
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Schultz, W. E. (Ed.) (1994). *Counselling Ethics Casebook*. Ottawa: Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association. 187 pp., \$9.95 for members of CGCA; \$14.95 for non-members (soft cover)

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In an age when professionals are increasingly required to be accountable for their actions, this short book is a timely addition to the literature which promotes discussion, sensitivity and guidance in resolving ethical dilemmas encountered by counsellors. The Casebook is educational, and the essays and the specific cases cited are designed to illustrate, clarify and analyze each of the 63 statements in the *Guidelines for Ethical Behaviour* (Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association, 1989). While the CGCA *Guidelines* appear to be modelled on the *American Association for Counseling and Development: Ethical Standards* (1988), the CGCA has made a significant addition by including an explicit ethical decision-making model under the heading "Resolving Ethical Conflicts" consistent with the model of the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (1991). This model is important in assisting counsellors to resolve ethical dilemmas through considering issues, options, consequences, and responsibilities. It is more useful in considering the complexities of modern practice than simply recommending a conscientious application of existing principles, standards and guidelines.

The first chapter reviews four ethical decision-making models which are all remarkably similar. Each of the subsequent chapters consists of case studies and two essays by different authors addressing each of the major sections of CGCA *Guidelines*, namely Professional Behaviour; counselling Relationships; Testing, Research and Publication; Consulting and Private Practice; and Counsellor Preparation Standards. For each of the 63 guidelines four brief case studies or vignettes are presented, a total of 252 in all, with half of them illustrating acceptable behaviour and half of them demonstrating the unacceptable. The essays help to clarify the issues. Discussion of these vignettes may elicit other alternative actions and "what if" scenarios.

Casebooks may be structured in different ways. (1) The *Casebook on Ethical Principles of Psychologists* (American Psychological Association, 1987) uses cases in which disciplinary boards have determined whether the professional against whom a complaint was made has violated the rules of professional conduct. (2) The *Companion Manual for the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (Sinclair & Pettifor, 1992) presents vignettes of ethical dilemmas without providing solutions or relating them to specific principles or standards. This approach leaves the reader the task of identifying the principles, some of which are in conflict, and choosing the response which is morally the most acceptable from alternative courses of action. (3) Although *Ethical Decision Making in Therapy: Feminist Perspectives* (Rave & Larsen, 1995) is more than a casebook, it provides nearly 50 vignettes of ethical dilemmas to which experienced feminist therapists have responded using the *Feminist Therapy*

Code of Ethics (Feminist Therapist Institute, 1987) as a reference. Instead of relating the cases to each ethical principle, they are organized around areas of concern, e.g. Overlapping/Dual Relationships, Violence Against Women, Reproduction/Health Issues, the Medical Model, Monetary Issues, and Therapist Self-Care. (4) In contrast to these approaches, the *Counselling Ethics Casebook* illustrates each guideline with cases in which the counsellor behaves in ethically acceptable ways and in which the counsellor fails to do so. The acceptability or unacceptability of behaviour is based on the morality of the profession's aspirational ethical guidelines rather than on the probable adjudication of a discipline committee. The CPA, CGCA and FTI "casebooks" strive for optimal levels of respect and caring for the recipients of services. All four approaches have educational value.

The content of the *Casebook* covers a comprehensive range of ethical dilemmas faced by counsellors. As with the codes of ethics of most helping professions, heavy responsibilities are placed on the individual professional to behave correctly in the relationship with the identified client, and to be accountable to the professional association or regulator body for compliance with its approved standards for competent and ethical practice. There are rapid changes occurring in society in the philosophy and in the structures for the delivery of counselling and psychological services, and our codes of ethics generally lag behind in addressing them. The CGCA *Guidelines* and the *Casebook* are no exception. We can argue that it is impossible to describe every type of ethical dilemma that one may encounter, and that we serve our members well to articulate professional values, to identify the more common issues, and to provide decision-making steps for meeting unanticipated new challenges.

New challenges affecting the way services are delivered need to be considered in the light of a profession's ethical guidelines. Among the most difficult issues on which professionals in both the public and private sectors need support is dealing with the conflict between the demands of third parties (employers, referers, funders, collaborating agencies and other professionals) and their own professional standards which require respect and caring for the well-being of the consumers. Today as salaried positions are disappearing, more counsellors are looking to private practice with varying sources of income, and more counsellors will face external pressures to place self-interest above the best interests of clients. Some strategies for change are based on individual accommodations, but, where systems-based problems violate the ethical principles of the profession, collective action through professional associations may be required. One may ask about the collective responsibilities of professionals and the ethical responsibilities of professional associations.

The CGCA *Casebook* wisely addresses newer issues of counsellor preparation, consulting, group counselling, self-awareness, and qualitative research. Dramatic changes in technology present new dilemmas. Computer-marked tests are not new, but therapy and telephone counselling charged by the minute, and counselling via the Internet are recent phenomena. Confidentiality in the use of fax machines, and the storage of records on computer discs need to be considered.

Professional codes of ethics seem to value individual responsibility in the professional and individual performance in the client. However, the helping professions are beginning to see problems as not necessarily within the individual but rather interrelated with environment, community, and the larger society. Some professional codes are beginning to address issues of community development and responsibility to society reflecting the belief that improving the quality of life of people must go beyond assisting the individual to adjust to the status quo. Respect for cultural diversity also broadens our vision of what are right and wrong ways of living. Feminist therapists and community psychologists may be leading the way in taking a proactive stance to social issues and social change. As citizens and as professional human service providers we cannot ignore the social and political problems of the day which threaten our human existence. Can our case studies reflect these concerns?

The *CGCA Counselling Ethics Casebook* is excellent for students, teachers and practitioners to sensitize them to ethical issues and to provide tools for dealing with complex issues. As with all ethics documents, the basic values and principles do not change much over time, but the interpretations and applications evolve in different ways. Constant vigilance and review are essential. Our codes and our casebooks need updating on a regular basis. We need to know what we stand for today so that we know what not to fall for.

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