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Thriving in the Wake of Trauma: A Multicultural Guide. Thema Bryant-Davis.

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helpful to those who desire more than a cursory knowledge of social welfare history in the United States. This book will be valuable for anyone interested in this area, but particularly for social work graduate students, researchers, and instructors. The level of detail presented may overwhelm undergraduates. One drawback of the book is that its proposals for policy reforms in the final chapter are too brief and could be more fully fleshed out. Overall, readers of this volume will come away with a deeper understanding of US welfare policy and the history of attacks against public assistance programs that seek to support needy families.

Allison De Marco, University of California, Berkeley

Thema Bryant-Davis. *Thriving in the Wake of Trauma: A Multicultural Guide*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005. \$39.95 hardcover.

Interpersonal trauma is experienced by survivors within the context of their culture, and healing is likewise shaped by culture. Unfortunately, this is not yet routinely recognized by the helping profession and it is assumed that the experience of trauma is universal. Exploring the cultural meanings of trauma opens opportunities for stronger recovery by both individual survivors and the people in their lives. Considering the increasingly diverse demographic of the U.S. and the growing acceptance of cultural competence as essential to social work practice, literature that integrates multiculturalism and trauma is greatly needed.

Bryant-Davis's book is a blend of scholarly review, self-help guide, case study and creative writing. She includes not just traditions and identity based on ethnicity and race, but disability, gender, migration status, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status as well. Interpersonal trauma is defined as any violation against a person or group of people that leads to feelings of powerlessness and emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual wounds. An important contribution of Bryant-Davis is her emphasis on *thriving* after trauma, in contrast with recovery from trauma. To thrive, survivors

work to move beyond symptom reduction to attain empowerment, awareness of one's strengths, and hopefully a level of functioning greater than before the trauma.

The author presents an insightful and practical exploration of cultural dynamics within several themes, such as trust and shame. The discussion of religion as culture is particularly beneficial, as spirituality is not often considered outside of its role as a positive source of strength for coping. Here, the influence of religion on survivors' interpretations of, and reactions to, the traumatic incident is explored, and may include feelings of guilt over a having a crisis of faith, valuing self-sacrifice over self-care, and avoidance of non-spiritual coping strategies. Bryant-Davis' discussion of religion, and the other cultural categories, is balanced; she presents both the positive and negative contributions to a survivor's healing.

Numerous creative examples of clinical activities for survivors are included. Although the combination of scholarly and practical content in this book creates a unique resource, the tone of the writing is inconsistent. Bryant-Davis acknowledges that her intended audience is both professionals of various clinical approaches and survivors. However, there are passages that seem alternately ill-suited to one of these audience groups, either because of insufficient explanation of theoretical concepts or the use of the imperative mood in the writing. A secondary critique is that several sections within the chapters consist of a single sentence or two, because each cultural category was discussed separately in relation to the theme of the chapter. This left an impression of a rigid format.

However, the merits of the book far outweigh these critiques. The voices of various survivors are strong and moving and enhance the theoretical and empirical discussion. These voices are presented in case examples and in poetry by the author and her clients. The opening poem provides a powerful statement on the importance of cultural considerations in trauma that cannot be expressed by prose alone. In this way, the author puts into practice her call for greater recognition of the strengths of survivors.

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