

Book Reviews

Metaphors of Identity

By *Thomas K. Fitzgerald*
Suny, 1993.

Why would counsellors read a book about a culture-communication dialogue which addresses identity as an "academic metaphor for self-in-context"?

Not the practitioner in search of easily-digestible, concrete suggestions on how to deal with specific client issues. More fundamentally and excitingly, Fitzgerald challenges the practitioner to look deeper into the meaning of issues that are brought up in counselling - into the integrative function of identity as a concept and metaphor, into the way that culture provides a context which defines identity, and into the way that context and time mould the identity of people of widely different cultures - including Maori, Cook Island immigrants, sexual minorities and the aged.

To this discourse, Fitzgerald brings a wide perspective of literature, academic disciplines, psychological adjustment, and New Zealanders within the context of world-wide cultures.

In Part I of the 264 page book, Fitzgerald examines scholarly studies of the place of biology in identity formation, the historical origins of the notion of self, and the relationship between culture, identity and communication.

In Part II he takes a more research-orientated approach to elucidate aspects of identity, including "Identity of Place" with specific reference to research he carried out in New Zealand with Cook Island immigrants; masculinity in transition in different cultures, including Maori; homophobia and the cultural myth of the "social stranger"; and identity transformation in the culture of aging. In each instance, Fitzgerald uses a discourse method to outline and debate the critical issues involved.

In all, this book challenges counsellors to look beyond the immediate concrete reality of presenting problems, to deeper patterns of constructed meaning - with particular emphasis

on identity, the metaphors that shape it, and the media used to communicate it. From such a deeper and holistic perspective, one's practical work must surely be enriched.

*Hans Everts, Senior Lecturer in Education,
University of Auckland.*