

Reviews/Recensions

RESEARCH METHODS WITH GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER POPULATIONS

William Meezan and James I. Martin (Eds.). (2003). Haworth Press Inc., New York, 212 pages.

Research Methods with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations, co-published concurrently as *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, Volume 15, Numbers 1/2 2003, highlights the importance of researching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) populations in the social service fields. The book consists of twelve articles written mainly by Social Work professionals engaged in various types of academic research on LGBT populations throughout the United States. It begins with an overview of the less than fifty-year history of social science research on LGBT populations and the even shorter history of LGBT research in social services (less than five years). The entire collection informs readers about why methodological research on LGBT populations in social services is imperative. In order to support innovative methodological approaches that create viable services to the LGBT community, it advocates for future research that is more empirically sound, conceptually complex, and that includes geographically and ethnically diverse samples of youths and adults.

The main purpose of this collection is to examine current themes in the research on LGBT populations by looking at a variety of different methodological approaches and research experiences. In doing so, it also encourages the further continuation of this critical and analytical research on marginalized LGBT populations. Represented within this collection is a variety of different perspectives, theoretical frameworks and practices. Articles range from Michael C. LaSala's, "When Interviewing 'Family': Maximizing the Insider advantage in the Qualitative Study of Lesbians and Gay Men", which focuses on the importance and the cautionary methods of "Insider" research to Darell P. Wheeler's article, "Methodological Issues in Conducting Community-Based Health and Social Services Research Among Urban Black and African American LGBT Populations", which looks at the lack of representation in LGBT social service research of "People of Colour"

to articles that critically look at sampling methods in previous publications of the *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*.

Among this diversity of perspectives articles can also be linked or grouped according to "recurring themes" developed from the various authors' perspectives and as outlined by the co-editors in the introductory essay. Some of the themes found in this collection are the importance of an ecological perspective to connect individuals' lived experience with their environmental context; moving from simple descriptions to complex models and explanations of phenomena; exploring variations within groups by testing findings with subgroups in order to prevent overgeneralizations within LGBT research populations; and alternative recruitment and sampling methods to elicit the diverse nature of the LGBT community. Other themes include the protection of research participants, participatory inclusive research, debates on the advantages and challenges of the "Insider" researcher perspective and the use of research to not only create program and service delivery improvement, but to also create an emancipatory voice for participants and to enhance social justice practices in the delivery of services to the LGBT community. Additionally, the editors' disclaimer of recurring themes at the beginning of the collection, guides readers to look at the similarities, differences and complexities of researching LGBT populations; thereby, creating a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse population of the LGBT community and the need for varied research methods.

Finally, the book concludes with an article by the editors that outlines the important ethical responsibilities and decisions social service workers, particularly social workers and to lesser degree psychologists have when designing, implementing, and disseminating results of research on LGBT populations. The National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics (1996) and the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (1992) are used to look at possible ethical dilemmas in researching LGBT populations. The authors suggest that these ethical codes can be used to ensure more equitable practices when researching marginalized groups. The conclusion further asserts that questioning the positive and challenging aspects of LGBT populations through research is essential in producing knowledge and delivering services to support these communities.

The relevance of this book to the field of Adult Education is that for adult educators, students, and community activists it can be used as a resource on how to conduct various types of research with the LGBT community. It also contributes a greater understanding of the LGBT

population, which can then be used to teach, learn and advocate for their issues in the social service and education fields. Furthermore, it can contribute to consciousness raising and the action-oriented strategies of activists, community members, and academics engaged in emancipatory theorization and praxis within LGBT communities (and in the Adult Education field) by providing further information and analysis. However, the limitation of this book is that even though it discusses the difficulty of accessing diverse populations within LGBT communities and emphasizes the importance of representing the diverse experiences of these LGBT groups through sampling and other inclusive research methods, it falls short of actually incorporating this diversity throughout the collection. Hence, issues of inclusiveness regarding “People of Colour” and Transgendered populations are theorized but not practiced fully within this book. The interconnectedness of identity between factors such as race, gender, class, (dis)ability, age, and sexual orientation are either mentioned briefly or ignored entirely. Oppression based on racism, sexism, classism, etc. is not discussed in relation to LGBT research. In particular, the book does not adequately address how the above-mentioned factors influence and dictate who is and is not researched or what and whose experiences are considered valuable to investigate, even among marginalized LGBT groups.

Overall, the book presents an important beginning in the examination of methodological, conceptual and ethical issues when researching LGBT populations. However, more research on cross-cultural, gender, and economically diverse LGBT populations needs to be established in order to create “real” inclusiveness, and to promote change and learning on research methods and practices that will elicit social justice praxis.

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