

Content Analysis of the *New Zealand Journal of Counselling*: Volumes 13–21, 1991–2000

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Abstract

An analysis of the contents of the *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* was undertaken in order to ascertain differences that might exist compared with a similar analysis that was done ten years ago in 1991. Comparisons between the two time periods are made and more recent trends in the *Journal's* contents identified.

It is now ten years since an analysis of the contents of the first 15 years of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors' *Journal* was published (Manthei, 1991). Therefore, it seems an opportune time to repeat a similar analysis for the 10 years 1991–2000 inclusive. In the original analysis it was assumed that a professional organisation's journal mirrors the concerns and changes in that organisation (e.g., Davis & Lipson, 1996; Pelsma & Cesari, 1989; Weinrach, 1987). The same assumption guides the writing of this analysis. For example, the first article revealed a number of interesting trends and gaps in the development of a professional counselling literature in New Zealand (Manthei, 1991). Specifically, it was found that there:

- was a balance between North Island and South Island authors;
- was a surprising preponderance of practising counsellors as authors (52.4% vs 47.6 % authored by academics). By comparison, overseas counselling journals have a much higher proportion of academics as authors;
- was a focus on critiques of counselling and the guidance role (41% of the total number of articles);
- was only a third of the articles that reported survey, research or evaluation data;
- were continuing problems for editors in trying to source adequate material to meet publication deadlines;
- were noticeable gaps in the *Journal's* contents, e.g., the areas of sociological, political and economic, and philosophical analyses of guidance; and research on counselling process and outcome.

The present analysis takes a similar form to that presented in the 1991 analysis to enable as many direct comparisons to be made as possible. Whenever possible, additional data is presented as well. This was made possible because the length of time the *Journal* has been in existence now spans over 25 years.

General comments on each year's issues

This section presents an overview of the year-by-year developments in the *Journal* based on the editors' comments and policy statements.

1991 Editors: Hans Everts and Margaret Agee

The year began with a pair of new co-editors and a new title. The *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* replaced the former name, the *New Zealand Counselling and Guidance Association Journal*. Everts and Agee remained editors until 1997, marking a welcome period of stability and development. Under their guidance the *Journal* included a number of new features. Beginning in 1991 all manuscripts were to be reviewed by two professional counsellors; they introduced a set of 'guidelines for authors' page in each issue. They also upgraded the format/appearance, stated their intention to include overseas material and sought to publish two issues per year. Both are to be congratulated

for their innovations and hard work during their lengthy term.

1992 Editors: Hans Everts and Margaret Agee

This was the first volume that contained a 'Letters to the Editor' section, something that proved unable to be sustained on a regular basis. Also, a relatively rare article on counselling Pacific Island clients appeared, another indication of the profession's increasing awareness of cultural issues in effective counselling.

1993 Editors: Hans Everts and Margaret Agee

This was the year that the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) combined its annual conference with that of the International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling (IRTAC). The conference was held in Auckland and was judged to be very successful. The *Journal's* contents reflected this international contact, with most of the articles being authored by overseas writers. Also, due to a delay in preparation of the two issues, both were published at once, a two-in-one issue. Finally, the names of those who reviewed articles were listed for the first time.

1994 Editors: Hans Everts and Margaret Agee

This year saw the appearance of the first (and only as it turned out)

research article by the University Counsellor Educators' Network. The editors adopted a consistent layout and style of graphics, further enhancing the professional appearance of the 'new look' *Journal*. An editorial board was formed and the position of technical editor was established. A 'Brief Reports' section was added to cater for shorter articles containing research and commentary on current issues.

1995 Editors: Hans Everts and Margaret Agee

Once again the two issues were combined, this time to save on production costs.

1996 Editors: Hans Everts and Margaret Agee

This year marked the end of the editorial reign of Everts and Agee. However, innovators to the end, they introduced the present, more appealing, two-column format.

1997 No issues were published while the change in editorship was sorted out and sufficient manuscripts solicited and reviewed.

1998: Editors: Gary Hermansson, Diana McIntyre and Cathy Love

The new editors reported the continuing concern about the uneven flow of material for publication, a problem that had become a perennial headache for editors.

Their first issue (19:1) was a special issue on sexual abuse and signalled the editors' desire to publish more 'special issues' and more practice-focused articles.

1999 Editors: Gary Hermansson, Diana McIntyre and Cathy Love

Again, it was reported that sourcing adequate and relevant material was an on-going problem. Two practice-focused papers appeared in the 20:1 issue.

2000 Editors: Gary Hermansson, Diana McIntyre and Cathy Love

Sourcing material was mentioned as a problem by the editors, who were signalling the end of their term.

Summary

Several comments seem warranted based on this general overview of the editors' comments.

- First, the problems with an unreliable supply of material mentioned in the first contents analysis (Manthei, 1991) continued throughout the next decade. Although the hope of publishing two issues per year was partially achieved (two issues appeared in 1992–96, and 1998), the lack of an adequate and steady supply of material continued to plague the various editorial teams.
- Nevertheless, the frequency of the *Journal* increased during the 1990s: 15 issues in the 10 years from 1991 to 2000 versus only 14 issues in the 15 years 1976–90 (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Evolution of the *NZ Journal of Counselling*

| Volumes | Years | Editors | Issues | Pages * (total) | Articles * (total) | Ave article length (pages) |
|---------|-----------|----------------------------|--------|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1-2 | 1976-79 | Hermansson | 3 | 85 | 15 | 5.7 |
| 3:1 | 1980 | Webb | 1 | 58 | 6 | 8.5 |
| 3:2 | 1981 | Hermansson | 1 | 67 | 8 | 8.4 |
| 4-6 | 1982-84 | Manthei | 3 | 256 | 30 | 8.5 |
| 7 | 1985 | Baker | 1 | 80 | 8 | 10 |
| 8 | 1986 | Agee | 1 | 86 | 9 | 9.6 |
| 9-12 | 1987-90 | Wadsworth and Drewery | 4 | 236 | 30 | 6.9 |
| 13-18 | 1991-96 | Everts and Agee | 11 | 484 | 56 | 9.6 |
| 19 | 1998-00** | Hermansson, McIntyre, Love | 4 | 284 | 22 | 12.9 |

* 'Pages' and 'Articles' excludes book reviews and poems.

** There was no issue published in 1997.

- Several layout and style changes were made that greatly enhanced the appearance and attractiveness of the *Journal* (these can be seen simply by comparing an issue from the mid-1980s with one from the late 1990s).
- The editorship continued to be dominated by university counsellor training staff. Perhaps this is predictable and desirable given their reliance on academic and professional journals for teaching material and publication outlets.

Content analysis

Using the same method of analysis and classification of articles that was used in the earlier content analysis (Manthei, 1991), all articles were classified by subject content, by each author's gender, island (or country) of residence and occupation (whether an 'academic',

'practising counsellor' or 'other'), and whether an article reported actual research or survey data. Descriptive categories similar to those in the original article were used with several new categories added as required. I was the sole person involved in classifying the material. Because an article's contents sometimes fit into more than one category, the total number of classifications exceeds the number of articles published (see, for example, the total number of classifications in Table 3).

Table 2 presents summary information on the *Journal* contents in the period covering the first analysis (1976-90) and in the time period which is the focus of the present article, 1991-2000. Several observations and comparisons can be made.

First, although there were more issues produced in the 1990s, they have tended

to be smaller in total number of pages and to contain, on average, more than two articles fewer per issue. This in itself is not a bad trend, nor are these differences very large. In fact, it can be argued that publishing slightly smaller but more frequent issues keeps the *Journal* in the membership's eye and acts as a reminder to members that reading professional literature is a developmental/continuing education activity and responsibility.

Second, the percentage of female authors has increased substantially, from 41% to 57%. This mirrors the increase in female school counsellors in Manthei's (1999) study and, probably, an increase in female counsellors in all work settings (what Webb calls the 'feminisation of counselling'; see Webb, 1998). Curiously, the proportion of females who reviewed books for the *Journal* has decreased. There is no obvious reason for this decrease.

Third, there has been an increase in the proportion of authors living in the North Island and from overseas. This balance is more representative of the country's population distribution and the increase in overseas material probably reflects the Association's success in fostering contacts with counsellors and counselling organisations overseas. Whether more articles of overseas origin are to be encouraged by future editors is open to debate. Unless the material has some obvious connection with New

Zealand and/or direct relevance to current issues here, the *Journal* could risk becoming a publishing dumping ground for overseas academics looking for outlets.

Fourth, the number of practitioners (counsellors in all work settings) as authors has fallen markedly. It is reasonable to expect a large number of articles to come from academics and counsellor trainers – publishing is usually a necessary part of their role. For practitioners, however, publishing – when it is done – must be squeezed into an increasingly busy day in which there is less time and support for activities that do not produce income. This is especially so if one is in private practice (the second largest group among the over 2300 members of NZAC; see the Executive Officer's Annual Report in the *NZAC Annual Report*, 2000, p22). As was the case in the first analysis practitioners includes authors who were enrolled in university classes.

Fifth, the number of articles reporting actual research data has remained constant at 33%. When considered alongside the rise in the proportion of articles authored by academics, this is somewhat disappointing given that their job description usually includes the necessity to conduct research. Of interest here is a brief New Zealand survey of conference attenders (Truell, 1999) which confirmed the fact that many counsellor educators do little research,

but say they would like to. Lack of time and organisational support were cited as the most common reasons for not carrying out research. Whatever the reason for the lack of increase, I think, as I did in 1991, that there needs to be much more published counselling research in this country. After all, researching and evaluating what we do as counsellors are essential activities in what is often a speculative, subjective profession.

Sixth, the first book reviews appeared in 1981 and have been a feature of the *Journal* ever since. However, it is sad to note that both the number per issue (2.6 vs 1.3) and the number of books reviewed that have originated in New Zealand (20 vs 4) have declined. The reasons for the decline in both statistics are not known. However, reviewing interesting, new books is something that many practitioners could do since professional reading is, or should be, a part of their continuing education.

Table 3 indicates the frequency with which various subject categories were written about and the rank order of those categories for the two time periods, 1976–90 and 1991–2000. As can be seen there has been a substantial change in the rankings of topics. However, the largest category, articles on the process and professional issues of counselling, has remained the most frequent topic. In fact, the percentage of articles dealing with that general topic

doubled, from 20% to 40% of the total. Given the nature of the subject and the explosive growth (Hermannson, 1999) in the NZAC membership, this concentration is understandable.

The topics of guidance roles and guidance programmes have both fallen from their previous ranks of two and three, respectively, to six and four in the 1990s. This perhaps reflects the upsurge of non-school counsellors in the NZAC membership and the on-going struggle school counsellors have had to maintain their position and profile in the education process (for a running account of NZAC's involvement in this matter see the *NZAC Newsletter*, e.g., issues 17:1–3, 18:1–2, 20:2, and 21:1).

The second ranked topic for the 1990s was 'other', a category which consisted of a plethora of articles on the counselling needs of special groups (see Table 3). Again, this probably reflects the interests of the wider membership, which is now dominated by counsellors in agencies and private practice. Cross-cultural and bicultural articles remained consistently popular (ranked four and three, respectively) as befits the cultural emphases in local counsellor training courses, the Association's policies and the realities of many counsellors' client backgrounds and needs. Manthei (1991) predicted that the popularity of this topic might increase, but that has not happened.

Articles on adolescent development have disappeared altogether, perhaps

**Table 2: Descriptive information on articles appearing in the
NZ Journal of Counselling, 1991–2000**

| | 1976–1990 | 1991–2000 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| A. ISSUES | | |
| 1. Number of issues | 14 | 15 |
| 2. Total number of pages | 868 | 768 |
| B. ARTICLES | | |
| 1. Number | 110 | 78 |
| 2. Ave per issue | 7.9 | 5.2 |
| 3. Ave pages per issue | 62 | 51.2 |
| 4. Ave pages per article | 7.9 | 9.3 |
| 5. Gender of authors (includes multiple authorship) | | |
| Female | 50 (41%) | 64 (57%) |
| Male | 74 (59%) | 49 (43%) |
| 6. Author's residence | | |
| North Island | 59 (54%) | 68 (61%) |
| South Island | 47 (43%) | 31 (27%) |
| Overseas | 4 (3%) | 14 (12%) |
| 7. Occupation of all authors | | |
| Counsellor | 65 (52%) | 32 (30%) |
| Academic | 59 (48%) | 60 (57%) |
| Other | 0 | 13 (13%) |
| 8. Research data reported | 37 (33.6%) | 26 (33%) |
| C. BOOK REVIEWS | | |
| 1. Number of reviews | 36 (2.6 per issue) | 20 (1.3 per issue) |
| 2. Origin of book: | | |
| NZ | 20 (56%) | 4 (21%) |
| Overseas | 16 (44%) | 19 (79%) |
| 3. Gender of reviewer | | |
| Female | 22 (61%) | 10 (43%) |
| Male | 14 (39%) | 13 (57%) |

due to editorial policy and the availability of other, more relevant material. Similarly, articles on vocational guidance have fallen from 10% of the total to 2%, a reduction which parallels the down-sizing of the government's vocational guidance services. In response there have

been notable efforts by vocational counsellors to engender a professional focus and to promote a separate division or grouping within NZAC (see the *NZAC Newsletter*, particularly the 1994–1999 issues, for information about these efforts).

Table 3: Themes and subject categories; frequency of classification

| Theme | 1976–90 | Rank | 1991–00 | Rank | Total | Rank |
|--|------------|------|----------|------|----------|------|
| Counselling: process and professional issues | 30 (20.7%) | 1 | 32 (40%) | 1 | 62 (27%) | 1 |
| Guidance or counselling role | 29 (20%) | 2 | 4 (5%) | 6 | 33 (15%) | 2 |
| Guidance or developmental programmes | 21 (14.5%) | 3 | 6 (7%) | 4 | 27 (12%) | 4 |
| Cross-cultural/bicultural issues | 20 (13.8%) | 4 | 11 (14%) | 3 | 31 (14%) | 3 |
| Vocational guidance | 14 (9.7%) | 5 | 2 (2%) | 7= | 16 (7%) | 5= |
| Adolescent development issues | 11 (7.6%) | 6 | 0 | | 11 (5%) | 7 |
| Counsellor training | 7 (4.8%) | 7= | 2 (2%) | 7= | 9 (4%) | 8= |
| Family counselling | 7 (4.8%) | 7= | 2 (2%) | 7= | 9 (4%) | 8= |
| Testing and assessment | 6 (4.1%) | 9 | 0 | | 6 (3%) | 10 |
| Sexual abuse | 0 | | 5 (7%) | 5 | 5 (2%) | 11 |
| Other: disabilities, the aged, children, gay/lesbian, anorexia, AIDs, Family Court, depression and suicide | 0 | | 17 (21%) | 2 | 17 (7%) | 5= |
| Total classifications | 145 | | 81 | | 226 | |

Two other areas that have declined are family counselling and testing and assessment. Perhaps interest in family counselling has ‘peaked’ for the time being; it is also the case that there are other specialist, local outlets for articles of this sort. Recent research has shown that testing and assessment no longer occupy a counsellor’s time to any significant extent (see Manthei, 1999; Miller, Manthei & Gilmore, 1993) and the low number of articles on the topic probably simply reflects that fact.

A new area, sexual abuse counselling could well have been included in the ‘other’ category. However, five articles on the topic made it worthy of separate mention. The publicity surrounding the topic in the 1990s made it an area of concern for counsellors in virtually every type of work setting.

Citations of articles

A frequently used indicator of a journal’s impact on a particular audience or readership is the number of times articles from the journal have been cited in subsequent articles, wherever they might have been published. Unfortunately, this information is unavailable because the *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* is not listed with an indexing service like the *Social Science Citation Index*. Therefore, it is virtually impossible to know how many times articles in the *Journal* have been cited in other outlets. However, I thought it might be useful to count the number of times that authors in the *Journal* cited articles that had appeared in earlier issues of the *Journal*. This might give some indication of the *Journal*’s impact on its readership and the extent to which

earlier articles might have influenced more recent writings on a similar topic.

The results were disappointing. They revealed that in the years 1976–90 there were a total of 19 citations, and these citations appeared in only 12 of the 110 articles (1.4 citations per issue). This low rate improved only marginally in the years 1991–2000, during which there were 28 citations which appeared in 13 of 78 articles, or 1.9 per issue. The low rate of citations in the first 14 years is explicable in the sense that the *Journal* was new and a literature had to be established for subsequent authors to refer to (in fact, the first citation did not appear until 1983, the seventh issue and seven years after the *Journal* commenced). The rate thereafter, while slightly higher, remains low. However, as seen above, there has been a substantial shift in topics that appeared in the *Journal*. Because of this there may still not be a sufficient literature in many areas to refer back to when writing on a current topic. A similar citation count for the next decade should provide a better estimate of the *Journal*'s impact.

The NZAC Newsletter: a competing publication?

During the 1990s there has been another outlet for literature on counselling in New Zealand, one which has paralleled the development of the *Journal*. The *NZAC Newsletter* has undergone quite significant expansion and upgrading

during the 1990s. Because of this I decided to look more carefully at the contents, issue-by-issue, to see how much overlap in content there might be with the *Journal*. The results appear in Table 4.

The *Newsletter* typically contains such material as branch and committee reports, notices regarding training courses and seminars, conference reports, letters and 'debates' that might arise from those, articles on ethical and professional matters, executive reports and business, membership news, reprints of articles that have appeared elsewhere, occasional poetry, and book reviews and articles that are critiques/commentary or contain research data. It is these last two categories that represent the areas of most overlap with the *Journal*.

From the table it can be seen that the *Newsletter* is published more regularly than the *Journal*, that it has provided members with about 2.7 times as many pages of reading during the same time period, and that it was by far the most popular outlet for book reviews, most of which were New Zealand in origin. From the financial reports of the NZAC, available at the 2000 AGM, it is clear that the total cost of producing the *Newsletter* is considerably more than the total cost of the *Journal*: \$26,515.79 vs \$6507.44, respectively. However, on a per-issue basis, the four issues of the *Newsletter* produced during the accounting year

Table 4: Descriptive information on the contents of the NZAC Newsletter, and NZAC Journal 1991–2000

| | Newsletter Issues 11:4–21:1 | Journal 1991–2000 |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| A. GENERAL | | |
| Number of issues | 39 | 15 |
| Ave no. per year | 3.9 | 1.5 |
| Total number of pages | 2073 | 768 |
| Ave no. pages per issue | 53 | 51.2 |
| B. ARTICLES * | | |
| Gender of authors: | 69 | 78 |
| Female | 27 (37%) | 57% |
| Male | 46 (63%) | 43% |
| C. BOOK REVIEWS ** | | |
| NZ books | 26 (51%) | 21% |
| Overseas books | 25 (49%) | 79% |
| Gender of reviewers: | | |
| Female | 32 (62%) | 43% |
| Male | 20 (38%) | 57% |

* Articles that represent stand-alone pieces; they do not directly address NZAC business. This number is approximate and is included for comparative purposes only.

** Number of reviewers is larger than the number of books because one book was reviewed twice.

cost the same as one issue of the *Journal* in the same year: \$6628 vs \$6507, respectively.

Two obvious reasons for the *Newsletter's* success seem to be the greater availability of material to be published (e.g., branch reports, executive business, portfolio updates, etc) and the stability, energy and production talents of the editors.

1991, 11:1 – 1993, 13:5
 Carol White (Mahwhinney)
 1993, 14:1 – 1995, 15:2
 Bill Grant
 1995, 16:1 – Fran Parkin (temporary)
 1995, 16:2 – 2000, 21:
 Catherine Carruthers

Summary

What differences in the *Journal's* content were evident in the 1990s and what do these differences suggest about counsellors and counselling in New Zealand? A number of observations can be made.

First, as was the case in the 1991 analysis, the *Journal's* contents reflect, at least in a general way, current NZAC concerns and professional issues. This can be seen, for example, in the decline in guidance-related articles; articles on adolescence; testing and assessment; and careers counselling; and an increase in female authors (the 'feminisation of counselling' according to Webb, 1998), articles on specific client groups or problems, and an increase in overseas authors (due, in no small part, to NZAC's conscious efforts to foster links with counselling organisations in other countries).

Second, there is no longer a balance between North and South Island authors, as there was in the first 14 issues. The current split is far more representative of the country's overall population distribution. However, the

difference may also partially reflect the fact that there were no South Island *Journal* editors during the last decade. Editors often have to pressure and cajole authors to provide material and that task is always easier to do with people who are close at hand rather than those who live at a distance.

Third, academics as authors have displaced practitioners as the most common category. This ranking is not unusual; in fact, it mirrors the order that occurs in overseas counselling journals. Academics are often under pressure to publish – it is a requirement of their employment. Practitioners are not under such pressure and to author material they often have to sacrifice valuable counselling/administration time in an increasingly busy schedule. While I regard this reversal as somewhat regrettable, it was entirely predictable.

Fourth, while it is heartening that the proportion of articles containing original research data has remained constant at 33%, it is incumbent on our counselling academics/trainers to do more actual research. The counselling profession needs more local research that: (i) investigates local issues, (ii) uses local subjects and (iii) is situated in local settings. And who is better placed to do such research than academics and their research students?

Fifth, the fall-off in the number of book reviews in the *Journal* seems to be explained by the correspondingly large

number that were reviewed in the *Newsletter* (21 vs 51, respectively). In other respects, as well, the *Newsletter* seems to be in direct competition with the *Journal* as a preferred outlet for counselling literature (see the number of 'articles' appearing in each). Each has its specific role to play and each contributes to the professional development of the membership in its own way. However, in the long run it may be more efficient and productive for NZAC to have the editors of each publication meet to decide on their areas of concentration.

During the 1990s the *Journal* developed enormously, in scope, layout, design, contents and overall quality. However, the editors said they still continued to struggle at times to produce issues on a regular schedule. That is a problem that can only be addressed by more members becoming *researchers and authors*. Given the success of the parallel development of the *Newsletter*, it seems necessary at this stage for the editors of both publications to meet to consider how each might work more closely with the other to reduce overlap in contents. At the moment NZAC is well-served by two very praiseworthy publications. Over the next decade, each needs to continue to be responsive to the profession's needs and interests and to educate members about 'best practice' in all aspects of counselling.

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