

Public Abstract

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Title:Dramatic Conflict: Exploring Interactive Theatre as a Pedagogical Tool for Addressing Issues of Heterosexism in the Educational System

Heterosexism and homonegativity are serious problems on university campuses nationwide. Although some scholars have begun to examine the use of interactive theatre as a method of combatting these types of oppression, they have done little to theorize its impact from the students' perspective. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of interactive theatre on college students in regard to heterosexism and/or homonegativity. Students experienced the presentation of an interactive scene exploring heterosexist/homonegative issues. The research question was considered in terms of both positive and negative influences on audience members and performers. Fifty-seven students participated. These students were comprised of three groups: heterosexual audience members, LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) audience members, and the actors who had performed in the scene. Methods of data collection included group interviews, survey responses, and observation. The data demonstrated that when students engaged with the performance, the presentation impacted one or more of the participants' multicultural competencies. These competencies consisted of an expanded knowledge about the consequences of various intervention strategies; an increased awareness of self, surroundings, others, and oppression in general; the acquisition of tools that were found to be helpful in facilitating dialogues about oppression; and/or an increased willingness to take action against oppression. These results hold promise for both the fields of theatre and education, suggesting ways that educators may more effectively develop programs to confront this and other types of oppression.