

Rebecca Daniel-Burke: This is Dr. Rebecca Daniel-Burke, your host for the American Counseling Association's, 2015 podcast series. Today, we are speaking with Dr. Dana Heller Levitt, and Dr. Holly J. Hartwig Moorhead, about Values and Ethics in Counseling. Dr. Dana Heller Levitt is an associate professor in the Counseling program at Montclair State University. She is a member of the CACREP board of directors, and a past member of the ACA ethics committee. She serves on the Editorial board for counseling and values, and has published in this and other ACA publications on ethics and counselor development. She is the co-author of Values and Ethics in Counseling: Real Life Ethical Decision-making with Dr. Moorhead. Dr. Levitt has been a counselor educator for over 14 years, having developed and taught ethics courses at two institutions. Her work with Dr. Moorhead highlights her teaching and research emphases on the roles and values in ethical decision-making and ethical counseling practice.

Dr. Holly J. Hartwig Moorhead is an associate professor in the school of Psychology and Counseling at Regent University. Additionally, Holly serves as a member of the American Counseling Association's ethics committee, the Association for Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling Board of Directors, and the Editorial Board for the Counseling and Values Journal. Among other professional service involvement, she previously was the ethics officer for the National Board for Certified Counselors, and chaired the Ethics Committee for a State Counseling Association. With Dr. Dana Levitt, she is the author of Values and Ethics in Counseling: Real Life Ethical Decision-making, published by Routledge. Welcome, Dana and Holly.

Dana Heller Levitt: Thanks so much for having us.

Rebecca: Dana, the first question is for you. Tell us about why you wrote Values and Ethics in Counseling: Real Life Ethical Decision-making.

Dana: Sure, so Holly and I were fortunate enough to be thrown together through some professional association work, several years ago and we started having conversations about what we were seeing about how counselors are being prepared to address ethical issues in practice. And what we noticed in the literature, and as we spoke with counselors, and as we spoke with students as counselor educators ourselves, we saw that there was really a hole in the literature and practice about the role of values in ethical decision-making.

From our own experiences as counselors and then as counselor educators as well, we kept seeing that there is a personal stance that is involved in ethical decision-making. What we really wanted to do is, we wanted to take the books that we did produce, and really start to implement and really emphasize just how important it is that we come to ethical challenges as people, and that our value has really formed the kind of work that we do.

We also, at the very full disclosure, Holly and I share some feminist leanings and we really started to wonder about the notion of the person in context. As that relates to counseling, and also as that relates to ethical decision-making and counseling more specifically. So with the book, we wanted to hear stories, we wanted to hear from practicing counselors about how they've really handled ethical decisions in practice, how do they really work through some of the models that we spend a lot of time in counselor preparation programs, preparing them to use and really utilize the book as an extension of what we often do.

What Holly and I have discussed, that we both separately do as counselor educators is to really try to suspend time, when we are faced with an ethical challenge. And really deconstruct it, but really starting with it from the standpoint of what's going on for me, what are my values, what's kind of nagging at me, as I'm faced with this challenging case. In ways that we don't often have the luxury of doing, when we are faced with these challenges in practice. To really help counselors at any point in their careers to begin to examine that, not only do they have personal reactions to situations that are out there, but to read about how professional counselors, at any point along the professional spectrum take values into account as they are dealing with these challenges.

Rebecca: Holly, what is unique about the focus on values in the book?

Holly J. Hartwig Moorhead: Well, as Dana mentioned, we thought the values were a significant part of counselor ethical decision-making, in our work as counselor educators teaching students, teaching ethics, whether we are supervising counselors in our own clinical work. And then of course, being part of professional counseling organization in ethics committees as adjudication processes. We were seeing that counselors really do consider values, in their ethical decision-making processes as part of, in some cases even more than working through standardized ethical decision-making model.

But sometimes, there is a tendency for counselors not to recognize how much their values impact their ethical decision-making. Sometimes, we saw that there was a fear that counselors thought they shouldn't admit, or talk about the reality that their values really do play a part in ethical decision-making. And so, we wanted to provide a way for counselors to reflect upon how their values really do play a role in how they make ethical decisions in real life practice, without requiring necessarily a politically correct filter. And we also wanted to hear from counselors with various levels of experience, from very new counselors, to counselors who had many years of clinical experience. And to help them talk about how their values play a role in how they make ethical decisions, in using these as standardized models.

And also, as Dana said, sort of suspending time, and looking at how those values were present, and whether they paid attention to them, whether they didn't. And so, in the book, you will find real world ethical dilemmas that real counselors face, and how they

looked at those values, how they recognized them, and how they thought about those, in the context of making decisions that were best for the client, which of course is our foremost ethical responsibility.

And we tried to step away from just looking at ethical decision-making as a linear step-by-step process. But recognize the values that are present and then look at how those values color that approach ethical decision-making, even with the step-by-step model. So, we will see in the cases that we talk about; counselors' values sometimes were managed in a way that facilitated in a respective ethical response. In other cases, you'll see that counselor values may not have been addressed as effectively as they could have been, for the ethical decisions that were reached. But, either way, you'll really get a candid glimpse into counselors' values as they grapple with these ethical issues. That are really complex and come up with every client just about in supervisees -- for those of us who supervise -- and how those values that we live with everyday, will play out in these real world decisions.

Rebecca: I used to be sitting with a client, and I would be aware of the fact that, something they said, I didn't like, I personally didn't like. And I would say to myself, this isn't about you Rebecca, this is about the client, and that would make me refocus and not be so judgmental about the thing that was said. I wonder if that's a common practice; what do you think?

Holly: Yes I think so, and I think that goes back to what we were talking about in reference before. I think the ability is for you to do that. Certainly, I have done that with clients too. Somewhere in our training, we probably had a supervisor and instructor; we were in the process that encouraged us to be able to take that step back, and to think about the value of value, but not to have to impose it in that moment, for it to be meaningful. And I think that a challenge that I have observed with counselors who are wrestling with, how do my values play into this process with the client in an ethically appropriate way.

Rebecca: Dana in your book, you write about morals, values, and ethics. What's the intersection of the three?

Dana: Yes, that was something that took us a little bit of time to deconstruct ourselves. And what we are really looking at is, and we try to define the three concepts separately for our readers. We look at morals as that foundational personal belief system. And so when you take your roots back to Lawrence Kohlberg and to Carol Gilligan's work, you can really see that morality and morals are at the foundation of what we believe. When we talk about values, we talk about the action that we put on those personal belief systems. So, one's morals is about, if we take it at its most basic level is that, it's wrong to hurt other people and that serves as a foundation.

And the values are; wait a minute, but now I see somebody, who is hurting somebody else. And maybe in the world of counseling, it's not quite as black and white as that. Is that maybe somebody is hurting somebody else through actions that are bullying, or words that they might be saying to a partner that are less than supportive. And that taps into that personal belief system of, it's wrong to hurt other people, and really start to have more of an action orientation to it.

The ethics piece is that professional component of it. And so what we see, and the approach that we take, the intersection that we take, is that the ethics is how our own personal belief systems, how those morals, and how we act on those, how those values appear in our professional work. So when we take the case of working with a client or, a student who is in a bullying situation. Our personal beliefs and our values are inevitably intertwined in the work that we are doing. It may not always be conscientious we may not be able to. As the example that you just gave, it's a developmental process for counselors to be able to take a step back and say, "Wait a minute; this is about what I believe, and what I believe is best for the client versus what the client believes is best for him or herself." So, we may not always know that they are intertwined but, they are always part of the work that we do.

I think about some of the cases that we have, from some of the contributors to our book where they were able to work backwards in some ways. So they knew what their ethical responsibilities were, yet there was something personal that didn't seem to feel quite right, about how to handle this professional responsibility. Given the fact that, there is an individual, there is a person sitting in front of them. And so this is really that piece, that big circle that we talk about in the book, is this notion that, yes, we know that there is a Code of Ethics that we are suppose to follow, and we know what the each section of the code guides us to do, and we will do that. It's the how, that we get there; that really is the big piece of bringing our morals and our values into the ethical picture.

Rebecca: Holly, there has been a lot of focus on how counselor values should be addressed in understanding ethics, and practicing ethically. Counselors listening to this podcast may think that they have to check their values at the door. It's that even possible?

Holly: I think that a lot of people are wondering about this question, and Dana and I, came to the position that, counselors ultimately have an obligation to maintain professionalism. And that is abiding by ethical standards, and utilizing ethic space practice, and those things that are part of who we are as professional counselors. But, we also recognized that, as Dana mentioned before, counselors are people and people have values, that's part of, I think, the heart of counseling. We are not machines devoid of personal histories and idiosyncratic perspectives. We have them, and so we believe that our clients' well-being is not protected. When counselors deny that they have personal values, or blindly state that their values absolutely don't enter into the counselor-client relationship.

Indeed, the literature tells us that both clients and counselors bring values to the counseling relationship. So, the answer isn't for counselors to deny the presence and the influence of their values. But we believe that, instead the answer is for counselors to recognize what their values are, and what their clients' values are. And then, as Dana mentioned, it's about that process, carefully examine how these values affect the counselors ethical decision-making process. And so, that we believe really requires us, as a profession to value, and intentionally create safe spaces for counselors to do this work. And as Dana mentioned before, that takes time to learn and I think, to your question before, learning how in that moment, when you are with a client and you realize there is the values issue at play. To have that internal process and practice, if you will, at recognizing what's happening but then being able to ethically respond in that moment, to act in the client's well-being, which is our foremost ethical obligation.

Rebecca: I was reading a case book recently of just different cases and how somebody dealt with it. And in one of the cases, she said -- this woman who was a counselor and identified herself as a feminist -- she said that, she had a client who came in and said that her husband made her scrub the floor, if they got in a fight. And so all of us who at least are partially a feminist if not completely feminist, would just cringe, I mean, what are you talking about? Your husband has told you, you have to scrub the floor because you disagreed with him? It's just -- so, anyway, she said how she dealt with it is, to basically say to the client, "How do you feel when he makes you scrub the floor because you disagree with him?" as opposed to coming out with all she was feeling. Do you want to comment on that?

Holly: Sure, I'll comment and then I'll ask Dana, if she wants to do as well. I think what you just described is the very heart of recognizing a values conflict. And not just recognizing it, but honoring it. I think that as people, we don't always have to agree. But as counselors, what we do professionally, is create space for people to interact in respectful ways, and our job, going back to the very first point that I made when you asked me, the first question was that, we are professionals in that relationship. So it isn't about us, it isn't about our values; it's about recognizing we're having a reaction but making that appropriate for the client. What is the meaning the client puts with that, and how do we help the client through her worldview and her values make sense of this in a way that promotes her well-being. Those are my thoughts initially; Dana, you may have a thought too.

Dana: Sure Holly, I think you said it really well and one of the words that I have often heard Holly say as we worked on this project, and throughout and beyond, is this idea of honoring. Honoring the client, and honoring the client's space. And from a counselor preparation perspective also, it's really honoring for the individual counselor his are her own values, and that they do exist and that they are part of it.

There is a metaphor that I use with students and supervisees, and sometimes, it's not even a metaphor, it's an actual; a glass jar. So imagine that you have a glass jar with you, when you are in session with your clients, and your clients said something that hits you, and with a visceral reaction, perhaps it's not quite so strong but it's something. Taking the example you just gave us Rebecca, and Holly and I, I felt this close for both of us that we agree from the feminist perspective as counselors, as individuals, as women. And so certainly, I had a reaction in hearing you describe this case. But what is important for me to do is to recognize that I have a value in something that I'm responding to; I can take that value and I can put it in this glass jar and put the top on tightly. I can see that jar, I can see that that value exists for me when I'm in session, and know that it's something I want to pay attention to, when I come out of session, and what I want to pay attention to in terms of my own growth, and my own recognition about how do I manage when I'm hearing something that is at odds with or perhaps resonates with what my client is saying and what I might believe, and how I act upon this personal belief system. So moving to that point of being able to ask the question of; "So how does it feel for you?" Is really aspirational, that's what we're aiming towards. I think sometimes as counselors, we need a little bit of prompting and we may need some of those, either actual or imaginary prompts, to help us to go through that process, to remind us that, this isn't about us, this is about the client and this is our professional responsibility.

Rebecca: I love that metaphor of the glass jar, that's fabulous. Dana, there have been a few recent court cases that focused on value-space counselor referrals How can counselors manage their values, if referral is not an option, or not encouraged?

Dana: This is really tricky and it's something that really has been in the forefront of the professional literature and the professional discussions for the last couple of years. So the two cases that are most prevalent are the Ward v. Willbanks and Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley. And they really highlighted what those challenges are in terms of an individual counseling student identifying a set of personal values, and with that set of personal values making a determination that there are certain individuals, certain clients and characteristics with whom they are not able to work. What the cases really establish is that, it's not permissible, that is discrimination and that there are other related issues to that. And so, we've seen the discussion in our professional journals and even through Counseling Today, some of the discussion has unfolded.

And we look at certainly, at the way that our 2014 Code of Ethics read really, to make much more clear that making a referral because your values are at odds, it's really not an option, because it's not professionally appropriate, and it's not professionally responsible, and personally respectful of the individual. So the way that I've looked at this and it's been interesting to have been writing this book at the time that these cases were becoming more and more prevalent. And this is a venture Holly and I started before these cases were in the spotlight.

You know, really, looking at what we've written in the book, and looking at how the cases unfolded is that, we really think that these are examples of where students could have benefitted from some of the self-reflective processes that we discussed, and we described and certainly as you look at the book and the cases that we've asked people to write about it, and to write about their reactions, we've done the same, we've given some of our analyses. And part of that is really encouraging some of these personal self-reflective questions, to oneself. So, really looking at that values exploration to really see what's at issue. I think it goes back to what Holly was talking about, about managing those personal values and managing them in such a way that, we're able to look at what's underneath, what's the real struggle that's there.

The one other piece that I do want to share is that, about a year ago, I believe that it was in the April 2014 Journal Counseling and Development, Michael Kocet and Barbara Herlihy presented an article looking at their counselor value based conflict model. And this is a model that makes a lot of sense when we are thinking about the idea of value-based referrals. That's not a reason for a referral. What Kocet and Herlihy do is, they walk counselors through this process of delineating what's a personal value, what's a professional value, what are the conflicts that are at odds, and what are the conflicts that can be resolved. Looking at this really, in knowing that referral isn't an easy out, and previous issues of the Code of Ethics and certainly some counselors of other generations were prepared. We were often prepared that, if you feel like you can't work with somebody, then make a referral. But, it's not really a reason or option. At first of all, it's not a reason or option, I mean, may working some place where you are the only counselor, or your client may only have access to you.

But, also looking at it more from the human struggle perspective of it is that, okay, so I don't agree with this person's beliefs about relationships, but I can certainly respect that. Here is somebody sitting in front of me, who is struggling, and who is dealing with something that is at the core of -- challenges to how to operate within a professional frame work, how to operate in school, and really try to look at it as more of a base level then looking at a presenting issue per se. It seems a little simplistic, but I think it encourages us to really shift our focus to focusing and respecting human struggles versus trying to say that this value doesn't agree with my own value.

Rebecca: Holly, when we think about Ward vs. Wilbanks and other cases, when is it ethically appropriate to refer a client, and what is the process of ethically referring a client?

Holly: Well, I think tagging on to what Dana shared just a few minutes ago that, the ACA Code of Ethics makes it very clear that counselors need to be aware of their own values, and it is unethical for a counselor to impose her own values, or his own values on a client. And the 2014 Code of Ethics also makes it very clear that, a counselor cannot just refer a client simply because of a values conflict with the client. And that's a difficult question; when is it a value conflict, and when is it a confidence issue. And so,

what we try to talk about certainly in our own counseling practice, in our work with students in supervision to highlight the fact that counselors have an ethical obligation to ensure that, they have pursued appropriate training to be able to work with a variety of issues and people, and values conflict.

Going back to what we've talked about in the last few minutes, recognizing that we have values, counselors have them and clients have them; but how do we suspend those, when we're working with a client to work in the best interest of the client. And so, we recommend that supervision and consultation which are always part of any of the ethical decision-making models you're looking at within the counseling profession, those are really core activities and core values, if you will, of an appropriate process, and for counselors to not just do this in isolation, but to look at, critically, themselves and their practice. What is the values issue and what is a confidence issue and if there is a value issue, the impetus is on us to pursue training, education, additional experiences to be able to deal with that as counselors, before we work with clients and not just put out a statement that we don't work with this, we don't work with that, we don't work with this; we don't work with that.

As Dana mentioned, there are a variety of reasons why clients may need a counselor in a community; and for us to be able to work with the competency with the most amount of people who need mental health services in various forms; that's our ethical obligation. And so when there is an issue of confidence though, the Code of Ethics is very clear that there is a process that needs to unfold, it's not just, "I can't work with you, good luck." We work with clients to find appropriate referrals, appropriate resources for them that take into account, whether it's cultural issues or clinical issues, and we also take that step to appropriately help clients connect to those resources. And that's going to look different for different clients, I think. But, it's not just handing them a piece of paper and saying "good luck"; it's helping them in a real way, connect to those resources so that, there isn't an issue of abandonment. And really we are referring in the best interest of the client, not just for the counselor's comfort.

Rebecca: Right. Dana many counselors might be afraid to talk about their own values and how they impact their work, especially their ethical decision-making. Can you speak to ethical decision-making models, and how values are part of the process?

Dana: Yes certainly. Holly and I take the bias that they are integral to the ethical decision-making process. And I think what Holly has said early on in our discussion here today, is reminding counselors that we're human, and the reason that some clients may fit better with some counselors than with others is because we're human, and it's what we bring to the relationship and the values that come with it. The ethical decision-making model, some of the earliest ones have this, and if you look at some of the linear models and the seven step process, early on in the steps, is this notion of tuning into your feelings, and identifying the moral principles that may be at play.

So really they are part of the models, the values are part of the models that are there. I think that sometimes the translation of the models into practice, is where the value can get lost. We really highlight the importance of helping counselors to talk about their values, and to do that in supervision, and again as we've said, regardless of where you are in your development as a counselor, if you are just starting out, if you are a student, or if you've been a counselor for 20 years. I have a good friend who was in private practice for 25 years and had a weekly peer supervision group. And that's a lot of what they talked about is: what are you responding to with your clients. And so it's part of having the discussion about values really can be a preventative approach. I think if you look at decision-making models more intentionally and look at how values play in there, one of the approaches that might be helpful is to certainly look at the principle ethics. So looking at autonomy and beneficence and non-maleficence, those are certainly foundational to the work that we do.

The other body of ethics that sometimes we don't pay as much attention to are the virtue ethics. And the virtue ethics really answer that question of what kind of a counselor do I want to be, versus the principle ethics which say, "What do I do?" And often when we are faced with ethical challenges, are initial reaction is, "What do I do?" what I think is that sometimes, we need to take a step back and say, "Wait a minute, what's the integrity here, how do I discern right from wrong, what's in the best interest of my client, how am I tapping into my own belief systems here?" So I think that those are important ways that we can really allow values to be part of that decision-making process.

There are two other pieces I want to say with that. One is that, again, I think that I would refer our listeners to our reference list and certainly you'll find that Kocet and Herlihy's counselor value-based conflict model, because I think that they really have done what some of the models have not, as intentionally, done is to really put values back into the process. And so, think that, that's a really good reading to learn a little bit more about it.

The other point that I wanted to just make about the values in the ethical decision-making model is just remind everybody that they take time, and that they are really good teaching tools and they're good supervision tools to encourage counselors in training, and counselor educators and supervisors, to really walk through the models, and to be intentional that walking through the models and to spend time when there is that opportunity to do that, so that we can more intentionally see where values are coming into play, and how they can be more readily be considered in our work that we're doing.

Rebecca: And I want to tell our listeners that, a lot of the things that we're referring to during this podcast, will be on a link at the bottom of the podcast write up. Holly, counselor values seem to be so much about identity. How do we actually encourage counselors to bring themselves into the counseling relationship without imposing the values? What a hard question, but, Holly, please take a stab at that one.

Holly: This is a hard one, but we'll do our best here. I think as we have been talking about over the last several minutes; I think what draws people to be counselors is that connection. A person reaching another person; the reason clients come to counselors is because they need a person to help them in their journey. And research certainly tells us that one of the most important therapeutic factors in the counselor-client relationship is rapport, a client feeling connected and understood and heard by the counselor. So this really shows us and tells us how important it is for counselors to show up, to be authentic, to be sincere and really to be themselves when they work with clients.

Again, with the important caveat that we are the professional in the relationship so, we have extra guidelines and standards that we need to meet within that professional context. But this part of bringing ourselves and who we are as people into the counselor-client relationship, is part of that therapeutic, important factor. But I think that, in terms of bringing that professional-self, but in a authentic, real-self to the counselor-client relationship means that, as counselors we really have to have a working knowledge not just a cerebral understanding of the ethical standards for a private practice as well as the reasons why these standards are in place.

What Dana talked about, I think in her last response. Understanding that these ethical standards are not just "Do this, don't do that", there are aspirational elements to these things, as much as there are these mandatory "should and shouldn'ts". And so, I think that really requires us to seek out and then fully engage in, we had to be willing to engage in quality training, and that extends beyond graduate school, or a counseling degree. That is part of what we do as counselors in supervision and I think there is an important distinction there qualified supervision, qualified consultation and seeking out quality professional development. So we continue to learn about ourselves, not just about clients, but also ourselves.

We know that counselor development is a developmental process, just as our clients change and grow, we do too; and as we're monitoring and understanding our values, we have to be looking at ourselves; and I think many of us would say too, some of our values perhaps have changed, some of them remain the same, but nuances have been changed over time, and if we don't pay attention to those, I think that can be a very slippery slope for us, as we try to navigate this ethical boundary with clients addressing values.

Quality Ethical decision-making doesn't come from just reading an ethics textbook; although we think our book is great. But that's not why I think anybody works with values confidently. And so, as a dynamic, constantly evolving process, we encourage ourselves and our colleagues to be willing to look at people in situations in new and different ways, and that comes from that supervision, consultation, engaging and continuing ed that really pushes us and allows to give feedback and also receive feedback.

And I think that also requires an awareness from each and every one of us that we have to be intentional about recognizing potential and actual ethical issues, and deliberately working through those. As Dana mentioned, even as we're working with a standardized model, giving time and space, not just to think about checking the boxes. But, what are my reactions to this, what are the values that are surfacing for me and the client, and how are those affecting the decisions that I'm making; and are those in the ultimate well-being of the client. And all of that to say, that I think most of all, this process requires us, counselors, to remember that counseling really isn't about us, it's about the clients we serve, and being sure that we work from that perspective, first and foremost.

Rebecca: Seems like in every podcast Rogers comes up an issue, we're talking, I was thinking about meeting your client where they are, and it's just so important, but, to meet the client where they are, requires you too. So you have to be looking at your values and admitting when your values are changing. Don't you think?

Holly: I do and I think that, just as in the counseling profession we have seen an understanding of the importance of spiritual and religious values change over time where, once a upon a time, we don't really talk about that, that's not appropriate for this particular milieu. And now we recognize that as such a central part of wellness, of culture, of understanding how somebody interacts with the world, values and who we are as counselors, I think it's having sort of an evolution too, we're not just a blank slate, client isn't talking to a blank wall. They're coming to a person and so just as folks in other professions, maybe use a hammer, or a wrench, or a different tool, we are our tool. And so we have to keep ourselves in tune and we have to do some upkeep in order to be able to appropriately and ethically serve, and give in this dynamic process where, we're authentic and we also have a professional self that we bring to this dynamic.

Dana: I think that, if I can just add to that, I think that the dynamic process is really critical also. Because, although our focus is on our clients, as counselors we learn a lot from our clients too. And we learn a lot about how they manage the world which helps us to expand our own world view as well, and maybe it would not be appropriate to bring in so, help me understand what that looks like, because here is my world view on things. But really being able to, as Holly said, being able to recognize how we as counselors are influenced by what we're hearing from the people with whom we work, help us to identify when our own values may be shifting.

Rebecca: Yes, and I agree. I always say, my clients taught me everything I know about counseling; and it's really true. If you're open, and you're opened to a lesson, you can get a lot of those lessons from your clients. Dana, how do counselors know when their values are inappropriately involved in their professional ethical decision-making?

Dana: Yes. It's that adage of "When something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't", I think that really requires so much of that self-reflective practice that we talked about. Some early writers around ethics, and ethical decision-making, talked about moral traces. That if we have walked through an ethical dilemma using a linear model or not using a model, and something doesn't feel right after the fact that there are these moral traces, then probably something isn't quite right.

Oftentimes, what we've found, that there are a couple of cases that stand out to me in particular is that, a lot of time is an "after-the-fact," it's sort of a post-talk; maybe my values were leading me a little bit more. Fortunately in those cases where that happens, there is an opportunity to follow up with the client, and to be able to recover a little bit. For example, one of the cases in our books, one of our contributors writes about seeing a client at a party. And then what that does in terms of the personal and professional boundaries and being able to after-the-fact speak with a supervisor and say, "Here is how I handled things at the party", and the supervisor and the counselor together being able to say; "Yes, that's probably not going to be the best way for your counseling relationship to proceed."

There is another case that I'm thinking of where one of our contributors writes about some visceral reaction she was having when she was learning about some intricacies with some infidelity in some couples counseling she was doing. And really being able to tune in and we so appreciated her honesty and her responding to that. And seeing that as something was unfolding, she could feel herself responding to it and saying that, "Well, I'm going to side with this part of the couple." What really seems applicable here is this idea of really tuning in to our feelings and looking at ethical challenges as not necessarily the textbook kind of thesis that presents to you, but that they unfold much more subtly. So this idea of really tuning into what I'm feeling and how I am in the moment in relation to this individual, or in this case individuals before me and really taking attention of the fact that you know when I may be guiding more than I am listening, in that case.

There is not an easy answer to that, except that we just keep coming back to this notion that; pay attention if something doesn't feel right, then maybe your values are getting in the way; maybe this is the time to take a breath and take a step back, and say to the client, "Let me figure out where things are."

Rebecca: You know, you mentioned seeing a client at a party. What would be a good way to respond to that? If you both could just give us, or either of you can just give us an idea. I am sure there are some new counselors, who are going to be listening to this, who would be like, "Wow, what would I do, if I met a client at a party?"

Dana: You know Rebecca; I've seen responses from across the board and to this. From my own experience as a counselor to work as a supervisor to work as a counselor educator, I have found that when making the assumption that we're working with clients

who are pretty high-functioning to be able to process with them after the fact, to be able to -- so if you bump into someone at a party to respond to it as, "Hi, it's nice to see you", and then for me, my personal response would be to say that, and to be able to politely excuse myself to go talk in another corner of the party or to interact with other folks and then really making sure that, I'm being honest and respecting our counseling relationship and having the opportunity to sit in a counseling session and really address the fact; okay, so the inevitable is happened; we've seen each other, how do we want to proceed from here.

And I can think of a case as a supervisor. I had a supervisee who was horrified because it was a much more intimate social interaction that she had with a partner, and with two other friends. One of whom happened to be her client and she was horrified by it. And really, we talked it through; we talked about what was challenging for her, when she met with the client, the client was nonplussed by it. And was really able to say, "Yes, I told them you were my counselor and ha, ha, ha isn't that great? And how weird that we run into each other." But it was really important for her as a counselor to be able to sit with the fact that this bothered her in some ways, because she really respected the sanctity of that relationship and wanted her clients to have her own personal space. I don't know Holly; you've had some experiences as well.

Holly: Yes. Well I think that, as we've mentioned before, counselors were different people and we work with different kind of clients. So, as Dana mentioned, I've taken the same approach, and I also live in a rather small town and so, I take a bit of a different approach just because of the life context I'm in right now. Because I do live in a small town, I make this particular likelihood that we're going to run into each other, as part of my informed consent. And for me, I talk with my client that we live in a small town, and what Dana said, I really like that word, just that honoring the sanctity and it may be more of a value for me than it may be for the client, actually.

And that's okay, and I try to make that part of my informed consent and explain to clients because I have such respect for your right to keep this private, or to explain it however you want to explain our relationship in your life, and I don't even need to be aware of that. I want you to know that, if we see each other I will smile and be a real person, that authentic person comes back again, that's my value. But I'm not going to approach you, I will wait for you to come and approach me, and I will follow your lead. If you're with somebody, and you just say, "Oh, I know Holly from town or whatever", I will just follow that. But then I want you to know the next time we see each other, let's talk about it. Because I want them to know too, what may happen, so that they are not left with lingering questions, after that interaction.

And like Dana said, I think for many clients it's not really a big deal. But for them, as well as the client, for whom it's a big deal, that's what is comfortable for me because of the context where I live and work. And some of the clinical issues that I worked with here, and of course that reflects my values as well. And they may be as different values than

a client has but I think circling all the way back around, it's talking about them in a respectable way where I recognize, "This is my value. But within that professional context too, this isn't an appropriate value for me to have as your counselor with the professional responsibility I have; let us navigate this as it's compatible with your values too."

Rebecca: Yes, I remember being in a small town and being a counselor, and being in a grocery store and somebody came up to me, "Rebecca, Rebecca hi, how is my relative doing in the sessions with you?" and I was like; "Oh my God". I remember saying, "Let's talk about this the next time you bring the relative in, we'll talk about it there, and thank you, nice to see you" and then I was off. And then I followed it up the next time with, "You might be okay with discussing this person's issues. But the person might not be okay." So, explaining it and she was like, "Okay, I get it". Those are difficult situations, but they happen all the time in small towns.

Holly: Rebecca, if you would allow me just to extend one more piece. What you just said triggered what I have learned too is that, in a small town, sometimes that can be perceived as rude and that you don't value the client enough to "remember" them. So I think talk about a value sort of disconnected those two values that are very different but both are important, and there is a reason why people hold them. And so, just circling all the way back, talking about them and having a safe space where we do talk about them. I think that's one of the greatest gifts that we give people as counselors is this space to talk about the taboo, the sacred, the "we don't talk about that" and fine language, and comfort around things that you -- the reason often times people come to counseling because they're talking about things that they can't talk about to the degree, or at all in other context in their lives. And to be able to model that -- I think it's so powerful.

Rebecca: Yes, absolutely. Holly, what resources do you recommend to counselors who might want to add some practical tools for addressing values in their professional ethical decision-making. What should they add to their professional libraries?

Holly: Well, we have referenced in our conversation here, some of the ethical decision-making models that we find particularly helpful. Not that most of the models don't provide a place for values, but as values become more discussed and more at the forefront of our profession, and that intersection between practice and ethics. We list some of those in a bibliography, as you mentioned that, we would provide to the listeners and they can download that as a PDF, as well as several recent and also some older literature that we think is helpful, not just to the current discussion about how do I practice ethically with values. But that other piece we talked about, understanding the reason why we have ethics. And the spirit of them, both the mandatory part as well as the aspirational. So we would be happy to share this with folks.

Rebecca: Okay, now we're going to the last question that we always ask, and I'd like you each to answer separately. ACA now has over 55,000 members; most of whom are clinicians. Is there anything I have not asked you that you want our members to know? Let's start with you, Dana.

Dana: So, there are two things I would say to that. The first is that, it's really important to remember that ethical decision-making is a split second process. And for that reason, it's so important that counselors really take their time to self-reflect, and to really focus in on where they are and what they believe, because we don't have the luxury of saying -- when we are faced with the challenge, we don't know how to answer. As a counselor, to say, "Hold on one second, let me go find my really phenomenal values based ethics book and go talk to my supervisor." But to really recognize the split second nature of ethical decision-making and that's how dilemmas often present themselves.

The other piece that I would just add is that, there is a parallel to -- many years ago it used to be that, when we looked at boundary issues in multiple relationships that counselors were guided to avoid them; to avoid multiple relationships. And we've transitioned to something that is much more realistic to managing them, when they do present. So not if you're faced with multiple relationships, but when you are, how to manage them in practice. And I think that there really is a parallel to ethical decision-making as well. It's not this notion that, if you're going to run into an ethical challenge, it's when you do, how are you going to do that. And the further parallel that would take to that, brings us back full circle to where Holly and I started, and where Holly and I developed the idea for the book that we've put together is that it's managing our personal values, it's not if they are going to come into play in counseling, it's they will come into play in counseling, and how are we going to manage them, so that we're keeping our client at the forefront of the work that we are doing.

Rebecca: I love that; and Holly?

Holly: I think Dana said it quite well. And I would just add to what she has said that, it isn't a matter of avoiding values, and I think sometimes the discussions and the message that people hear is, "We'll would just avoid it", that's why you refer, you just get rid of it. But isn't how the human experience and dynamic unfold. We bump into each other, we are in dynamic community, and so the answer isn't to avoid those things, it is to learn how to manage them and the point I would make is that, in order for us as a profession of counselors to do this well, we're going to have to create safe spaces to talk about this, where people bring their values whatever they are and have a chance to dialog and to figure this process out. It is not a linear step-by-step process. It is dynamic, nuanced process, that looks different for different counselors and different clients, and so I think creating safe spaces and also courage, bringing courage to those clients. I have small children; and one of the lessons we're learning is, treating other people the way you would like to be treated. And I think it is easy for us to do that with

clients sometimes, but I think we also need to remember that message with each other, within our profession.

Those values don't have to be yours, but how would you want to be treated. And let's dialog and that requires openness on both people talking to each other. And it takes a lot of courage. So, that would be my request to my colleagues and my profession that we do that well at our best; and for us to keep doing that because I think it betters us and certainly, it helps our clients.

Rebecca: I love that you brought up courage and I want to thank you so much Dr. Dana Heller Levitt, and Dr. Holly Hartwig Moorhead, for joining us today to discuss Values and Ethics in Counseling. To view links to this program, to write to the presenters or the host, please go www.counseling.org and click on the podcast page. This is Dr. Rebecca Daniel-Burke, your host for the ACA 2015 podcast series signing off.