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Article:

Rogers, M.M. orcid.org/0000-0002-7214-4375 (2022) Working with domestic violence and abuse across the lifecourse: understanding good practice, Ravi Thiara and Lorraine Radford (eds). The British Journal of Social Work. bcac033. ISSN 0045-3102

<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcac033>

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in British Journal of Social Work following peer review. The version of record, Michaela M Rogers, Working with Domestic Violence and Abuse across the Lifecourse: Understanding Good Practice, Ravi Thiara and Lorraine Radford (eds), The British Journal of Social Work, 2022;, bcac033 is available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcac033>

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Working with domestic violence and abuse across the lifecourse: Understanding good practice

This book is a helpful contribution to a dynamic and contested field in which the umbrella term 'domestic violence and abuse' (DVA) comprises an evolving amalgam of harmful practices. The book focuses on areas of the field that have been more commonly written about, such as the impact of DVA exposure for children, but also includes emergent areas, such as adolescent-to-parent violence and abuse. More marginal identities were also included including older women and black and minoritised ethnic (BME) people. In this sense, it achieves what is set out to do in representing victim/survivors from across the lifecourse.

In terms of populations of interest, the one group that I was most heartened to see included was that of perpetrators. My argument is that in working in the field of DVA, how can we as academics, practitioners, policymakers or commissioners, be inclusive if we do not give equal weight to our focus on those who perpetrate DVA (whatever their identities – men, women, trans, black, white, abled, disabled, old, young, and so on) as to victims. Inclusive practice in DVA work should not only be centred on the different identities and experiences of groups of victim/survivors or overlapping problems (such as mental ill health or substance abuse), but on those who cause harm.

Using an analytical lens, a further observation results from the author's questioning but balanced approach to a gender-based analysis of DVA. As an academic with strong roots in practice, I appreciate a critical lens and advocate that social workers use an eclectic approach to their practice, using whatever tools and theory are appropriate in applying these to every unique situation that they encounter. The principle can apply to DVA. As a feminist, however, I am fundamentally rooted to a gendered analysis of violence and abuse in intimate and personal relationships regardless of whether victim/survivors and perpetrators are identify as men, women or minority gender identity. This feminist positioning does not obstruct the concurrent adoption of a human rights or other lens through which to explore DVA however.

Overall, this book really is an indispensable handbook for those who wish to understand theory and practice pertaining to DVA and safeguarding. Each chapter is comprehensive and thorough in the analysis of the issue as well as in presenting examples of evidence-based interventions, guidance for practice and implications for policy. A lifecourse approach is reflected throughout the book and in more detail in some chapters, e.g., the chapter on black and minoritised ethnic people integrates the experiences of women *and* girls (the experiences of older BME women would have been a welcome addition). The balance of theory and practice is excellent in terms of the former not dominating the content and enough weight given to practice. This helps to emphasise the complex and intersecting nature of DVA and the central importance of context in assessments, planning and interventions.

I am a senior lecturer in social work with practice and research experience in the DVA field. I enjoyed reading this book and was heartened to see a range of contributors including practitioners enabling differential understandings and perspectives on DVA. I would wholly recommend the book to my students to enable them to understand the complexities of DVA while, at the same time, building clear links between the presenting issues in terms of safeguarding and good practice responses.