

Book Review

Pacific Identities and Well-Being: Cross-Cultural Perspectives.

**Edited by Margaret Nelson Agee, Tracey
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Makasiale**

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building a robust body of literature that supports good health and well-being for all members of society.

This book brings together a diverse group of practitioners who are seeking to examine and inform therapeutic practices with Pacific peoples in New Zealand, to increase understanding of Pacific ways of being, and hear Pacific voices. The collection of essays, prose and poetry came about through a Pacific Research Health and Wellbeing Symposium: Cross-Cultural Conversations about Pacific Identities, Mental Health and Wellbeing held in 2010, sponsored by the NZ Association of Counsellors and Auckland University Faculty of Education. The editors recognise there is limited literature to assist and guide counselling and psychological practises with Pacific people, especially when Pacific pathways are complex such as tensions between New Zealand and Island-born, challenges of multi-racial ethnic identity, and the influence of spirituality.

The diverse content has presented challenges for the editors and thematic sections are useful to locate pertinent information on topics such as identity and grief. Essay quality is variable but the value lies in the whole, rather than individual parts as the contributors weave traditional and contemporary stories alongside case studies and data analysis. The wider dynamics and ambiguities are reflected in Samoan, Tongan, Māori and Palagi perspectives on assessment and intervention across multiple environments such as church, school and prison settings.

The book contains useful material from many interesting authors. Teina Piripi and Vivienne Body who offer a self-assessment tool. *Tihei-wa Māori Ora* was developed using a Māori creation metaphor that moves the client from *potential* to *actual*. This chapter includes a number of useful visual aids. Melenaite Taumoefolau provides practical considerations of important aspects of culture that might impact on the therapeutic relationship. For example, engagement with kin based and collective activities, identifying the *in-betweeners*, and ways of showing respect such the wearing of ta'ovala – waist mat in Tonga or speaking indirectly with elders and people of rank. Karen Lupe explores indigenous streams being driven by a matriarchal universe, not gender based, and encourages practitioners working with pacific families to understand by “feeling into this different world view with its own forms of perception, processing and interpreting information, the bridges of communicate on are immeasurably strengthened” (p. 228).

This book is easy to read, a useful addition to your Pacific collection if you intend on offering therapeutic services to individuals and their families who identify with Pacific heritage. Although by no means comprehensive, the references signpost additional useful reading. While Pacific peoples continue to be overrepresented in negative statistics, the contributors are likely to continue with their endeavours towards