

# The New Zealand Journal of Counselling

## Editorial

It has been said that a greater spectrum of difference frequently exists within a group that outsiders see as having a distinct cultural identity, than is often found among members of ostensibly different groups. Among members of the Christian community, there are complex shades of difference that underlie the three companion pieces that open this issue, 'Are you a Christian counsellor? What Christian counselling could and shouldn't be about.' This paper by Philip Culbertson and two prepared responses by John McAlpine and Ruth Penny were originally oral presentations at a seminar held in Auckland last year. In her presentation, Ruth communicated movingly through the power of song as well as the spoken word, a part of her presentation that we are unfortunately unable to include for you here.

The frequently asked question in the title can be heard as a challenge from prospective clients to practitioners within the Christian community, and calls forth reflection on one's professional identity, the assumptions that might underpin this question, and the ethics of the way in which counsellors position themselves in responding. We offer these presentations here to open up space for further reflection and dialogue, as we did in the last issue with the companion pieces, "Eros and Liberation."

Following his discussion and critique of gay-affirmative therapy in the last issue, in a second instalment here, Andrew Kirby considers emerging integrative solutions appearing in the literature for therapists working with clients who struggle to reconcile their same-sex attraction with conflicting values and beliefs. These include a sexual identity management model, and a Kleinian perspective that offers a way of working with individuals who are unable to accept, change or integrate these competing aspects of their identity.

When Meera Chetty talked with young Indian adults who had survived childhood exposure to domestic violence within their immigrant families, she encountered stories of resilience as well as pain. Her article, co-authored by Margaret Agee, provides insights into the lived experiences of children and young people exposed to domestic violence, and evidence suggests that these themes are common to many young people in this situation. The stories of these young people also challenge our thinking about the part

counsellors in schools can play in helping young people build their resilience and achieve their educational goals to create brighter futures for themselves.

Two further research-based articles complete this issue. In the first of these, Ruth Mortimer, Gillian Craven and other researchers from Massey University present the results of a survey of New Zealand practitioners who provide therapy for survivors of sexual abuse and assault. The survey sought information about the processes that counsellors use to determine mental injury due to sexual abuse, and their approaches to working with clients. Data obtained from this survey have contributed to the development of the latest best-practice guidelines, released in June 2008, for counselling survivors of sexual abuse.

In the last article in this issue, Nikolaos Kazantzis and his colleagues report the results of a survey of 123 New Zealand counsellors who took part in a multinational study of therapists' professional development across their careers. The findings for New Zealand counsellors were compared with those of the Canadian and US counsellors who participated. It is interesting to see the way in which New Zealand counsellors compare with their counterparts in rating training, supervision, and personal therapy.

In both of these articles, the results of the research reflect encouragingly on New Zealand counsellors and their practice. Both also highlight the fact that we have little research-based evidence about many areas of our practice and related professional issues. As a professional association we need to do all we can to encourage and support research and foster engagement between practitioners and researchers.

We hope you enjoy this issue. As always, we invite contributions to ongoing dialogue about challenging questions, as well as articles that report recent research and offer new perspectives to enrich our practice.

Margaret Agee and Philip Culbertson  
Co-editors, *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*