Spencer, an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. As Mr. Spencer writes in his assignment introduction, “It was not an easy assignment for students to complete, since it required an unusual combination of intense personal reflection and academic research about a complex and emotionally-charged set of issues…” As with Spencer’s students, my students, too, found the assignment both challenging and rewarding and all took the assignment seriously. Their research asked them to consider how their lives have been shaped by societal pressures involving race, ethnicity, prejudice, sexual identify, pop culture, gender bias, or really anything they have dealt with that has impacted the way they think, behave, or what they believe.

In an attempt to allow my students to explore what is known as the *Sociological Perspective*, defined as: the point of view of sociology that sees general patterns of society in the lives of particular people, students were asked to write an autobiographical essay that reflects upon and analyzes how society has impacted the path of their lives in some substantial way up to this point.

While reading these stories, please remember the writers are not scholars. They are high school ninth and tenth-grade students with captivating stories and varying perspectives about their society. Each essay conveys experiences and imparts messages that are personal in regard to how society’s sensitive issues affect their lives.

Enjoy,

Mr. Cass