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Choices in Sexuality (Second Edition)

By Susan L. McCammon, David Knox & Caroline Schacht (2004)
East Carolina University; AtomicPublishing, Cincinnati, Ohio
<http://www.atomicdog.com>
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Choices in Sexuality is a wonderful title for a textbook on human sexuality. Students are encouraged to critically explore their personal choices and to be open to the choices of others. "Think About It" inserts not only stimulate the individual reader but may serve well as subjects for focus group discussions.

Let me admit that I am not a sex educator—but rather a sex counselor in private practice. Also, I did not read this 622 page text book from cover-to-cover, as it is my usual practice when reviewing books. Instead, I thoroughly browsed through it, reading many individual sections. At the end I consulted with an AASECT (American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors, and Therapists; www.aasect.org) colleague who has taught human sexuality for over 25 years. We both agreed that this textbook is very useful, especially as it is available in paperback as well as online; there is also a well done instructor's manual on the website www.atomicdogpublishing.com. Please refer to this website for more in-depth information about the book.

Choices in Sexuality covers all subjects of a human sexuality curriculum. The information is sound, appropriate and exhaustive. I was pleased to see the Basson model of female sexual response included as well as Leonore Tiefer's concerns about the medicalization of sexual dysfunctions. Illustrations of sexual positions are tastefully done. Fig. 7-3 shows a couple exchanging affectionate touch and also illustrates sexual orientation and cultural diversity, topics which are generally covered well throughout the book.

The section on sexuality and aging is good, but could have included a few more references, for example the SIECUS report "Sexuality and Aging Revisited," December 2001/January 2002, which compiles many recent references in this field. I did not find any mention of the fact that HIV/AIDS in individuals over age 50 is becoming an increasing concern. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) is listed as a resource in other sections, even though misspelled some of the times.

The text book does have a few shortcomings, one of them being the section on sexual pain (p.462-464), which only includes a few paragraphs on dyspareunia and vaginismus. Some of the relatively recent findings about vulvodynia and vulvar vestibulitis would have been very appropriate here, especially because many young women and their partners are affected by these sexual pain syndromes. It is very likely that some students—women as well as men—are experiencing the consequences of pain during sex. Even though an in depth discussion of these pain disorders is not expected in a general textbook on human sexuality, at least the National Vulvodynia Association (NVA, www.nvs.org) could have been mentioned as a resource for more information on this particular topic.

Apparently none of the three co-authors are members of sexuality organizations such as AASECT or the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS). Not that this is a prerequisite to writing a textbook on human sexuality, but I regard membership in some of these organizations as a crucial way to keep up-to-date with current trends and important news in the sexuality field by means of participation in annual conferences, online discussion groups and through monthly newsletters. Nevertheless, I was impressed with the wealth of information these authors have managed to compile. Choices in Sexuality is a textbook very well done.

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David Knox and Carolyn Schacht also host a website <http://www.heartchoice.com>

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