

Helping Gay and Lesbian Youth: New Policies, New Programs, New Practices, DeCrescenzo, T (ed), The Haworth Press, Inc, New York, 1994, ISBN: 1-56024-678-2; 1-56023-057-6, 69 pp, (p/b). Price: US\$19.95.

This book provides insight into the world of gay and lesbian adolescents. The book is composed of a series of articles, by different authors, which focus on the development of gay/lesbian youth as they learn to live in a society in which they are perceived as "different." The reader is given an opportunity to become familiar with a wide range of issues, problems, attitudes and political policies, etc, which can have a profound effect on this specific group of adolescents. Although the book's societal context is the United States, much of the information and topics presented are relevant to any society in which there are gay/lesbian youth.

The presented material is interesting, informative and easily understood. This fact enables the book to be accessible to a diverse population of interested individuals – such as parents, teachers and friends of gay/lesbian youth. It will also be of particular interest to professionals who may be in a position of providing understanding, assistance, or therapy to gay/lesbian adolescents.

I felt that the tone of the book encouraged mental health workers to take an active political role in supporting issues, problems and societal inequities relating to gay/lesbian youth. Certainly such an approach would have interesting and possibly controversial implications for mental health workers in Zimbabwe.

As a therapist at CONNECT, I was especially interested in two of the articles contained in the book. One, by Mallon, deals with counselling strategies useful with gay/lesbian youth. The other article, by Jackson & Sullivan, examines the impact of homophobia on gay/lesbian youth.

Mallon, in his article, not only focuses on effective approaches and interventions with regard to counselling needs, but also examines factors which may intensify 'normal' transitional problems in teenagers. The factors explored include: stigmatisation, hiding and isolation, sense of differentness, lack of familial support, harassment and violence. Mallon takes a brief look at the past and presents theoretical approaches which have been used with this specific population. In addition, he presents a list of suggestions which can be effective when counselling gay/lesbian adolescents.

The second article, by Jackson & Sullivan concentrates on the social and cognitive developments of gay/lesbian youth. The authors show how these significant areas of development are impacted upon by homophobic attitudes, and policies of a heterosexual society.

Also of interest was an article which dealt with the risk of HIV infection for the gay/lesbian youth population. The article also mentions ways in which adolescents could avoid being infected. Even though this particular article was aimed toward

gay/lesbian youth, the information is applicable for use with any adolescent who is beginning to deal with their own sexuality.

All in all, I felt that the book provided a lot of helpful, and appropriate information for dealing with gay/lesbian youth. The references cited in the text and the bibliography included at the end of each article will be especially helpful for those interested in exploring more in-depth information.

However, one must keep in mind that this book is based on dealing with and understanding gay/lesbian youth within a western societal context. In a Zimbabwean context, gay/lesbian youth are an invisible population. Therefore, a number of ideas for dealing with this group of adolescents are irrelevant. For example, suggestions and recommendations in terms of available social and support services simply has no relevancy here at all.

At the same time, one may argue, that the information, at some point in time, may be helpful for those who find themselves dealing with a client, friend or child who happens to be a gay/lesbian adolescent. The emphasis, or at least the tone of the book, appears to lean towards an active political role on the part of mental health workers, which is certainly not applicable to our Zimbabwe context.

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From Strategies to Action: A Research Perspective, edited and published by Association of African Women in Research and Development (AAWORD), Nairobi, 1995, pp 182.

Ahead of the Fourth World Conference for Women held in Beijing, China, the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) published the book **From Strategies to Action: A Research Perspective**. The timely book has also a timely message: that with regard to women in development the focus is shifting from the strategies to action.

The book not only reviews the progress made in the area of Women in Development since 1985 when the Nairobi Women's Decade Conference was held, to the 1995 Beijing Conference, but also outlines specific actions that would see women's lot improved in the next decade.

In virtually all the articles in the volume, two parts are discernable: The first part of each article reviews the progress made in the area of Women in Development since 1985 when the "Forward Looking Strategies" were laid down in Nairobi. The second part outlines the necessary action.

The volume consists of eleven articles covering over five different themes. The