

# Interaction

**ASERVIC**

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***President's Address:***  
**Elizabeth R. O'Brien**



As the 2015–2016 president of ASERVIC, I would like to extend a personal thank you for your continued support and contributions to our organization. Those who are familiar with ASERVIC know that our strength is the relationships that we forge with our members and friends; these are the ties that enable us to truly hear each other's unique worldviews and learn from one another so that we can become better counselors, counselor educators, and more well-rounded versions of ourselves. For those of you who are reading our newsletter for the first time, I extend you a warm welcome and encourage you to engage with the ASERVIC leadership and members to learn more about this fantastic organization.

As you read this, we have just concluded the 2015 ASERVIC conference held in New York City, a meeting that was intentionally planned to highlight many of the varied interests that make our organization unique. We enjoyed a cross-section of counselors, researchers, students, and spiritual and religious leaders coming together to present on diverse topics. As one of the initiatives for the upcoming year, we hope to extend the learning that took place in New York City by featuring some of the summer conference presentations as webinars and education sessions at the American Counseling Association conference to be held in Montreal, Canada, in April 2016.

In the coming year, our efforts will also focus on bringing you opportunities to become more involved and active in ASERVIC. We have begun this effort by revising ASERVIC's website to include more opportunities for visitors to connect with leadership and share thoughts and ideas for our continued evolution. I'm particularly excited about our branding initiative, which we will be launching with an ASERVIC logo re-design contest open to our members. Check out the website for this and more information regarding future events.

In closing, let me say that we can only realize our full potential when we work together in our shared vision. To do this, I believe that we must stand firmly in our traditions while having the courage to grow and create new traditions in the future. This is an exciting time to be a part of ASERVIC; please join us as we reach for new heights.

Take care and be well,  
Elizabeth

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## The ASERVIC Ethics Corner

Stephanie F. Dailey, Ed.D., LPC, NCC, ACS

### When and How Do You Assess the Client's Spiritual Domain?

Hello everyone, welcome to the ASERVIC Ethics Corner – a column specifically dedicated to ethical issues regarding the integration of spirituality and religion in counseling, supervision, and counselor education curriculum. Authored by the Ethical Values Committee, the purpose of this column is to address pertinent ethical issues as they relate to spiritual and/or religious issues in counseling.

The topic this quarter is *when* should a counselor approach spiritual and/or religious issues in the counseling process. Whereas the answer seems obvious – immediately – in practice many counselors fail to gather this information upon first engaging in counseling with clients. Unless spiritual and/or religious issues are a part of the client's immediate presenting problem, counselors are sorely lacking in their attention to and understanding of the client's spiritual domain and how spiritual and/or religious issues may relate to the client's life.

Assessing the client's spiritual domain is a vital part of who the client is as a multicultural, multifaceted being. Spiritual and/or religious communities or practices can also serve as a rich source of support and healing for clients and often are used as strength-based interventions. Assessing a client's belief system will help a counselor identify if these tools are available to clients. Individuals can unearth (or rediscover) social support, a sense of purpose, routine, occasion to be of service, and safety. It is also not uncommon, specifically in circumstances where the client's belief system is in conflict with their behavior or view of self, for the spiritual domain to contribute to therapeutic issues. What about the client who self identifies as a "religious person" who believes abortion is a sin but has just had an abortion? These are all important reasons why the counselor must gather information about the client's spiritual domain upon first meeting the client.

So where is the problem? While many counselors know it is essential to gather information about the client's spiritual/religious world, they are challenged in actually doing so upon first meeting the client. Assimilating the unique spiritual perspective of clients is essential to appreciating core experiences, beliefs, behaviors and patterns which not only builds the therapeutic alliance but also serves to guide ethical practice. Colleen, for example, a 34-year-old Jewish American woman living in Seattle has a very different cultural experience than Lorine a 39-year-old Hasidic Jew living in the Ukraine. Recognizing clients as unique spiritual beings - despite surface similarities - fosters empathetic understanding, avoids insensitivity, and helps to avoid incorrect preconceptions of a client's spiritual and/or religious world.

So *how* can a counselor address the client's spiritual domain if this is not something the client brings up in the initial session? There are numerous ways in which a counselor can do so – intake, observation, or through direct interview. Because intake is the initial interaction between the counselor and the client, the importance of appropriately introducing spirituality into this process cannot be understated. During an intake interview, the counselor truly sets the stage for discussing spirituality by demonstrating openness to learning about the client's spirituality and openness to sharing through mutual disclosure. Counselors are encouraged to ask question such as "Do you have a belief in God, a higher power, universal spirit, or other?" or "What role has religion and/or spirituality played in your life?" It is important that counselor gather a list of questions they can ask during the intake interview and include in an intake form (if applicable) that address the spiritual domain. Counselor's do not need a long list of questions – just enough to start the conversation with the client and get to know them better as a spiritual being. This also may let the counselor know that these topics are, at least initially, "off limits" and the client has little to no interest in discussing them. This in itself could be a relevant counseling issue.

Observation is also an important aspect of spiritual assessment that many counselors do not consider. Some aspects of client appearance, behavior, and language often provide the counselor with a vast array of information about the client's belief system. This information is essential and should be used to begin a dialogue with the client about their beliefs and overall values. Rings (wedding, engagement, Masonic); cross and star pendants; hair styles; head coverings; nationalistic/patriotic attire; colored ribbons; tattoos; and countless other things can imply personal or spiritual beliefs and values. Through observation of the client's initial appearance, many clues about client's spiritual and/or religious worldview can be gathered. Of course counselors need to be careful about inaccurately judging the meaning a client may place on jewelry, clothing, or other items; but these are good starting points for asking a client about what these items represent. Beyond observing appearance, counselors can also gain information through observing the client's behaviors and word choices.

Another final suggestion for initially gathering information about a client's spiritual domain is the direct interview. During a direct interview the counselor will ask the client specific questions related to the spiritual or religious domain. Seligman (2004) and Pargament (2007) detail specific questions or statements that may be useful for the counselor to include in this interview, including: "Do you see yourself as a religious or spiritual person? If so, in what way?"; "Are you affiliated with a religious or spiritual denomination or community? If so, which one?"; "Has your problem affected you religiously or spiritually? If so, in what way?" (Pargament, 2007, p. 211). Each counselor is encouraged to come up with questions that make sense for their client population and craft these to suit their professional needs. These fundamental inquiries can illicit information that will help the counselor determine what type of follow up is appropriate, based in the client's response.

Of course the suggestions above are just a few of the ways in which a counselor can gather information about the client's spiritual domain. There are also a myriad of spiritual and/or religious assessments which can be used. Whatever tools you choose to use, be sure to do so early on in the counseling relationship. Remember – if appropriate – assessing the spiritual domain should be done in the initial information gathering process and be infused through the counseling process.

## 2015 ASERVIC Conference



**Past & Present Board Members**

# ANNOUNCEMENT

## Contest for new ASERVIC Logo Design!

As part of the rebranding goals of ASERVIC, we are announcing a contest for the design of a new Logo. The intent is to announce the winner or winning team at the ACA Conference in Montreal. There will be amazing prizes!

Check out [www.aservic.org](http://www.aservic.org) for further information.

## Retiring!



## *Spirituality in the Field*

Jared Thiemann, PhD, LPC, NCC



My name is Jared Thiemann and I am a counselor and counselor educator. Currently, I teach as an assistant professor at Adams State University in Alamosa, Colorado where I also maintain a small private practice working with individuals, couples, and families from a variety of backgrounds. I have also historically spent a significant part of my career working with adolescent criminal and sexual offenders. As I reflect on my personal context to this point, I am deeply grateful for my experience thus far of spirituality and religion. I grew up in a deeply religious family in a community that was predominately of the same faith as we were. Most of my early childhood memories are tied to experiences with a

religious background to them. In my family of origin religion and spirituality were a part of our everyday lives. When I was a younger adult, I served as a missionary for my church for two years in Birmingham, England at my own expense. It was on a mission for my church that I gained a much broader understanding of different perspectives that are present in the world regarding religion and spirituality. I have found that my training as a counselor only deepened my spirituality and commitment to my faith as I have sought to deepen my own authenticity and connection with others and with God. Such concepts as vulnerability and authenticity have become a critical part of my spiritual journey, but are also central to how I believe counselors should be trained to work with others.

The competency I will be addressing is:

4. The professional counselor continuously evaluates the influence of his or her own spiritual and/or religious beliefs and values on the client and the counseling process.

I am reminded of an experience I had with students I was supervising in their initial skills training course. As part of the skills training in our program at Adams State University our students engage in a one week summer intensive experience and at the beginning of one of these experiences I began presenting the expectations and overall process to the students and, as they began engaging in the experience, some of the students were struggling with connecting to the process as I was presenting

this tension was not the optimal balance with this particular group. At the end of the first day, I considered and prayed about what to do and I realized that I needed to more effectively model authenticity and vulnerability in the counseling process. I determined to utilize a method I had seen colleagues use where the instructor acted as client and the students each went in succession for about 5-10 minutes as the counselor. The next day I found myself hesitating a bit, but I decided that it was worth a try. As I began with these students and simply shared about my personal process in my role as the client, and as they sought to utilize their basic skills in their role as the counselor we were able reach a deeper understanding of what the counseling process looked like, and also what it felt like. This worked far more effectively with this group than my previous strategies would have. Somehow this experience allowed them to see me as a human and allowed me to be more human. Through this experience I was reminded how useful it can be to engage authentically and vulnerably with others regardless of my role. As I now reflect on this experience it emphasizes to me how important it is for me to continually re-evaluate and evolve in my understanding of how my spiritual process is a part of what I do in supervision and with clients. Since my way of working with the counseling process has really become more a part of who I am, I am reminded how important it is to reflect on how to allow it to become uniquely helpful to those I work with. Instead of rigidly and prescriptively training or counseling, it is important that I am willing to consider how my methods and personhood can be uniquely woven into the best possible outcome for my students or my clients. I believe this is the best way for me to be as helpful as I can be in any given professional situation; to weave a unique approach based on an intentional and authentic engagement in the processes of counseling and human connection.

At the time of the experience written above, I had been reading *The Art of Counseling*, by Rollo May, where he discussed the importance of sharing ourselves with others in the process of counseling, he said: “[...] I ask myself, why should I be afraid he will know what is going on in my mind? I proceed to remind myself that I really have nothing to keep hidden from him; he may read my thoughts if he wishes, and in fact I am quite willing to assist him with the spoken word on any matter about which he may inquire. The point to be noticed is that by this little psychological device I am able to be more honest with the other person. I am able, that is, to give up to some extent the little game of deceit which all human beings play with each other most of the time.” I found many of his thoughts in this book to be very helpful in my process.

# ACA News & Updates

ACA Governing Council Meeting  
July 20-21, 2015



Updates

~Approval of the recommendations of the Awards Committee regarding the ACA Fellows Award program.

~Endorsement of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies.

~To unify the professional identity of counselors, ACA endorses, supports, and advocates for graduation from a Counselor Education program accredited by CACREP/CORE as the pathway to licensure for independent practice.

~ACA, in all advocacy efforts related to licensure for independent practice, endorses licensed professional counselors (including comparable state counseling licenses), licensed on or before July 2020, as qualified independent practitioners with the same professional privileges and practice options as graduates from CACREP and CORE programs.

~ACA shall, within its current legislative advocacy structure, endorse and will advocate for:

Standards that require graduation from a counselor preparation program accredited by CACREP or an approved affiliate of CACREP (e.g. CORE).

Students must demonstrate sufficient preparation in addressing clinical issues in order to be eligible for licensure for independent practice. In addition to concentration on Mental Health, psychological, and human development, this preparation shall include both coursework and practice in assessment, diagnosis, treatment planning, and clinical interventions for individuals with serious mental illnesses and/or serious emotional disturbances.

Students must complete a practicum of at least 100 hours and an internship of at least 600 hours. Graduates from programs accredited by CACREP or an approved affiliate of CACREP (e.g. CORE) in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling, Marriage Couple and Family Counseling, or Addictions Counseling are assumed to have met these clinical preparation requirements. Graduates of other CACREP or CORE tracks will need to demonstrate that they have met the clinical coursework requirements.

ACA will support and advocate for a liberal grandparenting period of seven (7) years after the adoption of this language in state regulations, whereby individuals who graduated from regionally accredited programs can still achieve licensure and regionally accredited program have sufficient time to pursue accreditation from CACREP or an approved affiliate of CACREP (e.g. CORE).

This advocacy will be included in the ACA Governmental Affairs Agenda as soon as is practicable.

## *Call for Reviewers for Counseling and Values Journal (CVJ)*



*The Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values (ASERVIC) is seeking editorial board members for the Counseling and Values Journal. Reviewers are selected for a three-year term of service, and can expect a review request every 30 to 60 days. The review process takes place on the ScholarOne platform, so regular access to the internet is needed.*

*In addition, reviewers are expected to be members of ASERVIC. If you are interested in serving as a reviewer on the editorial board, please send the following documents by August 15, 2015 to CVJ's editorial assistant, Paulina Flasch, paulinaf@knights.ucf.edu: (a) a short letter of interest describing your background and your reason(s) for wanting to serve on this journal's review board, and (b) your CV.*

*Sincerely,  
E. H. "Mike" Robinson, PhD, NCC  
Editor in Chief, Counseling and Values*



# 2015 ASERVIC Conference Awards

**Research Awards:** Three \$500 awards recognizing outstanding research by an individual who has helped advance the mission of ASERVIC through research.

- 1. Cassandra L. Johnson (in Absentia)**
- 2. William J. Haynes, Jr. (in Absentia)**
- 3. Salin Philup**



Salin Philup

**Lifetime Service Award:** Founded in the name of Dr. Judi Miranti, awarded to someone who has demonstrated significant contributions to and leadership in ASERVIC.

**Award Recipient: Dr. Scott Young (in Absentia)**

# 2015 ASERVIC Conference

Conference Co-Chair Harriet Glosoff,  
President--Elect Stephanie Dailey, Conference  
Co-Chair and President Elizabeth O'Brien



ASERVIC's Empty Plate Offering recipient was the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter, established 1982 by faith and civic leaders on Manhattan's Upper East Side, based on the premise that homelessness is the responsibility of the entire community. In addition to providing outpatient substance use and mental health treatment programs for individuals currently or formerly homeless, they also provide vocational and employment services, permanent housing for many, and housing/supportive services for youth who aged out of foster care.

# 2015 ASERVIC Conference



Opening Meditation  
Ryan Foster



L. Marinn Pierce, Membership Chair  
Amanda Giordana, Treasurer  
Jesse Fox, 2017 Conference Co-Chair



# *Spirituality in the Field*

Do you have ideas or a story to share regarding your practice of spirituality in the field? If so, please submit to the next edition of Interaction. The Innovation Committee would like to formally invite current ASERVIC members to consider sharing their “Spirituality in the Field” experiences for publication in an upcoming ASERVIC newsletter.

Inquiries and submissions for this special section of the newsletter can be sent to Cristen Wathen ([christen.wathen@montana.edu](mailto:christen.wathen@montana.edu))

- ◇ Follow the ASERVIC newsletter “guidelines for submission” as published in the most recent newsletter publication (see ASERVIC webpage [www.aservic.org](http://www.aservic.org))
- ◇ Articles include an opening paragraph introducing the author to the readers.
- ◇ Articles include a second paragraph describing how the author incorporates one or multiple Spiritual Competencies in practice.
- ◇ Articles include a concluding paragraph or list of resources (books, trainings, websites/blogs, inspirational quote, etc.) related to the practices and competencies addressed in the article.
- ◇ A professional picture of the author is attached (in .jpeg format) with the article.

Interested in submitting an article for the **FALL** issue of the  
*Interaction?*

The deadline is ***Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>!***



Please refer to [ASERVIC.org](http://ASERVIC.org) for guidelines for publication or contact the editor at [cgerhard@ashland.edu](mailto:cgerhard@ashland.edu) for more information.