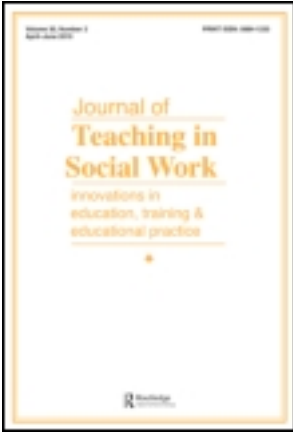


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### Treating Young Veterans: Promoting Resilience through Practice and Advocacy, by Diann C. Kelly, Sydney Howe-Barksdale, and David Gitelson (Eds.)

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Diann C. Kelly, Sydney Howe-Barksdale, and David Gitelson (Eds.). (2011). *Treating Young Veterans: Promoting Resilience through Practice and Advocacy*. New York: Springer. (384 pp, \$48.00 paperback, ISBN #13-9780826107091).

American veterans are returning home from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq today in staggering numbers. The systems of care, however, originally created to handle both their ongoing and emerging needs, are severely strained. The U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) has done a worthy job of trying to meet the medical and emotional challenges posed by soldiers and their families, but the sheer numbers are overwhelming the system. As such, civilian social workers and other health care providers (those not employed by the VA or Department of Defense Health Care systems) are assuming greater responsibility for caring for veterans and their families. The call for material to educate social workers and others on the needs of these veterans therefore is urgent. Fortunately, the editors of *Treating Young Veterans: Promoting Resilience through Practice and Advocacy* have assembled an impressive group of contributors with a vast range of knowledge and understanding of the complexities of military/civilian life and the struggles inherent in post-deployment adjustment.

Practice, outreach, and advocacy are the three major areas of inquiry, spread out over 14 chapters and an Epilogue. “Part One” focuses on assessment and practice approaches, “Part Two” explores outreach efforts and practice with special communities, and “Part Three” looks at advocacy efforts to promote veteran well-being. The theme of resilience emerges early and is defined as “. . . the capacity for successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426). The cohort of study, as defined by the title of the book, are young service men and women who are making the transition from active combat to veteran status and a return to civilian life.

The impact of the war experience forms the core of several of the chapters in Part One: Assessment and Practice Approaches. The chapter by Klug and colleagues is particularly instructive on the philosophical and emotional impact of participation in war, adding depth to our understanding of the

challenges faced by certain vulnerable veteran populations (the homeless, women who have experienced military sexual trauma, and families). Part Two highlights how these special communities have emerged from the war experience. The material in Part Three also is important because it looks at fewer areas of veterans services (such as benefits and legal matters) in relation to the specific needs of first responders and reservists.

The book is replete with valuable and meaningful information . . . and that is one of the problems I experienced when reading the volume. For a book on veteran care to be useful to the civilian practitioner, it not only should present the background information we all so urgently need to inform our practice but must apply that information functionally. Only one chapter—Tragedy, Loss, and Triumph after Combat—contains any case material. Five of the fourteen chapters present detailed statistical studies with no attempt to link the findings to practical case/care situations. Though those new to veteran services might find this material useful as background, what social workers really need is practice application. Hence, case material and real-world applications would have enhanced this book's value significantly.

The words *resilience* and *young veterans* are in the title but, after the first chapter, the theme of resilience is not carried forward. True, it is implied in the many studies presented, but it is never carved out as the distinct topic area it deserves. Infusing the book with the theme of resilience would have enhanced some of the discussion of veteran needs and supports. In addition, the title's spotlight on "young" veterans is not upheld. For example, two chapters cover the needs of reservists and National Guard members, groups of men and women who are not new to the military and often represent an older cohort of service members.

Despite these concerns, this book brings a wealth of information to the reader. It would be especially helpful to those new to understanding veteran and veteran family care. As a text for classes in social work with the military, it will provide some good research and useful background information.

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## REFERENCE

- Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcame adversity. *Development and Psychology*, 2(4), 233–238.