



Gender on Campus: Issues for College Women. Sharon Bohn Gmelch. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998. 309 pp.

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Gender on Campus: Issues for College Women seeks to raise the consciousness and guide the choices of today's young women in college in the United States. The book opens with a discussion, "What Is Feminism?" which untangles the term and addresses the problem of the negative connotations it has acquired. The book then moves to cover, issue by issue, what the author sees as important to women students. This book makes clear that college women face troubled times in terms of gender attitudes and discrimination on college campuses. It plots out the minefields, from gender-insensitive professors to problems of sexual harassment, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, racism, sexual identity and homophobia, participation in sports, physical disabilities, eating disorders, and date rape. A final section, "College and Beyond," deals with life beyond the college years, including the exploitation of women in the media, problems of women in the workplace, and women in politics.

The book lacks a preface to situate it in a broader context of feminist writing or spell out the author's aims. Yet it is clear from the very first pages that this book is not only about college women in the United States; it was written specifically *for* them. It also appears to be designed for use in women's studies classes. Each chapter provides useful lists of items under the headings "Did You Know?" "What Can You Do?" and "Resources" at its end. "Did You Know?" consists of facts and figures regarding women's status in the United States or historical landmarks in women's struggles for equality. "What Can You Do?" is a set of imperatives to guide women students; "Resources" lists additional publications and annotated videos. Throughout the book, cartoons add a welcome lighter touch.

Gender on Campus is well written, easy to read, comprehensive, and objective in tone. It alerts women students to gender problems on campus without being inflammatory. Despite the sometimes dismal portrait of today's campuses (a land of drunken students, depressed bulimics, and male date rapists), it is positive in intent, giving potential women student readers a sense that there is a lot they can do to protect themselves and better their own situations. A major weakness of the book is that discussion of the issues sometimes seems simplistic (e.g., "Students who abuse alcohol often abuse the rights and safety of others" [p. 198]) and the advice to women often platitudinous (e.g., "'Don't be afraid to call yourself a feminist if you consider yourself one" [p. 19]; "Use gender-neutral



language and encourage others to do so" [p. 55]; "Try out for and play a sport!" [p.70]). Other advice within the book may have dubious chances of effectively dealing with problems. For example, "When you write to your sexual harasser, describe what happened specifically. Next, state what effect these actions have had on you. 'This is why I dropped your class'; 'I cannot get to sleep at night'; 'You have made me change my major'" (p. 37). Though most of the gender issues presented in the book are relevant, the discussion of sexism in the classroom seems outdated. However, in line with her generally evenhanded and objective coverage, the author does point out that there are critics of the "chilly climate" view of academia who contend that "the obstacles confronting women students today are overstated" (p. 31).

Though the book informs women students about gender issues on campus, it offers surprisingly little analysis of why these problems occur and persist. Very few cross-cultural comparisons are made (a brief exception occurs in the discussion of rape); no feminist theory of gender equality is addressed at any length. Also surprising is that no use is made of Dorothy Holland and Margaret Eisenhart's insightful anthropological study, *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement and College Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), although the book is listed as a "resource."

For its potential consciousness raising and positive what-you-can-do focus, *Gender on Campus* will be useful reading for college-bound high school seniors and their parents. It might also be used in introductory women's studies courses at colleges and universities if supplemented with other more scholarly works on gender. As an early-21st-century advice book for young college women, the book is thorough, well presented, and informative.

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