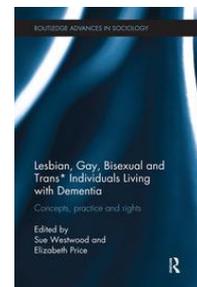


BOOK REVIEW

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans individuals living with dementia: Concepts, practice and rights (Westwood & Price, Eds.)

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Title: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans individuals living with dementia: Concepts, practice and rights **Editors:** Sue Westwood & Elizabeth Price **Publication year:** 2018 **Publisher:** Routledge **Pages:** 241 **ISBN:** 978-1-138-34334-4

REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Vicky Guise is a music therapist and trained as a neurologic music therapist. Her experience includes working in mainstream schools, colleges, hospital settings and care homes. She has worked alongside young children in mainstream education, children with autistic spectrum conditions and people living with neurological conditions, including dementia and brain injury. Alongside a number of freelance projects, including an inpatient Aphasia Friendly Choir within a Stroke Rehabilitation Ward, Vicky works for Chroma and as a Mental Health Practitioner for the charity Place2Be. [victoriaguise@hotmail.co.uk]

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Edited by Sue Westwood and Elizabeth Price, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Individuals living with Dementia: Concepts, Practice and Rights* is one of the first collections that looks to invite professionals involved in dementia care to explore research and perspectives within this under-represented area. Within three main sections, a wide range of professions and research specialisms, including social work, gerontology and dementia studies, are brought together alongside the voices of those with lived experience. This provides a valuable, varied insight into current thinking around the intersection of theory and practice within dementia care, and how this relates to the LGBT community. I feel it is important to state that I approached reviewing this book from the position of an ally to the LGBT community and, although the arts therapies are not discussed specifically, found much that is relevant to the profession. As the editor states, the experience of care for LGBT people with dementia will “be informed by the readiness, or not, of services for people with dementia and those who care for them, to recognise, understand and be equipped to meet the needs of LGBT people” (p. 1).

The book is divided into three distinct sections, the first of which discusses different theoretical approaches to LGBT people living with dementia. This section felt particularly relevant to those developing dementia research and considering diversity within studies. Each of the four chapters in this section offers different perspectives to omissions of LGBT issues within dementia research and the absence of people living with dementia within LGBT research. Westwood provides an overview of the issues the absence of LGBT voices within dementia research has on equality of service provision. She also provides a useful and accessible exploration of gender, sexuality and gender identity and how

these can all impact experiences of care. A particularly impactful chapter from Hulko considers how an intersectional framework may provide opportunities to consider the identity of a person with dementia through different lenses such as gender, age, sexuality and social class. This suggests the need to consider all aspects of a person's identity. The potential for how this can support care is explored through a case study of woman who identifies as a trans, bi-sexual woman and how a dementia diagnosis could impact her experience of healthcare. In chapter 4, King et al. provide detailed explorations of how different theoretical approaches, including Queer theory can be applied to challenge heteronormative approaches to dementia research and care.

Section 2 consists of six chapters that explore different aspects of practice and support for LGBT people living with dementia. As a practitioner, this section was especially powerful and leaves the reader with much to consider around their approach to work and supporting diversity. The chapters from Hughes and Barrett et al. have similar over-arching messages that invite the reader to consider aspects of practice that may create barriers and challenges for LGBT people with dementia. This includes attitudes of staff to LGBT people, the understanding of diverse support networks within the LGBT community and the impact of LGBT history on healthcare. Gaining a much wider understanding of this context is invaluable to understand the challenges and fears people may face in accessing support. Witton goes on to extend this by exploring the specific challenges that are faced by transgender people living with dementia, where it is particularly emphasised how understanding the needs of the community is vital to provide appropriate care. However, very little research exists to establish fully what these needs are. Within these three chapters, there are many places where, as a reader, it feels as though music therapy could contribute to a more supportive care system for LGBT individuals. For instance, Witton states that "developing ways for the individual to have meaningful inclusion in their respective residential environment and developing trans-focused methods for life review and reminiscence" (p. 116) are critical to a person-centred approach to care for a trans individual. There is potential, for example, for music to act as a means to understand and build connections between residents in care settings by sharing music that is significant to their life story, composing new songs or using lyric substitution. Chapter 9 develops considerations around the needs of trans individuals in care with an exploration of the complexity of gender identity. A particularly helpful aspect of this chapter is the discussion around good practice guidelines that are currently being developed in the UK and USA, which provides an important starting point to reflect on inclusive practice and care. The specific individualised support needed for LGBT unpaid carers and the impact of one-day training LGBT awareness courses on care settings are discussed in the final chapters, which add to the message of the section that more understanding, research and safe spaces are needed within this area of healthcare.

The final section draws together issues of health care policy in different nations, including the US, Wales and Scotland and how this impacts the care of LGBT people living with dementia and their carers. Willis et al.'s chapter exploring the attitudes of care staff in Welsh care homes was particularly hard-hitting, with quotes included from staff that highlighted the lack of training and understanding of the needs of the LGBT community.

As a whole, Westwood and Price's edited collection shines a powerful light on an under-represented and marginalised issue. The inclusion of a range of professions and own-voice experiences make the discussion feel relevant to all who work within dementia care, whether as a

researcher or a practitioner. As a reader, this made the writing styles very varied, with some being more approachable from a practitioner perspective than others. Although the over-arching messages of a number of chapters felt similar, I was left inspired by the role music therapy could play in supporting these key concerns. As a person-centred profession, this collection encourages us all to consider our own understanding of issues for this community, how we can make our practices safe and supportive and how we can give these experiences a stronger voice in research.