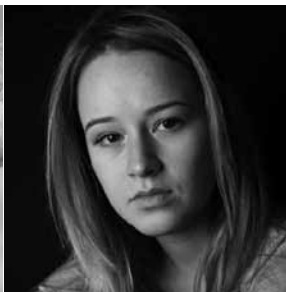
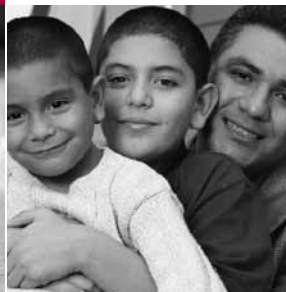


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REVIEWS

Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture

Mark A. Yarhouse. (2015). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

In his book, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture*, Mark Yarhouse addresses one of the most polarizing issues in contemporary society and one of the most challenging issues for the church. Yarhouse, a clinician, researcher, and academic, provides for the reader an overview of the issues in gender identity and gender dysphoria, common and professional terminology, theories of causation and etiology, and treatment approaches. The author writes from a Christian perspective and largely to a Christian audience including ministers, congregants, therapists, and to persons dealing with gender dysphoria.

Yarhouse reports on the experiences of transgender persons from his clinical experience, often by sharing portions of their narratives. It may be that these narratives are from a qualitative research project but that is unclear. The author does report in the introduction a study done with Christians who also identify as transgender. This is juxtaposed against his report on the position of conservative evangelical churches, many of which see Christian and transgender as mutually exclusive groups.

Yarhouse examines scripture that is frequently quoted as conservative verification of sin in the debate about Christianity and transgender issues. At that point, the author introduces one of the most significant contributions of the book, three theoretical perspectives for understanding and responding to gender dysphoria or transgender issues: Integrity, Disability, and Diversity. He describes the Integrity perspective as the traditional viewpoint of biological sex as being God's designated assignment of male and female. The Disability perspective is the notion of persons as fallen, which sees gender dysphoria as an anomaly and illness, outside the control of the transgender person and deserving of empathy. The Diversity perspective provides a normalizing of the transgender experience along a continuum as persons celebrate their identity. While the appropriation of the word integrity for the conservative viewpoint implies lack of integrity for more affirming views, it is notable that the author advocates for an integrated perspective that borrows the best from all three perspectives while clearly disavowing the strong diversity approach.

While the author reports on the research on causality, he clearly is skeptical about the current brain research and the DSM-5 focus on dysphoria as a diagnosable condition. In reviewing treatment options, Yarhouse reviews major treatment paradigms with a nod to the mental health community that supports helping clients' transition and that encourages use of the integrated model to help clients determine the least aggressive treatment path they can manage. The author's clinical practice perspective from years of work

with children, adolescents, adults, and their families includes assessment and intervention strategies that support clients in generally conservative approaches while affirming that gender dysphoria is not their fault or their choice. This leads to the author's discussion of the church and the continuum of responses to persons who are transgender, including the specific challenges to an internally or externally focused mission.

This book will provide those who identify as Christians a fairly comprehensive overview of the terminology, etiology, and challenges of gender dysphoria. The research and professional focus and language speak to the author's breadth of knowledge and practice. The theoretical framework and practice guidelines are a beginning for consideration. Christians in social work will find the discussion of transgender research and practice important to practice. Further, the author's discussion of scripture and Christian belief is important to working with clients who are both Christian and transgender. The three perspectives provide a framework for the social worker to help clients and their families think about their own responses to the transgender experience.

The strength of the work is this conceptual framework for readers to consider. Yarhouse walks the line of understanding and identifying with Christian conservative positions and of empathic and caring responses to persons who are on the continuum of transgender experience. Some conservative Christians will find the work too liberal and too accepting of transgender persons. Some persons in the transgender community and in professional practice will find the work too supportive of the conservative position that asserts that there is something morally wrong with being transgender. Many readers will find some insight and guidance in understanding transgender issues and more importantly perhaps, in understanding how much we still have to learn. That may be the primary contribution of the book. In any case, the critical thinker will find much here to contemplate. ❖

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Couple Therapy: A New Hope-focused Approach

Jennifer S. Ripley & Everett L. Worthington, Jr. (2014). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Everett Worthington, Jr. first introduced the hope-focused approach in his earlier book, *Hope-focused Marriage Counseling* (2005). After receiving feedback from both counselors and couples utilizing the approach, Worthington and Ripley revised the hope-focused approach in this book.