Deeper Dimensions
Culture, Youth and Mental Health

Edited by
Marie Bashir AO
and
David Bennett AO

No. 7 in the monograph series
Culture and Mental Health
CURRENT ISSUES IN TRANSCULTURAL MENTAL HEALTH
DEEPER DIMENSIONS—
CULTURE, YOUTH
AND
MENTAL HEALTH

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Marie Bashir AO
and
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New South Wales
TRANSCULTURAL MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE
Deeper Dimensions — Culture, Youth and Mental Health

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The changing faces of anorexia nervosa

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A parent’s perspective on early intervention

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Family intervention in first episode psychosis

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Suicidal behaviour in young migrant women

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Cognitive behaviour therapy in early psychosis: A Mediterranean perspective

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Introduction

THIS MONOGRAPH IS dedicated to aspects of the mental health of young Australians of non-English speaking background. It represents a valuable collaboration between the Transcultural Mental Health Centre and the NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health.

The mental health of young Australians, including those of immigrant and refugee background, is now being accorded rightful prominence in health planning and service development. Collaboration and partnerships are now linking professionals across the streams of primary health care, education, welfare and juvenile justice. These partnerships are targeting a range of key issues from emotional wellbeing and resiliency, depression and vulnerability, to self-harm and severe psychiatric disorder. Evidence exists that health promotion, early identification and early intervention for emotional problems such as trauma, abuse and discrimination will produce enhanced quality of life, as well as improved outcomes and opportunities for achievement.

The spectrum of ground-breaking material in this monograph has been derived from a series of forums convened by the New South Wales Transcultural Mental Health Centre plus the Centre’s 1998 Transcultural Mental Health Conference ‘Diversity and Mental Health in Challenging Times’. Contributions are included from parents, community workers, health professionals with considerable ethnocultural experience, and academics. Together, this group has provided a diversity of experiences, challenges and approaches in the critical areas of prevention and timely intervention.

The monograph is presented in two sections, Section I ‘Generic Issues and Key Concerns’ and Section II ‘Making A Difference’. The opening chapter provides a detailed literature review commencing with mental health issues in adolescence in general, followed by a specific focus on young people of non-English speaking background. It concludes with consideration of refugee experiences which impact on young people’s mental health. The topics of other chapters (for example, the experience of living with parents with mental illness, the considerations of young Somalis in a new and strange environment, and the multicultural dimensions of eating disorders) give an indication of the broad sweep of issues and concerns in contemporary Australian society.

Section II, ‘Making A Difference’, considers prevention and some interventions which have been specifically developed in working with immigrant and refugee young people. These chapters share valuable insights, addressing sensitive concerns such as suicidal behaviour in young females, the specific ethno-cultural application of cognitive behavioural therapy, the unique insights drawn from working with
traumatised young people and a moving account from the perspective of an immigrant parent.

This unique compilation explores new dimensions of mental health in an important group of young Australians. We view this monograph as a milestone in the promotion of greater understanding and improved health of young people in Australia's multicultural society. It is our hope that this endeavour will stimulate further exploration of challenging mental health issues facing young people of non-English speaking background and encourage additional research on specific cultural and ethnic groups.

The editors congratulate the NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre for undertaking this initiative and extend appreciation to the many authors who have provided such a rich fare of stimulating material. The Centre for Mental Health, NSW Department of Health, is also acknowledged for its invaluable support and encouragement of these projects.

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