

Editorial

In reviewing the contents of this issue we have been struck by the diversity represented here. Themes in the articles reflect different developmental stages across the lifespan, and life challenges that include claiming our personal and professional agency; developing the capacity to think and behave in ways that are consistent with sound values; change, loss, and grief; career-related processes and decision-making; and providing effective professional services. Also illustrated and discussed are particular applications of counselling in various contexts: school counselling; work with the elderly in a community centre and in their homes; private practice; career counselling; and practitioner research, as well as the contribution of research to practice. Matters raised by each article seem to have relevance across our different workplace settings, to broaden our viewpoints, inform our practice, and stimulate debate, reflection, and research.

First, Jane McWilliams addresses what is called, in theories of contemporary discourse, “the Lacanian phallus”—an overly determined symbol for power and privilege. She uses this as an entry point for a brave and deeply personal yet significant professional reflection on the way in which she has eventually been able to find her own power as a woman in her personal relationships and in the counselling room. She explores ways in which she has been disempowered throughout her personal development by common male-dominated social assumptions that because she is biologically female, she is entitled to less exercise of power and privilege than biological males are. Discovering the work of French postmodernist Michel Foucault gave her the strength and insight to redefine and reclaim her personal authority as a woman, a daughter, a wife, and a mother. Her courage in exploring these experiences in her own therapy has assisted her to develop as a potent and thoughtful therapist when working with men who might once have threatened her and with clients who have lost their own sense of power in relationship to both self and others. This article raises important issues for all readers.

The work of school counsellors contributes in multifaceted ways—not always visible to or recognised by others—to the education, academic achievement, and holistic development of young people. In the second article Colin Hughes proposes

that the concerns students bring to counselling rooms in schools are value-laden accounts of their experiences. He provides illustrative examples of ways in which the work counsellors do with students commonly assists them in the development of the five reasoning abilities that are identified in *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). These abilities relate to the values that are also articulated the *Curriculum*. This article illustrates the variety of therapeutic approaches that school counsellors employ, explores the difference in the distribution of power within counsellor–client relationships as distinct from teacher–student relationships, and links school counselling with educational achievement by clearly positioning the counselling room as a learning environment. This builds on an earlier article that was published in the *NZAC Newsletter*, and it presents a new and topical perspective on the important contribution that school counsellors make to students’ learning and development.

The next article relates to quite a different clientele in terms of their life circumstances and developmental stage. As older people form a growing sector of our population, it becomes increasingly important that their needs are recognised and addressed by policy-makers and by the helping professions, through the provision of suitable services. To support the wellbeing of older people and prevent the onset of depression, funding was provided by the government in 2007 for a pilot counselling programme for people going through life changes related to ageing. Since then the WellElder programme has been offering individual, home-based, and group counselling for people aged 55 and over in the Wellington and Kapiti Coast region. Robert Manthei and Rosemary Nourse present the results of an evaluation of this programme which demonstrated not only that clients of this service had similar needs to those who access services through other agencies both here and overseas, but also that the counselling offered was effective in meeting their needs.

Small-scale qualitative studies are valuable for eliciting in-depth information about human experience and understandings, and can serve as exploratory research or as a pilot for a larger study. As Karen Thompson notes in her article, the themes of non-mortal loss and disenfranchised grief relate to life experiences that are given much less recognition, and to a perspective on grief that is lesser-known, than losses associated with death and other theoretical models. In reporting the results of her qualitative study of counsellors’ experiences and knowledge in this work, Karen draws these significant perspectives on loss and grief to our attention, and also highlights the interrelationship between the personal and the professional in grief counselling. Although generalisations cannot be made on the basis of a small-scale study, the discussions with the participants

in this study about the theories they drew on in their work and their familiarity with the concept of disenfranchised grief suggest that further research is needed into counsellors' knowledge, practices, and professional development needs in working with loss and grief.

Although the final article in this issue by Rosemary Barrett and Hilary Lapsley with Margaret Agee will be of particular interest to practitioners who specialise in career counselling, situations in which clients only attend once and single-session counselling are common across practice settings. If the single session is unplanned and occurs because clients have failed to return, their behaviour has tended to be seen negatively—clients may be viewed as resistant, not ready to make a commitment, or in denial—and if clients do not return, counsellors (or supervisors) may question their skills and capacity to establish rapport, or inexperience may be blamed. If a single session of counselling is planned or acknowledged as such, we are likely to question the value of such a short encounter and doubt that very much can be achieved. This small-scale study of client experiences and perceptions is both interesting and heartening in challenging those views, and it serves as an example of practitioner research that may encourage others to investigate their own clients' perceptions of the value of the counselling they have experienced. This article is based on a paper presented by Rosemary at the NZAC annual conference in the Bay of Islands in March 1998, and subsequently at an international career practitioners' conference in Wellington. Over the years she has had requests to publish an article based on the paper, which still holds current relevance and interest for career counsellors and others.

Finally, our warm thanks go to all the colleagues who have assisted us by reviewing articles that have been submitted to the *Journal* during the past year. We are most grateful for your willingness to devote time and effort to supporting our work in this way. Your thoughtful assessments of the quality and relevance of articles submitted, and the feedback you provide to authors, contribute substantially to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the *Journal*.

Margaret Agee and Philip Culbertson

Referees 2012

James Arkwright
Peter Bray
Alison Burke

Meera Chetty
Richard Cook
Sue Cornforth

Alastair Crocket
Kathie Crocket
Gudrun Frerichs

Gill Goodison
Anthea Harper
Peter Huggard
Robyn Jensen
Vic Jones

John McAlpine
Judi Miller
John O'Connor
Gillian Reynolds
Barbara Staniforth

Rona Waetford
Ginny Wilkinson
Jan Wilson
Dick Wivell
Sabrina Zoutenbier