

Participatory Action-Research spiral then enters a new phase.

By bringing together the case study reports and the theoretical exposition, the editors manage to immerse the reader in the theory and practice of PAR because the lessons learned in the case studies are consolidated into principles of participatory research methodology.

The volume's appeal and readability is greatly enhanced by the participatory style of reporting which enables the authors to share their experiences in an involving manner. In this regard it is worth noting that in virtually all the case study reports, the authors use the first person (I, we) rather than the third person style commonly used in academic writing. Occasional use of dialogue (direct speech) and local terms such as *campesinos* (Mexican subsistence farmer) and *dais* (traditional village birth attendant, North India) effectively usher the reader into the world of Participatory Action-Research.

The volume is certainly valuable to students, teachers and other people interested in learning to undertake Participatory Action-Research. In fact the book goes beyond "Learning to do PAR" to nurture and advocate for it.

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"Gay and Lesbian Professionals in the Closet. Who's In. Who's Out, and Why?" edited by Teresa De Crescenzo, published by Harrington Park Press, New York. An imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc, New York (1997), 94pp inc index. ISBN: 0-7890-0331-7 (h/b); 1-56023-104-1 (p/b). Price: \$US29.95 (h/b); \$US14.95 (p/b).

Aim of the book and who it is directed at

By outlining experiences of several gay professionals, the book aims at critically reviewing the disclosure process. Authors of several articles in the book acknowledge the complications of the disclosure process and talk about disadvantages and advantages of coming out of the closet, limiting these mostly to gay and lesbian professionals mainly in the helping professions, eg, psychotherapists, personnel in psychiatric settings, religious workers such as priests, etc.

In the foreword, the book's Editor Teresa De Crescenzo, speaking from experience, encourages gay closeted professionals to come out of the closet and the message she puts across is for these professionals in the closet to speak up and out.

De Crescenzo acknowledges that there may be dangers involved in speaking out but she outlines the advantages for the person concerned as:

- self fulfilment
- not being stifled.

By remaining quiet there is validation of some people's belief in the right they have to demean and marginalise gays and lesbians.

The book contains different articles written by gays and lesbians talking about their experiences on coming out or deciding to remain in the closet, the impact it has on colleagues or clients and on the self. The editor cautions that those making decisions on staying or coming out of the closet have to consider how much disclosure will enhance or subvert relationships, but the underlying question is, *"How can we help others define themselves if we are not willing to do that ourselves?"*

The Disclosure Process

The disclosure process, its advantages and disadvantages include:

- social-psychological factors
- cultural influences
- legal issues
- status in a particular group.

Consequences of disclosure vary depending on several factors:

- discovering that one is not alone and needs not be isolated
- gaining sense of community belonging
- experiencing moral judgement of family, friends, even law
- loss of job, accommodation.

It is difficult to predict peoples reactions to disclosure. What does it mean to be "out of the closet?"

De Crescenzo puts these points forward

- not caring if seen holding hands with object of affection by straight friends
- not worrying that people – anyone – will discover your secret
- not hiding correspondence or literature at all
- not making fake plans of activities
- not taking "friend" of opposite sex to company functions
- not playing role of "straight" lonely single person
- not thinking about it at all.

De Crescenzo quoting Mark (1992) talks about "outing," ie, revealing of someone's homosexuality without permission. There is vindictive "outing" which exposes gays and they in turn are made stronger by this process, but the "outing" Mark advocates is not for the sake of wreaking vengeance or punishing but to avoid degrading oneself, to live with dignity.

De Crescenzo says America is just beginning to look at the negative effect the closeted gay role model has on gay and lesbian youth. When the sexual orientation of a well-known person is an open secret, the message is that it is not OK to be gay or lesbian. She then says the same question or message applies to social service providers including social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, priests, ministers and others in helping professions. She acknowledges that there are several points of view on the matter and it is hoped that the dialogue and research will continue.

The book is a very good information source for those gay and lesbian professionals who may want to know the impact of "coming out" for themselves and the people they work with. It is valuable in that it contains articles written by professionals outlining their personal experiences.

Most of the writers who are sharing their experiences are based in the United States, a country that has had gay rights issues in discussion for decades. For gay and lesbian professionals living and working in those countries where gay rights are not respected, the book opens up discussions and dialogue. The book content thus needs to be taken in the context of the American experience; however its value in encouraging and providing relevant knowledge, experience and information is crucial for all gay and lesbian professionals, and also for those professionals who work and interact with gay and lesbian communities.

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