
Social work practice with ethnically diverse nursing home residents and their families.
Edited by Patricia Kolb. Published in 2007, by Columbia University Press, New York.
Hardback, 259 pages.

This easy-to-read book has eight chapters written by different authors, each focusing on a specific ethnic group. The ethnicities explored (African American, American Indian, Italian, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Korean and Japanese) are more relevant in the United States, with the exception of the latter three. According to the 2006 New Zealand Census, our most common Asian ethnicities are Chinese (147,570), Indian (104,583), Korean (30,792) and Japanese (11,910). So, while the book has some relevance, it does not look at Indian people at all, our second largest Asian group. Maori and Pacific Island people are not discussed.

Each chapter has interesting case studies, and gives the reader information about the socio-political histories of the specific ethnic group. The first chapter by Molly Davis on African American elders was made more poignant for me because of the recent inauguration of Barack Obama as the United States' first African American President – locating this significant event in its broader historical context which includes themes of slavery, the civil rights movement, remarkable resilience and empowerment.

There are extensive references, organisations, websites (mostly American based) and suggested readings provided for each chapter. Woven throughout the book is a strong emphasis on anti-discriminatory practice, acknowledgement of oppression and racism, and how these experiences have shaped the elderly.

While the book is specific to the United States, it is a very interesting read, and many of the dynamics that occur between ethnic groups and the majority culture are replicated all over the world. There is a chapter on American Indian elders, and the issues for them as indigenous peoples. Much of the learning is transferable, and provides the reader with a wealth of ideas (micro and macro), of working in a culturally appropriate way with older people in care, their families and broader systems.

If you want a resource that assists specifically in working with the main ethnic groups in Aotearoa New Zealand, I would suggest that this book is not for you. If, however, you are interested in different cultures and their history, racism and oppression, and if you are willing to draw out the lessons from this book and apply them to your own context, this book will be an enjoyable and valuable resource.

Sarah DeSouza

Community Mental Health Social Worker, Mental Health Services for Older People, Taranaki District Health Board.

Errata

The editors apologise for the incorrect attribution of Mary Nash to the introduction by Margaret McKenzie of the editorial by John McCreary and the article by Jennie Pilalis, in *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, Issue 2 2008. The introduction was the sole effort of Margaret McKenzie.