

Editorial: Listening to Lived Experience

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Jane Marsden

While the concept and research strategy of lived experience are still evolving, there is no doubt that they can “inform sharp critique” when used judiciously, particularly in the fields of social justice, health, and wellbeing (McIntosh & Wright, 2019, p. 449). Thus, for the development of psychotherapy, counselling, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing practices, it is important to provide platforms for researchers with lived experiences of oppression, marginalisation, and diversity of gender, body, kinship, and sexuality (Barton, 2020; Bowers et al., 2007). In terms of qualitative research, lived experience is “a representation and understanding of a researcher or research subject’s human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one’s perception of knowledge . . . [it] tries to understand why some experiences are privileged over others” (Boylorn, 2008, p. 490). Fittingly, Volume 10(2) of the *Psychotherapy and Counselling Journal of Australia (PACJA)* celebrates the richness and diversity of our community of practitioners, the work that they do, and the people they work with.

Oehlman Forbes (2022), a psychotherapist, examines the often overlooked subject of women’s friendships, particularly those involving interpersonal rejection, which can precipitate acute or chronic rumination. Her overview of philosophical, historical, social, and psychological perspectives includes relational-cultural theory (RCT), adult attachment theory, response styles theory, and minority stress theory—the latter when considering how ostracism affects women with sexual orientation differences. This article informs practice by advocating for RCT and mentalisation-based therapy when working with distress around women’s friendship dissolution.

Drawing from his PhD project, gestalt therapist O’Regan (2022) highlights the tensions between gestalt practitioner education and the contemporary neoliberal context. He argues that gestalt training institutes’ shift towards accreditation and higher education qualifications may compromise core gestalt values such as authenticity, optimism, shared leadership, embodied experience, and “being” rather than “doing”.

Sarantakis’ (2022) single-client case study follows the therapeutic journey of a woman from a working-class background dealing with PhD-related anxiety at an elite university. Using careful reflexivity, the author describes a collaborative, humanistic approach which uncovered the culturally embedded conditions for his client to feel valued by herself and others. This strengths-based approach coincided with a decrease in her anxiety and an increase in decision-making capacity.

This issue also has some excellent papers by first-time journal authors. Psychotherapist Buys (2022) tracks her own lived experience of anorexia and bulimia and advocates for narrative therapy as a primary treatment option for eating disorders. Salameh (2022), a counsellor, looks at the perennial subject of burnout and compassion fatigue among mental health practitioners, but with insights from the COVID-19 context. Her recommended strategies for prevention and mitigation will be useful information for individual practitioners and employers. These stakeholders, along with students, academic institutions, and professional bodies, will also be interested in the findings of Lamb (2022), whose qualitative phenomenological study investigated the lived experience of early career counsellors. Lamb suggests that students' practicum placement is among several factors contributing to successful entry into the profession.

Spence (2022) begins their review of *Supporting transgender autistic youth and adults: A guide for professionals and families* (Gratton, 2020) by noting that Gratton shares their identification as queer, neurodivergent, non-binary, and transgender. In addition, Gratton identifies as autistic. Because Spence is a psychotherapist working with queer and transgender people, many of whom also identify as neurodivergent, they are grateful for Gratton's invitation to readers to explore the complex experiences and unmet needs of this marginalised population. This invitation is through accessible and practical "do-it-yourself training", including experiential exercises, which help readers dismantle their existing biases and assumptions instead of taking them for granted. This "empathic immersion course [invites] readers to expand the way they see the world" (Spence, 2022, para. 13).

Also inviting readers to expand their perspectives on knowledge, cultural humility, and lived experience is guest editor Dr. Gávi Ansara who painstakingly prepared the two articles on systemic and community-informed approaches to climate justice. Dr. Ansara's guest editor's note previews these papers, one by psychotherapist and climate activist Kökçinar (2022), and the other by Azuri (2022), a counsellor. A former acting editor of PACJA, Dr. Ansara was guest editor of Volume 8(2), PACJA's special issue on anti-oppressive practice in psychotherapy and counselling. I am very grateful for his ongoing commitment to the journal. Also deserving thanks are the many others who worked on this issue, including the PACFA Research Committee, PACJA Editorial Board, peer reviewers, copy editors, and typesetter.

Last month the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) held its 5-day conference on "Safety Through Diversity". Perhaps reflecting a genuine thirst among practitioners to listen to and learn from those with lived experience, the days that were best attended were those that focused on Indigenous healing practices and diversity in gender, body, kinship, and sexuality. I look forward to helping provide a platform for some of the learnings from this festival of ideas in the next PACJA issue. As always, submissions related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing practices, counselling, and psychotherapy, particularly from or about those with lived experience of these topics, will be warmly received (editor@pacja.org.au).

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