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Review

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## Book Reviews

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*Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies that Work*, edited by James T. Sears and Walter L. Williams. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 456 pp. \$ 49.50 (\$18.50)

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The concepts of multiculturalism and diversity seem to be entrenched in the lexicon of higher education, yet their definitions are as varied as the institutions that advocate for their inclusion. Should sexual orientation be included in these definitions or should the terms be omitted? If they are excluded, why? Homophobia? Heterosexism? A combination of the two? Or are there additional reasons that influence their exclusion? James Sears and Walter Williams provide a collection of essays in their book, whose purpose is to move beyond analyzing homophobia and heterosexism and to provide strategies that are most effective in reducing the biases targeted toward gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals.

The edited volume is composed of five sections: (1) foundational issues, (2) working with ethnic groups and family members, (3) working with students, (4) working in professional training programs, and (5) working within institutions. Although the book is not specifically focused on the academy, researchers and practitioners will find it furnished with useful techniques on how to combat homophobia and heterosexism, especially within institutions of higher learning.

The first section provides foundational issues that lay the theoretical groundwork. James Sears provides an excellent synthesis of earlier research, which reveals how to reduce homophobic behavior and heterosexism inequality. He also addresses the current limitations of the research (e.g., lack of studies on various racial and ethnic individuals, mainly assessing undergraduate students, and lack of longitudinal research designs). Sears argues that, in order to influence change in heterosexuals' attitudes, we as researchers and practitioners, need to study and implement strategies which will affect these individuals' cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. By integrating these three dimensions, activists can then specifically tailor strategies and programs which may reduce homophobia and heterosexism among "straight" individuals who have different sociocultural backgrounds.

Gust Yep's essay posits that the way we communicate shapes and maintains heterosexism and homophobia in our society. He provides several theories on how communication may influence individual beliefs and attitudes about gay,

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lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Dee Bridgewater discusses how coming out to oneself and to others is important in changing not only other people's attitudes, but eventually in laying the foundation for societal change. The final chapter in the section notes how activists, educators, and researchers should examine other cultures that either do not discriminate or are inclusive of same-sex relationships. The author, Walter Williams, argues that by understanding how these societies have incorporated this level of human sexuality we can utilize their strategies in the West to help combat certain aspects of homophobia and heterosexism.

The second section discusses how to work with family members and ethnic groups to overcome homophobia and heterosexism. Authors Arguillas and Fernandez and Reyes and Yep argue that homosexuality is viewed differently in the Latino/a and Asian American communities, while Rhue and Rhue suggest how certain events, individuals, and institutions (e.g., patriarchy, the Church, Nation of Islam, scholars, and popular culture) influence heightened homophobia and heterosexism within the African American population. Blumenfeld, Durgin-Chinchard, and Vennard each discuss how various groups, organizations, and individuals can be influential in helping eradicate prejudices. The section concludes with a very unique essay explaining how the use of music influences the affective domain of individuals. Russell suggests that, although most strategies are designed to affect one's intellect, it is also important that participants' emotions are influenced in order to reduce homophobia and heterosexism.

Working with students is the focus of the third section of the book. The first three chapters pertain to college students. Brunner explains how she uses class discussion, writing, and performance to teach her students about sexual biases. Mager and Sulek suggest that different pedagogical techniques should be used with African American college students in helping them overcome their homophobia and heterosexism. The third chapter, by Myers and Kardia, provides the reader with a theoretical understanding of a certain college program and lays the foundation for their results and discussion section. The essay notes that varied strategies are needed when educating college students in a program to reduce homophobia. The next two chapters involve students in high school. While Roy provides insight on how she constructs open dialogue in the classroom, Van de Ven explains how an entire public school system attempts to reduce homophobia. The final chapter transcends both secondary and postsecondary institutions. The authors, Sattel, Keyes, and Tupper, argue that for student athletes, coaches play a pivotal role in reducing or eliminating negative attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals.

Professional training programs are the focus of part four of the edited volume. Marinobe posits that strategies to reduce homophobia need to commence in elementary school. Hulsebosch and Koerner note that, not only is reducing homophobia important in the early part of a child's life, but also salient is how teachers and parents can work together to attenuate biases. The emphasis shifts from elementary students to college students in the remaining chapters. Counselors who provide advice to homosexual or bisexual students within an institution of higher education are highlighted by Emert and Milburn. The remaining essays focus on specific majors or professions: social work (Cramer), medical school (Wallick and Townsend), criminal justice (Iasenza), and law enforcement (Stewart). Stewart's article was particularly poignant in

arguing that, based on his research, individuals who provide sensitivity training need to begin with the individual's beliefs and opinions regarding homosexuality. Police officers in his study were confused when a theoretical framework (i.e., feminist theory) was used as part of the training program. Instead of helping reduce homophobia and heterosexism, the inclusion of a theoretical concept seemed to confuse the participants more than help them in understanding the significance of their biases.

A case study, written by Crew, regarding the evolution of the Episcopalian church and how it has evolved to include gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals, begins the final section of the book, *Working With Institutions*. Nugget's essay follows by postulating that attitudes toward homosexuality within the Catholic priesthood are notably divergent. Fong argues quite convincingly, in his chapter, that if heterosexism and homophobia are to be eliminated, national gay, lesbian, and bisexual organizations are going to have to build bridges to other civil rights organizations in hopes of advancing gay-friendly policies. Authors Baggett and Andre describe the importance of economics for individuals and the queer community at large. How to make alliances in the workplace is the focus of McNaught's essay on employment in the corporate world. Finally, Barret and Nardi provide insights on how to utilize and monitor the media (print and electronic) to reduce homophobia and heterosexism.

This book's greatest asset is its attempt to provide techniques that have been proven to reduce heterosexism and homophobia within certain contexts. *Beyond Tolerance: Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals on Campus* (1991) provides an adequate account of how to combat sexual prejudices on the college campus. However, it does not thoroughly address how to reduce homophobia and heterosexism in institutions of higher education. Sears and Williams's decision to include a multicultural perspective is especially salient, given that gay, lesbian, and bisexual people of color are rarely represented in national queer organizations. Fong's essay on establishing alliances with non-homosexual organizations is arguably one of the most telling chapters in the book. In Rhoads's (1994) *Coming Out in College: The Struggle for a Queer Identity*, students also recognized the salience of effective alliance building in their attempts to deal with heterosexism and homophobia on a college campus. The aspect of coalition building should be thoroughly explored and studied to assist activists in their work. Although the majority of the essays are important in efforts to change attitudes, I believe Fong has proficiently articulated why we must build bridges and how mainstream gay organizations need to reach out to other oppressed groups.

Generally I found the book to be quite revealing and useful in explaining how individuals utilize various techniques in overcoming or attenuating biases and stereotypes toward bisexual and homosexual individuals. A few of the essays, however, focused too much on the process and did not assess whether the strategies had any lasting effects in changing the minds of heterosexual individuals. The short-term outcomes may seem beneficial, but without any empirical longitudinal analyses, we can only speculate as to whether these individuals were forever affected. In addition, the inclusion and placement of some of the chapters left this reviewer questioning why certain essays that did not seem to address techniques on reducing homophobia or heterosexism were included in this volume. Finally, a concluding chapter by the editors would have been helpful for the reader. The final essay could have provided areas for future research

or a summation of common areas and recommendations postulated by each of the authors.

The book has provided strategies needed to begin the process of reducing prejudices and biases against gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. Those of us at our colleges and universities who understand how pernicious homophobia and heterosexism are to students, peers, and colleagues must first reflect introspectively on our own intolerances and "isms" before we begin educating others. It will be a prolonged process, but one that is overdue. Sears and Williams have provided us a guidebook on how to reduce our biases and assist in educating others; it is now up to us to follow through and take them up on their challenge.

### References

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*Academic Couples: Problems and Promises*, edited by Marianne A. Ferber and Jane Loeb. Champaign, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 1997. 308+ pp. \$44.95. (\$19.95).

DAVID POST, The Pennsylvania State University

Writing from the perspectives of economics, history, sociology, law, and administration, the editors and contributors to *Academic Couples* illuminate a subject sure to be of interest to at least one third of all faculty who are married or living with partners (the fraction whose partners also work as academics, according to Helen Astin and Jeffrey Milem). The book should interest many others for wider reasons, because the subject of academic couples would scarcely arise in the absence of three deep-seated secular trends in American society. First, ever since sociologists have discussed social mobility, they have recognized that education is rapidly becoming its most important channel. Second, over the past sixty years, there has been an increasing correlation in the education levels of spouses: couples are ever more "sorted" by education (rather than, e.g., ethnicity or parental occupation). Finally, and most familiar to all, married women have entered the labor force in growing proportions. As a net result, many more couples will have to share not just domestic chores but office space, especially when, as in academia, entry to firms is dependent on education. In other words, many of today's problems and promises of couples as an economic unit also arise for couples as members of colleges and universities. That truism, far from trivial, frames questions that, under the direction of Marianne Ferber and Jane Loeb, have broad importance for the understanding of higher education.

Feminist concerns guide many projects reported in the book. The reason for this is not obvious, because men form half of most academic couples (thus mak-