

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Earl Wright II and Thomas C. Calhoun (eds.). *What to Expect and How to Respond: Distress and Success in Academia.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, pp. 204, \$28.00 paper, (97811475827453).

What to Expect and How to Respond promises a little something for everyone. As the book's editors, Earl Wright and Thomas Calhoun state in the preface, for undergraduates the manuscript provides a preview of what to expect of the academic profession; for graduate students it provides some comfort that they are not alone in their struggles; for junior faculty concrete recommendations are given to address the difficulties they face; for senior faculty it addresses the role that they play in building the climate and culture of departments; and for administrators it provides solutions to issues relating to joint hires and tenure and promotion (xiii). The book is divided into four parts that roughly correspond with the groups identified above: I) Navigating the Academic Pipeline, II) Now That You Have the Job, III) Challenges in Academia, IV) Survival Techniques in Academia.

At first glance, the 12 chapters that comprise *What to Expect and How to Respond* seem disjointed and too wide-ranging to come together in a cohesive whole. Discussions range from professional socialization, to managing paperwork and meetings, to intellectual exclusion, to the challenges of dual-career, long-distance academics, to dealing with a campus shooting. Some of the chapters provide personal narratives with little discussion of theory or methods, while others very nicely draw on a disparate range of methodologies and theories. Yet, crosscutting all of the chapters are accounts of marginalization and discrimination, as well as descriptions of the multiple, intersecting hegemonies that continue to permeate academia.

What to Expect and How to Respond is an interesting read. It captures well many of the familiar stories of strife within the academy, such as unfair and biased hiring practices, tenure difficulties, nasty colleagues, social closure that dominates certain "prestigious" journals, and finding solace outside of one's own institution with like-minded colleagues. The book also acknowledges how much more difficult these issues are for racially and culturally diverse groups. The incongruity of this, of course,

is that universities are perceived to be safe places that welcome and celebrate diversity. Indeed, the younger contributors to the book believed these facades, either before they went to graduate school, were on the job market, or were granted tenure, though they explain that such perceptions quickly faded. As is pointed out in Chapter 8, “Diversity is a priority when there is money left over for it” (112). Yet, as noted in Chapter 1, even when “diversity and colorblind rationales inform admission and retention policies and practices in academia” (13), they still transpire within the context of White privilege and are thereby limited in their usefulness.

Although not discussed explicitly in these terms, the themes of structure and agency play a prominent role throughout *What to Expect and How to Respond*, and adequate solutions to reducing hegemony within the academy are needed at both levels. “At times the issue is policy; other times it is practice. Some solutions are reached through the administration, others by talking to individual faculty members” (119). The book also provides suggestions for coping and change, specifically since so many of the book’s narratives demonstrate and encourage survival and resilience. The coping strategies range from isolating oneself, to seeking supportive colleagues, friends, and family outside of the institution, to fighting for institutional and departmental change. The problem with the strategies offered in this book, and with our university systems more generally, is that the onus for change and coping lies with the individuals who are experiencing discrimination and are overburdened by academic hegemony in the first place.

Universities still have a lot of work to do to break down the powerful barriers that create opportunity for some and disadvantage for others. Yet, over the last two decades, policy changes have attempted to address many of the issues that are raised in this book, at least within some universities. Of course we need to do more, but *What to Expect and How to Respond* would have benefitted from acknowledging some of these policies and more importantly, from clearly specifying when the narratives presented in the book occurred (i.e. two years ago versus twenty years ago).

As noted in the introductory paragraph of this review, *What to Expect and How to Respond* promised readers a lot. There is, of course, a danger in undertaking such an ambitious project, for when a book tries to be all things to everybody, it is often nothing to anyone. I do not think that this is the case here, since the book does deliver something to each of its five target audiences. However, the book would have benefited from a concluding chapter that fuses the narratives together and clearly outlines how the book delivers on its promises. Further, the title is a

bit misleading because the book focuses much more on the distress in academia than the success (which is quite distinct from resilience and coping). A concluding chapter would have been able to address this by suggesting changes that need to occur within academia so that scholars can participate in the creation of, and flourish within, diverse academic communities and so that students can learn more deeply within them.

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