



INTERACTION

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- President's Welcome.....1
- Spirituality in the Field2-3
- New Members
- Spotlight.....4-5
- Spiritual & Religious Values Column.....6-9
- Webinar Submissions.....9
- ASERVIC Conference Information.....10
- Submission Requests....11

President

Jesse Fox

Past-President

Daniel Gutierrez

President-Elect

Hannah Bayne

Treasurer

Kristina Nelson

Secretary

Heidi Henry

Interaction Editor

Joy Mwendwa



President's Address

Dr. Jesse Fox

Friends, hello and welcome!

Since 1951, The Association for Spiritual Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) has existed to recognize the inherent importance and relevance of spirituality and religion for clients who entrust themselves into the care of a counselor. We were one of the first counseling organizations to propose and adopt a minimum standard of competence to ethically and effectively address these topics in the form of the ASERVIC Spiritual and Religious Competencies published in 2009. These standards exist as a framework to meet the needs of clients who come from diverse spiritual and religious perspectives, so that no matter where they are coming from, they will receive competent care.

We are unique as an organization in that we are devoted to the enduring legacy of transcendence as a human experience that crosses over generations, cultures, and geographical locations and has direct implications for our psychological vitality. These dimensions of the human experience can form the deepest reservoirs of resilience and meaning, and can also create the greatest crises and turmoil. In fact, we exist in a very interesting time in history where there is more research coming out each year and making significant advancements toward our understanding of how religion, spirituality, and mental health interlock together and can inform the practice of counseling. ASERVIC strives to be on the forefront of this emerging research and practice base through our journal *Counseling and Values: Spirituality, Ethics, and Religion in Counseling*, our Annual ASERVIC Conference, and our Webinar Series. ASERVIC members have access to all three.

We are delighted that you have found us, and we desire that all feel welcomed into this space. It has been my experience through several years of service with ASERVIC that people make genuine efforts to promote a spirit of hospitality, and it is my hope to carry on the legacy as President.

We are delighted that you have found us, and we desire that all feel welcomed into this space. It has been my experience through several years of service with ASERVIC that people make genuine efforts to promote a spirit of hospitality, and it is my hope to carry on the legacy as President.

Jesse

SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD

Interview with Selina Ruiz: Family, Faith, and Spiritual Values



What does spirituality look like in professional counseling?

A broad question with a broad answer: it depends. As an essential domain of human experience and our holistic wellness (Ohrt et al., 2019), spirit (or spirituality) and its role in professional counseling is a rapidly burgeoning field of interest to many researchers and counselors in the field of professional counseling. From structured intervention and assessment approaches (Cashwell & Young, 2020) to general guiding philosophy and theoretical orientation (Richards & Bergin, 2005), integrating spirituality into counseling is an ethical obligation for counselors in their professional responsibility (ACA; C.5), as well as in assessment and interpretation (ACA; E.8). With that said, what does it look like? Exploring the personal meaning of this question, Vincent Sears from ASERVIC's Spirituality in the Field sat down with Selina Ruiz to hear what insight she might offer in her answer to the question of this column.

It's personal. Selina, a master's student in Marriage and Family Therapy, identifies as a Puerto Rican, non-denominational Christian. For Selina, being Puerto Rican was an important influence on her spiritual development as she was raised in a Pentecostal church where her uncle was the pastor, and her family was deeply involved. "Being involved in the church from such a young age created a deep belief in compassion for others and that we are created in the image of God", she remarked in describing the values of her early home life. Now an assistant director of prevention and education, Selina found the origin of her passion for this work in her spiritual upbringing. After leaving home, Selina's spiritual development blossomed in a new church of a different theological perspective. In her new church home, Selina came to believe and hold dear her new understanding of God and "creation... that we as imperfect human beings cannot save ourselves". This component of her theology empowers Selina to press into the hard conversations of spirituality and faith both in her personal and professional life because she feels her faith in God should "be reflected in my willingness and ability to help others, to come to their aid... to sit with people without shaming them... to love the widow and the refugee and the least of these".

It's professional. While intimately personal in origin, Selina described how supportive these experiences and values are to her professionally in Marriage and Family Therapy saying, "when I think of how I provide care, my spirituality informs my perspective on systems theory and that we're all connected to a system that shapes our development". In describing an example of how this shows up for her professionally, Selina described a couples therapy session: "if I'm working with a couple and there has been an impasse that feels immovable, like 'we can't bridge this gap', I can help them explore how they might be both contributing to the disconnect because we're all limited and flawed and nobody's perfect, so let's examine what expectations we have for ourselves and each other because perfection is impossible". Her confidence in the shared responsibility of friction between partners comes from her spiritual beliefs and values. Bringing these values into the counseling space can be tricky and, at times, a heated encounter. Selina's spirituality gives her rest in believing the source of a person's healing comes not solely from self-reliance, but instead from connection. For Selina, this self-reliance can create "an incredible amount of pressure". Instead, Selina believes that healing comes from one's connection with God and community, as she remarked "we are not meant to do this alone".

SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD

It matters. Whether it be personally or professionally, Selina believes that “these are the things that matter right? Community, connections, relationships, humility, compassion. For me, these are all things that align with my faith”. Elaborating on the importance of these values in our society, Selina mentioned that authenticity in these values is sorely missing at the cultural level and that she wishes “more Christians would talk about what they stand for instead of what they stand against... I think of we as Christians did a better job at that, the world would be better off. I think if the goal was that we as Christians are loving, that we are generous, that we are kind, we are compassionate, we are consistent... I think that would be much better”. As a helping professional and Master’s student in Marriage and Family Therapy, Selina believes the core of our struggle in our relationships with our selves and with others in our lives is a spiritual one: “if I were to sum up the problems many people have in their marriage, it’s that many do not have a reason larger than their own gratification for why they’re together...this is a spiritual problem... but if we had the shared understanding that if I abuse or disrespect you, that I’m hurting myself too, than things can be different... it’s understanding that I need to see us as a unit and that commitment is bigger than my own gratification, than my own happiness and how compatible we are, and how attractive you are to me... that commitment is more important”.

So, what does spirituality look like in counseling?

For Selina Ruiz, it’s personal, it’s professional, and it matters. In the final comments of her interview, Selina reflected on what message she would give to counselors about spirituality to bring it all together: “don’t run from it... don’t assume that religion is this antiquated, ‘old-person’ thing that isn’t modern and that young people aren’t interested in... if you zoom out, everyone worships something, and I think for us as therapists it’s helpful to help clients identify what it is they’re worshipping and whether or not it serves them”.

References

American Counseling Association (2014). *ACA Code of Ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Cashwell, C. S., & Young, J. S. (2020). *Integrating spirituality and religion into counseling: A guide to competent practice* (3rd ed.). American Counseling Association.

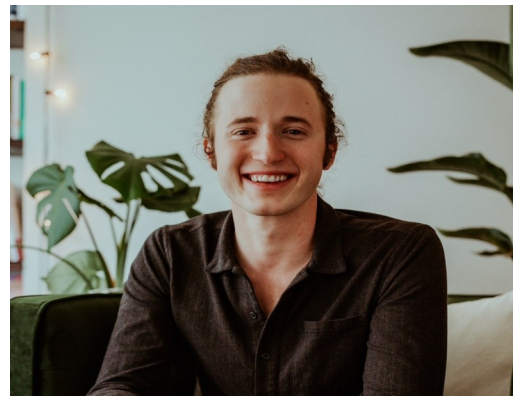
Ohrt, J. P., Clarke, P. B., & Conley, A. H. (2019). *Wellness counseling: A holistic approach to prevention and intervention*. American Counseling Association.

Richards, P. S., & Bergin, A. E. (2005). *A spiritual strategy for counseling and psychotherapy* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE FIELD INTERVIEWERS



Vincent Sears, MA



Bridger Falkenstien, MS, NCC, LPC

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: ALLIE KOCHERT

What drew you to membership in ASERVIC?

Seeking connection with others in the field of psychological integrative science as it pertains to mind-body-spirit wellness. Looking to make connections with other therapists who specialize in burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue in ministry and trauma conscious spiritual care. Connecting with other therapists who are spiritual directors themselves.



How did you get here? What is your spiritual story?

I grew up Catholic, with a deep connection to mysticism, angels, saints, and early Christian desert mothers and fathers and received spiritual direction starting in my teens. I was drawn to mental health care in my teens in part because of an internal sense of call as well as coming from a family of helpers and Western medical healers. I worked in hospitals, outpatient centers, and group practices through the years, as well as raising my three children and being engaged in creative worship and lay leader positions at Catholic and UCC churches. Five years ago I took a year off for an intentional sabbatical that brought me to spiritual direction training at the Haden Institute. I began my online psychotherapy practice after my burnout recovery journey, focusing on supporting others in their own recovery, and have built since a sister practice that is dedicated to the spiritual care of helpers and healers to support ministerial resiliency, as well as offer trauma-conscious spiritual care and other professional trainings. I have a passion to find ways to combine the psychological and spiritual in new and innovative ways.

How do you see yourself working with ASERVIC?

I'm interested in collaborating with others who are dedicated to integrative and holistic offerings of mental and spiritual wellness, especially as it pertains to supporting soul care providers including therapists, pastoral counselors, ministers and spiritual directors. I also am passionate about creating accessible and creative offerings that support and teach about trauma-informed spiritual care from a psychospiritual perspective.

Welcome to ASERVIC, Allie!!

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: DEBORAH LEWIS



What drew you to membership in ASERVIC?

The first time I went to a counselor (in my 20s), I remember being nervous that she would pathologize religious life. Thankfully, that was not the case for me. As a client, most of my deepest work touches on issues of spirituality. As a counselor-in-training, I was thrilled to learn about ASERVIC and to see current efforts to intentionally integrate spirituality and religion into counseling. I'm also an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, with a background in church-related non-profit work and over two decades in campus ministry.

How did you get here? What is your spiritual story?

As a kid visiting my grandparents in rural Virginia, I often went outside at night to marvel at the stars in the ink black sky. I could never see that many at home in our suburban neighborhood. Though I recited "star light, star bright" as I made wishes, in adulthood trying to put words to that experience, I realized all of it was prayer. This "uncovering" of spirituality in the midst of the everyday surprises, affirms, challenges, and comforts me. Being able to share experiences like this with others can help us see our relatedness, to one another and to the Divine.

How do you see yourself working with ASERVIC?

I am in my first semester of the M.Ed. program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at William & Mary. My goal is to weave this degree and training together with my overarching calling as a pastor, to serve in a pastoral counseling capacity. I hope my clergy experience (including an emphasis on interfaith relationships) will be of value to ASERVIC's efforts.

Welcome to ASERVIC, Deborah!!

SERIES ON THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN COUNSELING COMPETENCIES*Attending to the ASERVIC Assessment and Diagnosis and Treatment Competencies Through the Wider and Systematic Adoption of Spiritual and Religious Values in Counseling**By: Jennifer D. Vincas-Cua, PhD, LMHC, LPC, ACS, NCC*

Professional counselors, supervisors, educators, researchers and counselors in training are called to practice counseling with competence. According to the ASERVIC (Cashwell and Watts, 2009) competencies, there are six foundational concepts connected with fourteen com-

petencies, they are culture-worldview, counselor self-awareness, human and spiritual development, communication, assessment, and diagnosis and treatment. This article focuses on the last two competency sections of “assessment” and “diagnosis and treatment” and their four associated competencies. 10. During the intake and assessment processes, the professional counselor strives to understand a client’s spiritual and/or religious perspective by gathering information from the client and/or other sources.

11. When making a diagnosis, the professional counselor 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

12. The professional counselor sets goals with the client that are consistent with the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives.

13. The professional counselor is 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.

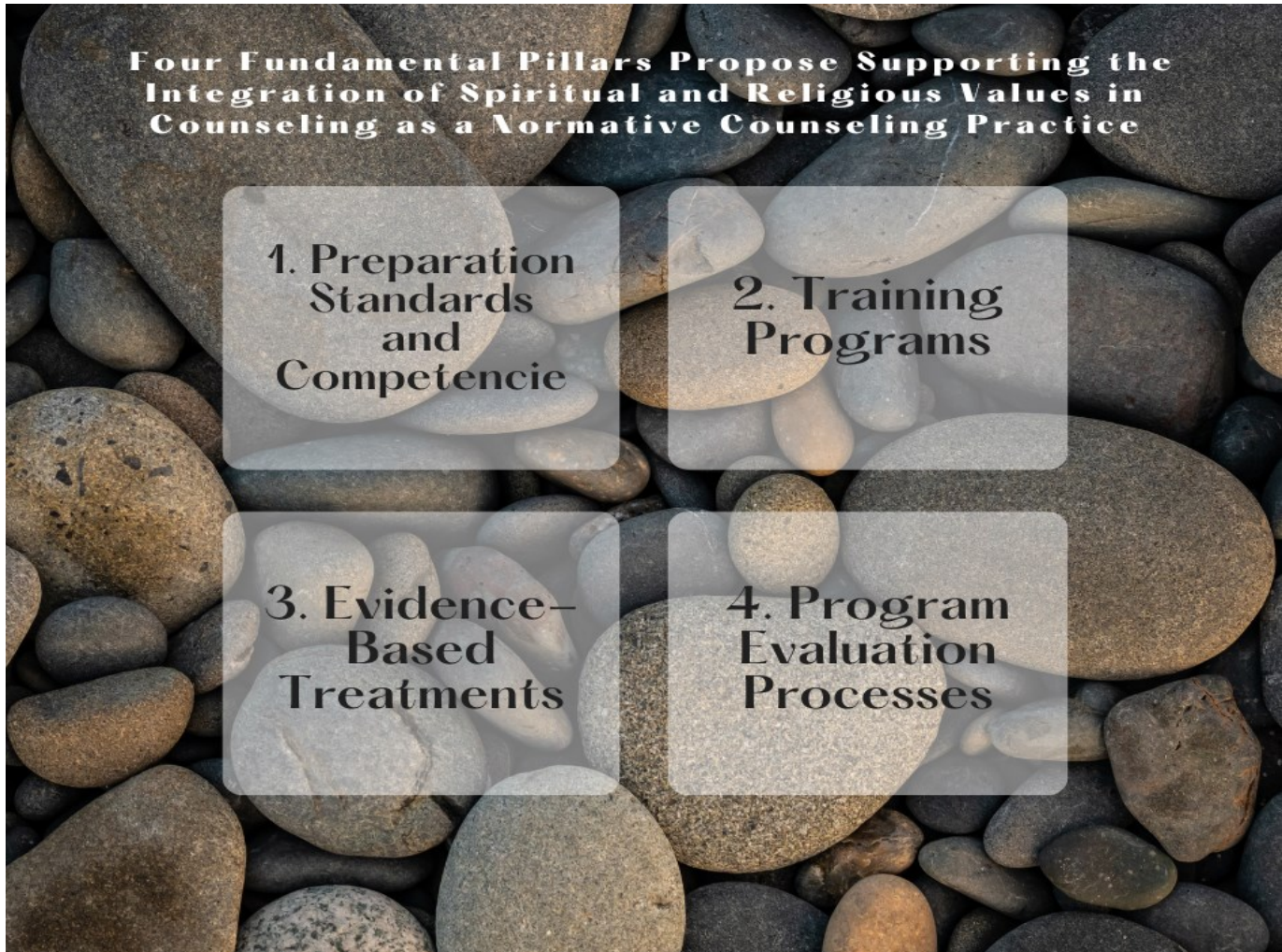
14. The professional counselor can therapeutically

apply theory and current research supporting the inclusion of a client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives and practices.

The grand majority of counselors will work with clients that have a religious or spiritual background. According to the Pew Research Center’s National Public Opinion Reference Surveys, approximately, 70% of the US population identifies with a faith, more specifically 63% of U.S. adults identify as Christians and another 6% of adults identify with non-Christian faiths (2021 Pew Research Center’s National Public Opinion Reference Surveys). The profession has established cultural competencies such as the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (MCC) developed by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) and ASERVIC Competencies that reinforce the importance of teaching and training that increase counselor awareness for cultural matters pertaining to religion and spirituality (Smith et al. 2019). The ASERVIC competencies, promote the need for spiritual and religious competencies training to prepare counselors to understand and utilize client’s spiritual and/or religious perspective into their assessment, diagnosis and treatment.

The importance of spirituality and faith as a cultural variable is part of the fabric of counseling treatment. Counselors often view their client’s faith as playing a prominent role in the lives of individuals and families (Scott et al. 2017). However, this disconnects from counselor comfort in competently addressing this topic. The need must be addressed with a cohesive plan that calls for the standardization and wider adoption of evidence based treatment approaches that integrate religion and spirituality. There are certainly strides and ongoing positive development in this pursuit. Therefore, the following four fundamental pillars propose supporting the integration of spiritual and religious values in counseling as a normative counseling practice.

SERIES ON THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN COUNSELING COMPETENCIES



The pillars uphold our counseling professions' focus on enhancing human development through cultural awareness and responsivity in spirituality and religion.

Preparation Standards and Competencies

Counseling preparation standards are championed by Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). This accrediting body's mission is to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners through specifically the current standards that directly address "spirituality" and "religion" in Section 3, Standard 2.k. "SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY. These standards are to be met in the training of graduate counseling students however this is often taught in an overview of other cultural factors. Ultimately training and supervision for the development of culturally responsive assessment, diagnosis and treatment strategies in spiritu-

ality and religion can gain depth as standard practice. A key recommendation from Bohecker et al., (2017) calls for the adoption of a ninth core CACREP curriculum area that provides counselor competencies for meeting the spiritual and religious needs of clients. This standard can also inform the counseling program training practices at both secular and faith-based institutions (Bohecker et al., 2017). Continued attention towards cohesively and continually training and supporting counselors and counselors in training falls on the training institutions from start to finish.

Training Programs

Training programs have often been delineated to graduate programs at higher education institutions. Other trainings can occur through professional associations and certification programs which offer orientation and continued education trainings. The topic spirituality and religion may be found embedded in Counselor Education curriculum in courses such as Multicultural

SERIES ON THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN COUNSELING COMPETENCIES*Continued ...*

Counseling, Theories of Counseling, Appraisal and Assessment, and Human Development and other Counseling Skills classes. It can also be seen in client work during practicum and internship courses. Other trainings can come through professional associations such as ASERVIC, Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, The Society for Spirituality and Social Work. These associations can offer training through webinars, conferences, and certification programs. The initial trainings can occur through these mediums and ongoing support can be met through additional clinical training and supervision for spiritual and religious competencies in counseling. Partnerships between the professionals, faculty, and students are made in membership to professional associations that strengthen counselor competency in religion and spirituality. These constituents carry out the learning and practice of religion and spirituality in counseling and can formalize their approaches through scientifically based practices.

Evidence Based Treatments

Research proven treatments that integrate religion and spirituality (R/S) are available as new ones are emerging. These approaches offer assessment tools and clinical strategies that when effectively used in treatment, improve the functioning of clients. Research supports the positive relationship findings between the clients' R/S, their mental health and well-being (Koenig et al, 2012). In obtaining positive clinical outcomes, supervision is an integral component that supports counselors learning of treatment modalities while providing feedback that informs any need from clinical treatment adjustments during the implementation process of assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Training needs can also extend to supervisors who are learning new R/S interventions. While clinical experience using treatment models is certainly beneficial for practicing supervisors, the ability to train others on the treatment model can entail more in depth knowledge and skill needs for the supervisor who train their supervisee. Training the trainer often requires additional supervisor training. Supervisory and training methods continue to be a focus for propelling counselor preparation and competency.

Program Evaluation Processes

The development of a rich empirical body of research and the scholarly dissemination of findings on the topics of the spiritual, ethical, and religious values in counseling is trending in its growth. According to Alder et al. (2021)

metastudy that analyzed the publication characteristics of 405 articles from 2000 to 2019 in ASERVIC's flagship journal *Counseling and Values: Spirituality, Ethics, and Religion in Counseling (CVJ)*, it was found that overtime research input in R/S is increasing (68.7% from 2015 to 2019) and also growingly competitively among the most research-intensive counseling journals, such as *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development* (82.6% from 2000 to 2019; Saks et al., 2020) and *Journal of College Counseling* (72% from 2000 to 2019; Milowsky et al., in press). This great momentum is to be leveraged through the possibility of follow-up studies on established measures, treatment, supervision and training practices and program development, implementation and sustainability. This fertile research group in R/S requires a program evaluation framework that considers the three previously referenced pillars of 1. standards and competencies, 2. training programs, and 3. evidence-based treatments with the last and four pillar of program evaluation and findings. The Accountability Bridge Counseling Program Evaluation Model by Astramovich & Coker (2007), has four key components which are 1. Program Planning, 2. Program Implementation, 3. Program Monitoring and Refinements 4. Outcomes Assessment. This last pillar of program evaluation framework can provide a guide towards planning, conducting, and evaluating the advances and barriers of R/S learning while ensuring a refinement process that polishes the ongoing contributions towards the quest for R/S competency to assess, diagnose and treat our clients while ensuring dissemination to training programs and the larger counseling community.

To view the ASERVIC competencies, please visit the website: <http://www.aservic.org/resources/spiritual-competencies/>.

References

- Alder, C., Yu, C., Bardhoshi, G., & Erford, B. T. (2021). Counseling and values metastudy: An analysis of publication characteristics from 2000 to 2019. *Counseling and Values*, 66(2), 218-233. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cvj.12158>
- Astramovich, R. L., & Coker, J. K. (2007). Program evaluation: The accountability bridge model for counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 85(2), 162-172. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2007.tb00459.x>

SERIES ON THE SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES IN COUNSELING COMPETENCIES

Continued ...

Bohecker, L., Schellenberg, R., & Silvey, J. (2017). Spirituality and religion: The ninth CACREP core curriculum area. *Counseling and Values*, 62(2), 128-143. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cvj.12055>

Cashwell, C. S., & Watts, R. E. (2010). The new ASERVIC competencies for addressing spiritual and religious issues in counseling. *Counseling and Values*, 55(1), 2-5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2010.tb00018.x>

Koenig, H. G., King, D., & Carson, V. B. (2012). *Handbook of religion and health*, New York: Oxford University Press
 Scott, S. K., Sheperis, D. S., Simmons, R. T., Rush-Wilson, T., & Milo, L. A. (2016). Faith as a cultural

variable: Implications for counselor training. *Counseling and Values*, 61(2), 192-205. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cvj.12037>

Smith, T. B., Lyon, R. C., & O'Grady, K. (2019). Integration or separation? addressing religious and spiritual issues in multicultural counseling: A national survey of college counselors. *Journal of College Counseling*, 22(3), 194-210. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocc.12137>

Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 20, 64-88. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.1992.tb00563.x



● **FALL 2022 WEBINARS**

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

Presenters: Aparna Ramaswamy, Alfonso Ferguson, & Hridaya Sivalinga
 (August 2022)

Compassionate Forgiveness

Presenter: Awa Jangha
 (November 2022)

ASERVIC is pleased to offer webinars for continuing education to students, counselors, supervisors, and counselor educators. If you are interested in being a webinar presenter, please contact Jennifer Niles (jknilesorefice@wm.edu) with a brief abstract of your proposed presentation topic.

The Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC) has been approved by NBCC as a continuing education provider, ACEP No. 1010. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. ASERVIC is solely responsible for all aspects of the program. For more information about ASERVIC's webinars, visit <https://aservic.org/archived-webinars/>



ASERVIC 2023 CONFERENCE

JUNE 9-10

**Stetson University
DeLand, FL**

WITH KEYNOTE

DR. LISA MILLER

Founding Director of the
Spirituality Mind Body Institute
at Columbia University



**PRESENTATION PROPOSALS
DUE JANUARY 10, 2023**

DATE AND TIME

Friday, June 9, 2023 – Saturday, June 10, 2023
8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
32720

LOCATION

Stetson University
508 North Woodland Blvd Deland, FL

ABOUT THE KEYNOTE: DR. LISA MILLER

Lisa Miller, Ph.D., is the New York Times bestselling author of *The Spiritual Child* and the newly published *The Awakened Brain*. She is a professor in the Clinical Psychology Program at Teachers College, Columbia University, Founder and Director of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute, the first Ivy League graduate program and research institute in spirituality and psychology, and has held over a decade of joint appointments in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University Medical School. Her innovative research has been published in more than one hundred peer-reviewed articles in leading journals, including *Cerebral Cortex*, *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, and the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*.

Dr. Miller is Editor of the Oxford University Press Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality, Founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the APA journal *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, an elected Fellow of The American Psychological Association (APA) and the two-time President of the APA Division 36 Society for Psychology, Religion and Spirituality. A graduate of Yale University and University of Pennsylvania, where she earned her doctorate under the founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, she has served as Principal Investigator on multiple grant funded re-search studies. Dr. Miller speaks and consults around *The Awakened Brain* and *The Spiritual Child* for the US Military, businesses (including tech, finance, HR and sales), personal development, faith based organizations, schools and universities, and for mental health and wellness initiatives.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



INSTAGRAM

https://www.instagram.com/ASERVIC_ACA/

FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/aservicofficial>

TWITTER

https://twitter.com/ASERVIC_ACA



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

**The extended deadline is
MAY 15, 2023**

Please refer to [ASERVIC.org](https://www.aservic.org) for guidelines for publication or for more information, email Joy Mwendwa, *Interaction* Editor, at jmmaweu@liberty.edu