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Book Review

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Review of Holly Nelson-Becker. Spirituality, Religion, and Aging: Illuminations for Therapeutic Practice. Sage: Los Angeles. 2018. Pp. 488. Price \$41.00.

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Holly Nelson-Becker has written an excellent and comprehensive book for those researchers and clinicians concerned with the role of religion and spirituality in people's lives as they age. Each of the chapters focuses on a different dimension of religion and spirituality in a person's life.

One important note here: Nelson-Becker distinguishes between religion and spirituality. Briefly, "Religious practices include any common and customary behaviors that are associated with a particular religion or many religions (2018:205)." As for spiritual practices, those one "...those practices one performs to move into sacred space whether this space is visible, invisible, or has other spiritual practices (2018:206)." These distinctions may seem a bit vague and/or circular. Those concerns are not crucial for the purpose or the intent of the book, which is to help the clinician help her/his clients address their concerns and their needs as they age. Furthermore, the intent of the book is to help the clinician her/himself address their own needs as well as they help their clients.

Nelson-Becker reviews previous theories of religion and spirituality in history and in sociological and psychological theory and in philosophy. She provides extremely useful summaries and analyses of different religious and spiritual practice for the clinician. This is especially useful for clinicians who do not have background in these areas. In addition, she provides case studies and raises ethical concerns for clinicians to help them raise and address client concerns. She provides exercises, religious and spiritual, for clinicians and clients as they address these larger concerns. Lastly, she includes comprehensive resources for researchers and clinicians on religion, spirituality, and organizations.

I would like to specifically address clinical concerns here in this review. I am both an anthropologist and a licensed psychologist. I also teach in an enrichment program designed for "Older Adults." As a psychologist, I treat a range of clients, including older clients. I also have seen these clients in hospitals, including hospitals that have religious affiliations. I have also seen clients at nursing homes, including skilled nursing facilities. When I first went into practice three decades ago, I added to my intake questions ones about religious and spiritual practice. That was not common at the time. I found it useful to do so as part of understanding my clients and finding ways and words to help address their needs.

These kinds of intake questions should be part of clinical practice Nelson-Becker strongly suggests in Chapter 6 and throughout the book. If the client sees religion and/or spiritual practice as helpful in deepening her/his aging and providing new sources of growth and inspiration as s/he ages, and coping as s/he move closer to death, then the clinician should be ready, able, knowledgeable, and resourceful to provide the tools to help the client. While helping the client, the clinician should recognize her/his own religious and spiritual beliefs, realize where they can provide strength to both the client and her/himself, and where they may lead to an ethical boundary violation, such as imposing one's beliefs on another (2018:70-73.)

One of the many riches of this book is the detail and nuance Nelson-Becker offers in terms of the sociological research, useful for the clinician and researcher. For example, she addresses generational, gender, and sexual preference differences in religious and spiritual practices. Other riches include meditation suggestions and creative art practices. As first noted, her work is filled with these treasures and any short listing would be a disservice to her book.

Those of us working with seniors in clinical and teaching capacities and with students in the social and behavioral sciences and in gerontology will find this book as a significant and invaluable resource. It is very well-written and is interspersed with moving quotations, charts, and diagrams. My only suggestion is that the print should have been larger for those readers who have vision issues.