

Personal Belief System and Attitudes

Linnea Puckett

School of Behavioral Sciences, Liberty University

Author Note

Linnea Puckett

Some of the content in this paper will touch on sensitive subjects and include sexual content.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Linnea Puckett. Email: lpuckett10@liberty.edu.

Abstract

As a future counselor, I want to know how my attitudes and beliefs can or will affect how I can provide the best care to my prospective clients. Therefore, I need to evaluate my values and find actions to separate my personal feelings from how I might respond to a moral/ethical problem. I want to recognize my reaction and response to certain situations and how my worldview influences my decision. Also, I hope that once I realize my problems with the case, I can use the knowledge from my textbooks/articles to find actionable steps to separate my values from how I will treat a patient in a similar situation, as mentioned below.

Keywords: *attitude, belief, Christian Faith, moral issues, values, reaction, response, action, sexual immorality*

Personal Belief System and Attitudes

My initial answers to questions from the Attitudes and Beliefs Inventory (Modified from Corey, G., Cory M.S., & Callanan, P. (2011). Issues and ethics in the helping professions, (8th ed.) Brooks/Cole), expresses how my personal beliefs or attitudes affect my response to certain ethical or moral situations. Therefore, there is a need for self-awareness and growth in my attitudes and beliefs. In this paper, I will discuss my reaction to the questions I perceive as moral problems, how my response is influenced by my philosophies and ideas, and what actionable steps I can take to separate my values from how I respond.

Reaction

In this section, I will discuss three questions invoking a solid response in the Attitudes and Beliefs Inventory. The three questions were: “A student and family who believe non-whites are inferior,” “A student who sexually abused younger siblings,” and “A student who believes women and girls should be subservient to men and boys.” (There were a few others I had stronger reactions to, but I recognize that my response has to do with personal trauma more than my values so I will not include them in here).

“A student and family who believe non-whites are inferior” caused a reaction because I believe God created all of us in his image. Therefore, no one is inferior to another.

We are all seen as equals in God’s eyes. My Christian faith advocates for all believers to be inclusive and compassionate to all. I believe God commands us to love others, as He has shown His love towards us. Also, I think that people who discriminate based on their skin color do not see the person's true character. It is important to reserve judgment on someone until you have all the facts, like the idea of not judging a book by its cover. God commands us not to judge others before first checking ourselves. I also feel these students allow their parents to influence

how they see Others. Therefore, it would be hard for me to feel comfortable around this student and their family, especially if they stated negative or racist things about people of color.

“A student who sexually abused younger siblings” caused a somewhat triggering reaction. Not only do I find the information disturbing, but I believe this is an act of sexual immorality taught as a sin in my faith. I think that being sexually involved with someone who is your sibling is incest, and therefore, the person who is participating in this is sinning against God. But also, outside of faith, I believe it is morally wrong for a person to force someone to commit sexual acts that they did not agree to. Therefore, if I faced such a person, it would be tough to feel comfortable offering counseling services to them without allowing my emotions to come into play.

“A student who believes women and girls should be subservient to men and boys.” caused a reaction to the belief that all people are equal in God’s eyes. Although, in my faith, there is an understanding that women must submit to their husbands and fathers, it also makes it clear that the husband must treat his wife with respect and honor. Now, I believe that women are not equal in the roles they are supposed to play in the family dynamic, but they are similar in every other way. Also, I think women are meant to serve their husbands just as men are supposed to help their wives. Women serve their husbands in caring for the home and family, and the husband helps the wife in protection and provision. Even so, women can assist their husbands to provide for the family if necessary. Therefore, I would face some discomfort when counseling the above student.

Response:

In each scenario, I have expressed my beliefs. Now, I want to explore the origin of each of these beliefs. I will explain when, from whom, and how I learned the values and beliefs I

stated in the above passage. I gained many of these beliefs in the first question when I accepted Christianity at six. I also know that I am influenced by my relationship with my multiracial family members and the values of my mothers, which she taught me. I have a few siblings of a different race. My emotions would be triggered by a student believing they are inferior to me, especially after watching my siblings grow up and accomplish their dreams. In the second question, my Christian faith, influenced by the bible, would be the critical player against sexual immorality. There is an element of personal attack, with younger siblings suffering from this same issue on both sides. Still, I also feel influenced by my community's view of this, as incest is considered wrong by everyone in my community. In the third statement, I think that although there are elements of faith influence, most of my beliefs and attitudes came from observations of my parents and the community around me. Also, I believe many of my values were explicitly taught to me by my parents and couples who were looking for my best interest.

Action

In this section, I will cover what steps I need to take to settle my conflicts with each problem discussed above. Although I believe there are some beliefs I can abstain from affecting my ability to provide counseling services, the stronger beliefs, such as sexual immorality and equality, would be harder not to allow to impact my decisions. However, the article Value Conflicts in Psychotherapy discusses the problem of enabling clients to develop therapeutic goals to avoid conflict. "By valuing the clients' choosing their treatment goals, the therapist has imposed a value and a treatment goal. No matter who determines the purposes, the therapist has foundational beliefs about what constitutes positive mental health for clients, which is inherently a value judgment. We must also recognize that tolerance and respect for client autonomy are both

values as well. In essence, values underlie our very definition of healthy, normal, or well-adjusted states of being.”(Aaron P. Jackson, Jamie Hansen, and Juliann M. Cook-Ly, pg. 8).

So, I cannot allow my patients to decide how we must continue.

In relationship with my faith and work, it is essential to comply with the code of ethics personal values statement, “A.4.b. Personal Values: Counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—their values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Counselors respect the diversity of clients, trainees, and research participants and seek training in areas where they risk imposing their values onto clients, especially when the counselor’s values are inconsistent with the client’s goals or are discriminatory.” (ACA 2014 Code of Ethics, pg 5). Also, when I think about what the article *Handling Conflicts of Personal Value* states. "A counselor is not working for the good of the individual if the counselor sits in judgment of the client." (Michelle E. Wade, pg 16). I am more aware that my judgment might hurt my clients even more when they are only trying to seek my help.

Regarding Sexual immorality, I can use the method of the biblical teachings of grace to reset my mindset. I have to remember that God hates the sin, not the sinner. If I see it in that light, I can extend grace to someone seeking counseling for sexually abusing their siblings. The reminder that they are coming to me because they seek help can help me extend grace towards them. Some steps I can take to ensure this is prayer and biblical guidance by a pastor or myself. I am also seeking therapy for my issues with sexual misconduct. Also, as the article *Balancing Value Bracketing with the Integration of Moral Values in Psychotherapy: Evaluation of a Clinical Practice from the Perspective of Catholic Moral Theology* says, "It is not the task of the psychotherapist or mental health counselor to assist a client with obtaining moral freedom." (Matthew R. McWhorter). I do not have to feel any guilt about what my client chooses to do

outside of when we met. Therefore, I can offer assistance or guidance without feeling like I am betraying my values.

I could promote equality without allowing my personal beliefs to affect how I respond to a client. However, I can be mindful of my emotions in a severe discrimination case by ensuring I walk in my client's shoes. Some actionable steps to ensure I am aware of the differences can be described in *Developing Multicultural Counseling Competence*, 4th Ed. "Seeking out formal and informal opportunities to engage in discourse about historic events and current issues that shape the worldview, cultural background, values, beliefs, bias, and experiences of (privileged or marginalized) clients." (Danica G. Hays, Bradley T. Erford, Appendix pg 675).

Conclusion

After taking the inventory, I know the many challenges I might face in the field. With this recognition, I want to take not only my attitudes and beliefs about the above-stated questions into consideration but all other feelings that might hinder my ability to assist my clients. I am glad I can recognize now the need to be self-aware of how my values might affect my work. I hope to use the actionable methods mentioned to assist me in the current issues presented in this paper and across the board in the other aspects of my career.

References

American Counseling Association. (2014). 2014 ACA *code of ethics*.

<https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>

Jackson, Aaron P.; Hansen, Jamie; and Cook-Ly, Juliann M. (2013) "Value Conflicts in Psychotherapy," *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy*: Vol. 35: No. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp/vol35/iss1/3>

Hays, D. G., & Erford, B. T. (2023). *Developing multicultural counseling competence: a systems approach* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Wade, M. (2015, April). *Handling Conflicts of Personal values* (Counseling.org, Ed.)

[Review of *Handling Conflicts of Personal values*]. Ct.counseling.org;

ct.counseling.org.

McWhorter, M. R. (2019). Balancing Value Bracketing with the Integration of Moral Values in Psychotherapy: Evaluation of a Clinical Practice from the Perspective of Catholic Moral Theology. *The Linacre Quarterly*, 86(2-3), 207–224.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0024363919856810>

