THIS PĀKEHĀ LIFE: AN UNSETTLED MEMOIR

By Alison Jones
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Reviewed by
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This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir, by Alison Jones, examines what it means to be Pākehā in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. Throughout the book, Jones looks back on her positionality and relationship with Māori as a non-Māori woman, examining themes of power, privilege, displacement, and intersectionality. By reflecting on her childhood, growing up in towns across Aotearoa New Zealand, she digs into the uncomfortable truth of Pākehā privilege, seen through the lens of her experience as the daughter of English immigrants. Through this lens, she provides an up-close and personal account of the intricacies of power dynamics in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. By reflecting back over her life, Jones' book explores how these dynamics play out in real time and everyday lives, and by doing so, provides an excellent framework for other Pākehā to reflect on their own positionality in this country today.

This is not the first time Jones has delved in to the complicated relationships between identity, belonging, and Pākehā-Māori relations. A professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Auckland, *This Pākehā Life* continues Jones' trajectory of exploring Pākehā-Māori relations, with previous works including two notable books (co-written with Professor Kuni Jenkins) – *He Kōrero: Words Between Us: First Māori-Pākehā Conversations on Paper* (Jones and Jenkins 2011), and *Tuai: A Traveller in Two Worlds* (Jones and Jenkins 2017). *This Pākehā Life* moves away from these examinations of other people, to an intimate piece focusing on Jones' own experiences of being Pākehā in Māori spaces. In doing so, Jones provides a deeply personal, sometimes uncomfortable, reflection on the power dynamics seen and experienced in contemporary in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Jones' book follows her life more or less chronologically, beginning with her parents journey to New Zealand in 1952, one year before her birth. Early chapters discuss her childhood and school years, with a focus on her relationship to the Māori children she grew up around. As she looks back on her own development in these spaces, Jones discusses the discomfort she felt on realising her privileged position in society, stating that 'I started to understand that, whether I liked it or not, I was a member of a dominant (white) group that was being unfair and even violent towards black and brown people around the world. The descriptor 'white', now firmly linked to bad behaviour, filled me with ambivalence and confusion' (79). This realisation provides a pivotal point in the book.

Throughout *This Pākehā Life*, Jones highlights differences in cultural values between Māori and Pākehā culture, which are underlaid and interwoven with histories of violence and colonisation. A striking theme she uses to explore this is travel. Pākehā culture, so heavily based on British colonial values, allows people to go wherever they wish. It encourages it, even. The idea of travelling the country – the world – is highly romanticised and, as Pākehā, many of us hold a strong belief that we have the right to go anywhere, interact with anything; that nothing is forbidden. The basis of this idea is that the roads, paid for by taxpayer money, are free for all to use at will. However, such views, seemingly straightforward, are laden with histories of violence and oppression. Woven in with a discussion of white ignorance, Jones uses travel and roads to show the fundamental structural power dynamics still at play in Aotearoa New Zealand. As she writes, 'having forced roads through other people's lands, we just assume we can travel uninvited anywhere on an innocent whim…. [It is] ignorance of our history that allows us to behave like this' (205). For many Māori, meanwhile, the land is much more than a space for us to use at will: it is sacred, has its own mana, and is not there simply so we can live, buy, and explore it (205). The ignorance Jones discusses is not that Pākehā do not care about Māori history and struggles, but that they do not know about them. Whether this ignorance is wilful, is a question worth asking. *This Pākehā Life* helps destabilise this ignorance, providing a necessary framework for Pākehā to use when thinking about the ongoing social issues surrounding land and other aspects of life, and bringing into light the structural racism and other realities faced by so many in this country.

While dealing with complex issues of identity and belonging, *This Pākehā Life* is an accessible read for anyone wishing to learn more about what it means to be Pākehā in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. As an autobiographical work, *This Pākehā Life*, is deeply personal to Jones' life and experiences, and of course does not, therefore, reflect the experience or thoughts of all Pākehā.

Jones highlights this on the very first page of the book, clearly stating that 'every Pākehā becomes a Pākehā in their own way, finding her or his own meaning for that Māori word. This is the story of what it means to me' (7). However, by looking back on her own life and experiences, providing intimate reflections on how her relationship with Māori has changed and shifted throughout her life, and providing an unflinching account of this, the book provides an excellent framework for other Pākehā wishing to reflect on their own positionality, and is an exemplar of what that might look like. In addition, although not strictly speaking academic, this book provides much insightful material for scholars working on identity, belonging, and power, especially in settler-colonial societies. The book would be a good read for undergraduate students, as well as anyone generally interested in identity, belonging, and power in Aotearoa New Zealand.

LIVING IN THE TENSION: CARE, SELFHOOD, AND WELLBEING AMONG FAITH-BASED YOUTH WORKERS

By Susan Wardell
Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2018, 235 pp.
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Based on the author's PhD thesis, 'Living in the Tension' is a comparative ethnographic exploration of the under-researched lifeworld of Christian youth workers in two locations, Kampala in Uganda, and Canterbury in Aotearoa New Zealand (ANZ). The participants were evangelical Christians from two organizations who led activities and programs which supported the wellbeing of young people in these locations. A mixed-methods ethnographic approach was used consisting of interviews, focus groups, and being a close 'participant observer' (p.23). As someone with personal experience as a faith-based youth-worker, Wardell takes a phenomenological stance to her fieldwork, acknowledging her positionality as an 'insider' which led to not only observing but also participating in the lifeworlds (Jackson 2013) that are documented in the book. It is this methodological aspect of what Wardell terms 'an intimate ethnography' (p.3) that gives this work an exceptional level of depth and reflexivity which is often missing in anthropological research on Christians, especially in western settings (Cannell 2006; Harding 1991).

Wardell's research aimed to find out how faith-based youth workers negotiated caring for the youth they were in charge of and caring for themselves. The main focus is burnout, framing faith-based youth work as a form of 'care labour'. Care labour is that which looks after others, such as social work, counselling, or nursing. The author draws on psychological, medical, and organizational anthropology to examine burnout as a 'cost of care', and the subjectivity and spirituality of the youth workers who enact this care. A narrative discourse approach was used to examine the participant's use of language in order to understand how they made sense of and interacted with the tensions between their Christian faith, organizational neoliberal managerialism, and the real-world problems of the youth they were trying to help.

The book is divided into three parts, with the first examining the theme of 'Being and Becoming', the next 'Feeling and Caring', and the final section discussing 'Suffering and Sense Making'. In Part One Wardell introduces the topic of faith-based youth workers under the heading of 'The Spiritual Carer' (Chapter One). The fieldwork sites in Uganda and Aotearoa New Zealand are introduced, and the main themes of the book are explained, which are youth work (general and faith-based), care labour, how neoliberalism impacts care labour, and the personal cost of youth work. Chapter Two looks at 'The Calling Story', this is a common trope where youth workers at both sites felt a sense of being 'called' by God to be involved in youth work; to be a youth worker is 'not just a job' (p.32). I found Wardell's discussion on her Ugandan participant's association of Christianity with modernity particularly interesting. They equated being 'African' with being flawed, corrupt, and not successful. Christianity was associated with the west, and linked to modernism, being successful and not being poor. As such discourses of 'calling' for these Ugandan youth workers focused on how they were transformed from being corrupt and slothful to being empowered, hardworking, successful youth-workers. A calling to youth work in this context seemed to entail a rejection of 'Africanism' and embracing a type of westernized, neoliberal Protestant work ethic.

Part Two focuses on how feelings and 'caring' were constructed and understood by the youth workers. Chapter Four looks at the 'conquered body', which was present in Kampala more so than in Canterbury. Negative feelings, such as sadness or anger, were subjected to the emotional labour of containment. They were something to be controlled and 'conquered' to be a better youth worker. In Chapter Five and Six Wardell examines two schemas youth-workers used to relate to the young people they worked with. In Kampala, the youth-worker is a type of parent, a 'mama or papa', who used the rhetoric of family to describe their relationship with the youth they worked with. The author muses that

familial language was particularly apt to the Ugandan context as, due to the AIDS pandemic and civil war, there were many literal orphans in need of parents. Chapter Six considers the Canterbury context where the youth worker was constructed as a 'loving professional', or a big brother/sister (p. 93), rather than a parent. In Canterbury the managing of emotions was related to balance; that is being neither too open nor too closed to those whom one helped. Chapter Seven discusses having an 'authentic heart' where the youth-worker needed to be a 'responsible feeler' to have long-term sustainability (p. 100). Chapters Eight and Nine move into theological territory, interrogating the concept of the youth-worker as an 'Empty Vessel' that though drained through youth work could be filled up by God, and that of the 'Holy Channel' through which God's power flowed from youth-worker to young person.

Part Three considers the topic of 'Suffering and Sense Making' with three chapters that looks at how burnout and the suffering caused by it was framed. The comparative discussion on the understandings of mental distress across the two sites was fascinating. In Uganda, there was talk of demon possession and dark spiritual forces, while in Canterbury a biomedical model of getting a diagnosis and finding a cure was at the fore. These observations lead to a discussion in Chapter Twelve on how at both sites youth-workers were expected to manage themselves in order not to burn out; to burn out was to show a lack of self-management. Wardell sums up in Chapter Thirteen by highlighting that youth work is a delicate balance of holding in tension competing narratives and practices of faith, moralities and organizational expectations.

I found this to be a well-written and intriguing book. Many of the findings mirrored my research with young Anglican social justice activists in ANZ, with the comparative aspect making an original anthropological contribution. It has been argued by some that 'insider' research is problematic. However, this book shows the insider researcher has to work harder at being reflexive and critical of one's positionality than an 'outsider', with the reward being a deep level of rich and nuanced analysis. I would recommend this book to those interested in contemporary Christianity, faith-based NGOs, transnational religion, and the psychology of Christianity and/or religion.

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