



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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Donald J. Foss, Chairman
Department of Psychology
CAMPUS

Dear Don:

We are writing to express serious concern about an anthology that we hear will be required for all English 306 students. We have read much of the anthology, "Racism and Sexism," finding it one-sided, egregiously propagandistic, and lacking in scholarliness and objectivity. We are familiar with the psychological literature relating to race and gender and do not find anywhere in this text an appreciation of the complexity of the issues it purports to illuminate. Instead, many of the articles selected present extremist positions that ignore opposing facts and fail to consider alternative explanations. Straying from the best tradition of true anthologies, this book is a political manifesto rather than a representative collection of good ideas on a topic.

We want to provide a few text examples illustrating its one-sidedness and limitations. Consider the editor's definition of racism: "Racism involves the subordination of people of color by white people. While an individual person of color may discriminate against white people or even hate them, his or her behavior cannot be called racist" (p. 6). This "definition" discourages comparative approaches to the study of this phenomenon and indicts only one group for the sin of racism. The intention here is obvious, to place the burden of responsibility only on whites, while ignoring the same behavior on the part of others.

In an article entitled, "Class in America: Myths and Realities," (p.56), the author presents data on family income and offspring SAT scores (p. 65). The author's interpretation is that income determines SAT scores. However, the author fails to consider a wide range of existing data leading to alternative interpretations. For example, he fails to note that income interacts strongly with race such that blacks with family incomes above \$50,000 obtain SAT math scores slightly below the median SAT scores of whites with

family incomes of less than \$6,000, and much below the median scores of Asians with equally low family incomes.

Our third example comes from the editor's summary of statistics showing that infant mortality is twice as high in blacks as in whites (p. 50). She does not note that infant mortality rates for Mexican Americans are the same as for whites, in spite of significantly lower socioeconomic status among Mexican Americans. Data again are cited selectively in an effort to transmit a simpleminded political message rather than to consider alternative hypotheses.

If one aim of English 306 is to reduce racial tensions, the biased selection of readings in this anthology cannot but achieve the opposite. The likelihood that this will happen is particularly strong considering that the course will be taught by graduate students in English who cannot be expected to provide the necessary correctives to the tendentious judgments collected in this volume.

We think that the numerous flaws in this anthology, of which we have cited only a few, and its use in a required English course are so serious as to demand the attention of the Dean of our College.

Sincerely,

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Joseph M. Horn
Lee Willerman

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