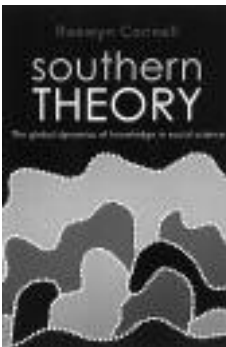


How Can a “Southern Theory” Perspective Contribute to New Zealand Counselling?

Edgar Burns

Abstract

Raewyn Connell’s new text, *Southern Theory*, is described here as a background perspective for counselling teaching and practice. The first half of the article explores the idea of southern theory and New Zealand culture, seeing parallels to it in the relation between Māori and non-Māori New Zealanders. Several points are then raised about perspective in general, suggesting that a southern perspective helps inspect truth claims of counselling concepts and practices. The second half of the discussion is framed around what Connell sees as four key assumptions that northern theory makes about the world which adversely affect southern societies like New Zealand. The southern challenge to these assumptions is linked to counselling in this country.



The purpose of this article is to introduce the New Zealand counselling profession to Raewyn Connell’s new book, *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science* (2007), and to discuss the possibilities it offers to counselling practitioners and teachers in this country. From our New Zealand location, professionals often have reason to value personal and vocational connections to ideas and debates in the European and American centres of economic and political importance. Connell’s book, however, suggests that at the same time the social theory that emanates from

these world centres, and which frames the work of all human service professions including counselling, undermines the usefulness and recognition of our own ideas for those of us outside those northern centres of power and influence.

My viewpoint in writing this article is that of a sociologist who has taught counselling, psychotherapy and social work degree students at each year-level of their undergraduate degree over a number of years. Seeing students pulled between the authorities in their northern canonical texts on the one hand, and the need to learn how to address local issues and personal needs on the other, in this country, in these cultures, and in this period of time, has been a powerful experience—near educational exchange for me and my colleagues. Both students and teaching staff engaging this tension are called to reframe experience and reflect on what it means, and how to proceed as we grow professionally and personally.

Given that many of the texts used internationally in counselling come from First World or northern hemisphere sources, the implications of Connell's reasoning suggest that counselling, along with other professional activities, will exist in a tension between developing local concepts for local problems, and the continual absorption and cultural colonisation of our social ways of framing our national and cultural experience by unconscious emulation of those world centres. As a consequence of this tension, the tug and pull of theoretical and cultural social forms creates a kind of practitioner split mentalité. Protocols of professional-client interaction, service provision, and ways of doing things “sort of fit,” but also “don't exactly fit” at the same time. Counsellors can be so focused on learning and improving their skills and competencies that their faithfulness to what texts and theorists say misses this largely invisible overlay of American and European—what Connell calls northern—ways of doing things on southern societies such as New Zealand and Australia. Australasian societies are a long way from being European countries or cultures any more, and this encroachment of ideas inhibits the interpretation of southern experience and practice here.

In a number of ways, this echoes and reinforces the kind of insights provided in the essays that appeared in the *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*, 27(1). That issue offered, as the editors commented (Cornforth & Parkin, 2007), “at long last, a number of papers that have as their focus taha Māori, biculturalism and different ways of relating” (p. iv). Many of the same kinds of processes of overlay, and resistance to or amelioration of such imposition that are central to discussions of Māori and Pākehā and our colonial backdrop, are paralleled today by the northern-versus-southern cultural tensions affecting New Zealand.

This fundamental point needs to be expanded because it works at least on the following four levels. First, there are analogous marginalising processes for southern societies as a whole, which to some extent can be read about and learned. Studying the

Māori-Pākehā relationships emerging from a new recognition by non-Māori has already delivered some better understandings of things Māori in recent years.

Second, this is not a claim that says “we” (non-Māori) understand what Māori have gone through and continue to go through vis-à-vis the rest of New Zealand society. However, it proposes that the sort of colonisation and racialisation “putting down” mechanisms that affect Māori—where a dominant group sometimes explicitly, but more often tacitly, systematically disadvantages the minority group—have analogues that are being practised on us as whole New Zealand southern society (Māori and Pākehā together). This is done by northern powerful societies that speak and write about *their* problems from *their* point of view, and in terms of *their* political process and cultural practices in relation to those issues, and how to deal with them. Such speaking, writing and practice mostly ignores New Zealand experience, but acts as though it also represents and is transferable to our national situation.

Third, if this affects all of us in a southern society, as Connell claims, then those of us who are not Māori can benefit from Māori input and learning about Māori experience. This is not just for reasons such as addressing fairness and gaining insights into holistic or spiritual framings that have been greatly eclipsed in secular society, but because Māori are a near-at-hand source of knowledge and insight into how such marginalising processes play out. If we find it hard to see the near-invisible strands like those with which Gulliver was tied down by the Lilliputians and which also tie us, we have a need to absorb some of that often bitter marginalisation to help shift our collective New Zealand self-understanding. This need not be a cultural cringe, but a growth towards cultural maturity.

Fourth, to the degree that the idea of southern theory has merit, it is certain that the professional activity of counselling, in any of its institutional or practitioner forms or modalities, draws upon professional and theoretical models that *in toto*, whatever their conceptual usefulness, at the same time effectively marginalise the full development of local counselling knowledge, ideas, and ways of thinking about our issues. This is not a claim to privilege local experience, but an assertion of the legitimacy and appropriateness of locally generated ideas with which to think about and understand that experience.

The idea of a southern perspective is not in any way opposed to attention to Māori and bicultural perspectives, nor is it trying to supersede them. Quite the contrary: it actively builds on alternatives to mainstream values and ways of framing experience, pain, and value, and pays attention to exploring solutions utilised by indigenous

peoples. Connell asserts that the presence of indigenous peoples in southern countries, and their values concerning land, group behaviour, community and gender, have changed ex-Europeans who now live here. New Zealanders are no longer merely white people in this part of the world; our whole economic and cultural life is different because of this contact and location. In New Zealand's case, European New Zealanders are Pākehā, whether that word or another is preferred. Connell's term *southern* picks up this changed socio-cultural reality across a number of countries like ours.

Anthropologist Unni Wikan's (1991) admonition about "balance" is a useful contribution that complements Connell's reasoning by means of a brief narrative cameo she provides. From her work in Indonesia, Wikan describes a conversation with a local Balinese couple about applying concepts like "balance" and "harmony", concepts that might be used in a number of counselling practitioner contexts.

In the end the man cut me short and gracefully said, "You know, it's right what you say, but it is not the way we think." And he went on to expound how Balinese think, substituting the notion of "balance" I had used with more experience-near concepts of pragmatic consequence in everyday life, and relegating my kind of usage to the discourse of literary and textual specialists. To me his warning came timely. As I saw it, he did not merely juxtapose two kinds of discourses, two ways of knowing, one expert, one folk, or even two different cultural models. More was at stake.

(p. 285)

Wikan, the academic, reports herself as *learning* her theory from her everyday conversationalists. Many counsellors and educators report a similar sense of learning from those with whom they work. Connell's argument is about the professional framing, texts, and Euro-American perspectives imparted from northern, non-New Zealand settings that hinder the development of local self-understanding and action.

So even while we expand our understanding of Māori-and-Pākehā-together ways of behaving, reacting, learning, and adapting, we are continuing to use the theoretical and practice tools of counselling individuals and academic disciplines that are historically and culturally located elsewhere—they are not the simple, literal "truth". Durie (2007) put it like this in a recent volume of this journal:

Since the modern study of psychology owes much to investigations by scientific researchers in western countries, many of the findings about behaviour, relationship building, cognition and affect are particularly germane to western cultures. However, they cannot necessarily be applied to all cultures. Assumptions about

universality have long since given way to recognition of the impacts of ethnicity on patterns of behaviour, and there is an increasing realisation that the ways in which people think, feel and relate to each other are often a reflection of the culture within which they have been raised.

(p. 1)

A southern approach to such issues is one way of elaborating a response. It aims to:

- name broad themes of cultural and national sensibilities that together make much of what we do in our advice and interpretations appear to be “natural”. The fact that such “sensibilities” are not just “natural” can be readily discovered by New Zealanders visiting or relocating in another country; this learning may be more elusive for northern professionals coming here;
- introduce an integrative social theory perspective that might be woven into our counselling teaching and practice in this country, honouring gender, ethnicity, and culture, and gradually challenging existing perspectives and models;
- identify southern commonalities across several countries outside the northern European and American metropolitan centres;
- invite engagement with northern theory from a standpoint that is increasingly our own, where the “our” shares both indigenous and multi-country insights about how it is to be treated as “other” by the northern geo-political centres.

The contention here is that the pattern of inapplicability or merely partial relevance that exists between economically privileged countries and cultures such as Māori is not just about theories but is an expression of underlying political power. Further, this pattern is replicated even within the so-called group of developed nations in the marginalising effect that many ideas have on New Zealanders and other southern countries—for both Māori and Pākehā, or for white Australians as well as Aboriginal peoples, and so on. Just as it is all too easy for Pākehā New Zealanders to miss the ways in which they marginalise Māori in their professional and personal actions and practices, it is also common for Pākehā New Zealanders to be only vaguely conscious of the fact that their own—as well as Māori—perspectives are discounted against ideas from the centres of intellectual and textbook production.

Using perspectives

Sociology and other disciplines often use “perspective” and “approach” as broadly equivalent terms to mean the ways a person or group is oriented towards one or more subjects or to the world in general. The everyday terms “point of view,” or “where a

person is coming from,” express similar concepts in non-academic language. It is important as practitioners to be able to shift comfortably from the technical terminology of counselling theories and models to the everyday equivalents or near-equivalents that clients use. There is much more data to be harvested from interactions if this is done well. But to be able to do this competently is a counselling skill beyond the initial learning of theories, and where and when they might be applied. As teachers, there may be room for criticism that this further step in developing professional practitioner skills could be elaborated on. The role of sociology as one core contribution in the formation of counselling competence might be said to widen the vision of self and agency in varied cultural and social contexts. It can be tempting for some professional helpers to omit contextual issues from their analyses and solutions for individuals, especially if these are contentious or culturally difficult to articulate, and prefer instead to adopt a more restricted focus that implies that personal issues largely have personal causation.

A perspective or point of view can be thought of in two ways. First, it provides a professional route for counsellors to orientate themselves to their own learning, their beliefs and priorities, their skills, and towards their clients. A subset of this is the academic use of perspective or approach to mean the conscious creation of ways to tackle issues and tasks. Perspective in this setting can sometimes be used as approximately the same as model or theory, but is better seen as giving guidance to such models and theory building. A feminist perspective, for example, causes attention to be paid across many diverse situations to gendered constructions, how women are positioned or framed in the given circumstances, and how these expectations and “rules” might affect and disadvantage women.

The second way to deploy perspective is to elevate clients’ opinions and statements as their perspective on things, revealing their approach to life, to partner, to work, and so on. Although in one sense amorphous and often not explicit, client perspectives are fundamental material to work with if any reframing or change is contemplated. For example, it is not too hard to see a client perspective of inner self-critical talk having implications for everything from releasing negative links to parents, to reframing a primary partner relationship, to the care and training of the next generation. Further, it is possible to talk about differences between the academic job of self-conscious constructing of perspectives and the personal formation of perspective that clients (in fact, everybody) construct in going through various experiences in life. The first is formal and deliberate, whereas client perspectives may grow accidentally with the flow of life, often uninspected even when problems arise, and essentially private rather

than debated. Bringing perspectives and the assumptions that accompany them to awareness is often central to resolving internal or interpersonal conflicts.

In summary, then, a perspective may be a whole-of-life framework or a set of ideas about some more-focused topic. An academic perspective is usually regarded as broader and more background to a theory, although again there can be a fair bit of overlap in how these terms are used. An academic theory is deliberate, and should be set out formally so that others can—professionally—inspect it, challenge it, and test it in practice or by research, and suggest revisions. A perspective may be more cognitively framed or it may be a personal interpretive framework.

The southern perspective implies that we should be critically aware of the supposed “truth” of everyday counselling concepts (Walker, 2004). Without an ongoing agenda of professional enquiry and recalibration of our ideas, procedures, and concepts, our practice may become too narrow, may reflect age-boundedness, be too “white,” too American, not international enough, or in a variety of other ways diminish our capacity to intervene professionally in the range of counselling situations regularly encountered, or in administrative contexts involving practice and policy processes and educator engagement.

Four main strands of southern theory

What is southern theory? The subtitle to Connell’s book explains that it is about “the global dynamics of knowledge in social science.” It describes how modern social ideas that are now taken to be scientific, objective, and neutral were developed through the period of colonialism and neo-colonial expansion of European and American influence during the 19th and 20th centuries. The inference to be drawn from Connell’s discussion of social theory is that the very central counselling ideas that we use every day are to some extent implicated in the dominating power relations that exist around the world. They are not simply and uncomplicatedly “truth”. As reflected in NZAC policies, as well as in articles in previous issues of this journal, the idea that it is not possible to be a competent counsellor in New Zealand without some bicultural awareness makes the case for a local knowledge (Geertz, 1983) to be developed and utilised. Outside “knowledge” is not always applicable. Connell’s argument is that similar reasoning applies across Australia and other southern countries as well.

When counselling within what may appear to be “completely” white or European New Zealander or other non-Māori groups, practitioners still need a southern perspective. This is because the presence of white people in this part of the world, and

the presence of Māori people here—and all the complexities those facts give rise to—means that Māori experience and existence, and hence the modification of non-Māori cultures, is relevant even in what might be supposed by some to be clearly “non-Māori” situations within New Zealand social settings.

Even supposing a specialised argument might be made for a recently arrived counsellor interacting with a recently arrived counsellee, the event takes place within the cultural context of this society. Certainly, in all ordinary everyday interactions, the lived experience of Pākehā, Māori, and any other identifiable groupings people may wish to claim (not just ethnic ones) is intertwined and thereby modified, irrespective of our personal activities, relationships, or opinions. This happens across the diversity of the political, economic, work, family, and interpersonal aspects of our lives.

Northern theory, as Connell demonstrates via critique of three well-known social theorists, can be seen upon inspection to be putting a northern “spin” on concepts and ideas that are therefore not entirely accurate representations from our point of view in the south. She calls these northern centres of power the metropole (the centre) and southern societies the periphery (that is, the edge places). The effect of these dominating frames of reference is to marginalise southern understanding, experience, and ability to construct and promote theoretical models and explanations relevant to our field, even if that is not intended or realised. Only by accepting and “buying into” the northern ways of doing things do we become acceptable “players”, but the game is still played on northern terms.

Connell (2007, p. 44) identifies four aspects of the northernness of general theory. “The consequences of metropolitan geo-political location can be seen, I suggest, in four characteristic textual moves: the claim of universality; reading from the centre; gestures of exclusion; and grand erasure.” A southern perspective also means that the simple fact of counselling texts being written in English does not necessarily mean they are fully congruent with New Zealand needs and social nuances.

In the four “textual moves,” we can begin to discern ways in which these ideas might be appropriated by local counselling theory and practice so that local insights are not invalidated as merely special cases, interesting but not universally applicable, but re-read and established as useful and independent theories in their own right.

The claim of universality

From a southern viewpoint, dominant northern texts from American and European authors make “a strong and repeated claim to universal relevance” (Connell, 2007,

p. 44). This assumption is part of the scientific and secular rationality that reached a peak of confidence in mid-20th-century developed societies. Those dominant economic centres still assume that professional texts (that is, what *they* say) are equally true for everyone. Four comments about this belief in the universal extension of northern views attempt to link this to New Zealand counselling.

First, even though northern ideas are dominating, southern theory is not advocating an “anti” northern standpoint, but rather argues that naming these ideas as northern invites recognition that these are *their* ideas and theories. Unreflective adoption of such ideas and concepts makes better sense to members of those societies than to us. It is always relevant to ask how poorly or well such ideas, models, and practices fit New Zealand, and to ask what selections we should make, or what challenges should be mounted. This is of course part of the conscious need to update our understanding and use of overseas ideas as our collective awareness of our own society continues to develop.

Second, a theory or model from here is given the name “a New Zealand counselling model” or something similar. Connell says “its specificity is immediately obvious,” but such a question is much less often asked of American or European texts. To call something “Latin American counselling” is immediately to ask, in Connell’s terms, how far this is relevant to other situations, and to note that such a question is much further down the list for inspecting northern claims. Often northern theorists and practitioners “bolt on” Australian or New Zealand examples to illustrate their work. Even insights generated from examples of, for instance, Hindu or Japanese culture (Shweder, 1991) still tend to be read by those in the northern environment as something of interest to append to the main truth that they already “know”, rather than shifting an ethnocentric perspective.

Third, professional counselling and counsellors share many of the characteristics that northern professionalisation brought to this country in the 19th and 20th centuries. Professions, and the beliefs and practices that are part of professional socialisation and formalisation in modern society, are quite literally products (exports) of European and American—that is, northern—historical development.

Professions provide highly desirable links across national boundaries, but at the same time it is necessary to identify differences, culturally appropriate practices, and key focal concerns, and to follow these over time. Core professional competencies around which professional groups are constituted continue to alter over time. What counts as professionalism in American counselling sits at some points the same as in New Zealand, partly a model to be emulated, and at other points as something that has

rigidities, formalities, assumptions about method, practice, and cultural relevance extending to the “whiteness” of significant parts of the profession, and different male-female discourses, that compare and contrast with this country when viewed from a southern perspective.

Fourth, assumptions or claims of universal relevance can also be challenged by reviewing specific examples from counselling and psychology. The cultural history of IQ tests, for instance, has a very low profile relative to the psychological testing sector creating and norming instrument validation over many decades. Only gradually has a reluctant acknowledgement been forthcoming to reveal how deeply embedded in social and historical contexts these tests are, challenging earlier beliefs in IQ test capacity to abstract a universal measure of intelligence (Murdoch, 2007). Similarly, the currently fashionable idea of emotional intelligence is imbued with cultural relativity. We can also include Walker’s (2004) challenge to usage of learned-helplessness and self-efficacy concepts, staples of the counselling profession too often.

Again, as with the previous points, this is not to say such ideas are wrong *per se*, but that they contribute relative insights rather than the universal truth so often claimed or implied.

Reading from the centre

Connell (2007, p. 45) points out that “contributions to general theory are often presented as resolutions of some antinomy, problem or weakness in previous theory.” In most social science and psychology disciplines, inspecting the history or development of the field reveals that schools of thought have emanated from disputes and attempted resolutions of methodological or theoretical positions. Connell’s argument is that these debates or revisions are usually ones stemming from northern traditions, northern history, and northern issues. For example, while the subject-object binary is fundamental to European intellectual traditions, and shapes many counselling concepts, the Balinese example of feeling-thought cited previously demonstrates that there are quite different ways in which such conceptions can be framed. New Zealand has a hybrid history, drawing on Māori and Pacific ideas as well as European ones. Being able to build on such ideas as viable and legitimate is a much harder task than merely seeing difference, or being seen as different.

Reading and re-reading from the centre means that these claims are continually repeated and reinforced: “That this point of view originates in the metropole is not explicit” (Connell, 2007, p. 44). Only to the extent that southern societies and experts

call these ideas into question, making their assumptions explicit, do the universal claims inherent in such assertions, often described as scientific, become apparent as much less grand and much more ordinary. One clue that can be practically exploited is to identify why disciplinary schools of thought developed, and then chart the succession of such developments. Every disciplinary perspective chronicled in textbooks has its own history of challenge and dissatisfaction with the adequacy of previous approaches. More often than not, studying the history of such groups (not just the potted first-chapter summaries of textbooks such as Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson, 2006, pp. 3–29) reveals knowledge patterns that make better sense when viewed from a southern vantage point as a mixture of culture, national themes and science, not simply science. This is true not only for recent contentions in identity politics involving constructions of gender and ethnicity, but also for supposedly neutral models of personality, use of inventories, creation of typologies, and so on.

Gestures of exclusion

When texts are produced about counselling, they are predominantly from the northern centres of America and Europe. Slowly that is starting to change, but still with self-conscious reference to the theories and problems to be addressed as defined in those places. In a recent text such as Sharf's (2007) *Theories of Psychotherapy and Counseling*, the entire list of about a dozen major theories through which the text traverses reads like a who's who of European and American notable names and models of psychotherapy and counselling. As Connell (2007, p. 46) observes, “Theorists from the colonised world are very rarely cited in metropolitan texts of general theory.” The question needs to be asked: in the other 90% of the world's population, is there no worthwhile philosophy or theory of personality, of the person, that has emerged over the millennia of multiple sophisticated civilisations? Sharf's book mentions a few, here and there, but the national-cultural northern centrism must be continually challenged.

There are pragmatic reasons, as well as the more abstract forms of geo-political positioning, for such gestures of exclusion. What Stager Jacques (2007) described in relation to business textbooks in New Zealand has similarities with counselling. He referred to the sense of imposition of non-New Zealand cultural types derived from overseas textbooks, but acknowledged the countervailing argument that the economics of production print-run (and hence being able to provide a more complex educational offering) make a bigger and better-value teaching resource.

Notwithstanding economics, the impulse to expanding discussion and writing among ourselves about southern things that concern us today means that several disciplines in this country are beginning to produce texts that, in varying degrees, engage with our locality as well as ideas from the wider globe (e.g., Crothers, 2008, or in counselling, Drewery & Bird, 2004). These texts aim to go beyond merely adding a chapter or piece that recognises alternatives to northern cultures and practices, albeit as something interesting or special. Such writing is for the most part still peripheral to mainstream models, or treated as exotic.

Grand erasure

The sheer absence of significant themes, historical information, and personal accounts only makes sense when seen as not fitting a northern viewpoint. A vivid illustration of erasure, as spelled out in *Southern Theory*, is the contrast between social theorist Pierre Bourdieu and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. Bourdieu first published his major work *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972) from his research in Algeria during the Algerian colonial wars in northern Africa, with no discussion of the war or its consequences. Fanon (1967; 1986), working in the same time and place, is the major theorist of the psychopathological effects that war and bitter colonialism have on personality, emotional health, and many related themes. The erasure by Bourdieu of the lived, actual experience of people in that locale stands in breathtaking contrast to Fanon's involvement in and sharing of the pain and turmoil.

A political response may not be pertinent for most counselling professionals, but this journal's previous issue 27(1) is a courageous step in seeking to address huge blanked-out experiences in local New Zealand social history. Consider these three erasures: (a) the sense of loss or homeless dislocation of immigrant Europeans to New Zealand (Moir-Bussy, 2003, p. 5); (b) everyday restrictions on Māori people sitting upstairs in movie theatres, which persisted in this country into the 1960s; (c) passive resistance of Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kakahi to land confiscation in the Taranaki during European colonisation, detailed in Dick Scott's (1954/2004) *Ask That Mountain* (initially described as communist propaganda!). Any one of these erasures, and many others, provides thought experiments for a journey of insight and revelation (Winder, 2003) about the psyche and spirit of New Zealand people today.

The logic of client self-erasure of issues and difficulties that is seen in counselling has parallels in the southern perspective of northern erasure being done to our society as a whole, in all the categories of gender, ethnicity, and otherwise that create our

habitus, our lived self. Becoming familiar with such a perspective assists professional counsellors in addressing client erasures without compounding client situations by adding further professional ones.

It is always relevant to ask, “What is missing here? What is not being said? What is being stepped past in this interaction?” The productive openness to challenging the idea that “Isn’t ‘good counseling’ good counseling?” in Sue and Sue’s (2007, p. 3) updated classic is developed in relation to the concepts of multiculturalism and special populations. Yet even the use of these terms is freighted, and while acknowledging the spirit of such explorations, it must be noted, first, that multiculturalism sits very differently in a New Zealand context, and second, as the present discussion has tried to show, southern theory is about the total “us” of our society, not simply “them” of any special group within it.

Concluding thoughts

It is worth reiterating that this essay is not an antagonistic attack on the varieties of northern theorising. It does not seek hostility, rejection, or the advocacy of incivility. On the contrary, Connell’s proposal is an invitation to an intellectual and cultural maturity and challenge that draws on the abundance of insight and expertise in those northern centres. It encourages us, however, to recognise that the generation of such large volumes of ideas and texts does not, in itself, validate the applicability and local relevance of such work. It is not an either-or. There is an inextricable blending of desirable and unsuitable material that requires ongoing assessment. Even then, the cultural force of the powerful north means that the selection and response from our southern shores is a trial and error process, one that is never completely finished, in dealing with the upsides and downsides of such a broad yet problematic relationship.

Developing a southern perspective sounds somewhat like the problems of individuation as mature adults from school, parents, and youthful peers, and progression on from past hurts, experiences, and relationships that have configured our personal lives. There are indeed many parallels that create analogies between personal paths and (ir)resolutions, and broader cultural and society-wide ones. Further, the experiences and insights we collectively continue to gain from the interaction of European/Pākehā and Māori strands of New Zealand culture (Bowden, 2001; Liu, McCreanor, McIntosh, & Teaiwa, 2006), and other revised understandings about topics such as gender and sexuality, provide us with a partial template for seeing through the invisible application of power to practice, expectation, and experience.

Even as northern ideas offer things we want and find useful, the development of a professional and national maturity that honours and makes greater use of our own southern experience is central to counselling theory and a vibrant counselling community in this country. Having an agenda that makes explicit the country, time, and conflict from which each theory emerges is a good beginning. One practical starting point to breach the thrall to other values and ways is to take the points of Connell's critique of the northern assumptions named in *Southern Theory*, and to use each of them in turn to question and reposition our own New Zealand practice.

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