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## Introduction to Professional Issues in Counselling Practice

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Bill Schulz

*University of Manitoba*

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First of all, I offer my thank you to the former editor, Max Uhlemann, of the *Canadian Journal of Counselling (CJC)* for inviting me to be editor for this special edition on "Professional Issues in Counselling Practice." It was indeed a pleasure to invite people to contribute and to read many very good manuscripts. I am very grateful for all the effort our new editor, Vivian Lalande, put into reviewing and editing so that this edition could be published. The tradition of excellent editors for our journal continues. Thank you, Max and Vivian!

In ethics and counselling, the decision-making component continues to fascinate me. Years ago I read about styles of decision-making: styles such as intuitive, impulsive, agonizing, fatalistic, delaying, compliant, paralytic, and rational/planful. Naturally, rational decision-making was encouraged, even though I believe most people knew that when truly difficult, complex decisions came along, emotions played a significant part.

In the last decade particularly, much more is being written about ethical decision-making that deviates from a tradition of a rational, cognitive approach to ethical decision-making. Virtue ethics, care ethics, and the social constructivism model of ethical decision-making put far greater emphasis on the character of the counsellor, and on thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that incorporate principles, emotion, reason and the consequences of action. The caring, "art" part of ethical decision-making is emphasized rather than the rule, "science" part of ethics. Common questions that emerge from social, caring ethics include:

- What emotions do I feel as I consider the ethical dilemma and what are my emotions telling me to do?
- How will my decision affect other stakeholders in this ethical dilemma?
- Will my decision change if I share it with colleagues?
- How can my values best show caring for the client?
- What decision would best define who I am as a person?

The first two articles in this special edition continue the discussion on ethical decision-making. Rocco Cottone summarizes a social constructivism model of ethical decision-making, where decisions are placed in a social context. Decisions then become "an action taken within a social context deriving from biological and social forces." Using his model, and referring to the *CCA Code of Ethics*, Cottone also provides several examples to demonstrate how his social constructivism model would work.

In "Professional Judgement in Ethical Decision-Making: Dialogue and Relationship" Ron Lehr and John Sumarah comment on the importance of

dialogue and relationship in ethical decision-making. Building on Cottone's social constructivism model, the authors build a strong case for "ethical decisions to be socially assembled" and argue that the interpersonal process and the dialogue among people add new dimensions to ethical decision-making for counsellors.

Robin Everall and Barbara Paulson discuss the possible impact on ethical behaviour resulting from counsellor burnout and secondary traumatic stress. I believe that many counsellors feel a sense of burnout at times, and to see some sound suggestions for burnout prevention is appreciated. In their article, Everall and Paulson show the importance of self monitoring, obtaining supervision, and intervention and support of colleagues in helping prevent burnout.

I was excited about receiving an excellent research study on the attitudes of Canadian counsellors regarding the ethical issues related to dual relationships in counselling. In their article, "Dual Relationships in Counselling: A Survey of British Columbian Counsellors," Tracey Nigro and Max Uhlemann survey British Columbia members of CCA on their attitudes and experiences with dual relationships. Besides providing rankings on 39 dual relationship activities, Nigro and Uhlemann show some important relationships between counsellors' characteristics and their attitudes toward dual relationship. I for one found it interesting that this research supported the common belief that "rural practitioners are more vulnerable to dual relationship overlaps," and supported the previous research that showed males rating items as more ethical than females in the area of significant relationships.

Counsellors who are involved in dual relationships often rationalize their behaviour, and it was particularly pleasing to see that the surveyed Canadian counsellors in this study mostly said an emphatic "Never Ethical" to dual relationship items such as going into business with a client, inviting a client to a personal party or social event, and having a sexual relationship with a client six months after termination.

I hope that counsellors reading these articles on ethics in counselling will be inspired to examine their own ethics, not only in the areas of decision-making, boundaries, and burnout, but in many other ethical areas: multiculturalism, supervision, internet counselling, confidentiality, informed consent, training, and group work. I hope a renewed interest in ethics will result in more people in the helping professions writing on ethics in counselling.

Thank you, authors and reviewers, for your fine work in making this issue possible.