

Teaching Professional Ethics in Counsellor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

A Small Survey Study

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Abstract

One mark of a profession is that it articulates a shared vision of the responsibilities involved in professional relationships, generally expressed in a Code of Ethics. But what are the processes involved in inducting new members into a profession and offering them opportunities to translate and grow personal ethics into professional ethics? The study on which this article reports aimed to investigate the practices employed by counsellor educators in Aotearoa New Zealand in ethics education. The study asked two organising questions: what is taught, and how is it taught? In reporting on the study, this article seeks to offer a contribution to dialogue about how ethics might be learned and taught in initial counsellor education. The article raises questions for further discussion. To what extent should the how and what of ethics teaching be woven together? How do we educate for a practice where we cannot know ahead of time what ambiguities will emerge? How much theory of ethics is needed for ethical practice? When do we begin to teach ethics? How well are we teaching an ethics of partnership that is relevant for Aotearoa?

Keywords: ethics, counsellor education, teaching, learning, New Zealand Association of Counsellors

The national Ethics Committee of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) has the responsibility, as one of its constitutionally defined tasks, to “promote education about ethical practice” (NZAC, 2010, 12.E.2.b). The committee has responded to this task in many ways, including through offering ethics workshops at NZAC branch-sponsored events and national conferences, and through articles in the

national newsletter. The curriculum for this ongoing professional education in ethics has been proactive: see, for example, Winslade's (2002) introduction to the new *Code of Ethics*; Aunt Ethica's regular (agony-aunt-style) advice column in *Counselling Today*, NZAC's national newsletter, and many of the contributions to Crocket, Agee, and Cornforth's (2011) edited volume. The curriculum content has also been shaped in response to particular knowledge and practice gaps that have been identified in the course of the committee's fulfilling its responsibility to process complaints about members of NZAC. Convenors and other members of the committee have written educative articles in the NZAC newsletter (see, for example, Medcalf, 2008; Pritchard, 2005). Some contributions to the Crocket et al. volume were also informed by experiences of lapses in ethical practice.

Winslade and White (2002) identified those aspects of practice that had most concerned members of the public as reflected in the first 100 complaints that had been received by NZAC. With 333 complaints having now been received by the association, and the development of a regional ethics process (see White, 2011), a current systematic analysis of complaints would be timely. Such analyses serve many purposes. Importantly, they educate NZAC, the committee, and members about what matters are of particular concern to the public, thus offering opportunities for ongoing reflection, reflexivity, and practice development. Further, they offer counsellor educators a lens through which to review the ethics curriculum in the context of formal counsellor education programmes.

While these publications and workshops provide some sort of record of the content areas of ongoing professional education in ethics in counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand, little is known, beyond the programmes themselves, about the rationale for, content, or delivery of an ethics education curriculum in formal counsellor education programmes. It is timely therefore to investigate ethics education within initial and advanced formal counsellor education programmes, and for the Ethics Committee to consider this as part of its brief to promote education about ethical practice.

This article reports on an exploratory research project undertaken on behalf of the committee. The study sought to take up the committee's brief by consulting with the leaders of counsellor education programmes in response to two research questions. The first question asked what is taught in ethics education in counsellor education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. The second asked how this curriculum is delivered.

Teaching and learning ethics for practice

Writing about education in professional ethics, Davis (1999) suggested that the latter part of the twentieth century had seen an “ethics boom.” A growing emphasis on ethics can be accounted for by increased professionalisation in a range of disciplines, and the post-Holocaust research environment (see, for example, Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Cornforth & Crocket, 2011; Davis, 1999; Hill, 2004a; Miller, 1994; Pettifor, Estay, & Paquet, 2002). Locally, an increased emphasis on ethics is illustrated by Miller’s (2011) survey of the content of NZAC’s national newsletters across two decades. In her first survey in 1996, there had been no separate category for ethics, the small number of ethics articles being subsumed under the general category of professionalisation. Between 1997 and 2002, however, Miller reported, there were 57 ethics items (8% of total items), and between 2003 and 2009 there were 80 items (11%). Many of these items had been written by Ethics Committee members about specific areas of practice.

As Kitchener (1986) noted, ethics is “a complex discipline in and of itself” (p. 310). A range of ethics-related literature is available to those responsible for teaching ethics in counsellor education: literature that is specific to counselling; other related profession-specific literature (social work, psychology), and general professional ethics. Then there is the ethics *education* literature in each of these areas. Many contemporary authors emphasise the responsibility of professional ethics education to offer an understanding of wider philosophical positions, of ethical theory, of what it means to act in moral relationship to others, and of critical reflection on action (Betan, 1997; Gray & Gibbons, 2007; Hill, 2004a; Hugman, 2005; Miner, 2005; J. P. Shapiro & Hassinger, 2007; Urofsky & Engels, 2003). The suggestion that ethical practice is social and dialogic, rather than the work of an individual decision-maker, is attracting increasing interest (Bauman, 2000; Cornforth & Crocket, 2011; Cottone & Claus, 2000; Gray & Gibbons, 2007; Hill, 2004a; Hugman, 2005).

Another contemporary theme is caution about ethical decision-making frameworks, their proliferation, their acceptance without empirical evidence of their efficacy, their cumbersomeness, and their potential to lead to formulaic or technicist responses to ethical complexities (see, for example, Gray & Gibbons, 2007; Hill, 2004a, 2004b). Out of these cautions arise arguments for the value of also paying attention to imaginative, affective, intuitive, and “epiphanic knowing” (Hawkins, 1997; Hill, 2004a).

These ideas about ethics in practice have implications for ethics education. Writing about teaching methods in ethics education, Pettifor et al. (2002) suggested:

Adults will learn more from strategies that involve personal experiences, personal involvement, shared values, and reasoning than solely from the imparting of knowledge through didactic teaching. (p. 263)

Case studies and discussions are a widely mentioned medium for teaching ethics in practice (Boland-Prom & Anderson, 2005; Davis, 1999; Gutman, 1998; Hill, 2004b; J. P. Shapiro & Hassinger, 2007), often in tandem with teaching models of ethical problem-solving and moral reasoning (Betan, 1997; Cottone & Claus, 2000; Frame & Williams, 2005; Gawthrop & Uhlemann, 1992; Knapp & Sturm, 2002), or skills in argumentation (Osmo & Landau, 2001). There are cautions against the teaching of codes of ethics as prescriptive without understanding the call to moral action implicit in these codes (Hill, 2004a, 2004b; Urofsky & Engels, 2003). Nash (2002) draws attention to a further responsibility: to teach ethics ethically.

Contemporary applied ethics traverses the territories between what Bond (2011, p. 102) describes as understanding ethics, on the one hand, as “individualised and private” or, on the other hand, as “generalised abstract principles.” Ethics education involves preparing counselling students to traverse the complex territory between these two points, “using ethics to define the center of professional identity” (Hill, 2004b, p. 201).

Ethics education involves a responsibility to learn the implications of professional relationship as ethical relationship—“*to take responsibility for one’s responsibility*” (Bauman, 1998, p. 17; emphasis in the original). The question arises, then: what knowledge is considered necessary for the responsibilities of ethical practice in counselling and how is that knowledge accessed?

Method

This study is the first in a series of small projects that together will build an account of ethics in counsellor education in Aotearoa New Zealand. For this first study, a survey design offered the possibility of an inclusive yet economical approach (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Online technology (see Glover & Bush, 2005; Harlow, 2010) offered a medium for an accessible and time-efficient means of inviting the leaders of all counsellor education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand to participate. The study employed Lime Survey (<http://www.limesurvey.org/>) open source online survey software, and NZAC’s database of counsellor education programme leaders was used in recruiting participants.

The study involved two phases of data-generating, the first offering participants a hardcopy option as well as the online Lime Survey option. Options were offered in the

hope of increasing initial accessibility, and thus the response rate. Most participants used the online option. The first phase asked respondents to identify themselves, their institution, and the level of programme taught. It then asked two open qualitative questions, inviting participants to write about what their programme teaches about ethics, and then how the teaching is done. The analysis of these responses then provided material for the second phase, which was available only online.

I approached the analysis of the first-phase qualitative responses by asking the following narrative questions of the data:

- What stands out in this response and why? (Some research materials were distinctive for their language, for example.)
- What does this response have in common with others? How is it unique?
- What moves me and why?
- What gaps might there be?
- How might I theorise what I read here and why would I theorise it like that?
- What questions emerge for ethics education in counsellor education?

While phase-one data offered a series of individual accounts, phase two was intended to build these into a wider survey account, a recursive folding back, that would invite participant response to and reflection on my analysis of the research materials that counsellor education colleagues had offered during the first phase. A recurrent and rewarding experience I have had in undertaking research has been to hear participants speak of having derived benefit directly from the inquiry processes (Crocket, 2001; Crocket et al., 2004). Reflexive engagement with research inquiry has the potential to serve and shape participants' practice: "the researcher...instigates self-reflections that will lead the respondent not merely to report his or her life, but to change that life" (Frank, 2005, p. 968). While I don't believe that this small online survey project was the particular kind of research that Frank (2005) envisaged when he described the possibilities of a Bakhtinian dialogism for both research process and product, I read many of the online responses as suggesting that participants had indeed experienced themselves as being invited into a form of imaginative dialogue between their practice, their colleagues, and the field. The opening words on the online site were intended to demonstrate this dialogic quality, the idea that "research does not merely report; it instigates" (Frank, 2005, p. 968): "This survey study is designed to open dialogue, about the teaching of ethics in counsellor education, by consulting with counsellor educators."

Conceiving of the survey as a forum that would invite participants into reflexive consideration of their own professional practice as they contributed research data, in

composing questions I hoped to use the technology available on Lime Survey in a way that would be generative for participants—in the research process as well as product. Thus, phase two employed a variety of question styles: questions invited participants to respond to others' phase-one responses, to offer examples from their own practice, as well as the kinds of ranking and ordering and listing more usually associated with surveys. Before going live, these questions were reviewed by a researcher experienced in using Lime Survey and then trialled by three counsellor education colleagues who were not programme leaders. Questions were further refined, and the link to the survey was then sent to programme leaders. Responses in this second phase were anonymous.

Participants

Participants for the first phase were recruited through writing by mail to the leader of each counsellor education programme identified on the NZAC database, inviting them to participate in a two-phase study. This letter gave dates for each phase and noted that I would make no further efforts to recruit: if there was no response I would take that to mean potential participants had made a purposeful decision not to participate. However, a number of colleagues made contact with me after the closing date, having missed the deadline despite intending to participate. I now see more clearly that there are competing ethical principles here, one being inclusion (achieved through a researcher sending reminders to potential participants), and the other being informed consent (assuming that a researcher does not have the right to continue to invite potential participants when they might have already made a decision not to participate). By taking care not to engage in coercion of potential participants, I excluded from participation some potential participants whose schedules did not neatly coincide with the project's time frame.

Table 1: Host institutions by type and number

| | Phase 1 | Phase 2 |
|--------------|-----------|----------|
| PTE* | 4 | 1 |
| Polytechnic | 5 | 5 |
| University | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 11 | 8 |

* Private Training Establishment

One phase-one letter was returned unopened, leaving 20 potential participants in the study. Table 1 identifies the host institutions of participants in each phase.

My positioning as researcher

My position as researcher carries ethical ambiguity. I detailed these ambiguities in my application to the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee for ethical approval of the project and in the information offered to potential participants. I am a member of the national Ethics Committee of NZAC, which initiated the research, and I am a counsellor educator myself. As well, while I consulted the Ethics Convenor along the way and provided her with all written documentation for comment, I was in the unfamiliar position of being sole researcher, another decision made for reasons of efficiency. Responsibility for analysis was mine: I worked to engage in analytic processes in ways that value all contributions, and that recognise "unfinalisability"—in Bakhtin's terms, the capacity to become someone other than who one is already. As Frank (2005) explained it: "...in a dialogical relation, any person takes responsibility for the other's becoming, as well as recognizing that the other's voice has entered one's own" (p. 967). Although I took leadership in this project as researcher, I also identified myself as being in consultative conversation—in dialogue—with counsellor education colleagues, all of us engaged in the ethical process of becoming and none of us finalised in our ethical practice. And indeed, I did find myself moved, as I read particular ideas that my colleagues offered, by a sense that ethics education is for the most part in good heart, alongside the potential that unfinalisability offers ethics education and educators.

Results

Even in a small study, it is not possible to present all the possible stories of results that the research materials offer. The results reported and discussed here are intended as a contribution to ongoing dialogue about ethics education within counsellor education.

Phase one

The importance of process in teaching ethics

Limits of the study's inquiry process were highlighted by the response (R1) that began:

A difficulty in responding [to the survey] begins with the two questions [the survey asks]:

- *What we teach and how we teach it are not so easily teased apart;*

- *How we teach it may well be the primary rather than the secondary question, especially given that this is a counselling training course in which modelling of process with students is of as much consequence as is the teaching content.*

I suggest that this response directly offers a question for ethics education: **Do I teach ethics using processes that *demonstrate* what I am teaching?**

Integration of content and process was further demonstrated as R1 continued, reporting that the programme teaches students:

To recognise an ethical question/situation, such that:

- *They know that they need to investigate, and how to approach that;*
- *They know how to articulate and frame up an ethical question;*
- *They know how to have an ethical conversation with supervisor/peers.*

The purpose was further described as intending to produce graduates who are “safe enough to manage their anxieties around the ambiguities of ethical dilemmas without isolating themselves from peer and other professional support.”

Ethical practice is constructed here as taking place within an individual practitioner’s recognition, investigation, and articulation, including of anxieties and ethical ambiguities, in the context of professional community. These educative purposes and responsibilities seem to have some alignment with Grant’s (2011) call for counsellor education to equip counsellors to deal with difficult aspects of affect:

When things go wrong in counselling relationships, it is often a consequence of an unbearable affective experience...if the [unbearable affective] experience can be borne in mind, and thought about, then any actions are less likely to be problematic.
(p. 154)

This construction of ethical competence—managing *anxiety* and *ambiguity*, and the importance of professional community—stood in some contrast to a learning outcome listed in another response (R2): *be able to approach an ethical dilemma with confidence*. While R2 also listed other learning outcomes—such as “knowing who and when to consult,” “be aware of 5 ethical models and approaches,” and “have personal awareness of their own values and morals and how these related to NZAC standards and code of ethical practice”—a potential tension and ambiguity arises between these two perspectives on learning outcomes; the one referring to *confidence* and the other to *managing anxieties* in the face of *ambiguities*. This tension offers a second question to take into ethics education: **To what extent would counsellor educators hope that**

graduates would approach an ethical dilemma with confidence, and to what extent would we anticipate that they would experience the discomfort of ambiguities that would lead them into responsible dialogue with others?

A matter of emphasis

The responses offered further compelling distinctions. R3 described a learning outcomes emphasis on terms similar to R1, interweaving what is taught and how to develop:

[students'] sensitivity to ethical dimensions of counselling practice; their awareness of their own processes in response to ethical issues and the diversity of responses others may have; their consideration of multiple perspectives and capacity to work with complexity; and the flexibility, breadth and thoroughness of their thinking in considering potential responses and deciding upon courses of action and how they would be implemented.

Other responses to the question of what is taught suggested more of a content-knowledge focus.

R4: *[The paper] Ethical Practice is focused on the NZAC Code of Ethics. Trainees discuss ethical and legal issues in relation to aspects of counselling practice such as note-taking, record-keeping, internet counselling, working in multi-disciplinary teams, facilitating group-work, working with children, and counselling cross-culturally.*

R5: *We link ethics to NZ law. Content areas are (in no particular order): record storage; notetaking; NZAC Code of Ethics; models for making ethical decisions (predominantly Tim Bond's process model); protecting the counselling relationship and multiple relationships; supervision; complaint process (NZAC); beneficence versus autonomy; responsibilities to colleagues, profession; responsibilities to employers, funders, and wider community.*

Another response suggested a wider perspective on the content knowledge in ethics for counsellor education.

R6: *The nature of codes of ethics. Limitations of Codes of Ethics, and their interpretation in terms of different models of practice: Liberalism, human rights and ethical principles. Theories of ethics (Kantian, utilitarian and virtue-perspectives). Problem-solving in professional ethics. Confidentiality. Informed consent. Safety issues. Research ethics. Boundary issues.*

R6 went on to write:

What I am at pains to avoid is a technicist approach to practice, and of course a “one-right-answer” approach to ethics.

At work here is the challenge, noted by many authors (Bond, 2011; Cornforth & Crocket, 2011; Freeman, Engels, & Altekruse, 2004; Gray & Gibbons, 2007; Hill, 2004a; Urofsky & Engels, 2003), to relate ethical practice to what are complex and abstract ethical principles and arguments. A significant question arises here for ethics in counsellor education: **To what extent is it important for counsellors to understand the historical and philosophical storylines upon which contemporary approaches to ethical practice depend?**

In phase two, I attempted to produce a partial response to this question by asking about which theories of ethics are taught, but it became clear that the question of how far counsellors and counsellor educators must also be theorists of ethics is more complex than my questions provided for, and perhaps at the same time was not well understood.

How we teach ethics

In answer to the question about how ethics is taught, a number of responses focused on the descriptive:

R7: *Teaching is by way of didactic, small and large group work and discussion, observed and written practice.*

R7: *A further 9 hours of class time is spent on working through some ethical scenarios using the Code of Ethics and a “10 step model of reasoning.”*

R4: *All our tutors are experiential in their teaching and use a mix of didactic teaching, small group work, class discussion, and case studies.*

R2: *We use a process that includes a series of didactic tutorials, discussions and experiential learning.*

Others offered a more philosophical commentary on their approaches to teaching.

R1: *The method is essentially Socratic:*

- *the posing of questions/situations/abstractions based on various readings or introduced by the tutor;*
- *the facilitating and shaping of the ensuing input/conversation in small and large group formats;*
- *the attention to critical points and to process, both individual and group.*

R6: *Firstly I locate issues in professional ethics in the context of a theoretical construct: the practitioner’s model of practice...Ownership, engagement and*

difference are key themes. Within that context I deploy a Community of Inquiry approach to teaching, founded on Matthew Lippman's Philosophy for Children.

A number of participants offered full descriptions of carefully structured learning and teaching practices, signalling the methodical scaffolding of learning throughout a programme.

Locating our practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

The NZAC Code of Ethics was mentioned in all but one response:

R7: *Working within the NZAC Code of Ethics is a requirement throughout the course.*

R4: *In Stage 2 there is an assignment to do, focused specifically on the NZAC Code of Ethics. Trainees are expected to give definitions and examples of various relevant terms.*

R8: *All aspects mentioned in the [NZAC] Code are taught week by week.*

R9: *Graduates... meet the provisional membership requirements for a professional association of counsellors such as NZAC, and comply with the standards set out in the NZAC Code of Ethics.*

R3: *Examination and critique of the nature and role of ethical guidelines, particularly the NZAC Code.*

R10: *The NZAC Code of Ethics, in which the Code of Practice, its details, history and purposes is woven into all papers, and addressed more directly in each of the practice papers.*

R11: *We **first introduce** the NZAC Code at the **very beginning** of Year one in the **first** counselling theory/skills class, as we believe our teaching should be situated within the context of the NZAC Code of Ethics. (emphasis added)*

Alongside R3 and R10's noting the presence of the NZAC Code of Ethics throughout their programmes, R11's emphasis on the early timing of the introduction of the Code raises a further question for counsellor education: **When do we introduce and teach ethics?**

Two responses focused more particularly on ethics in a local context.

R3: *... the integral nature of ethics in...day to day practice...These [practice] contexts include the settings in which counselling takes place, embedded in wider social, historical and cultural contexts relevant to practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

R9: Ethical implications of working in a treaty nation (Tiriti o Waitangi) and of cultural difference.

A question about the emphasis on locatedness of ethics teaching in the context of Aotearoa and the Treaty of Waitangi links with the earlier question about philosophical storylines, offering a further question for phase two. A question also arises about the relationship between counsellor education programmes and NZAC, in relation to programmes' expecting students to practise within the terms of the NZAC *Code of Ethics*. All participants responded that students were required to practise within the terms of the NZAC *Code of Ethics*, but only two confirmed that this had been negotiated with NZAC.

Phase two

As noted above, the phase-two questions were designed to bring together questions arising from the phase-one analysis.

Partnership ethics

The first question focused on a contemporary and local storyline of ethics and partnership: Please indicate the extent to which your programme's emphasis is on the ethical implications for counsellors of living in a Treaty nation. The responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Emphasis on the ethics of living in a Treaty nation

| Response | Number |
|---------------------|--------|
| Strong emphasis | 2 |
| Reasonable emphasis | 5 |
| Some emphasis | 1 |
| Little emphasis | 0 |

The descriptors, of course, have no intrinsic meaning. Rather, I think of this question as a process question that invited participants into evaluation of what it might mean to suggest that a counsellor education programme puts *strong emphasis* on the ethical implications for counselling of the Treaty of Waitangi. In considering the question, "If this is the aspiration, where does our programme sit?" the leader who responded "some emphasis" may well lead a programme that is little different from the programme whose leader responded "reasonable emphasis," as indeed the teaching

examples each offered would suggest. In leading with this question, my intention was to signal its importance for counsellor education. It is in many ways good news that most programme leaders in what Te Wiata and Crocket (2011) described as a “Pākehā-dominated discipline” (p. 22) take the position that there is room for development in this aspect of our ethics teaching: “If anything, any partnership derived from Treaty expectations encourages the continual posing of questions that seek to both critique and construct possible other forms of practice” (Mika, 2011, p. 27).

The timing of ethics teaching

If, as Loewenthal and Snell (2001, p. 23) suggested, “ethics as practice is not in any way separate from psychotherapy,” the place and timing of the teaching of ethics in an overall programme is critically important, as R11 indicated above. Responses to a series of three questions provide an overview of this aspect in the eight programmes surveyed.

Question A. At what point in your programme is the topic of ethics first introduced?

(See Table 3.)

Question B. At what points in your programme is the substantive teaching of ethics done?

(See Table 4.)

Question C. At what points in your programme are there assessments about ethical understandings and practice? (See Table 4.)

Table 3: The timing of the introduction of ethics as a topic

| Response | Number (A) |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| During selection processes | 3 |
| In the first class of the programme | 2 |

Table 4: The timing of ethics teaching and assessment

| Response | Number (B) | Number (C) |
|---|------------|------------|
| In a theory paper/module/course | 6 | 7 |
| In the introductory skills paper/module | 5 | 4 |
| In advanced skills paper/module/course | 4 | 5 |
| Throughout the programme | 6 | 5 |
| In a final summative programme assessment (such as oral examination or portfolio) | – | 6 |

Hill (2004b, p. 184) suggested that “as with issues of diversity, ethical issues permeate the entire counselor education curriculum.” If it is taken as aspirational that the topic of ethics is introduced at the time of selection and is taught and assessed throughout a programme, the matter of timing is an area where there may be potential for some review.

Certainty and ambiguity

The following contrasting qualitative responses illustrate the importance of continuing to address the tension between certainty and ambiguity, discussed above.

R21: *The programme would certainly want students to approach every aspect of their practice holding some forms of confidence while also keeping in mind that ethical challenge might bring about questions and uncertainties. Ambiguities and complexities will require students to reach for new, innovative developments in their practice... Sensitivity to the many dimensions of ethical questions is an aim of the teaching in the ethical domain.*

R20: *By the end of the ethical unit completed by all students, they will have learnt and been assessed competent on all aspects pertaining to practising as a counsellor and in alignment with requirements by NZAC.*

The question perhaps arises how this latter statement’s position on certainty prepares students to understand counselling as a human service practice abounding in ethical ambiguity, for which education cannot give anyone all the answers ahead of any particular event, and where mistakes can happen even in the context of prudent practice (Cummings, 2008; D. Shapiro, Walker, Manosevitz, Peterson, & Williams, 2008). This question perhaps highlights one of the ongoing discomforts of counsellor education: we cannot be certain that our best efforts in ethical education will produce the practice outcomes we intend and hope for. Such uncertainty, however, increases rather than diminishes counsellor educators’ “*responsibility for our responsibility*” (Bauman, 1998, p. 17; emphasis in the original), and I suggest takes us back to the starting point of this presentation of results and discussion: the argument that we teach ethics both through the content and the processes of our teaching.

Taking the study further

The final two questions in phase two asked participants about any effects their participation in the project had generated, and invited any further comments on teaching and learning ethics, or on the research project itself. Given that this study

originated out of the Ethics Committee's responsibilities for ethics education, it was heartening to read of the ways in which participants had used their engagement in the project as a reflecting surface to both appreciate and extend their teaching:

R12: *I am now wondering what other ways I can teach ethics apart from following a process model. I will retain the model but have a conversation with colleagues about other possibilities. And I will look at how I am currently critiquing ethics and models throughout my teaching... [Ethics] is something that I really enjoy teaching as our work is always imbued with ethical nuances and decisions.*

R19: *We are wondering if we should put more emphasis on ethics. We are also interested in checking out Tim Bond's recent book.*

R15: *Highlighted some areas for further focus than currently provided... Great to know there is a research project paying attention to such a crucial aspect of students' training.*

R25: *Further integration of ethical elements into the programme teaching. Possibility of a closer relationship [with NZAC], and NZAC approval for operating under its Code... Making more visible and integrated the ethical practice of counselling in a treaty nation founded on Te Tiriti o Waitangi... All the best with this valuable piece of research. I eagerly await the outcome.*

R26: *Reminded and made visible the many sites where ethical conduct is emphasized; foregrounded the importance of this aspect in our teaching; and sparked new ideas of how this may be revisited and reshaped. Time constraint is a reality to work around. [A] meaningful project that invited reflections and rethinking about our commitment to ethical practice.*

Echoing the certainty of an earlier comment on learning outcomes, R20's response to questions about the effects of participation in the study stood apart in indicating only satisfaction with current teaching: "I think we do a great job of teaching beginning counsellors in assisting them to develop an ethical mindset in their practice."

Implications and limitations of the study

I have already noted that some potential participants were excluded by the study's time frame: their perspectives would have enriched the study. Just as R26, above, noted the effects of time constraints for what it is possible to teach, so time constraints meant this was a less collaborative research process than I would have preferred, both in its data-generating strategies and in being undertaken individually. While I am very grateful to

have experienced my colleagues' generous responses to this online survey format despite its limitations, my preference remains for qualitative research practices that offer more immediate dialogic possibilities. I am not sure how far the claims for the efficiency and economy of online surveys are borne out by my first experience of using this medium and method, and the research materials are less rich than those I am used to.

Nonetheless, I suggest that this beginning dialogue offers some useful reflections and questions for counsellor educators to consider—as programmes and as a professional interest group—as we teach ethics for counselling practice. These are questions about which we might also engage supervisors and our counselling colleagues in discussion, and for the National Ethics Committee of NZAC to consider. Frank (2005) suggested that:

the research report must always understand itself not as a final statement of who the research participants are, but as one move in a continuing dialogue through which those participants will continue to form themselves as they continue to become who they may yet be. (p. 967)

I understand this project as one move in a continuing dialogue as our profession gives more overt attention to how we might shape ethics education towards how it may yet be. The project, as reported here, raises some particular questions for further discussion by counsellor educators and in our wider profession:

- To what extent should the *how* and *what* of ethics teaching be woven together?
- How do we educate for a practice in which we cannot know ahead of time what ambiguities will emerge?
- How much theory of ethics is needed for ethical practice?
- When do we begin to teach ethics?
- How well are we teaching an ethics of partnership for counselling in Aotearoa New Zealand?

Acknowledgements

I thank Anne Harlow, of the Wilf Malcolm Institute for Education Research, University of Waikato, for guidance in the use of Lime Survey; my three colleagues who tested the phase-two survey before it went live; and participants who gave time and knowledge to the study, thus living out our responsibility to participate in the activities of our profession (NZAC *Code of Ethics*, 7.3.b).

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