

Editorial – The inaugural edition of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia (PACJA)

 pacja.org.au/2012/10/editorial-the-inaugural-edition-of-the-psychotherapy-and-counselling-journal-of-australia-pacja

[Return to Journal Articles](#)

Sally V Hunter Acting Editor of PACJA and Chair of the PACFA Research Committee

I am delighted to be the person to launch the inaugural edition of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia (PACJA), which is the official on-line e-journal of the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). Without the financial and administrative support of PACFA, and the voluntary academic support offered members of PACFA and its Member Associations, this journal would not exist.

In June 2012 I examined how much research is currently being conducted in the field of counselling and psychotherapy in Australia. You might be surprised to know that between 2001 and 2012, TROVE online thesis database published 9924 theses about psychology, 4952 about social work, 619 about counselling and 260 about psychotherapy. Of course, many of the psychology theses relate to particular modalities and there is considerable overlap within these figures. In the same period, 935 theses were published about mindfulness, 259 about family therapy, 209 about art therapy, 196 about CBT, and 91 about narrative therapy. There were 1266 theses published about depression, 254 about anxiety disorder, 217 about drug and alcohol issues, 162 about child sexual abuse and 122 about domestic violence.

It is not surprising that the figures for psychotherapy and counselling are lower than for psychology and social work, since psychotherapy and counselling courses generally do not offer Bachelor Honours programs or fully embrace research as a culture. However, much of the research conducted by psychologists and other mental health professionals informs our work and an increasing number of psychotherapists and counsellors are becoming research active.

One of PACJA's stated aims is to stimulate research in this field, by providing an online journal in which the findings of effectiveness and other research studies can be published. In this online journal, we intend to publish articles that contribute to the evidence base of psychotherapy and counselling in the form of theoretical essays, experiential reports, and empirical studies featuring quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches. PACJA encourages practitioners, researchers, students and educators (even if you have never published before) to submit articles for publication. The process is intended to be a supportive in order to mentor aspiring authors to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge in the counselling and psychotherapy field.

The first edition lives up to PACJA's aims, with six differing articles of merit, a commentary relating theory to practice, and two book reviews. In the first article Dr John Meteyard, Kirsty Andersen and Dr Denis O'Hara report on the findings of a study that they conducted with 173 students from different disciplines, to explore the relationship between anxiety and managing interpersonal differences. The study demonstrates that students with low levels of trait anxiety have greater tolerance to interpersonal differences within close relationships. This study has obvious implications for couples therapy which are discussed, and demonstrates the potential usefulness of conducting research among students.

By contrast, the second article is a stimulating, theoretical paper written by Mark Pearson and Dr Patrick O'Brien. It explores the potential use of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a meta-theory that could underpin eclectic practice in the field of counselling. The authors argue that, if we ascertained the preferred 'intelligences' of our clients, it might be possible to tailor the counselling approach that we take to these preferences, especially by utilising the expressive and creative arts therapy modalities.

The third paper was commissioned by PACFA under the terms of the grant from an anonymous philanthropic body. It is entitled 'the effectiveness of family and relationship therapy: A review of the literature' and was written by Phillipa Evans, Shelley Turner and Associate Professor Chris Trotter of Monash University. We hope that you will find the literature review useful. We are in the process of commissioning other literature reviews into other psychotherapy and counselling modalities and these will be published both on the PACFA website and in PACJA.

The third article is followed by a commentary by Professor Ione Lewis about the family therapy literature review, relating theory to practice.

The fourth paper combines theory with practice. Dr Sally Hunter has described the ethical challenges facing psychotherapists and counsellors when they work with children and young people. She reviews recent literature and explores the main ethical dilemmas relating to competence, consent, confidentiality, competing interests and child maltreatment. These are discussed in relation to a case scenario and suggestions for working therapeutically and ethically with children are made.

The fifth paper is an article explaining the need for research and evaluation in psychotherapy and counselling and ways to go about it. Professor Robert King explains the current resistance to research in this field and acknowledges that fear of conducting research into practice is inevitable and needs to be correctly managed. He gives the reader practical hints on how to set up a successful research collaboration and describes the research process in easy to understand terms.

The final paper demonstrates the quantitative research process in action. Dr John Meteyard and Kirsty Andersen have examined the effect of counselling training in the context of a faith-based institution on the development of the trainee in terms of their level

of differentiation of self, level of religious quest and their epistemological development. Many psychotherapy and counselling educators will be interested in the findings of this study.

The next piece is a book review written by Elizabeth Day. Hugh Crago and Penny Gardner called 'A safe place for change: Skills and capacities for counselling and therapy' published by IP Communications in 2012. The book focuses on the importance of self-awareness and the need to create a safe place for change in the learning environment for counsellors and therapists.

And the final piece is a book review by Professor Carolyn Noble of the new book by Michael Carroll and Elisabeth Shaw entitled ' Ethical maturity in the helping professions: Making difficult life and work decisions' published by PsychOz Publications in 2012. This book challenges everyone in the helping professions to develop ethical maturity and makes some useful suggestions as to how to achieve relational accountability.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this inaugural edition of PACJA and find it stimulates your lifelong learning in the field of psychotherapy and counselling. The new Editor, Petra Bueskens, will be taking over from me in January 2013 and I wish her all the best in this important endeavour.

Finally I would like to thank the office staff at PACFA, and especially Maria Brett, who have worked tirelessly to get the PACJA website up and running and to make the journal look so professional. I would also like to thank the anonymous philanthropic organisation for supporting this venture financially. And none of this could have happened without the support of all the reviewers and the members of the PACFA Research Committee who give of their time so generously, free, gratis and for nothing,

Dr Sally V Hunter

Acting Editor of PACJA

Chair of the PACFA Research Committee

Editorial Policy

All PACJA manuscripts (5,000 words maximum excluding references) and an abstract not exceeding 150 words are to be submitted electronically to the Acting Editor, Dr Sally Hunter natresearch@pacfa.org.au.

- Manuscripts must be formatted as a Word document or similar (Microsoft or Macintosh compatible).
- Authors should include a separate page with manuscript title, name(s) of author (s), and contact information (postal and email addresses, phone, fax). Author identification should not appear on the manuscript itself.

- Upon submission, the manuscript should be completed with references and tables and figures (if any), and follow APA style (6th edition).
- As the PACJA is peer-reviewed, authors must be prepared to address comments and make required changes to their manuscripts.
- Once the article is accepted for publication, the author (or first author if the article is a co-authored submission) will be notified of an approximate publication date, whereupon it will be understood that permission to print is granted (unless the author and/or co-authors withdraw). Upon publication PACFA holds copyright of the article.

[Return to Journal Articles](#)