Whistling
Women: A Study
of the Lives of
Older Lesbians
By Cheryl Claassen, PhD; 2005; Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc.; 284 pages; softcover; $19.95.

Cheryl Claassen interviewed 44 older lesbian women in this study. It is well presented, using narratives from the participants with a summary at the end of each chapter to highlight the author's conclusions. The information is of interest to professionals working with older lesbian women. It may help professionals to understand the actions of these women in conducting their lives in light of their sexual orientation.

This book may not be of much interest to nurses caring for older lesbian women. The information presented is more of a sociological bent than a medical one. However, with societal changes alluded to in the book, nurses will encounter more lesbian women. The information is of interest to professionals working with older lesbian women. It may help professionals to understand the actions of these women in conducting their lives in light of their sexual orientation.

The book has been constructed in a manner showing considerable structural rigor as well as cohesiveness. Each of the case studies is preceded by a tersely-worded exordium, interestingly introducing the reader to the pivotal ethical issues to be raised by a particular case study, and followed by a “commentary,” expertly focusing readers’ attention on an ethically illuminating analysis of that study. Listings of “key terms” and succinctly-worded chapter “objectives,” placed at the beginning of each chapter, and listings of academic references (“endnotes”), placed at the end of each chapter, are further salutary appendages of the book’s structural anatomy. Numerous study questions, identified as “critical thinking questions,” are also injected into the textual body, and embellish the book’s didactic value.

Three “parts” are the mainstay pillars upholding the book’s structural foundation. The describing of variant possible sources of moral authority affecting nursing practice garners close attention in part one.

Case Studies in Nursing Ethics
(3rd edition)
By Sara T. Fry, PhD, RN, and Robert M. Veatch, PhD; 2006; Sudbury, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett; 488 pages; softcover; $56.95

A carefully chiseled, ethics-centric analysis of multifarious case studies, drawn from real-life nursing practice, is the crux of the thought-provoking primer. Actual case studies, tinged with a vast array of ethical concerns, are the structural bricks used to build this enthralling book. Well-reasoned analysis of these concerns filtered, carefully, through the discerning ethics screens of the coauthors, is the intellectual glue binding the book together. The coauthors’ primal purpose is to help nurses regarding ethical challenges they may face in day-to-day nursing practice. And the book’s artfully crafted contents should, indeed, be most gratifying to anyone with an interest in nettle-some ethical conflicts that may erupt in real-life nursing practice.

The book’s contents should be very instructive to those with an interest in nursing ethics, including practicing as well as student nurses, ethicists, and, also, healthcare clinicians, policy makers, lawyers and administrators.

The highly-skilled hewing of bedrock ethics principles, so as to closely fit ethical nursing practice, is the principal task undertaken in part two. Tentacles of perspicacious focus extend to the principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, justice, autonomy, veracity, fidelity, and the sanctity of human life. The cases comprising the last part pertain to special problem areas in ethical nursing practice, encompassing thorny issues connected to abortion, contraception, and sterilization, divisive genetics-linked issues, concerns tethered to psychiatry, gut-wrenching questions associated with HIV/AIDS, difficult questions pertaining to end-of-life decision making, cases interlocked with consent problems, and contentious questions entwined with experimentation on human beings.

This well-put-together primer lucidly shows a revealing picture of nursing ethics, albeit at a particular point in time. An important lesson imparted by the book is that vexing ethical questions, impinging potentially on nursing practice, are often fractious in nature and sorely lacking with respect to definitive answers. Plainly, substantial additional discourse is needed to add considerably more flesh to the underfed bones of nursing ethics. Because the scalpel of law oftentimes cuts deeply into the corpus of real-life ethics questions, possible future editions of the book may benefit from the inclusion of law-trained contributors.

The book’s contents should be very instructive to those with an interest in nursing ethics, including practicing as well as student nurses, ethicists, and, also, healthcare clinicians, policy makers, lawyers and administrators.

Diane M. Brooks, MS, NP
Gerontological Nurse Practitioner
San Diego Internal Medicine Association
San Diego, California

Leo Uzych, JD, MPH
Healthcare Lawyer
Wallingford, Pennsylvania