Mythical Creature Vignettes

A Creative Instructional Intervention for Ethical Decision-Making and Cultural Competence

Mythical vignettes represent a new and creative instructional method for teaching ethics and cultural competency to master's-level counseling students. By incorporating scenarios involving mythical creatures and their unique cultural and ethical dilemmas, instructors can promote student engagement and critical thinking. Students can practice strategies for addressing cultural issues in ways that align with ethical principles as well as state, local, and federal laws. Through developing treatment plans tailored to "mythical" clients, students enhance their understanding of the ACA Code of Ethics, improve their cultural competency, and prepare for real-world practice in navigating ethically complex and culturally diverse situations.

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Introduction

Ethical practice represents one of the most fundamental skills that must be taught in a quality counselor education program. As a counselor, ethical practice requires a deep knowledge of ethical codes, laws, and one's own personal values (Levitt et al., 2019). Without a strong foundation in ethical practice, counselors may make decisions that lead to ethical violations, thus putting their clients and their licensure at risk. For this reason, all counseling programs accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) must teach ethics to their counselors-in-training (CACREP, 2024). The 2024 CACREP standards emphasize that counselors-in-training should understand how to engage in ethical practice when they begin working with clients.

However, teaching ethical practice to counselors-in-training (CITs) can be a difficult task. This is because learning about ethics goes beyond simple knowledge acquisition through textbooks or lectures (Zakaria & Warren, 2016). Teaching and learning about ethics draws from a diversity of salient elements, requiring both teacher and student to engage in an exploration of the personal and cultural values they have developed throughout their lifetime (Zakaria & Warren, 2016). The use of creative methods may provide a way to better engage students in the ethical learning process.

The use of creative, play-based andragogical strategies are known to be valuable in developing a variety of skills for CITs (Isawi et al., 2024). Further, the use of creative storytelling - through clinical vignettes, archetypes, metaphors, myths, fables, and even personal anecdotes from practice - have been found to enhance the learning practice for CITs (Dempsey, 2023). As such, the creation of adapting fairy tales to address typical ethical counseling dilemmas has become a popular method of instruction in counselor education programs (Henderson & Malone, 2012). Creative scenarios, such as adapted fairy tales, allow CITs to explore the nuances of ethical decision-making in a non-threatening environment, reducing anxiety about potential mistakes (Levitt et al., 2019). By integrating mythical vignettes, CITs gain the opportunity to address ethical dilemmas that might not be immediately evident in traditional case studies.

This brief acts as an extension of the popular tradition of adapting fairy tales to clinical vignettes, by demonstrating that vignettes generated about mythical or supernatural creatures may be useful in educating CITs on ethical decision making and cultural sensitivity. In the following sections, we provide examples of how creative vignettes of mythical creatures may be used as a tool for educating CITs about ethical practice with cultures with which they are not familiar.

DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY: MYTHICAL CREATURE VIGNETTES

The use of vignettes as an andragogical strategy has long been valued in counselor education for its ability to simulate realistic yet controlled scenarios that elicit students' genuine reactions

and decision-making skills (Gray, 2024). Those genuine reactions and decision-making skills can then be reflected upon, in an effort to help counselors-in-training build insight and further develop their skills. While many traditional vignettes focus on human contexts, the inclusion of mythical creature scenarios offers a unique, creative avenue to address complex ethical and cultural dilemmas.

This innovative approach aligns with experiential learning theory by providing CITs with opportunities to actively engage, reflect, and conceptualize abstract concepts in counseling ethics and multicultural sensitivity (Kolb, 1984; Isawi et al., 2024). Through the use of mythical vignettes, students are immersed in complex scenarios that require them to analyze ethical dilemmas, evaluate cultural nuances, and apply theoretical knowledge in a structured yet creative manner. For example, a vignette that explores the ethical implications of working with a faerie who feels pressured to hide their pointed ears due to the societal pressure to "fit in" with non-magical creatures could allow CIT's to engage actively and creatively with the issues of conformity, authenticity, and cultural assimilation.

This active engagement fosters a deeper understanding of abstract principles, as students move beyond passive learning to actively constructing meaning from their experiences. Reflection plays a key role in this process, allowing CITs to critically assess their assumptions, biases, and decision-making strategies. By applying these insights to develop culturally responsive and ethically sound treatment plans, students bridge the gap between theory and application. This method not only enhances their conceptual grasp of counseling ethics but also builds essential skills for navigating the complexities of real-world practice in diverse and multicultural settings.

ENHANCING ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Ethical practice requires CITs to navigate multifaceted issues involving autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, fidelity, and justice (ACA, 2014). Mythical creature vignettes introduce imaginative yet plausible dilemmas that challenge students to think critically about ethical codes, laws, and the students' own personal biases. For example, a vignette where a deaf Giantess faces exclusion from society due to her size and disability status could represent an opportunity for students to safely explore compounded discrimination due to intersectional marginalized identities. Students are challenged to think critically about personal values and cultural sensitivity, key areas of competency within the American Counseling Association (ACA) code of ethics (2014). By working through these imaginative yet realistic scenarios, students practice navigating complex ethical landscapes, gaining confidence and skills that will translate to their work with diverse human clients. This experiential approach enhances ethical competence and prepares CITs for the unpredictability of real-world counseling.

ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CREATIVITY

Counselor education research has increasingly focused on the value of creative strategies in promoting engagement, reflection, and empathy among CITs (Isawi et al., 2024; Saunders & Cogburn, 2024). By integrating storytelling elements from mythology, educators can create a dynamic learning environment that captivates students' imaginations while meeting CACREP (2024) standards for ethical and cultural training. The playful nature of mythical creature vignettes also aligns with the therapeutic powers of play, which facilitate self-expression and emotional exploration (Schaefer & Drewes, 2013). Storytelling, particularly through the lens of mythology, allows students to immerse themselves in creative scenarios that feel engaging yet non-threatening. Mythical creature vignettes can stimulate creative thinking by introducing unusual dilemmas, such as a phoenix experiencing burnout from constant rebirth, which mirrors real-world concerns like professional exhaustion or identity struggles. These imaginative, creative contexts draw CITs into active problem-solving, fostering greater emotional investment and a willingness to consider diverse perspectives.

As students engage with these scenarios, they develop skills that can later be applied to real-world counseling cases, such as analyzing client behavior through both an empathetic and critical lens. Such scenarios also encourage students to collaborate and share interpretations, building classroom cohesion and reinforcing the idea that multiple viewpoints can coexist. In this way, creative storytelling through mythical creature vignettes not only meets educational goals but also nurtures the emotional and intellectual growth of CITs, preparing them for the nuanced challenges of real-world counseling.

DEVELOPING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Incorporating mythical creatures into vignettes broadens the scope of cultural competence training by encouraging students to reflect on the "otherness" of fictional beings. As Gray (2024) notes, vignettes can bridge gaps in understanding by fostering empathy and reducing bias. For example, a vignette featuring a merfolk client experiencing systemic discrimination due to their aquatic heritage can parallel real-world issues faced by marginalized groups, providing a creative lens for exploring privilege, oppression, and advocacy. This approach complements existing literature advocating for culturally relevant andragogy in counselor education (Henderson & Malone, 2012). Using mythical creatures as an allegory for marginalized groups allows CITs to safely examine their biases and assumptions without the defensiveness that may arise in discussions about real-world populations. Such exercises challenge students to develop deeper cultural humility and a more nuanced understanding of how privilege, power, and oppression manifest in diverse client experiences.

APPLICATION ALONGSIDE AN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL

When utilizing an innovative, creative instructional method like this, it is prudent to simultaneously utilize an ethical decision-making model. This helps provide scaffolding for students to

understand the serious process of making ethical decisions as future counselors. While these creative mythical creature vignettes can be used alongside any ethical decision-making model, the Transcultural integrative ethical decision-making model, as proposed by Garcia et al. (2003), provides a helpful framework for resolving ethical dilemmas by incorporating cultural variables into traditional ethical decision-making processes.

The transcultural integrative ethical decision-making model consists of four stages that guide counselors through ethical dilemmas (Garcia et al., 2003). The first stage focuses on enhancing sensitivity and conducting thorough fact-finding to understand the nature of the dilemma and the cultural values of all stakeholders (Garcia et al., 2003). Counselors are encouraged to reflect on their own cultural identity and biases to recognize how these might influence their perception of the situation. In the second stage, counselors formulate ethical decisions by reviewing relevant ethical codes, laws, and policies while generating culturally informed courses of action (Garcia et al., 2003). This stage emphasizes the inclusion of diverse worldviews and the use of relational methods, such as negotiation and consensus-seeking, to reach a balanced resolution.

The third stage involves weighing competing nonmoral values and affirming the chosen course of action (Garcia et al., 2003). Counselors must critically evaluate their own values and consider how institutional, societal, and cultural influences may impact the implementation of their decisions. The fourth and final stage focuses on planning and executing the selected course of action, including anticipating potential barriers and developing culturally relevant strategies to address them. This comprehensive process ensures that ethical decisions are grounded in both principle and virtue ethics while remaining sensitive to cultural diversity (Garcia et al., 2003). When applied to mythical creature vignettes, this model offers a dynamic tool for counselor education. This model's emphasis on cultural adaptability and relational methods aligns well with the imaginative and diverse nature of mythical creature vignettes. It equips CITs to approach ethical dilemmas with a reflective and culturally competent mindset, ensuring they are well-prepared for the complexities of real-world counseling practice.

Assignment Recommendations

This instructional framework integrates the ethical decision-making model into a series of mythical creature vignettes, offering a structured approach for teaching ethics and cultural sensitivity to CITs. The pre-activity instructor preparation allows instructors to engage with the mythical vignettes ahead of time. Following the pre-activity stage, the instructor will be well-equipped to guide students through this four-step mythical creature vignette. In this activity, students can learn to engage with complex scenarios, applying ethical principles and counseling theories to culturally nuanced cases. Four full vignettes, including an instructor and student copy, can be found [here].

PRE-ACTIVITY INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION

Instructors may benefit from engaging with this content ahead of implementing it in class. This can help instructors become aware of their own reactions to this assignment before using it with CITs. The following prompts can act as a journaling exercise to help instructors better frame, guide, and debrief students.

Instructor Self-Reflection

1. How might my own cultural background, values, and lived experience (personal and professional) influence my ability to lead students through this creative exercise?

2. How can I model ethical decision-making and cultural sensitivity to my students?

3. How can I model humility and curiosity when biases or blind spots may appear — both my own and my students?

4. How did my own instructors/supervisors/mentors successfully model ethical decision-making and cultural sensitivity to me?

Classroom and Student Preparation

1. What are the core ethical principles and cultural competencies that I want students to take away from this exercise?

2. What classroom "rules" or guidelines may be put in place before this assignment begins to help students approach these mythical vignettes with the right mindset? For example, respect, curiosity, confidentiality, non-judgment, etc.

3. What steps can I take to ensure my classroom is a place where students feel safe to explore ethical decision-making and cultural competence?

4. How can I help frame this exercise so that students…

    1. Make meaning of these mythical vignettes by translating metaphor into practice?

    2. Apply those insights from fictional scenarios to their own current or future human clients?

Instructor Practice/Preparation Tips

1. Run through the chosen vignette yourself before assigning it to students, using the student handout. See what you come up with on your own, without the instructor's guide. Note anywhere that you felt curious, defensive, or surprised — these moments can be powerful teaching cues.

2. Identify any parts of your own response that you may feel comfortable sharing with the class after they complete the assignment. This can be a great opportunity to model openness and reflection.

3. Consider and reflect on what kind of feedback you may anticipate from students (e.g., discomfort, disengagement) and take a moment to plan how you will respond. Prioritize

curiosity over correction.

After running through this pre-activity instructor preparation stage, instructors will be better prepared to lead students through the next phase of the assignment, which consists of four steps: applying the ethical decision-making model, applying counseling theories, developing a treatment plan, and reflecting on the process. To demonstrate this four-step process, the mythical vignette of Ghoulberta will be used.

Scenario: Ghoulberta

Ghoulberta is a ghost presenting to your private practice for counseling. She wants to work on minimizing her negative self-talk, but reports having difficulty speaking kindly to herself, especially when she makes a mistake. Ghoulberta would like your support to become a more confident version of herself. However, she works at a demanding job and has very little free time to attend counseling. She asks if you offer video appointments, but there's only one issue - as far as you know, ghosts can't be seen on video! Does this present an issue for telehealth visits? Can you ask Ghoulbert to wear a sheet over her ghostly form so you can see her?

Step 1: Apply the Ethical Decision-Making Model

Students begin by going through the steps of the transcultural integrative ethical decision-making model (Garcia et al., 2003). Using the first stage, CITs identify the cultural norms and values relevant to their assigned mythical client's circumstances. In the second stage, the students would need to review the relevant ethical and legal codes. This could include the ACA code of ethics (2014) and relevant national and state laws. In the third and fourth stages, CITs would be able to discuss and evaluate their chosen course of action while addressing relevant cultural considerations.

In the case of Ghoulberta, students are asked to analyze the ethics of an interesting situation related to telehealth. Telehealth, also called online therapy, e-therapy, or teletherapy, is a method of delivering health and psychotherapeutic services either synchronously or asynchronously via phone, e-mail, application, and/or live video (du Preez et al., 2024). Video-based therapy has become popular, particularly after the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic (du Preez et al., 2024). As such, it is important to consider the ethical considerations that accompany a type of therapy that has grown so rapidly in popularity in recent years.

Per the first stage of the ethical decision-making model, the counselor should first ensure that they have an accurate understanding of the nature of the dilemma. First, it might be a good idea for the counselor-in-training to make sure that they were right in understanding that ghosts can't be seen on video. Is this fact or fallacy? When you do not have a lot of experience with a new group of people, it is important that you take the time to check your own understanding. Making unintentionally discriminatory statements or inquiries, like asking Ghoulbert to wear a sheet so you can see him during telehealth sessions, would constitute a microaggression. This could damage or even fracture the counseling relationship.

Per the second stage of the ethical decision-making model, the counselor should review any relevant ethical codes and laws. Regarding laws, the counselor should check their own local

and state laws at the time of this assignment. Because telehealth is a budding industry, there are near-constant changes to local, state, and federal laws that make this a vital step for any counselor who chooses to engage in telehealth sessions (Sheperis & Smith, 2021). Some states have strict and well-defined laws regarding telehealth, and others do not yet have any specific laws that regulate teletherapy (Sheperis & Smith, 2021). As such, each counselor should regularly familiarize themselves with the laws that govern telehealth.

Regarding ethics, there are also many considerations. While teletherapy has many benefits, there are also ethical risks that need to be considered when choosing to engage with a client over a telehealth platform. Many of these ethical considerations are also relevant in traditional face-to-face therapeutic practice, but they may require more careful consideration in a video-based therapeutic session (du Preez et al., 2024). For example, competency, security, and accessibility are concerns in traditional face-to-face therapy, but may require extra thought in the context of a virtual session.

One of the most widely cited competency-based ethical concerns for teletherapy is the potential absence of nonverbal cues - this could lead to miscommunications or misunderstandings between the therapist and client (Stoll et al., 2020). It is possible that the therapist could miss important clinical information, which could lead to incorrect diagnoses and as such, incorrect or ineffective treatment planning (Stoll et al., 2020). Additionally, there is a noted lack of ethical and legal guidelines for the practice of telehealth (Stoll et al., 2020). Online therapy may not be appropriate for all clients or all treatment modalities (Stoll et al., 2020).

There are also security-based ethical concerns that must be considered in telehealth therapy when you cannot see the client. Since Ghoulberta cannot be seen on camera, there may be concerns about identity verification issues. Deception or fraud is a possibility when the client cannot be seen on camera (Harris & Birnbaum, 2015; Stoll et al., 2020). Additionally, the ACA code of ethics states that counselors must verify the identity of their clients at the beginning of the therapeutic process, and throughout the entirety of their treatment (ACA, 2014). What methods could students employ to verify the identity of their ghost client?

Accessibility also represents an important consideration in telehealth therapy. Telehealth therapy provides flexibility and increased accessibility to care for most patients (du Preez et al., 2024). However, there is an added burden on therapists to assess the suitability of telehealth for each client (du Preez et al., 2024). It may be important to ask whether in-person therapy be accessible to Ghoulberta, given her scheduling concerns. If not, it may be time to get creative, or refer Ghoulberta to a counselor with availability that closer matches her needs.

For stage three of the ethical decision-making model, the counselor-in-training should weigh all the aforementioned values, ethical codes, and laws before ultimately affirming their chosen course of action. There are many legal and ethical codes that need to be considered. Ultimately, mental health interventions should be easily accessible and, whenever possible, targeted to a client's unique circumstances (Griner & Smith, 2006). For Ghoulberta, this may make therapy over the telephone the best fit.

Per the fourth and final stage of the ethical decision-making model, the counselor should plan and implement the selected course of action. This would, for Ghoulberta, consist of deciding whether to offer teletherapy or refer Ghoulberta out to a counselor with availability that more closely matches her needs. While there are greater risks for miscommunication in teletherapy than there are in traditional, face-to-face therapy, sometimes this represents the most accessible and feasible option for clients (Manalili, 2024). The counselor should adequately complete and document written informed consent for treatment that provides information about the limits of confidentiality when using electronic communications (Brenes et al., 2012). Additionally, counselors who wish to utilize telephone therapy should ensure that they engage in training or study of methods that strengthen their reflective listening skills, their attentiveness to auditory cues from clients, and their ability to convey warmth and emotion using only their voice (Brenes et al., 2012).

Step 2: Apply Counseling Theories to Ethical and Cultural Dynamics
In step two of this mythical vignette, students should evaluate the merits of different counseling theories to address the cultural and ethical dimensions of their mythical client cases. In examining the counseling theories that may be most appropriate for Ghoulberta, students should begin by looking at her presenting concern. During Ghoulberta's intake session, she reported a desire to minimize her negative self-talk and increase her confidence. With these goals in mind, a few options for treatment may include:

- strengths-based counseling
- positive psychotherapy
- acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)
- humanistic therapy
- cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)

Step 3: Develop a Treatment Plan
Students draft treatment plans tailored to their mythical clients, bringing together ethical, legal, cultural, and theoretical considerations. Guided by the third and fourth stages of the decision-making model, students evaluate proposed solutions and plan their implementation, considering potential cultural barriers and ethical implications.

For example, as discussed through the lens of the ethical decision making model in step one, treatment planning would involve deciding whether or not to offer teletherapy or refer Ghoulberta out to a counselor that may be more accessible to Ghoulberta. Treatment planning would also include a plan on how to properly address Ghoulberta's presenting concern: a desire to minimize negative self-talk and increase confidence.

Step 4: Reflection
In step four, students reflect on their own reactions to this assignment. In this stage, students are prompted to challenge their own biases and preconceived ideas. Without this reflection stage, it may be easy for students to treat this exercise as an unserious assignment about fake

clients, but this reflection stage allows the CITs to take examine their biases and preconceived ideas about clients who have problems that may not seem "real" to them. The instructor will play a pivotal role in guiding the students through this reflective process and may choose to have students engage in reflection individually, as a small group, as part of a discussion with the whole class, or any combination of those options. The instructor has the flexibility of choosing which option makes the most sense for their specific class and their individual learning needs.

Evaluation and Assessment

Evaluation of an assignment based on these mythical vignettes would be centered around assessing students' ability to integrate ethical principles, cultural awareness, counseling theories, and thoughtful self-reflection into practical applications. Students' ability to apply ethical principles and demonstrate cultural sensitivity is evaluated through their engagement with the mythical vignettes, aligning with the cognitive levels outlined in Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). Faculty assess how well students identify and address ethical dilemmas, such as interspecies confidentiality or cultural power dynamics, within the context of their assigned mythical clients, focusing on their progression through Bloom's stages of learning.

Evaluation for this assignment occurs over two domains: self-evaluation and instructor-evaluation. The opportunity for self-evaluation is built into the assignment, where students are expected to reflect upon their own experience of the assignment. Instructors will evaluate the students' performance on the treatment plans students draft for their mythical clients. Additionally, instructors will evaluate the students on their performance in the reflective portion of the assignment, which can be conducted individually, as a small-group discussion, or as a full classroom discussion. The instructor can choose which reflective evaluation is most appropriate, based on the needs of the learners.

The feedback should highlight strengths in aligning counseling theories with ethical and cultural considerations while offering constructive suggestions for improvement. For example, students may be encouraged to refine their treatment approaches to address the unique cultural norms or relational dynamics of their mythical clients. This iterative feedback process reinforces learning and supports the development of practical counseling skills. Additionally, the feedback for both small and large group discussions are evaluated through an analysis of the students' comprehension, creativity, collaboration, and thoughtful reflection. Faculty observe how students analyze ethical and cultural dilemmas, propose innovative solutions, and engage in critical dialogue with peers. Attention should be given to how well students incorporate diverse perspectives and demonstrate creative problem-solving in addressing the complexities of their mythical clients' scenarios.

Emphasis is placed on the depth of understanding and accuracy in applying the ACA code of ethics (2014) and relevant state laws, aligning with the knowledge level of Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). Students will be expected to recall and recognize relevant ethical standards and state laws, increasing their retention of key ethical guidelines. At the comprehension level, students demonstrate their understanding by accurately explaining the ethical and cultural principles underlying their decisions. The application level is evident as students implement these principles in crafting treatment plans and addressing specific challenges posed by mythical clients. Faculty will further assess how well students deconstruct complex ethical dilemmas, examining the interactions between counseling theories and cultural nuances in the provided vignettes. At the synthesis level, students are encouraged to integrate multiple theoretical approaches with ethical considerations, creating cohesive and culturally sensitive treatment plans. Finally, at the evaluation level, students critically assess their own work and the feedback provided, demonstrating reflective thinking and a commitment to improving their professional skills (Anderson et al., 2001; Bloom et al., 1956).

Discussion and Implications

This brief serves as a demonstration of how mythical creature vignettes may be useful in educating CITs about ethics and cultural responsiveness in counseling. Mythical vignettes like those in the appendices may help creatively engage counselors-in-training about topics that are paramount to successful practice in the field of clinical mental health. While the application of fairy tale vignettes has been popular in the field of counselor education for many years (Henderson & Malone, 2012), this brief acts as an extension of current creative counselor education methods in an effort to provide more tools to counselor educators and supervisors. Through the use of these mythical creature vignettes, counselors-in-training will be able to apply their skills to novel cases and, in doing so, practice their ethical counseling skills.

The use of mythical creature vignettes in counselor education offers unique implications for enhancing cultural competency and ethical decision-making skills among CITs. By reflecting on the "otherness" of fictional beings, CITs can safely examine their biases and develop empathy for clients from diverse cultural backgrounds (Gray, 2024). This approach aligns with culturally relevant andragogy and fosters greater understanding of privilege, oppression, and advocacy (Ratts et al., 2015). Additionally, these vignettes allow CITs to practice ethical decision-making in a non-threatening environment, promoting engagement with principles like autonomy, beneficence, and justice. By applying structured ethical decision-making models to imaginative scenarios, students develop confidence in addressing ethical dilemmas, which translates to their real-world practice.

Limitations

As with any teaching exercise, it is important to recognize that the use of mythical vignettes in a classroom setting comes with limitations. These include the risk of student over-detachment, cultural misrepresentation, and poor transferability. As mythical vignettes are centered around fictional beings rather than real client examples, students may mentally "check out" and detach from the seriousness of the exercise unless instructors explicitly frame the activity as a metaphor, rather than a diversion from human-centered ethical decision making. Students should be reminded that ethical dilemmas always involve people, even when framed fictionally, and their analyses must reflect empathy, human dignity, and awareness of real-world parallels (Rogers, 1957, 1961). Clear guidance and reflective debriefs can help students address why it may feel easier to dismiss cultural sensitivity when the "client" is not perceived as human, prompting students to explore implications for their practice. This can help the risk of depersonalization.

Cultural vignettes always carry the possibility of misrepresentation and poor transferability. With mythical vignettes, this risk is heightened because students may project human cultural stereotypes onto fictional beings if left unguided. Rather than challenging biases, such projection can inadvertently reinforce them. To mitigate this, assignment instructions include a directive that students use multiple credible sources, both online and print, to ground their work in evidence-based cultural construction rather than assumption. Faculty must reinforce that multiple representations exist for mythical figures, and critical engagement across sources is expected. This approach reduces the likelihood of reinforcing stereotypes and instead cultivates critical cultural reflection. However, mitigation depends on strong faculty framing. Without explicit guidance linking fantasy to real cultural frameworks such as intersectionality and systemic oppression, the assignment risks reinforcing bias rather than dismantling it (Sue et al., 2007). This will also help mitigate the risk of poor transferability, helping students apply these mythical scenarios to human clients and in doing so, carry over important lessons in empathy, ethics, and cultural competence into their professional work. Mitigation requires faculty to explicitly coach students through holding both metaphor and personhood in mind. Pre-activity lectures or guided discussions should clarify that allegory must deepen, not diminish, ethical clarity.

Future Directions

A promising direction is adapting mythical vignettes for online and/or hybrid learning environments. Virtual platforms could incorporate storytelling through simulations or collaborative activities, making this creative approach more accessible to CITs in diverse

educational settings. Incorporating global mythologies could further enhance cultural awareness by exposing students to values and beliefs from various cultural perspectives. These future directions not only support innovative teaching strategies but also ensure CITs are better equipped to navigate the complexities of counseling practice with cultural sensitivity and ethical integrity (Isawi et al., 2024). Through continued research and development, mythical creature vignettes can evolve as a valuable tool for preparing counselors for diverse and ethically complex scenarios.

Future research could explore how mythical creature vignettes can extend beyond ethical training to other clinical skills, such as diagnosis, treatment planning, and crisis intervention. Studies could also assess the effectiveness of these vignettes in improving student outcomes, such as cultural humility and ethical reasoning (Parker et al., 2022). Expanding this approach to include intersectional identities within mythical narratives, such as a werewolf facing stigma due to overlapping marginalized traits, would deepen CITs' understanding of how societal attitudes and systemic barriers affect clients' mental health and well-being.

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