

Book Review

Weiss, A. B., Lawrence, L. S., & Mijangos, L. B. (Eds.). (2017). *Narrative in social work practice: The power and possibility of story*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Reviewed by Bishnu Mohan Dash, MSW, M.Phil., Ph.D.
Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar College, University of Delhi, Delhi

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The book *Narrative in Social Work Practice: The Power and Possibility of Story* is a diverse collection consisting of sixteen chapters organized into four sections: "Writing as Discovery and Healing," "Narrative Social Work with Individuals and Families," "Narrative Social Work with Groups," and the last section dealing with the impact of narrative in social work education, "Supervision and Research." It is an autobiographical self-examination, a work with individuals/ groups, and an illustration of the field's commitment to training and research. Each part of the book is preceded by a list of certain competencies essential for the education of a social worker and ends by suggesting some effective ways for developing them. The book highlights the importance of narrative practice in the social work profession and its use in the learning and teaching of social work practice. This innovative book is the culmination of the interpretative understanding of the authors aimed at providing solutions to bridge the divides between social workers and their clients towards a therapeutic, universal recognition of the human condition.

The book is a testament to the advantages of revelatory narrative concepts in the care of the most vulnerable sections of the population like the older people dying alone at home, mothers whose children have been taken away from them and put into foster care, persons with dementia who have lost language abilities, and patients shocked by the sudden appearance of fatal cancer in their lives. And in the face of such trauma and crisis, the narrative

methods not only described but also mapped the autobiographical terrains by intersubjective contact, which brought the hope, the contact and the universality of human experience. thereby creating a bridge of dignity and recognition towards a future. The book is based on the practical experiences of the social workers who successfully applied narrative theory into their social work practice and made effective interventions with a wide range of individuals, families and groups facing a variety of life challenges in varied environments. The book successfully demonstrates the power and appeal of narrative methods, which not only empower the clients but also have a fulfilling experience for social workers. The book suggests various ways by which social work can achieve its mission of linking individual well-being to the well-being of the society.

Most of the chapters included in the book have some common features: the profound joy of helping a person to recognize the meaning of the tale he or she tells, the narrative humility of opening to the mystery of the other, the reflected trauma of witnessing the suffering of others, and the soft echoes of self and other within the immersive listener. Each chapter of the book demonstrates one or more competencies and practice behaviors as well as narrative methods used to fulfill them. The book reflects examples of narrative competence of the authors who had the ability to carefully listen and observe others very deeply. The chapters included in the book are the representation of the story in the author's own language as shared by the subjects.

Authors are not involved in the process merely as observers. They seem to have a clear understanding of their own stake in the process. In a number of chapters, one finds the narrative humility with which the authors work can be seen in their search for self-understanding and self-healing. They, while writing about their clients, depict a sense of respect, dignity and appreciation of their lives.

The book expounds the social and personal dimensions that attract social workers to their work in the first place and proposes innovative ideas and methods that keep the practice incessantly new. The book provides a cornucopia of strategies for social work professionals to use their 'self' in innovative ways in various welfare settings. It will be also extremely useful in a growing number of other professions that value narrative and relational competence, such as oral history, narrative therapy, trauma therapy, narrative medicine, narrative psychiatry, palliative care, and dementia care. The book is an essential reading for social work practitioners, educators, supervisors and researchers and other human service professionals who focus on human dialogue, interpretation and interventions. It equips social workers to understand better as to why, when and how to address human sufferings.