

Book Review: Social Work Practice with LGBTQ Community: The Intersection of History, Health, Mental Health, and Policy Factors

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3 BOOK REVIEW
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6 Social Work Practice with LGBTQ Community: The Intersection of History, Health, Mental
7 Health, and Policy Factors, edited by Michael P. Dentato. New York: Oxford, 2018. 570 PP.,
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9 ISBN 978-0-19-061279-5
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22 One of the most progressive areas of social work practice is work among LGBTQ communities.
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24 The book under review is a comprehensive social work text on theory, practice and
25 understanding on LGBTQ communities, spanned across themes of identity, health, policy and
26 social work practice. The text is meaningfully divided into five parts. The first part is an
27 overview of LGBTQ community aimed at building knowledge for social work practice. Out of
28 the three chapters in this section, the first one gives a comprehensive history of LGBTQ
29 movements across the globe and vividly in US. The second one provides a comprehensive
30 understanding of various concepts and terms in understanding LGBTQ, and third one builds on
31 the social justice perception of LGBTQ communities as enshrined in social work practice.
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43 Lifespan perspective is significant in understanding and working with LGBTQ community, and
44 7 chapters in second section of the book does a good job of that. The chapters describe lifespan
45 of LGBTQ person from identity development, through coming out, related trauma, dating, family
46 issues, employment and, finally considerations in ageing. Every chapter in this section discusses
47 in developments and challenges in each stages of life every LGBTQ person usually undergoes.
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54 This section provides practice approaches for working with LGBTQ community at all these
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3 stages of lifespan as well. The third part of the book titled as affirming LGBTQ practice
4 approaches, is by far the largest section of the book with 9 chapters, covering practice
5 approaches with different LGBTQ groups. There are separate chapters on working with (social
6 work) practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer communities. Other chapters
7 reminisce on major practice frameworks used in social work practice such as strength based,
8 minority stress theory and postmodern approaches. The chapters explore issues of practice
9 related to homophobia, rural settings, micro, meso and macro levels of social work practice,
10 policy implications and continuum of care.
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22 The last five chapters of the book elucidate on the health and mental health factors affecting lives
23 of the LGBTQ community. This section starts with an overview of mental health factors
24 impacting LGBTQ community, followed by detailed chapters dedicated to considerations of
25 intersectionality, substance abuse and addiction, intimate partner violence and HIV/AIDS issues.
26 Each chapter provides comprehensive analysis of health and mental health issues affecting
27 LGBTQ communities, and discuss social work interventions approaches to work with them. The
28 book unearths mental health from the important angles like addiction, partner violence and
29 HIV/AIDS, that affect mental health of LGBTQ community.
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41 There are two chapters in this book that specifically addresses strength based social work with
42 LGBTQ community. Chapter seven, titled strengths affirming practice with LGBTQ youth, has
43 a general overview on social work practice with LGBTQ communities. The chapter is divided
44 into four categories starting with identity development, self-determination and intersectionality.
45 Identity of LGBTQ people is one of the most important issues in understanding and working
46 with them, which is sufficiently discussed in the first part. Intersectionality (of oppression) is a
47 major paradigm in social work practice, and this section discourses on how intersectionality
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3 applies while working with LGBTQ. The next part on language as practice discusses semantic
4 predilections and power of language in working with LGBTQ people. The author explains how
5 and why names, pronouns and language/words used in social work practice are significant in
6 ensuring a safe space for clients. Based on these fundamental premises of understanding LGBTQ
7 in social work perspective, the author recommends models of practice in third section of the
8 chapter. It ponders on how social workers could follow positive youth development, trauma
9 informed care and harm reduction in working with LGBTQ people. The last part is sharing of
10 practice essentials for social workers, where authors reinstate the need for creating support,
11 welcoming the whole person and working to reduce harm. Subsequently authors provide
12 guidelines for social workers on working LGBTQ people in the context of leading social work
13 practice models. The chapter has a focus on social work practice models and provides examples
14 from actual work with LGBTQ community. This would serve as a prelude for a social worker
15 hoping to work with LGBTQ community.
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34 Chapter 18 of the book affirms how advanced social work practices are integrated in serving
35 LGBTQ communities through detailed discussion of Continuum of Care (CoC). The chapter
36 presents different models of CoC, relevance of CoC in serving LGBTQ communities and how
37 CoC ss an effective strategy for developing supportive network for LGBTQ community, by
38 empowering and engaging them throughout the process. The authors provide a pragmatic
39 example of the CoC from experience of working with LGBTQ community, in which they share
40 eight integrated programs that include education workshops, youth enrichment programs,
41 counselling at various levels, housing and coordination of care. Authors reinstate the need for
42 negotiating with partners and collaborating with service providers while serving LGBTQ
43 population. The chapter highlights the need for listening to the feedback from service users,
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3 orienting partners and funders alike, and organizational skills for working with intended client
4 groups. The chapter put forward valuable inputs on the theoretical and practical frameworks for
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6 applying CoC in serving LGBTQ population.
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10 The information contained in this book justify the large size of the book (570 pages). It is a
11 comprehensive reference book for social workers working with LGBTQ community. Though
12 there are several terminologies used to describe sexual minorities the book follows LGBTQ,
13 which gives consistency in the reading. The book follows a logical approach in presenting the
14 themes by introducing the history of LGBTQ community, important concepts, lifespan
15 approaches, social work practice approaches, and considerations for mental health. The social
16 work practice considerations at the end of every chapter, shared from experience of working with
17 them or through case studies, provides insights and tips on social work practice with LGBTQ
18 people. They serve are additives to the practical wisdom gained from this book. The appendices
19 share valuable information on important people, historical events and signs and symbols of
20 LGBTQ community. The resources and websites given at the end provides excellent additional
21 sources for explorations.
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39 Social work philosophy, methods and practice overarch the entire writing in this book. The book
40 represents social justice perspective, scientific rigor and radical human rights approaches. Social
41 work, which has historically borrowed from social sciences, is increasingly relying on medical
42 science as well, as referred to in many chapters in this book, to validate LGBTQ identities and
43 develop social work practice methods to work them. A social work reader would find almost all
44 social work models being discussed in the perspective of working LGBTQ community be it
45 trauma informed care, cognitive behavior therapy, narrative approaches, or psychodynamic
46 theories. Some theories (Eg:CASS), issues (Eg:HIV/AIDS), themes (Eg: Lifespan approach) and
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3 topics (Eg:DTDA) have been discussed in several articles in relation to different topics
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5 discussed. Though readers may find it monotonous at times, such references are invariable for
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7 complete discussion of those topics. The text follows an emic (insider) view of LGBTQ
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9 community and social workers, and most discussions are in this section viz a viz throughout the
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11 text. As an etic (outsider) one may wonder if social exclusion and homophobia as challenges
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13 mental health of LGBTQ community, which have not been sufficiently discussed in any of the
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15 chapters. Nevertheless, this book will be an asset to novice or seasoned academicians and social
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17 workers working with LGBTQ community.
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