

## Book Review

**The Transgender Handbook: A guide for transgender people, their families and professionals.** *Edited by Walter Pierre Bouman and Jon Arcelus.* New York: Nova Publishers, 2017, 490 pages, \$ 243.00 (hard back). Paperback due in September 2017. ISBN: 978-1-53611-843-8.

When I started working in the field of transgender health in 2013, I immediately looked for a reliable, comprehensive, and easy to understand text that could provide me with an initial overview of the area. However, I quickly found that there was no such text. The books that were available tended to be written for surgeons, endocrinologists, and psychiatrists and, as an academic psychologist, were less appropriate for me and what I wanted to learn. I was therefore delighted to hear that Walter Pierre Bouman and Jon Arcelus were editing a book that looked to fill this gap. Having been lucky enough to be asked to review the book, I can say without hesitation that it was not only lived up to, but exceeded, my expectations.

The book itself is divided into 29 chapters, which immediately gives an indication of the breadth and comprehensiveness of the topics covered. Chapters are written by professionals and academics in the field, from all over the world. Particularly refreshing to see is the inclusiveness of the book from the point of view of the backgrounds of the authors, which includes junior and 'up and coming' academics and medics, and not just those who have been established in the field for many years. Indeed, the final two chapters are written by transgender individuals and

describe their personal journeys, which really serves to bring the preceding chapters to life.

For each chapter, the reader is presented with an overview box, the main text, and then a learning points box at the end. I found this latter aspect very helpful for synthesising what had been read and capturing the take home messages and I envisage that this will be extremely useful for students who may have this text recommended as part of their academic study. The vignettes are also tremendously valuable for thinking through the issues. The chapters are well-referenced and detailed, but while still retaining a conciseness that allows single chapters to be fully devoured without reader fatigue kicking in.

The book provides a thorough overview of everything you might have ever wanted to know about what transgender is (and is not). It speaks to the historical background of the field and changing issues surrounding diagnosis, the current concerns and controversies (for example, when to treat (if at all) young children and adolescents), common questions many people have (for example, regarding sexuality or fertility), and legal issues that transgender people often have to face (for example, regarding employment and discrimination). Whilst the book acknowledges throughout that a medical transition (the use of hormones with / without surgery) is not desired or chosen by all transgender people, it includes 6 chapters that describe the range of endocrine and surgical treatment options available which leaves the reader well informed of these possibilities. My only criticism with the book is the cost. It is currently only available in hardback, priced at \$243.00, which is rather expensive,

particularly for the lay reader. However, at the editors' request, the publisher will be issuing a more reasonably priced paperback version in September 2017. This will help to ensure that this important text is available to all and that price is not a barrier.

Overall, this book serves to highlight the complexity of gender in a way that is accessible to all readers. Walter Pierre Bouman and Jon Arcelus have done a commendable job at pulling together a book that will act as a much needed support resource for anyone who is questioning their gender identity, transitioning, or supporting a loved one. I believe that this book will leave all who read it better informed and, as such, is an invaluable tool in increasing education, support, and acceptance.

GEMMA L. WITCOMB, PhD

*Lecturer in Psychology*

*School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences*

*Loughborough University,*

*Loughborough, United Kingdom*