

Editorial

The unexamined life is not worth living.—Socrates

We might paraphrase Socrates by saying “The unexamined practice is not worth doing.” Gladeana McMahon, a British counsellor and therapist, points out the many different forms that reflective practice and self-evaluation may take:

Reflecting on work with clients directly after a session has ended, on areas of counsellor strengths and weaknesses, on personal motives for engaging in counselling (McMahon, 1994), on gender and sexuality (Davies & Neal, 1996), on personal counselling philosophy and theoretical approaches, and on the relevance of research and how it can inform practice and skill efficacy (Legg, 1998). Reflective practice also considers social, cultural, and organisational contexts which may help, hinder or influence the therapeutic relationship (Megranahan, 1997; Lago & Thompson, 1996).

Speaking of the juncture between our professional lives as counsellors and our personal lives, McMahon observes, “Everything that happens to the counsellor personally and professionally provides useful information which may aid the therapeutic process” (<http://www.counsellingpracticematters.com/about-gladeana/>).

A strong theme of reflective practice runs through this issue of the Journal. Robert (Bob) Manthei explores the relationship between the personal and the professional in proposing that a counsellor or counsellor educator’s chosen theoretical orientation may serve as a self-revealing autobiographical statement. His review of the evidence both about effective therapies and about the process of developing one’s theoretical orientation challenges us to reflect on the personal and professional influences that have shaped the values and beliefs underpinning our own approaches to practice and/or teaching.

The interrelationship between the personal and the professional is illustrated in the next article, in which Frank Seth reflects on a personal journey that has led him from a career in IT to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in life and a deep commitment to counselling as a profession. In this process, which he likens to the growth of his “life-tree,” journaling has led him to discover a sense of connection beyond himself that he experiences as his spirituality. The reflexive process of engaging with his spiritual

autoethnography evokes continuing transformation personally and enriches his work as a practitioner.

Claire Ferguson then tells the story of the transformation of the pastoral care services within a multicultural South Auckland high school. Guided by the values of the New Zealand Curriculum and underpinned by an holistic philosophy, the delivery of pastoral care embraces all aspects of students' wellbeing and development. In this article, Claire describes the process of change, and reflects on her role in the process as counsellor and what it means to practise safely and effectively in a multicultural context.

Selected results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of a Christchurch counselling centre are the focus of the next article, the second in this issue by Robert Manthei. Here he compares current statistical client data with historical data from earlier research conducted at the same agency. In the current research, client and counsellor estimates of client outcomes and their satisfaction with counselling were also compared. The information elicited, and the replication of method and information obtained across the two studies, make a particularly useful contribution to the limited New Zealand-based literature in this field.

The final article in this issue invites readers to reflect on what counselling effectiveness might mean in a different context. Nick Mulqueoney considers the influence of White privilege as he questions his fitness as a male Pākehā counsellor to work with Māori tamariki in the context of a community agency. In this sense, Mulqueoney's article should prompt deeper thinking in all of us about what it means to work cross-culturally, what we have to do to ensure we are being understood correctly in cross-cultural situations, how the racial or cultural mismatch between a counsellor and a client can undermine the effectiveness of a counselling relationship, and when it is appropriate to seek cross-cultural supervision.

Margaret Agee and Philip Culbertson

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