

ETHICS INSTITUTE

Ethics, Law, & Social Justice:
The Intersection of Behaviors and Beliefs

With

Perry C. Francis, Ed.D., LPC
Professor of Counseling
Eastern Michigan University

Case Study #1

The Adjunct Client

Dr. Frank Smith has been a member of the graduate counseling faculty at State University (SU) for 15 years, having earned the rank of full professor 3 years ago. He is well thought of at the university and has held several interim administrative positions on and off throughout the past several years. He is often seen as the “go-to guy” to get certain projects done at the university. This often affords him a certain amount of privilege and prestige in some circles of the institution. He chalks that up to his people skills and ability to motivate others. Dr. Smith also maintains a small private practice close to the university where he gets to “practice what I teach.”

Dr. Mary Washington, a part-time instructor from the College of Arts & Sciences at SU, sought his services for depression and career counseling. Frank, as he likes to be called, agrees to see Mary for a reduced fee because SU does not offer part-time instructors health insurance. She has been an instructor at two other universities over the course of 4 years while looking for a job in her field. She landed at SU after her last position was eliminated when the department hired a tenure track assistant professor for a position she desperately wanted and needed. She explained that as a Black woman in a field dominated by White men, she is often overlooked or shut out of faculty searches. Successful candidates in her field often have mentors or advisors who connect them to others who have openings in their departments. She has neither. Mary also pointed out that the course evaluation process was often stacked against female professors and professors of color in White dominated universities, a fact Frank did not know.

Frank has always treated others fairly at the university. He is committed to SU and proud of the work done at SU to ensure racial equality, although he never really participated in any of the discussions or events on race and culture that were held on campus. He perceives himself as a progressive type of person and so was puzzled when Mary questioned him about his role as a White privileged professor at SU during the intake process. He always considered academia as a safe and egalitarian place for all people.

- 1) Search for the term “cultural encapsulation” and see how it can be applied to Dr. Smith.
- 2) Find the standards in the code of ethics addressing competence and apply them to this case. Keep in mind that competence is not an either/or proposition, but a developmental path that each person is responsible for pursuing.
- 3) What concrete steps can Dr. Smith take to expand his self-awareness?

Case Study #2

Marnie and the Church

Marnie is a school counselor in private K-12 Christian School and maintains a small private practice on the side. She has been a member of the large non-denominational church that owns the school since she was a child and currently serves on various committees and attends worship services weekly. She has often used her client’s religious and spiritual beliefs, when appropriate, as part of her counseling interventions with much success. Debra comes to see Marnie for services because she is on a list of approved providers from her insurance company. As is her practice, Marnie asks about involvement in religious organizations and if the client’s beliefs are a support to them in difficult times. Debra becomes quite agitated and shares she has just left the same church

where Marine is a member due to the church's stance on a woman's place in the home and society. It seems that Debra and her husband sought pastoral counseling from the church staff for marital conflict and was instructed she should support her husband as the leader of the family. Debra always envisioned her marriage as a joint affair, with both parties having an equal say in all family decisions. Her husband continues to attend the church and this has caused major conflict.

Debra caught Marine off guard by what she shared. Marnie had never really examined her role in the church or her church's beliefs on the role of women. She just knew that her church was where she grew up and felt safe.

- What work should Marnie do to examine her assumptions, worldviews, and beliefs in light of what Debra shared?
- How might Marnie develop her knowledge about the different beliefs on the role of women in society?
- What action could Marnie take to examine how her beliefs affects her communication style with clients?

Our Reference Case

The Case of Hiam

You are the director of a counseling center. A practicum student at your counseling center is an observant Orthodox Jew. He is a very bright and gentle man. He announced that he consulted his rabbi who told him that he could see gay people as long as they didn't talk about being gay. The example he gave was if the client is struggling with his/her orientation, he cannot work with them. The problem, of course, is that often if they are struggling it won't arise in a session at the beginning of therapy. The college has a large LGBTQ population on campus and this whole thing is giving you the heebie-jeebies.

Questions:

- 1) If he is allowed to not see gay students are you condoning bigotry?
- 2) What about if it comes up after five sessions?
- 3) What else might the rabbi forbid?
- 4) What is the ethical course of action for the practicum student?
- 5) What is the ethical course of action for you as the director?

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