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## Exploding Stereotypes and Moving Forward: LGBT Research has a New Look

**Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clients, Second Edition.** Edited by Kathleen J. Bieschke, Ruperto M. Perez, and Kurt A. DeBord, Washington D.C., American Psychological Association, 2007. 464 pp. \$79.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 1-59147-421-3

**Sexual Orientation and Mental Health: Examining Identity and Development in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People.** Edited by Allen M. Omoto and Howard S. Kurtzman, Washington D.C., American Psychological Association, 2006. 336 pp. \$69.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 1-59147-232-6

Michelle Hospital · Suzanna M. Rose

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Visibility of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community has increased significantly in the political, cultural and entertainment arenas in the last decade. As such, there has also been an increase in the quantity as well as quality of psychological research conducted on LGBT persons. However, this proliferation of research has occurred in a variety of domains with very little cohesion. These two books attempt to synthesize and disseminate this ever emergent field of research for clinicians, researchers and policy makers alike. Although disparate in their approaches, both books are designed as resources to elucidate the complex and often intersecting challenges affecting the LGBT community.

Editors Kathleen Bieschke, Ruperto Perez, and Kurt DeBord present two primary aims for the creation of this second edition of the *Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clients*. First, it was designed to promote a complex understanding of the diversity of the LGBT community. Second, it was developed as a heuristic for integrating mental health services and the affirmation of LGBT persons. The book contains seventeen chapters organized into three main sections. Section 1 provides a contextual

understanding of the LGBT community and its subpopulations; Section 2 addresses issues surrounding the provision of affirmative counseling; and Section 3 presents an overview of the emerging areas of LGBT research such as the potential harm of conversion therapy and reconciling the sometimes opposing forces of religious and sexual identities.

One of the strengths of this book is its specific inclusion of the often-overlooked bisexual and transgender populations. In Chapter 4, Beth Firestein presents a thorough analysis of the challenges that bisexual women face, such as the isolation they often feel when rejected by both the heterosexual world and the lesbian community. The clinical implications of this dual marginalization are addressed in a thoughtful manner. In clarifying this duality, Firestein effectively uses the analogy of working with clients who have a biracial identity, where they do not feel wholly a part of either culture and no real sense of community. Firestein includes a concise overview of the most recent research on bisexual women, including evidence about the positive aspects of accepting a bisexual identity and studies that take into consideration the intersecting aspects of sexual, religious and cultural identity. A framework for affirmative counseling with these clients also is presented, focusing on the need for clinicians to be able to see sexuality as fluid and dynamic.

Chapter 5 by Daniel J. Potoczniak focuses on bisexual men and their issues with biphobia—both internal and external. Potoczniak includes a concise historical overview

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of the bisexual community, through which he is able to clarify the complexity of how different groups define male bisexuality. He also presents a useful summary of key theories of bisexual identity development. Arlene Istar Lev introduces the transgender communities in Chapter 6 by providing some historical context. Lev also includes some important definitions and clarifications on gender identity and sexual orientation and details how the internet has facilitated the development of the community itself by providing a resource for communication for these isolated individuals.

Several authors boldly explore the unexamined anti-LGBT biases that often exist in various aspects of clinical training and practice. The chapter by Amy Fischer and Kurt deBord presents an excellent example by addressing the conflict experienced by some clinicians between affirming their religious beliefs and affirming the client's sexual minority status. Considering the current polarized political and religious climate, the inclusion of this topic in the book is important and timely. Clinicians whose religious beliefs do not support an open LGBT identity face an ethical dilemma when working with LGBT clients. Instead of immediately presenting a one-size-fits-all solution for handling this highly emotionally charged issue, Fischer and deBord take the creative position of walking the reader through their own process of disentangling this complex topic. They use the Hill, Glaser and Harden (1995) decision making model and the American Psychological Association "Ethical Principles of Psychology and Code of Conduct" (APA, 2002) to provide a framework for this process. They begin by candidly recognizing their own biases towards LGB affirming attitudes. Subsequently, in the process of defining the problem, they make a distinction between religiously justified LGB oppressive values and non-LGB oppressive religious values. By taking the time to disentangle these differences, the authors steer clear from over generalizing and are able to focus on the specific attitudes that are in conflict. Ultimately, they arrive at a complex and multi-faceted solution that addresses the power imbalance inherent in the client/counselor relationship. Even if the reader does not agree with the solution presented by the authors, Fischer and deBord successfully provide an excellent model for clinicians to use when attempting to reconcile difficult conflicts between their own set of ethical values and those of their clients.

The *Handbook* also presents an interesting discussion of the inherent heterosexism in clinical supervision by Halpert, Reinhardt and Toohey. These authors shed light on the need for affirmative clinical supervision that combats the pervasive heterosexist assumptions that currently exist in the clinical training process, such as assumptions that clients are heterosexual or a lack of openness to respecting all forms of sexual identity. A chapter by Melissa Lidderdale and

colleagues focuses on the burgeoning research concerning LGBT persons and the workplace. However since much of this research is still nascent, it remains to be seen whether these workplace integration models can be empirically tested. Policy issues are capably reviewed regarding both lesbian and gay family issues (Patterson) and the mental health of LGBT clients (Stevenson).

*Sexual Orientation and Mental Health: Examining Identity and Development in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People*, edited by Allen Omoto and Howard Kurtzman, takes a different approach to LGB issues by presenting them within a developmental framework. The book includes fourteen chapters arranged into two major sections: (1) youth and (2) adults. Stephen Russell's strong opening chapter sets the stage for Section I by presenting an in-depth review of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) concerning substance use and abuse and mental health among sexual minority youth. Other chapters on LGB youth cover significant topics such as sexual orientation milestones, family relations, victimization and mental health (D'Auggelli), social anxiety and barriers to resilience (Safren and Pantalone), young women's sexual identity development (Diamond), and religion and health among LGB youth (Rosario and colleagues). A chapter by Elizabeth Saewyc includes unexpected findings on the prevalence of pregnancy and impregnation among lesbian and gay youth. Some research has indicated that LGB teens may be twice as likely as heterosexual peers to become pregnant or father a pregnancy during their adolescence. Saewyc explores the empirical evidence and theoretical explanations for this phenomenon.

Section II describes research on LGB adults that applied innovative quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques. Using the Chicago Health and Life Experiences of Women pilot study data sample, Tonda Hughes and colleagues provides an excellent example showing the need for careful attention to the types of comparison groups that are utilized when drawing conclusions about the prevalence of mental health problems in lesbians. Also included in Section II are "state of the art" chapters by Susan Cochran and Vickie Mays on mental health and substance abuse disorders among a national sample of lesbians and gay men, and by Megan Fulcher and colleagues on lesbian mothers and children's adjustment. Other authors address understudied populations and contexts, including sexual behavior and dysfunction among lesbians; mental health outcomes for Latino gay men; the costs of concealment for closeted gay men; and the consequences of being out in the workplace. A chapter by Claire Sterk and Kirk Elifson focuses on a unique population: African American female crack cocaine users. Their exploration of sexual behaviors and sexual orientation in this group illustrates the useful-

ness of qualitative research for studying hard-to-reach populations. Their findings also suggest that researchers know little about “hidden lesbians,” i.e., women who have sex with women but do not define themselves as lesbians.

Historically, research with the LGBT population has been challenging for a number of reasons including small sample sizes, lack of accessibility to non-clinical samples, and self-selection bias. A major contribution of *Sexual Orientation and Mental Health* is the presentation of multiple research studies using advanced methodological strategies such as sophisticated longitudinal designs and the inclusion of data from nationally representative samples that is an important step in further advancing the legitimacy of LGB research. Also notable is the sensitive and comprehensive manner in which the struggles faced by LGB adolescents are addressed. However, since this book’s main organizing structure is using a developmental framework, an interesting addition to the book could have been to include research on the unique challenges faced by LGBT individuals in two additional developmental periods, that of young adulthood and the elderly.

Both books offer important contributions to the field of knowledge. Despite being divergent in their conceptual frameworks, they both serve as excellent resources on the

challenging, complex and intersecting issues impacting LGBT persons. The *Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Clients*, 2nd Edition, combines quality research with practical and concrete case examples. It would be an excellent resource for advanced clinical graduate students and supervisors as well as for clinicians seeking to educate themselves on the multifaceted aspects of working with LGBT clients. *Sexual Orientation and Mental Health: Examining Identity and Development in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People* would be highly recommended for graduate classes concerning LGB psychology or methodological issues, and also as a resource for those conducting research in this area.

In conclusion, the fact that both books have been published by the American Psychological Association (APA) highlights the increased legitimacy and visibility that some of the most prolific and cutting edge LGBT researchers have garnered in the field. They also reveal significant improvements in the quality and quantity of the research being conducted. However, both books also illustrate the need for additional research with the LGBT community because of the continuing existence of bigotry and heterosexism in the society at large and within the field.