Ethics for Human Service Professionals in the Modern World

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According to the US Census Bureau, 2011, the Internet is used by 30.2% of people worldwide and up to 78.2% of the United States population.

According to Marc Prensky, (back in 2001), technology has ushered in a new world, that has divided us into:

Digital Natives: Have spent their entire lives surrounded by technology, are used to receiving information fast, like to parallel process and multi-task. Prefer their graphics before text rather than afterwards (think Tumbler), they prefer random access, they function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards.
and Digital Immigrants...

Digital Immigrants, according to Prensky, typically have little appreciation for these new skills that the Natives have acquired and perfected through the years of interaction and practice. These skills are almost totally foreign to the immigrants. Some Immigrants might learn better than others, adapt to their environment, but will retain, their “accent” that is their foot in the past, e.g. reading the manual for a program rather than assuming the program itself will teach us to use it (*Thank you Steve Jobs*)
The Native/Immigrant Divide in Action

• Middle aged mother: “Is your friend coming with us to the pool?”
• 14 year old daughter: “I dunno, she hasn’t texted/facebooked me back”
• Middle aged mother: (annoyed/puzzled) Why don’t you just call her house” (on the landline)
• 14 year old daughter: (eyes are rolling, tone of voice is one of complete exacerbation, smart device in hand) “All right, I’ll text/facebook her again)
For Rehabilitation Professionals, Especially those of us from Pre-Millennial Generations, Technology poses Cultural Competency as well as Ethical Challenges
Acknowledgement

What We Will Discuss Today

• Define the Ethical Principles embedded in the CRC Code of Ethics
• Review the challenges presented by evolving technology to the field of Rehabilitation Counseling
• Discuss application of the CRC Code of Ethics via case studies
The Primary Values that Serve as a Foundation for the Code Include:

- Respecting human rights and dignity
- Ensuring the integrity of all professional relationships
- Acting to alleviate personal distress and suffering
- Enhancing the quality of professional knowledge and its application to increase professional and personal effectiveness
- Appreciating the diversity of human experience and culture; and,
- Advocating for the fair and adequate provision of services
FYI-Time does not allow us to review in depth the Top Ten Changes to the Code as of 2010. Please refer to your handouts and the CRC website for more detailed information and resources:

www.crccertification.com/filebin/fdf/CRCC
The Six Ethical Principles:

• **Autonomy:** To respect the rights of clients to be self-governing within their social and cultural framework

• **Beneficence:** To do good to others; to promote the well-being of clients

• **Fidelity:** To be faithful; to keep promises and honor the trust placed in rehabilitation counselors
The Six Ethical Principles:

• **Justice**: *To be fair in the treatment of all clients; to provide appropriate services to all*

• **Nonmaleficence**: *To do no harm to others*

• **Veracity**: *To be honest*
How many of the 6 ethical principles are potentially at play in this scene from “The Good Wife”?  
http://youtu.be/KxunqMmhxqs

• Autonomy?
• Beneficence?
• Fidelity?
• Justice?
• Nonmaleficence?
• Veracity?
Benefits of Social Media

The following 19 slides (slides 10-28) are adapted from McGuire-Kuletz & Froehich 2012

- Find jobs
- Connect with clients (millennial generation and younger)
- Share Information (utilize collaboration tools, access contact information)
- Gather feedback
- Reconnect with old friends/colleagues
To Google or Not to Google?
Behnke (2007) noted that some clinical training directors and graduate psychology program have started to use the Internet to search for information about trainees and applicants. This research raises the risks related to psychologists shifting from a clinical to an investigatory role.
Barnett (2009) focused on the potential for therapists to secretly access client information online. He defined it as **boundary issue** and suggested that this behavior violates an **implied contract** and may affect the **trust** unless this behavior is clearly addressed in the process of informed consent.
Hughes (2009) asserts that it is *not necessarily unethical* to search for patient information online. Her argument was that if information was sought to *promote patient care*, rather than to satisfy a therapist’s curiosity, it could further a legitimate clinical interest.
For example... if a client refused or was unable to provide historical information, an online search might be a reasonable way to obtain supplemental data.
Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Google

• Are you looking because you are curious?
• Are you looking with an employment related intention?
• Is there any way you can involve the consumer in this process? For example....
Considerations for Job Seeking
Consumers & Counselors

• Impress on those you are working with that anyone applying for a job can now reasonably assume that potential employers will “Google” them

• Recommend to job seekers that they “Google” themselves before beginning the job search

• Depending on the results they can clean up, retool, standardize and generally retool their online presence....Because
Considerations for Job Seeking Consumers & Counselors

• One’s outdated posts from old websites might still be accessible

• There may be some unwelcome leaks from Facebook accounts

• Others may share the individual’s name
Remember-Facebook (created in 2004) is a force to be reckoned with....

- 135 million people in the US visit Facebook each month, for on average, 7 hours a month
- Social networks are starting to become part of the criteria that both hiring managers and college admissions officers are using to weed out applicants
- One in five hiring managers conduct background checks using social networks (primarily FB), while one in ten college admissions officers do the same
If Facebook was a country, it would be the third largest country in the world!!
What if one of your consumers sends you a “friend” request?
A Few Guidelines from the CRCC Code of Ethics,
when considering and interpreting the CRCC Code we understand we should:

• Avoid accepting “friends” unless there is a beneficial rationale to do so
• Set your personal privacy settings to “friends only” to avoid unwanted interaction
• Only provide information that accurately reflects your profession
Be Proactive...Keely Kolmes, Psy.D has the following social media policy...

Go to http://www.drkkolmes.com/docs/socmed.pdf to review Dr. Kolmes’ very detailed policy on social media
“This document outlines my policies related to the use of Social Media. Please read so that you know how you can expect me to respond to various interactions that may occur between us on the Internet. If you have any questions about anything I’ve outlined, I encourage you to bring them up at one of our meetings.”
Dr. Kolmes’ policies

- **Friending:** “I do not accept friend or contact requests from current or former clients on any social networking site (Facebook, LinkedIn etc.) I believe adding clients as friends or contacts on these sites can compromise your confidentiality and our respective privacy. It may also blur the boundaries of our relationship”
Dr. Kolmes’ policies

- **Interacting:** “Please do not use __________ to contact me. These sites are not secure and I may not read these messages in a timely fashion. Engaging with me in this way could compromise our confidentiality. If you need to contact me between sessions, the best way to do so is by __________”
And let's not forget...

**Twitter**
- Launched in 2006
- 190 accounts
- “Social networking and microblogging”
- 65 million “Tweets” per day

**LinkedIn**
- Launched in 2003
- 80 million members
- “Professional network”
- Vocational profile
- Colleagues maintain up to date information
- Promotes collaboration
New form of discrimination in the digital age

“WEBLINING”: Practice of denying opportunities to certain people due to observations about their digital selves
Section J.1. Behavior and Identification
Behavior and Identification J.1.a-
Application and Competence

Rehabilitation counselors are held to the same level of expected behavior and competence as defined by the Code, regardless of the technology used (e.g., cellular phones, email, facsimile, video, audio, audio-visual) or its application (e.g., assessment, research, data storage)
Behavior and Identification J. 2.b-
Problematic use of the Internet

Rehabilitation counselors are aware of behavioral differences with the use of the Internet, and/or methods of electronic communication, and how these may impact the counseling process.

For Example.........
Online Disinhibition Effect
People Do and Say Things Online That They Wouldn’t in a Face to Face World- Suler, J. (2004)

• You don’t know me- being anonymous provides a sense of protection, e.g. having a user name

• You can’t see me- online, it is easier to misrepresent yourself, also online there are no available social cues such as tone of voice, changes in expression etc.

• See you later- conversations don’t happen in real time. A person can voice their opinion and then leave the conversation
Online Disinhibition Effect

• **It’s all in my Head**—visual face-to-face gives immediate indication of the other person. Online, we do not know the true characteristics and traits of another. We can assign qualities and traits that we desire that the person might not have.

• **It’s just a Game**—Suler paraphrases Emily Finch, a lawyer who studies identity theft in cyberspace. She suggests that people may see cyberspace as a kind of game where the normal rules of everyday interaction don’t apply to them.

• **We’re Equals**—People are more likely to speak their mind to an equal rather than a superior being. “Online, what a feels like a peer relationship with the appearances of “authority” minimized—people are more willing to speak out or misbehave.”
Behavior and Identification J. 1.c-

**Potential Misunderstandings:** Rehabilitation counselors educate clients on how to prevent and address potential misunderstandings arising from the lack of visual cues and voice intonations when communicating electronically.
In the most recent Issue of the *Journal of Rehabilitation*, Martha Chapin and Andrew Byrne of East Caroline University’s article “Ethical Decision Making Applied to Social Networking” suggests a decision making model by Rubin and colleagues (1991) that rehabilitation counselors can apply to ethical dilemmas posed by social media....
Rubin’s 6-Step Decision Making Model

• Select between two courses of action
• State the factually based reasons for supporting each course of action
• State the ethical principles supporting each course of action
• State the factually based reasons for not supporting each course of action
• Indicate which ethical principles will be compromised for each course of action
And Finally…..

Justify your decision for choosing a particular course of action by including selective points from the above steps
Read the case study in your handouts, adapted from Chapin and Byrne’s article before we proceed
Step One: Two Courses of Action, Sandy must decide to either:

• Address what she saw on line during her vocational counseling/planning sessions with Kayla, or....

• Keep her knowledge of the photo to herself
Step Two: Factually based for supporting each course action. (Using the photo in session in a therapeutic manner; ) Reasons to support discussing the photo include

- Kayla may not be aware of the photo’s existence or that it identifies her
- If Kayla is on Facebook, and depending on her privacy settings, the photo may be accessible to potential employers
- The photo may document a relapse
- The photo shows Kayla engaging in a behavior in which she could harm herself (increased risk of seizure) and may apply to Sandy’s duty to warn
Step three: Ethical principles supporting use of the photo

- Sandy has an ethical obligation to act against possible harms to Kayla and others
- Including potential harm from alcohol use
- May disclose as part of her obligation that addresses veracity
Step Four: Factually based reasons to support not discussing the photo include:

• If the photo becomes part of the counseling process, and placed in the record, it could be subpoenaed
• The photo may have been staged (Kayla was not drinking)
• The person in the photo may look like Kayla, but be someone else
• If Sandy uses Motivational Interviewing techniques, the picture might be considered irrelevant to the counseling relationship
• Using the photo may threaten Kayla’s relationship with their mutual friend Janette
Step five: Ethical principles that support not using the photo

• Sandy protects Kayla’s autonomy
• Beneficence - Janette’s friendship provides Kayla with therapeutic support
• Facebook may be central to Kayla’s generational culture - applying to Code section A.2. Respecting Diversity
• If Sandy uses the photo, it may cause a disruption Kayla’s friendship, may be considered a support network see Code section A.3.: Support Network Involvement of the Code
Step six, Justify the Decision
Per Chapin and Byrne

• Not all information is helpful to the therapeutic alliance when shared
• Sandy can use the photo to inform counseling dialogue without alerting Kayla to its existence (reviewing recovery status, seizure risk)
• Sandy may choose to confront Janette on having a posting that shows her drinking without revealing her role as Kayla’s
Keep in Mind, when faced with a potential ethical dilemma, resources available to you include:

- Your colleagues
- Your supervisor
- Your agency’s policies and procedures
- and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification

www.crccertification.com
A Few Highlights from Section L: Resolving Ethical Issues

• **L.1. Knowledge of CRCC Standards**: Rehabilitation Counselors are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the Code, and seeking clarification of any standard that is not understood. Lack of knowledge or misunderstanding of an ethical responsibility is not a defense against a charge of ethical conduct.

• **L.3. Application of standards, section e.**: When uncertain as to whether particular situations or courses of action may be in violation of the Code, rehabilitation counselors consult with other professionals who are knowledgeable about ethics, with supervisors, colleagues, and/or with appropriate authorities, such as CRCC, licensure boards, or legal counsel.
Some Netiquette Sites

• http://www.albion.com/netiquette/

• http://www.networketiquette.net/index.html
References

• Behnke, S. (2007), July/August). Ethics in the age of the Internet. APA Monitor on Psychology, July 74-75
Thank You!

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