Spirituality and Ethics: Applications to Counseling Practice

Awa Jangha & Gena Minnix
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Objectives

- Participants will be able to define spirituality and religion.
- Participants will be able to identify ways in which spirituality can manifest in counseling sessions.
- Participants will be able to describe ethical considerations of spirituality listed within the ACA Code of Ethics.
- Participants will be able to identify the competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling (ASERVIC).
Religion & Spirituality
Religion Defined

- "organized, more ritualistic systems and practices of individuals or groups of individuals with specific beliefs... are sometimes inseparable from culture" (Bohecker, Schellenberg, & Silvey, 2017, p. 129)

- Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) describes religion as not the same thing as spirituality even though religion can be a part of one’s spirituality (ASERVIC, n.d.). Below are a few cited definitions of religion:
  - “the codified, institutionalized, and ritualized expressions of peoples’ communal connections to the Ultimate” (Kelly, 1995, p.5)
  - “an integrated system of belief, lifestyle, ritual activities, and institutions by which individuals give meaning to (or find meaning in) their lives by orienting them to what is taken to be sacred, holy, or the highest value” (Corbett, 1990, p.2)
Spirituality Defined

- The **search for what is sacred** (Pargament, 2007)
  - A personalized understanding of what brings meaning to life and what is sacred

- ASERVIC (n.d.) describes spirituality as:
  - “**drawing out and infusion of spirit in one’s life**” (para. 1)
  - “**a personal affirmation of a transcendent connectedness in the universe**” (Kelly, 1995, p.4)

- Bohecker et al. (2017) describe spirituality as including various outlooks on life such as atheism, and agnosticism (p. 128) and define it as “**a way of being in the world that acknowledges the existence of a transcendent or unknown dimension in life that is intrinsically found within all human beings… internal and individual, and it goes beyond religious or cultural boundaries**” (p. 129).
Spirituality and Counseling
The 2014 PEW Religious Landscape Study indicated that from a sample of adult Texans:

- 77% are Christian
  - 31% Evangelical Protestant, 23% Catholic, 13% Mainline Protestant, 6% Historically Black Protestant, 1% Mormon, < 1% Orthodox Christian, 1% Jehovah’s Witness, 1% Other Christian
- 4% are Non-Christian
  - 1% Jewish, 1% Muslim, 1% Buddhist, < 1% Hindu, 1% Other World Religions/Other Faiths
- 18% are Unaffiliated (religious “nones”)
  - 2% Atheist, 3% Agnostic, 13% Nothing in particular
- < 1% Don’t Know

http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/texas/
Barnett & Johnson’s Ethical Decision Making Model (2011)
Integrating Religion/Spirituality into Counseling Ethical Decision Making Model  
(Barnett & Johnson, 2011)- 9 Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Respectfully assess the clients Religious/Spiritual (R/S) beliefs &amp; preferences</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Carefully assess any connection between the presenting problem &amp; R/S beliefs/commitments</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Weave results of your assessment into the informed consent process</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Honestly consider your countertransference to the client’s religiousness</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Honestly evaluate your competence in the case</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>CONSULT with experts in the area of religion &amp; psychotherapy</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>If appropriate, clinically indicated, &amp; client gives consent → Consult with client’s own clergy or other religious professional</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Make a decision about treating the client or making a referral</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Assess outcomes &amp; adjust plan accordingly</td>
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Inclusion of Spirituality/ Religion within Codes of Ethics
ACA’s Code of Ethics & Spirituality:
(what we are ethically responsible for as counselors)

ACA’s 2014 Code of Ethics include the following:

1. encouragement of counselors to recognize spiritual support networks of clients (Section A.1.d)
2. statement of the professional responsibility for counselors to attend to self-care to maintain their spiritual well-being (Section C, Introduction)
3. discouragement of counselors from discrimination of clients based on religion/spirituality (Section C.5)
4. encouragement of counselors to be aware of the impact of areas such as spirituality on assessment (Section E.8)
## Additional Codes of Ethics

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<td>-1.05 <strong>Cultural Competence and Social Diversity:</strong> seek education and understanding of social diversity and oppression including religion</td>
<td>-Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity: a) awareness &amp; respect of areas of diversity including religion and b) an effort to eliminate the impact of biases</td>
<td>-1.1 Non-Discrimination: refrain from discrimination based on areas of diversity (i.e. religion)</td>
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<td>-2.01 <strong>Respect:</strong> refrain from criticism of colleagues in respect to their social diversity including religion</td>
<td>-2.01 <strong>Boundaries of Competence:</strong> obtain training/consultation in areas of diversity (i.e. religion) to provide competent practice</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aamft.org/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx">www.aamft.org/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx</a></td>
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<td>-4.02 <strong>Discrimination:</strong> refrain from discrimination on the basis of social diversity including religion</td>
<td>-3.01 <strong>Unfair Discrimination:</strong> refrain from discrimination based on areas of diversity (i.e. religion)</td>
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<td>-6.04 <strong>Social and Political Action:</strong> Prevent and seek to eliminate discrimination on the basis of social diversity including religion</td>
<td>-3.03 <strong>Other Harassment:</strong> refrain from harassing or demeaning behaviors to persons based on diversity (i.e. religion)</td>
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*https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/

*www.aamft.org/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx
Applying a Case Study to the Decision Making Model
Preamble: The Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling are guidelines that complement, not supersede, the values and standards espoused in the ACA Code of Ethics. Consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (2005), the purpose of the ASERVIC Competencies is to “recognize diversity and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts” (p. 3). These Competencies are intended to be used in conjunction with counseling approaches that are evidence-based and that align with best practices in counseling.
ASERVIC Competencies

- **Culture and Worldview (2)**
  - Can describe similarities & differences between the concepts of religion & spirituality and between some examples of each (i.e. basic beliefs of some major world religion, of agnosticism, atheism, etc.)
  - Recognizes that the presence or absence of spiritual and/or religious beliefs are central to client worldview & can impact psychosocial functioning.

- **Counselor Self-Awareness (3)**
  - Explores own attitudes, beliefs, and values re: spirituality and/or religion.
  - Evaluates (on an ongoing basis) the influence of one’s own spiritual and/or religious beliefs/values on the client and counseling process.
  - Can identify limits of understanding and has connections with spiritual & religious resources for consultation and/or referral.
ASERVIC Competencies

- **Human and Spiritual Development (1)**
  - Able to describe different models of spiritual and/or religious development, apply them to counseling work, and connect them to their understanding of human development.

- **Communication (3)**
  - Utilizes acceptance and sensitivity to client communication re: spirituality and/or religion.
  - Uses spiritual and/or religious concepts that are acceptable to and consistent with the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives.
  - Recognizes and when appropriate addresses spiritual and/or religious themes in client communication.

- **Assessment (1)**
  - Gathers spiritual and/or religious information from the client or other sources during assessment in order to understand the client’s perspective.
ASERVIC Competencies

- Diagnosis and Treatment (4)
  - Recognizes that the client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives can a) enhance well-being; b) contribute to client problems; and/or c) exacerbate symptoms when making a diagnosis.
  - Creates goals with the client that are consistent with their spiritual and/or religious perspectives.
  - Able to a) modify therapeutic techniques to include a client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives, and b) utilize spiritual and/or religious practices as techniques when appropriate and acceptable to a client's viewpoint.
  - Therapeutically applies theory and current research supporting the inclusion of a client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives and practices.
Spiritual Integration in Counseling Course Database

- The database includes resources such as articles and book references pertaining to spirituality and varying course content within 15 counseling courses (i.e. Assessment & Testing, Psychopathology, Clinical courses, Career development, etc.). The following is a link to a libguide that contains the database and can be shared with others:
- [https://guides.ssw.edu/c.php?g=873373](https://guides.ssw.edu/c.php?g=873373)
- This database may direct you towards resources that can help in your development of the ASERVIC competencies.
At Home Experiential
Spiritual Lifemap
For the last portion of this on-line CEU we would like you to experience what it is like to create your own spiritual lifemap (Hodge, 2013).

Spiritual lifemaps are a spiritual intervention that can be used with clients, but it is important to experience the process for yourself first. Also, as a means of working on the ASERVIC competency of personal spiritual awareness we encourage you to create your own spiritual lifemap.

Spiritual Lifemap Experiential

- **The Process:**
  - Take about 20 minutes to follow the directions on the following slides in creating your spiritual lifemap.
  - Take the last 10 minutes to go through some of the process questions. These are useful for self-reflection and can also be used as a part of a clinical intervention with clients.
  - You will need a sheet of paper and writing materials (preferably colored pencils, pens, markers, or crayons- a pen or pencil can also suffice).
Experiential Activity- Your Own Spiritual Lifemap

- You are going to create a roadmap (like a timeline) that captures your spiritual journey from the earliest you can remember to present (and even beyond if you want to dream and imagine the future).
- Think about your spiritual experiences over time.
- How you might imagine the path from one experience to another (i.e. smooth, bumpy, straight line, circular, etc.)?
- Think about the major life events that have occurred in your life (i.e. marriage, death, children, loss of job) and how your spirituality was present or absent during those times.
Experiential Activity- Your Own Spiritual Lifemap

- You can use pictures, symbols, numbers, words, or colors to depict the various events.
- Some have used hills, bumps, potholes, and weather (i.e. rain, lightning, sun, etc.) to capture their different experiences (Hodges, 2013).
- Consider how those around you (family, friends, community, society) have utilized spirituality and religion during those major times in your life and how that might have also impacted your spiritual lifemap.
- This is driven by you and created by you... there is no right or wrong way to do it. Have fun!
- The next slide includes an example of what a spiritual lifemap may look like.
Spiritual Lifemap
Spiritual Lifemap - Processing Questions for Reflection

(In working with clients, be curious and in the moment- this can be a great moment for building rapport & showing multicultural openness):

- Tell me about what you have created.
- What were your thoughts about spirituality at the major challenging times of life... at the major celebratory times in life?
- When did your view of spirituality conflict with those of others close to you and when were they in sync? How might that have impacted your daily life functioning and stress?
- What things might you want to continue to do or start back up that you did in the past? What things do you not want to continue to do or bring with you in the future (things being spiritual and/or religious practices, beliefs, etc.)?
- What was this experience like for you?
- Did anything from this lifemap surprise you?
Pause Video Now
Summary & Evaluation
Contact Information

Awa Jangha  
awa.Jangha@ssw.edu

Gena Minnix  
gena.minnix@ssw.edu
References

References