



Association for Spiritual, Ethical,
and Religious Values in Counseling
Graduate Students

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

Volume No.1 | Issue 1

Welcome to the ASERVIC Graduate Student Newsletter!

The goal of this newsletter is to celebrate the many contributions of the diverse graduate student community within ASERVIC. Each student brings a valuable presence to the division and to the progress of integrating spirituality into counseling.

I hope you enjoy this summary of our year of service together. In particular, I hope you enjoy reading the contributions from our peers. It is an honor to include them, and they illustrate the talent and wisdom that is characteristic of our ASERVIC Graduate Student Community.

As we continue on our journeys toward becoming counselors and counselor educators, I hope you'll remember you belong here. Your presence in ASERVIC is valued and our graduate student community is enhanced with you here.

IN THIS ISSUE

Monthly Meetings:
A Summary

Graduate Student
Submissions

Literature Corner

Professional
Development:
Conference Retreat &
Upcoming Webinar



GRADUATE STUDENT MEETINGS

A Summary



We were fortunate to gather virtually multiple times throughout the academic year, often with visiting speakers and leaders in the field of spirituality and counseling. Included here is a brief summary of each graduate student meeting. *Recordings of each session are available in the ACA Connect ASERVIC Community Discussions or by email request (jknilesorefice@wm.edu).*

September 2021: Initial Gathering

In our first session together, we gathered for a centering practice and introductions. We shared about our interests and backgrounds and discussed goals for the year.

October 2021: Dr. Craig Cashwell

Dr. Cashwell joined us for an interactive question-and-answer session about the effective integration of spirituality and religion into counseling with clients. Dr. Cashwell addressed the progress our field has made and discussed the topics of spiritual bypass and trauma.



December 2021: Drs. Aparna Ramaswamy & Hridaya Sivalingam

In Part 1 of their two sessions with us, Drs. Ramaswamy and Sivalingam presented *Integrating Meditation as a Transformational Practice in Counseling* and provided education about the impact of meditation for counselors and clients. Throughout the session, Dr. Ramaswamy and Dr. Sivalingam guided attendees through contemplative practices useful for counselors and for use with clients.



February 2022: Drs. Aparna Ramaswamy & Hridaya Sivalingam

In their second session with us, Drs. Ramaswamy and Sivalingam presented on *Building on Theistic and Non-Theistic Spirituality in Counseling*. The presenters offered a wealth of information about varying religious and spiritual traditions. Dr. Ramaswamy and Dr. Sivalingam invited self-reflection on personal practices that help us re-align as counselors and closed with a guided meditation.



The single most important thing in a counseling interaction is you.

Dr. Aparna Ramaswamy

GRADUATE STUDENT MEETINGS

Continued...



March 2022: Dr. Leila Warraich

Dr. Warraich presented *Experiences of Imams in the Personalized Interactions with their Congregants: Implications for Collaboration with Clergy*. In her presentation, Dr. Warraich provided data from her qualitative study and interviews with Imams. Additionally, Dr. Warraich offered implications for counselors across various counseling settings and how we can more effectively work in community to support Muslim clients.



April 2022: Dr. Deborah Haskins

Dr. Haskins presented *Am I Doing a Dance Around Ethical, Religious, and/or Spiritual Values in Counseling? A Case Conceptualization Approach*. Dr. Haskins provided information about various frameworks to spiritual assessment and integration in counseling, and guided their application through case conceptualizations. Dr. Haskins also offered a wealth of resources on healing racial trauma, integrating spirituality, and indigenous healing practices. (These resources are included in her [powerpoint linked here](#) or available by email request at jknilesorefice@wm.edu)



May 2022: Dr. Daniel Gutierrez

Dr. Gutierrez joined us for an interactive question-and-answer session about the integration of spirituality and religion into counseling. Dr. Gutierrez guided attendees through a contemplative practice and addressed the evolution of ASERVIC. Additionally, we discussed the ways we can integrate spirituality with clients across settings, backgrounds, and needs.



The qualities of an effective counselor.
Created together during Dr. Ramaswamy and Dr. Sivalingam's session,
Integrating Meditation as a Transformational Practice in Counseling

GRADUATE STUDENT SUBMISSIONS



WHY SPIRITUALITY MUST REMAIN IN THE CACREP STANDARDS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTEGRATING SPIRITUALITY INTO COUNSELOR TRAINING

by Britney N. Smith, M.Ed., LCMHCA, NCC
University of the Cumberlands

A The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2015) Standards Revision Committee recently proposed to eliminate Standard 2.2.g, “the impact of spiritual beliefs on clients’ and counselors’ worldviews” (p. 10). In the 2024 CACREP Standards Draft, the only standard explicitly naming spirituality is in the Addictions Counseling specialty area stating the “role of wellness and spirituality in the addiction recovery process” (p. 22). The 2009 CACREP Standards included a definition of spirituality while eliminating the definition in 2016. Spirituality has gradually decreased over the years and is proposed to only remain in the Addictions Counseling specialty area in the 2024 CACREP Standards. Suppose CACREP removes spirituality from every counseling area except addictions. Will counselors-in-training continue to receive training about assisting clients with spiritual struggles or wanting to use their spiritual belief system and resources to help them heal?

In the United States, 90% of people believe in a higher power or a god (Pew Research Center, 2017). Instead of turning to organized religious groups, more people are seeking spiritual guidance from counselors (Vieten & Scammell, 2015). According to Oxhandler et al. (2018), 49% of clients want to address spirituality in counseling. Not only is it necessary to be aware of the client’s relationship with spirituality, the counselor should understand their own relationship to spirituality and how it affects their therapeutic presence (Oxhandler, 2017).

The American Counseling Association (ACA) includes wellness in the definition of counseling based on the 2010 ACA Conference. The ACA Encyclopedia of Counseling defines wellness as “a state of positive well-being, one in which body, mind, and spirit are integrated” (Myers, 2009, p. 563). The 2014 ACA Code of Ethics advises counselors to allow the client’s identities, including spiritual, to assist with interpreting the results of normed assessments (E.8.). Currently, the CACREP Standards identify spirituality as an aspect of the multicultural definition (2015). The Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) developed Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies, including counselors respecting clients’ spiritual beliefs and understanding the privilege and marginalization dynamic of a counseling relationship (Arredondo et al., 1996; Ratts et al., 2016). CACREP Standards should align with multicultural competencies and the ACA Code of Ethics relating to spirituality because of the impact of spirituality on positive mental health outcomes specifically (Koenig, 2015).

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GRADUATE STUDENT SUBMISSIONS



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Spirituality needs to remain in the standards that govern how counselors are trained because of the number of clients who seek counselors to assist in increasing their well-being by better understanding their spiritual beliefs, spiritual struggles or harm, and spiritual resources. Further removing spirituality from the standards that guide how counseling programs prepare counselors-in-training will decrease counselors' preparedness to treat clients. It is the duty of counselors, counselor educators, and supervisors to advocate the importance of understanding how to integrate spirituality into clinical practice and better preparing master's-level counselors-in-training. Counselors should seek more knowledge on incorporating spirituality into treatment. Counselor educators and supervisors are responsible for training counselors to integrate spirituality into their practice based on the needs of the client.

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Britney Smith is dually licensed as a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Associate and School Counselor in North Carolina. She is currently a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of the Cumberland.



GRADUATE STUDENT SUBMISSIONS



INSECURITY IN INTEGRATION: WHY WE MIGHT FEEL HESITANT TO INCORPORATE SPIRITUALITY IN COUNSELING

by Meredith Trank
Wake Forest University

There is inherent risk involved in broaching the spiritual aspects of a client's life in a session. Like any other component of our identity, religion and spirituality leave room for offense or assumption or stereotype. For some reason, when religion comes up, though, many of us feel insecure or nervous to discuss it. Is it something about the sacredness of the spiritual that leaves us wavering a bit more? To know that if we offend our client, we might be offending their God? By becoming more familiar with our own spirituality, we can engage our clients more comfortably when exploring the role their relationship with a higher power plays in their lives.

A key consideration when doing this work is to be aware of one's own religious or spiritual beliefs. Many individuals grow up adopting the religion they were raised in, and when faced with truths that might challenge those beliefs, there can be moments of existential consideration. For example, it may be difficult to help a client with an unbiased framework if you believe their religion or practices are "wrong." It is important to tread lightly and allow the client to take the lead. Being mindful of inclusive language for God is essential to helping a client feel comfortable discussing spirituality in session. For example, instead of referring to God as "Father" or with masculine language, consider using non-binary pronouns or simply calling God, God. You could also ask the client what they prefer to call their deity or higher power. Our confidence in discussing religion and spirituality can be built up by using the client's language and letting them teach us.

To get more familiar with your beliefs about God, a helpful exercise might be to draw or reflect on what your own image of God or higher power looks like. It can be surprisingly enlightening to see how we envision God or what we assume God to be based on our experiences. Understanding how our own images of God have developed can help us empathize with our clients and how they relate to religion.

For counselors to be effective in integrating spirituality into our work, we need to remain curious about the divine and hold our ideas of God with an open hand. If our images of God are too set in stone, then we might not be able to fully imagine with the client what their truth is for them. To fully empathize, we must offer the client, and ourselves, room to explore. The only truth I know to be certain is that God is a mystery. We won't have all the answers nor will our clients, but by embracing the expansiveness of religion and spirituality, we can allow ourselves to explore them together more confidently.

Meredith Trank is pursuing a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Wake Forest University. She has recently been selected to serve as president of the Pi Alpha chapter of Chi Sigma Iota and looks forward to continuing her professional development in the counseling profession.



GRADUATE STUDENT SUBMISSIONS



CREATING COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL SPACES: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUALITY AND COUNSELING

by Sapna Singh
San Francisco State University

Personal loss has a way of teaching us what is important in life. Recently, a personal loss led me back to the rich philosophical and spiritual side of my own Hindu upbringing, reminding me of the theistic and nontheistic teachings from Hindu scriptures about life and all its conundrums. In my quest to find answers, I studied the Bhagwad Gita again. Gita is an essential Hindu scripture, embraced by many as a religious, philosophical, or spiritual guide. In a further effort to reconnect with my community and to gauge whether the Gita remains relevant, I sent out an informal online survey on individuals' reliance on the Bhagwad Gita and its teachings. Of the 40 responses I received, those who identified as relying on teachings from Gita ($n = 34$) shared some common threads of spirituality. Some wrote about their belief in doing their karma without attachment to the outcome. That attachment is worldly and the indestructible soul is on its own journey on this earth, was another theme. I felt a sense of spiritual connection with the respondents, each of us striving to selflessly perform our tasks during our time on earth.

These are not new teachings for me. But my return to a spiritual way of being, from an identity as a graduate student focused on clinical mental health counseling research, is karmic. Post-COVID, spiritual and existential dynamics in mental health has been proposed as one of the many areas that would need to be researched to address mental health needs of those affected as we grapple with anxieties, suffering, and loss (Bell et al., 2020). The loneliness and isolation, well-researched as experienced among older adults (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020), has now become prevalent in the general population. Social disconnection is an important risk factor not only in mental health but also as a morbidity and mortality risk (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

As graduate students in the field of counseling, we are devoting tremendous energy and internal resources towards understanding ourselves as we learn to be the best counselors we can be. We are not immune from our own life challenges. Many of us are drawn to this vocation because of our own life experiences. We do not need catastrophic life events to experience intense loss and grief. Trauma can happen without specific triggering events. It can be a gradual loss of one's bearing in the world they find themselves in, at once temporal, spiritual and existential. Our losses and how we deal with them personally bring up the importance of the cultural, the religious, and the spiritual in the therapeutic process with our clients. Personal suffering and loss are essential constructs in human life. They are vastly researched in academia but considered a specialized subject in graduate school. Spirituality, religion and worldviews should also be addressed directly in pedagogy in graduate school settings, both for personal growth of students as counselors and as a CACREP foundational competency.

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GRADUATE STUDENT SUBMISSIONS



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The pandemic has just reinforced the need to have holistic supports in place for graduate students. In a study on grief experienced by graduate counseling students, participants reported emotional, cognitive, physical, behavioral, interpersonal, and world assumption grief effects, with statistically significant relationships to both type of loss and reported closeness to the deceased (Varga, 2020). Dealing with multidimensional grief requires holistic ways of support for the individual. This goes beyond the academic accommodations and check-ins. There could potentially be many avenues of support for a student besides family, friends, individual therapy, and meeting their material needs to help facilitate their learning in the program. These could be support systems facilitated by the schools and spaces of care within peer-to-peer, professor- student, mentor-mentee, or the supervisor-supervisee relationships. This can only happen in a culture that values discussion of diverse religious/spiritual/temporal orientations, self-disclosure, compassion, and empathy. Do we as graduate students in counseling programs find the community that provides us with the connections we need to survive our loss and trauma? How may we advocate for such spaces? How may we create community and spiritual spaces where we can come together outside of academia?

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Sapna Singh is a graduate student at San Francisco State University in the MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program. She is a proud mother of two on a path of learning, hoping to be of service to all sentient beings.



ASERVIC CONFERENCE RETREAT



For the first time in three years, our community gathered for an experiential retreat style conference. Presentations from the 2022 ASERVIC Rest & Renewal Conference Retreat included:

2022 SUMMER RETREAT
JUNE 10 - 11, DELAND, FL
STETSON UNIVERSITY

REGISTER NOW FOR A RETREAT-STYLE CONFERENCE FEATURING EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING:

Contemplation and Social Transformations: An Introduction to the Benefits of the Contemplative Way of Life

Dr. Daniel Gutierrez & Dr. Stephanie Dorais

Research demonstrates that consistent contemplative practice not only has health benefits but can lead to personal transformation that motivates individuals to engage in their communities with love and compassion. In this experiential presentation, we will share the findings of our research which includes strategies for developing consistent practice, the influence of contemplative practice on wellbeing and prosociality, strategies for incorporating contemplation into treatment with novice practitioners, and trauma-informed contemplative practice. We will present several forms of contemplation, their supporting research, discuss practice benefits, and offer strategies for addressing challenges that might occur in clinical integration.

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Induced After-Death Communication for Grief: A Randomized, Controlled Study

Jan Holden EdD, LPC-S, NCC, ACMHP, Noelle St. Germain-Sehr, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, ACMHP, and Amanda St. Germain-Sehr MS, MA, LPC, MT-BC

Presenters will explain the discovery and development of Induced After-Death Communication (IADC), provide preliminary research, describe a randomized controlled study comparing IADC to traditional talk therapy for grief, and illustrate the uniquely healing impact of IADC on grief using case examples.

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Contemplative Photography as Self-Care

Awa Jangha, Ph.D., LPC-S, ATR-BC

This presentation will provide an overview of contemplative photography and how it can be utilized as self-care for counselors and clients. The practice of contemplative photography as self-care parallels the work of art psychotherapy and this presentation will offer participants the opportunity to engage in an experiential of Visio Divina with reflection questions for individual processing.

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REGISTER NOW FOR A RETREAT-STYLE CONFERENCE FEATURING EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING:

Naikan, a Japanese Method of Self-Reflection

Rev. Morris Sekiyo Sullivan

Naikan, a Japanese word that translates roughly to "looking inward," refers to a system of self-reflection that was developed as a spiritual practice by a Jodo-Shinshu Buddhist during the 1950s. Naikan is a fairly easy practice to learn, with exercises that incorporate gratitude and awareness of relationships and the environment as methods of self-reflection.

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REGISTER NOW FOR A RETREAT-STYLE CONFERENCE FEATURING EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING:

Exploring Theistic & Non-theistic Spiritual Practices in BIPOC communities

Aparna Ramaswamy EdD, PhD, LCPC, ACS

The program seeks to share a brief historical context of theistic vs. non-theistic religious and spiritual practices with an intent to invite dialogue about attendees' spiritual practices that offer them solace and guidance in navigating difficult situations in life.

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Divine Therapy: Contemplative Prayer and Clinical Practice

Dr. Jesse Fox

This experiential workshop will draw upon primarily Christian contemplatives and metaphysicians. In this rich context, we will explore Lectio Divina and Centering Prayer and through them unearth their transformative potential. The work of the counselor can often become an ally of the Divine Physician, whom the contemplative meets in the sacrament of the present moment, as the infinite source of Being as Oneness.

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Experiencing Spirituality: Wellness in Spirit, Body and Mind

Michael C. Lazarchick, PhD, LPC, NCC

Using diverse thoughts from eastern and western traditions, this workshop will explore spirituality, with short lectures around a holistic model of interconnected spirit, body, mind. Powerful short meditations, a little qi gong, yoga and some surprises are on this path that promises to end with you feeling energized.

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The Role of Counselors' Own Transpersonal/Spiritual Experiences in Spiritual/Religious Self-Awareness and Work with Clients and Supervisees

Jan Holden EdD, LPC-S, NCC, ACMHP, Noelle St. Germain-Sehr, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, ACMHP, and Amanda St. Germain-Sehr MS, MA, LPC, MT-BC

In this experiential session, each participant will complete an inventory of the transpersonal/spiritual/religious experiences in their lives. Participants will come away having acquired an exercise they may use in their counseling practice, their supervision, and/or their teaching of transpersonal/spiritual/religious issues in counseling.

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Where Yoga Meets Neuropsychology for Mental Health and Posttraumatic Growth

Linda Ouellette Ph.D., LMHC, LMFT

The research and supported yoga based practices (YBP) will be presented and participants will experience examples of the yoga interventions. Recommendations will be provided for using yoga interventions for mental health and post-traumatic growth.

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Meditation for Spiritual Growth

Mark E. Young and Jora M. Young

In this interactive workshop, participants will learn a method of spiritual meditation which can be used by people of all faiths and even by those who have no religious or spiritual affiliation.

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No Forgiveness, No Recovery: Know Forgiveness, Know Recovery

Dr. W. Bryce Hagedorn, LMHC, NCC, MAC

The active process of forgiveness of self and others is not simply a "forgive and forget" event, and in fact, many believe that sustained recovery is unattainable without engaging in the forgiveness process. By accessing clients' religious and spiritual narratives, clinicians can tailor their approaches to navigate spiritual bypass as they lead their clients toward a path of integration and thriving.

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REGISTER NOW FOR A RETREAT-STYLE CONFERENCE FEATURING EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING:

Experiencing Tai Chi and Qigong

Rev. Morris Sekiyo Sullivan

Qigong is a traditional Chinese system of exercise and moving meditation. Tai chi (taijiquan) is a traditional Chinese martial art most often used today as a health practice. Often, these two activities are studied together, with benefits that include reduced risk of falls, improved breathing capacity, lowered anxiety levels and improved sense of wellbeing.

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ASERVIC CONFERENCE RETREAT



Snapshots from the 2022 ASERVIC Rest & Renewal Conference Retreat



We hope you'll join us at next year's ASERVIC Conference in 2023!

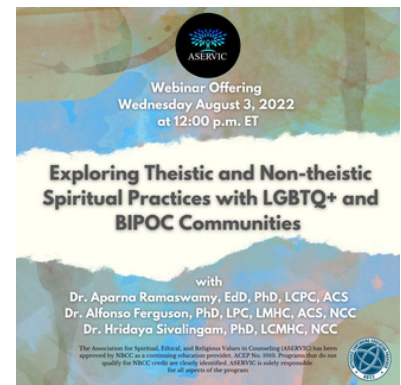
UPCOMING ASERVIC WEBINAR

Exploring Theistic and Non-theistic Spiritual Practices with LGBTQ+ and BIPOC Communities

Dr. Aparna Ramaswamy, Dr. Alfonso Ferguson and Dr. Hridaya Sivalingam

August 3, 2022 at 12:00-1:00 p.m. ET

This roundtable presentation will offer counselors in training, counselors, counselor educators and supervisors an opportunity to explore the unique challenges with understanding, belongingness, and wholeness the BIPOC LGBTQ+ community members may experience while understanding their religious beliefs and spiritual practices. Attention will be given to identifying theistic and non-theistic religions and exploring related practices that support personal meaning for participants. Clinical applications will be shared and solicited from participants.



For more information and to register, [click here](#) or visit ASERVIC.org

LITERATURE CORNER

Resources for self-exploration and work with clients, compiled by ASERVIC student members.

Poetry and Memoirs:

No Mud, No Lotus, Thich Nhat Hanh

Keeping Quiet, Pablo Neruda

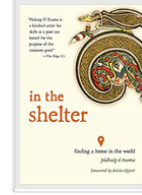
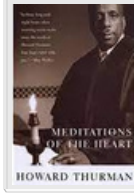
To Bless the Space Between Us, John O'Donohue

In the Shelter, Pádraig Ó Tuama

Meditations of the Heart, Howard Thurman

The Book of Joy, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and The Dalai Lama

The Bell and the Blackbird, David Whyte

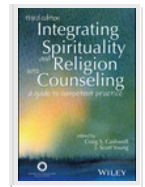
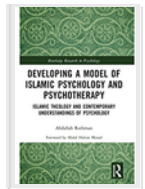


Counseling resources and texts:

Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: Islamic Theology and Contemporary Understandings of Psychology, Abdallah Rothman

Integrating Spirituality and Religion into Counseling: A Guide to Competent Practice, Edited by Craig S. Cashwell and J. Scott Young

Connecting Soul, Spirit, Mind, and Body: A Collection of Spiritual and Religious Perspectives and Practices in Counseling, Ryan D. Foster and Janice Miner Holden



MESSAGE FROM YOUR 2021-2022 GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

It has been an honor to serve as your graduate student representative for the 2021-2022 academic year! I am in awe of the many talents and gifts within the ASERVIC graduate student community and am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with you and learned from you throughout this year.

I am excited to continue serving ASERVIC now as Media Chair and Webinar Coordinator. Please reach out with feedback, suggestions, ideas, or if you'd like to be involved. I look forward to our paths continuing to cross!

Jennifer Niles
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ASERVIC Graduate Student Representative
2021-2022



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