



Murray, Christine, Pope, Amber, and Willis, Ben, *Sexuality Counselling: Theory, Research, and Practice*

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Talking about sexuality is a challenge that is likely to come up during counselling, for both clients and counsellors, since sexuality is often a latent issue in many personal or familial cases. Through an overview of this under-addressed topic, the book reviewed here, *Sexuality Counselling: Theory, Research, and Practice*, demystifies this masked item, offering know-how to enrich the competencies of diverse counselling specialties. It covers a broad range of sexuality discussion, from physiological, mental, emotional, cultural, social, economical, spiritual and technological dimensions, which relates to adolescents, adults and seniors, including not only single persons and couples, but equally important heterosexual and non-heterosexual people (LGBTIQQA; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, and ally). Based on its comprehensive, contextual framework, it proposes a Contextualised Sexuality Model that promotes positive sexuality, finally asserting the significance of sexuality counselling as a specialty in the psychotherapy field, as well as in the public health and education arenas.

Guided by the Contextualised Sexuality Model to gain a thorough understanding of human sexuality, the authors advocate for the impact of dynamics among contextual influences that comprise individual physical and mental health, gender identity and sexual orientation, intimate relationships, cultural and contextual factors, development influences, and positive sexuality. When individuals achieve sexual health and sexual satisfaction, their sexuality is fulfilled positively, implying that they undergo lifetime positive

growth and interaction within the earlier-considered elements. This framework builds the motif of this book.

The book is well structured. Aside from listing the objectives in each chapter, it enumerates keystones to recapture readers' attention, together with chapter summaries and additional resources in most chapters. There are also fictional cases so that readers can better understand relevant concepts, wherein the exercises are roadmaps on self-reflection, self-assessment, ethical rethinking, and skill development for counsellors. Tabulation on commonly used assessment tools, sexuality-related disorders, and sexual side effects of psychotropic medications exhibits a clear picture, providing easy references. Impressively, the authors delineate their experience in sexuality counselling, as well as their insight into writing this book. Their sincerity in sharing their experiences greatly increases the applicability of the Contextualised Sexuality Model.

Discreetly distinguishing sexuality counselling from sex therapy, the authors compare treatment intensity and case complexity between these two closely connected professions. A fuller set of skills for counsellors who deal with clients with sexual problems is required. In contrast, this book frankly argues that most counsellors have insufficient training in human biology and anatomy, resulting in hurdles in explaining physiological problems that clients may encounter. Therefore, it is advisable for sexuality counsellors to compensate for this weakness through efforts such as building up inventories of sexuality-related language, which will enable them to communicate with clients more accurately and professionally.

Despite these advantages, this book contains room for improvement. Initially, it discusses professional ethics in detail, showing empathy towards client vulnerability. However, it neglects referral guidelines where needed in certain cases. This review suggests discussion on how counsellors

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can refer out adequately if they feel discomfort in handling sexuality-associated clients. Second, although the authors emphasise the imperative of cultural and religious factors, they focus only on Western monotheisms (including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), neglecting Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. This incomplete depiction should be rectified. Third, this book involves most topics of sexuality, with the exception of sexual violence, which has increasingly become an indispensable discussion in helping professions (for instance, counselling, social work, health care, and education). This review suggests this part should be addressed attentively. Fourth, as spelled out in this book, since sexuality encompasses developmental stages, lifelong sexuality education and psychoeducation (including physical and mental changes) can accommodate different phases throughout an individual's entire lifespan. However, if the authors could have discussed the debate on the governmental role in public and school settings, this book could have further enhanced its discourse. Fifth, the authors go through LGBTIQQA from a counselling perspective. Nonetheless, little depiction has been given on minority stress, including homophobia, transphobia, internal homophobia, and internal transphobia, associated with external and internal fear of non-heterosexual orientation and behaviour, and how counselling can serve them. Lastly, this book needs more elaboration on the benefits of positive sexuality in the sense of physical and mental health, and relational benefits. This review proposes to extend this discussion to other premises; for example, societal and public finance benefits.

Furthermore, the authors put forth effort towards the fundamental knowledge of sexuality and general concepts of sexuality counselling. They seldom specify the practicability and effectiveness of mainstream psychotherapeutic

interventions, involving psychoanalytic, person-centred, and cognitive and behavioural approaches, underpinned by abundant research. Since recent studies denote positive signs of complementary and alternative treatments, such as music therapy, movement therapy, and arts-based methods, this review recommends that the application of these instruments can be attempted in sexuality counselling.

Sexuality counselling is a multi-disciplinary study in theoretical and clinical domains. This reviewed book unveils an extensive coverage of sexuality counselling in a holistic form of the Contextualised Sexuality Model, which is beneficial to counsellors, whether or not they specialise in sexuality counselling. Its chapter organisation, with cases and exercises, guides readers in learning the essential concepts. Hence, not only does this book furnish material for psychoeducation and self-learning, but it also serves as a textbook or reference for helping professionals and instructors who are eager to equip themselves with relevant knowledge and skills.

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