

Special Section Editorial

Counselling Psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand: Introduction to the Special Section

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This editorial introduces the special section of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* focused on counselling psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Six articles cover a range of perspectives on this developing paradigm. These articles are introduced with brief reference to some of the historical and current issues for this scope of practice. These include strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for not only practitioners and researchers within the field, but also for the community of psychologists and, most importantly, for the people we work with and the potential contribution of this distinct perspective to the wider community.

As the Guest Editor to the special section, I wish to thank Jackie Feather and Elizabeth du Preez for their vital help in the development stages of this special section, and for their behind-the-scenes support throughout the process. I also wish to thank the many people who served as reviewers— some of whom are themselves contributors, and all of whom are working in the field, who brought their experiences, knowledge and insights to the peer-review process. I would also like to personally and publicly acknowledge the amazing support of Donna Macdonald and Debra Ridgway from NZJP who worked tirelessly to keep the processes going. Tena koutou ... Rhoda Scherman

On behalf of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, we would like to welcome you to a special section focusing on counselling psychology. The discipline had its genesis in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1985 when members of the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) formed a Division of the Society, which later became the Institute of Counselling Psychology. The New Zealand Psychologists Board has recognised counselling psychology as a scope and is in the process of approving competencies. There is currently one accredited training programme, at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), which has been producing graduates since 2011. Counselling psychology is well established internationally, and currently most counselling psychologists in New Zealand are overseas-trained.

Counselling psychology is perhaps unique as an approach, as its defining scaffolds are at once phenomenological, developmental, systemic, empowerment- and enhancement-focused, ethical, cultural and spiritual (Feather, 2011). The model is neither fixed nor necessarily representative of the ideas of all those who may classify themselves as counselling psychologists. In each context in which it has developed, the discipline has evolved in response to the needs of the community that it serves. In this country, counselling psychology continues to advance in consultation with colleagues, industry partners and the public. The overarching question is always, *what do all these parties want and need from us that might be unique and different from existing psychological services?* In part, this is the reason it is difficult to find a common definition of the discipline in the literature (Gibson, Stanley & Manthei, 2004). Having said

that, historically and philosophically, counselling psychology very clearly positions itself as a union between scientific models of functioning and more humanistic contextual views.

Internationally, there are commonalities with our local development and experience (see for example, Pelling, 2004). The struggle for identity is a common theme, and this is evident in some of the articles in this special section. *How do we differentiate counselling psychology from clinical psychology, counselling or psychotherapy, or for that matter, from educational or community psychology? What is unique and different about counselling psychology? Who or what is the focus of our endeavours?* Connell's Southern Theory (2007) gives some insight as to why these questions may be particularly pertinent in the New Zealand context. We have reason to value connection to theories and practices emanating from European and American centres of power and influence, but this can undermine our own ideas and experiences. We are a small, remote society and, notwithstanding the ubiquitous connection modern technology provides, it often feels like a mismatch: *"You know, it's right what you say, but it is not the way we think"* (Balinese man to anthropologist Unni Wikan, 1991, p. 285). Māori have experienced this mismatch and marginalisation since the arrival of the first European settlers. In a way, all New Zealanders are now in a similar position to Māori (not to minimise the

devastating effects of colonisation) whether we are of indigenous heritage, well-established Pakeha or more recent immigrants. Northern voices are loud but don't seem to fit. The idea of Southern Theory can help us assert the legitimacy and appropriateness of locally generated ideas with which to understand our experiences (Burns, 2009). This then is a rationale for a "ground-up" development of counselling psychology theory, research and practice in this country, and is evidenced in a number of the articles in this special section.

Farrell (2013) opens with a past-present-future look at the field of counselling psychology. As he describes the paradigm, he does so from the point of view of a counselling psychologist, showing his intersubjectivity as he positions himself squarely within the tradition. He describes counselling psychology from its place in the American Psychological Association and the British Psychological Society, before showing us how the discipline has been adopted in the larger therapeutic structures of New Zealand, ultimately forming a cohesive and synthesised interpretation of the field. From that, Farrell distils counselling psychology down to its core elements before reflecting on its genesis in New Zealand, where he proposes that counselling psychology "has actually been in Aotearoa/New Zealand since there were first people here". He emphasises the intrinsic importance of indigenous voices in the development of counselling psychology in this country. Farrell concludes by outlining the challenges and opportunities currently existing in the field.

In the second article in the series, Drury (2013) moves us away from the broad conceptualisations to more specific implications of counselling psychology practice by drawing on the philosophical teachings of Wittgenstein. The general tenant of this author's article is that therapists should consider an alternative to the medical model that labels the patient, and instead learn to take the client's perspective—and the understandings that they give for their own situation. Drury does this by drawing on metaphors from

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, suggesting a reorientation and a new way of relating to the environment that emphasises the need to be collaborative, intuitive and contextual—all concepts central to counselling psychology.

With Stanley's (2013) contribution, we turn again to the broad constructs of counselling psychology. Here he critically discusses and analyses what he sees as the seven core components of the discipline as derived from the official definition endorsed by the New Zealand Psychologists Board (NZPB). This is contrasted with the definitions offered for the other NZPB scopes of practice (i.e., clinical and educational psychologies). Throughout his paper, Stanley emphasises counselling psychology's unique commitment to a person-centred approach as he considers the practice implications of each of the seven (as he argues) perfectly and precisely interconnected components that define the discipline.

Thorpe's (2013) article moves us into the realm of research and training, making links between the process of qualitative research and the process of psychotherapy. He begins by proposing that conducting qualitative research within postgraduate training programmes in psychology provides students with knowledge and experience that may augment the development of therapeutic skills. Thorpe supports this proposition with examples of students' qualitative research studies from the counselling psychology programme at AUT. He argues that counselling psychologists are drawn to qualitative methodologies as these approaches, like therapy, are intensely personal and the topics often sensitive. The experiences, attitudes and values involved in both endeavours are delineated and compared using five postulated phases of qualitative research. Ultimately, the process of qualitative research is presented as a form of experiential learning that is valuable in therapeutic training, demanding personal and professional development in areas that can only be learnt in a personal encounter that encourages a rigorous enquiry into both self and other.

Reflecting on some of the key themes in the counselling psychology literature, du Preez and Goedeke (2013) take us into the ethical decision-making practices of counselling psychologists. The authors suggest that, when faced with an ethical dilemma, practitioners will necessarily turn to the Code of Ethics as endorsed by their professional board or association. The problem with this, the authors argue, is that for the counselling psychology paradigm, the current rational, prescribed and linear models that emphasise first-order change are not suitable. Counselling psychology privileges context and collaboration as central to the relationship—and therefore, central to the decision-making processes. du Preez and Goedeke propose a new ethical decision-making model for the field; one that is theoretically-aligned, holistic, integrative and ecologically-minded. Toward that end, several existing ethical decision-making models are critically considered, and their own model is offered that preferences second-order decision-making and emphasises relational and contextual aspects.

The final two articles in the special section further develop themes fundamental to counselling psychology: context, self and 'other', and power—specifically, who has it? These articles demonstrate how counselling psychologists in Aotearoa / New Zealand understand and work with these dimensions in practice, drawing on local theory, knowledge and experience. The perspective of Māori is of crucial importance here. Unfortunately, no Māori are represented in this special section, a reflection perhaps of the infancy of the discipline in this country. However, Seiuli (2013) provides a valuable contribution that addresses the psychological health of Pasifika people in New Zealand, framed within the *Uputāua Approach*—a Samoan-based perspective. Emphasising collective responsibility, relational spaces, and respectful dialogues as vital elements of the Uputāua Approach, the author describes the key components of this model as illustrated by the *faletalimalo* (Samoan meeting house). Seiuli shows us how working holistically, and

with cultural, familial, spiritual, and environmental awareness, therapists can help their clients achieve healing and restoration. Importantly, this paper provides a template for a therapeutic approach within counselling psychology that acknowledges and respects the worldviews of minority communities represented in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Relevant to the experience of minority communities is Milton's work on self and other. In the first counselling psychology keynote at the NZPSS conference in Queenstown in 2011, he reminded us that even though we often think of ourselves as the only 'other', there are many 'others'. What is important in a psychological encounter is knowing ourselves and respecting others; being open, asking and not assuming; creating the space to be in a dialogue; being willing to do a dance; co-creating, exploring together and acknowledging the uncertainty. These aspects are evident in Kliem, Feather and Norton's (2013) article that reports the therapeutic journey of an intern counselling psychologist and her client. This article highlights the central place self-reflection has in counselling psychology, and is an example of the collaborative and sensitive use of an evidence-based CBT protocol with a client with severely debilitating anxiety. It also demonstrates the triple focus that a counselling psychologist explicitly holds: (1) the primacy of the therapeutic relationship and contextual factors; (2) alleviating symptoms and enhancing coping skills; and (3) healing underlying causes. It shows how responsiveness to the client on all these levels contributes to an ever-evolving formulation that meets the client's needs in a respectful and empowering way. The power balance within the therapeutic relationship was quite equal, and both client and therapist were able to express their difficulties and their progress through self-reflective writing and in-session discussions. The client's personal development through the therapeutic process nicely paralleled the intern's professional development through training and supervision.

In welcoming you to this special issue, it is our hope that you come away with an appreciation of the

diversity yet commonalities manifest in the evolving paradigm of counselling psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There are central themes evident as a common thread through all these articles that contribute to the "ground-up" development of counselling psychology theory, research and practice in this country. These include a privileging of the therapeutic relationship within a collaborative contextual empowering framework, and a balancing of these humanistic, systemic aspects with a scientific approach that emphasises practice-based theory and research. In this latter respect, counselling psychology is as yet a young field in this country. This special section provides a start, with locally developed frameworks and case study examples. As the discipline comes of age, we look forward to the development of a long and fruitful tradition of theory, research and practice that builds on these, and previous, seminal publications.

While the strengths and opportunities for counselling psychology have been highlighted, we must also acknowledge the gaps. A glaring omission is the lack of any contribution to this special section by Māori psychologists. We believe there is a natural fit between counselling psychology and the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi: partnership, protection and participation. This has yet to be explored in any published form, but certainly has been the subject of discussion in training and supervision contexts within the field. As Farrell noted in this special section, we are very keen to encourage indigenous voices, and are grateful to have been able to include Seiuli's contribution that illustrates shared features of counselling psychology and a Samoan perspective on health, wellbeing and the therapeutic relationship.

One other point, also highlighted by Farrell, is that psychologists of other traditions may encompass similar elements to those described here, and may well read these articles and say, "but I practice like that and I'm not a counselling psychologist". We propose that, as the Dodo said, "everybody has won and all must have prizes" (Rosenzweig, 1936). If we pursue a

'them' and 'us' dialogue, it is likely to be to the detriment of the people we work with and their communities. The contribution of counselling psychology may be one of emphasis: the discipline re-focuses the emphasis in therapeutic work on those very aspects that both research and practice have shown matter (Wampold, 2001). This could be considered something counselling psychology explicitly offers, and thinking and research in these areas in partnership with other traditions may then contribute to all.

We have been privileged to be part of the process of documenting the current 'state of the art' of counselling psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and look forward to continuing the dialogue with our colleagues, both within and alongside our scope of practice.

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