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Review of Tyler Lefevor and Lisa Tennsmeyer-Hansen Presentation

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There are many questions that therapists and theoreticians strive to provide answers to. When confronted with difficulty in answering these questions, a feeling of discomfort or inability to move forward may be present. A question that can often be increasingly difficult is how to care for members of the Church who question their gender or their sexual orientation. And as therapists whose goal is to provide a path toward mental health but also spiritual health what is best in these situations?

In this pursuit, the research and discussion held by Tyler Lefevor, PhD, Lisa Tennsmeyer Hansen, LMFT, PhD, and Ty Mansfield, PhD, LMFT, invites an opportunity to delve into these questions. Important in this pursuit is an openness to discussion that allows for all sides of this dialogue to be heard. In the video, Dr. Lefevor invites the tone of the presentation to be a dialogue about the perspectives of those who identify as LGBTQ+ but also with leaders and therapists who engage with those who identify as such. This open dialogue of considering all perspectives invokes the importance of allowing for an open exploration of these topics in this presentation and a practiced example on how to work with clients.

Dr. Lefevor opens the discussion by providing his results on multiple studies conducted with LGBTQ+ members. These studies vary from questions detailing the roles of labels that people use to describe their identity and sexual orientation, the role of the church membership on the quality of life for sexual minorities, the importance of quality relationships, and the difficulties with ambivalence. In this work, a consistent theme of the complexity of these questions is palpable and Dr. Lefevor excellently allows space for open dialogue about their own lived experiences and the experiences of those in attendance.

Dr. Tennsmeyer Hansen provides apt counsel as we approach sexual or gender minority clients. The declaration on avoiding harm provides an in-depth approach guiding therapists on how to approach clients in a way that recognizes and affirms them as valid and valuable persons despite difficulties with gender or sexual orientation. This is clearly exemplified throughout the presentation as questions of differing belief systems, clinical approaches and spiritual concerns are all discussed. Dr. Tennsmeyer Hansen closes with a review on the Gender Congruence Scale and the Gender Role Scale.
In the presentations of both Dr. Lefevor and Dr. Tennsmeyer Hansen, the approach is to allow open discussion to pervade their presentation. These discussions are open to varying opinions but the consistent approach throughout is to allow each person to be valued while valuing the complex and experiential perspectives of LGBTQ+ and identity-questioning members. In this way, the human is being approached in its fullness, both spiritual and mental. The presenters make it clear throughout their role to interweave both the spiritual and mental in all their work with their clients and in this open forum.

It is best to close with the words that Dr. Tennsmeyer Hansen quotes from Elder Ulysses Soares (October 2021) in how we need to treat those around us with compassion:

>“We need to consider that it is not easy to understand all the circumstances that contribute to someone's attitude or reaction ... Even knowing all our weaknesses as He does, the Savior does not rashly condemn us but continues to work with us compassionately over time, helping us to remove the beam from our eye. Jesus always looks on the heart and not on the appearance. The invitation to consider the whole of a person, of the special importance of their heart, is the guiding rule necessary whenever considering these complex questions.”