Spirituality in School Counseling Practice and Implications for School Counseling Education

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ABSTRACT

The researchers employed qualitative means to arrive at a phenomenological understanding of pre-service school counselors' knowledge and integration of spirituality in counseling practice to address the research questions: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field?, (b) How would pre-service school counselors react to scenarios regarding students' spiritual needs? and (c) What additional training and resources concerning the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field would pre-service school counselors find useful? A purposeful selection was applied to a convenience sample of pre-service school counselors enrolled in a graduate-level "Structured Groups" course at a large, private, non-profit Christian university in the United States. Data triangulation was achieved via a Likert-scale instrument ($n = 18$), responses to vignettes ($n = 7$), one-on-one semi-structured interviews ($n = 7$), and a focus group ($n = 7$). The Likert-scale survey was tested for reliability for the entire instrument and each question cluster by calculation of a Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The finished instrument was analyzed via descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were analyzed by consensual data analysis from co-investigators via phenomenological reductionism. Recurring themes were identified through bracketing, coding, and memoing. Trustworthiness was achieved through the use of data triangulation, enumeration of codes, member-checks, and peer review. Themes identified in the data inform training in school counselor preparation programs regarding integrating spirituality in school counseling practice.

INTRODUCTION

Much research confirms that we are beings with not just physical and mental, but also spiritual sides (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm 2011; Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno 2003; Fisher, 2011; Goldstein, 2010). Naturally, spiritual beings have spiritual needs (Yocum, 2014; Curry, 2010; Maslow, 1964). In order to facilitate spiritual development (Hindman, 2002; Love and Talbot 1999; Paredes-Collins and Collins 2011) of their charges, educators (Astin, 2004; Yocum, 2014; Milacci, 2006; Miller, Karsten, Denton, Orr, and Kates 2005; Speck and Hoppe 2007: St. John and Parish 2012; Tisdell 2003) and counselors (Milacci, 2006; Garzon and Milacci 2009; Hefti 2011; Parker, 2011; Sink, Cleveland and Stern 2007; Sink and Devlin 2011; Rosmarin,

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Auerbach, Bigda-Peyton, Bjorgvinsson, and Levendusky 2011) alike are well-served by understanding their own spirituality and how to identify and meet spiritual needs of students.

The authors seek to offer current theoretical and research-based perspectives on spirituality in school counseling practice as well as implications for school counseling education programs. Research questions guiding the review of literature and research are: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field?, (b) How would pre-service school counselors react to scenarios regarding students' spiritual needs? and (c) What additional training and resources regarding the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field would pre-service school counselors find useful?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Regardless of one's religious beliefs (or lack thereof), an understanding of the concept that we are all spiritual beings (Astin, Astin, and Lindholm 2011; Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno 2003; Fisher 2011; Goldstein 2010) is not new. When this point is conceded, it follows that spiritual beings have spiritual needs (Yocum 2014; Curry 2010; Maslow 1964) to develop spiritually (Hindman 2002; Love and Talbot 1999; Paredes-Collins and Collins 2011), and to meet their individual potentials for spiritual self-actualization (Yocum 2014).

KEY TERMS DEFINED

Spirituality

Spirituality is an integral part of self-concept that included beliefs about connectedness with the world, the universe, and others (Miller et al. 2005). Spirituality informs individual sense of morals. It enables transcendence of the constraints of our existence (Greene 2001) and provides insight into life's purpose (Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm 2006; Maslow 1964; Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott 1999). Etymologically, spirituality (and other related terms, *spirit, spiritual,* and *spiritually*) finds its origins in the Greek word *pneuma* (Schweizer 1968), used to describe the indivisible aspect of our nature (Vine 1966). As such, spiritual health and can be affected by physical, mental, emotional, and social health (Harris, Thoreson, and Lopez 2007; Hill and Pargament 2003; Miller et al. 2005). Although there is often overlap between spirituality and religion (religion is typically a vehicle for spiritual expression), for the current work, we are focused primarily on spirituality. While spirituality informs life meaning and

beliefs as above, *religion* typically involves corporate experiences and an ecclesiastical attention to doctrine, traditions, customs, and practices (Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm 2006; Maslow 1964; Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott 1999).

Counseling

Thirty-one U.S. and international counseling organizations collaborated in a Delphi research-based process to develop a definition of counseling that was ultimately acceptable to 29 of the organizations (Kennedy 2008; Kaplan, Tarvydas, and Gladding 2013). According to this definition, counseling is a broad professional field that entails "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (Kaplan et al. 2013, 366). Counseling works with individuals throughout their lifespans to help them live healthy and meaningful lives (Kaplan et al. 2013). A person's experience in the educational setting, both as a child and an adult, constitutes an important aspect of counseling.

School Counseling

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) was one of two organizations that did not endorse the above definition of counseling (Kaplan, Tarvydas, and Gladding 2013); however, the ASCA agreed that "counseling is a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. School counselors work with all students, school staff, families, and members of the community as an integral part of the education program" (ASCA as cited by Dahir and Stone 2012, 19).

PERSPECTIVES ON SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS

Spiritual development is a component of healthy identity development, particularly during adolescence (Goldstein, 2010; Poll and Smith 2003) and reflects a self-awareness of spirituality and the recognition and fulfillment of spiritual needs (Yocum, 2014). In this way, spiritual development can be likened to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1943). Just as there are times where fulfillment of physical, physiological, emotional, and social needs are prone to wax and wane, impacting the ability to sustain self-actualization (Maslow 1943) (the level of fulfillment whereby having met baser needs empowers individuals to focus on deeper life meaning, pursuits related to self-improvement, and helping others), so too the fulfillment of spiritual needs ebbs and flows, affecting one's ability to maintain a sense of spiritual self-

actualization (a state wherein base spiritual needs are met, allowing room for deeper, more introspective incorporation of spirituality into self-identity and freeing one to encourage spiritual growth in others) (Yocum 2014). Spiritual development, seen in this light, is not a single destination where individuals take up residence once reached, rather is it a transcendent journey to unfixed locations where spiritual needs are met that is undertaken many times throughout life.

If having spiritual needs met is such a crucial part of ongoing spiritual development and spiritual self-actualization, what are spiritual needs? Individuals have a need for awakenings (and re-awakenings) to their sense of spirituality through transcendent (Greene 2001) or peak experiences (Maslow 1964). Spiritual needs also include the need to find truth, value, meaning, morality, and purpose in life (Chickering, Dalton, and Stamm 2006; Maslow 1964; Zinnbauer, Pargament, and Scott 1999). Spiritually, we have a need to express ourselves and our beliefs (both alone and communally) and to feel a sense of connectedness (which may include a need to acknowledge and connect with a higher power) to our world, ourselves, and others (Yocum 2014; Miller et al. 2005). Freedom from guilt understood as a need to forgive, and be forgiven by others is another spiritual need (Carson and Koenig 2008). Additionally, we have an altruistic need to serve, give to, and encourage others (Huber and MacDonald 2012; Miller et al. 2005). Finally, we have a need for spiritual literacy (Yocum 2014) in order to have the vocabulary to understand, express, and seek to fulfill spiritual needs. While the spiritual needs presented here are representative rather than all-inclusive, it is intuitive that these needs are also common to those expressed in counseling settings and will be discussed in the following sections.

SPIRITUALITY IN COUNSELING AND SCHOOL COUNSELING

Spirituality in counseling and school counseling has gained more prominence in recent research and scholarship. The topic of spirituality in counseling settings must be addressed delicately due to ethical guidelines. The American School Counselor Association Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010) states that school counselors should: (a) support students from diverse backgrounds, including religions and/or spiritual identities, (b) increase awareness, knowledge, and skills to work with differing religions and/or spiritual identities, and, possibly most importantly, (c) respect students' values, beliefs, and backgrounds and do

not impose personal values on students or families. The American Counseling Association (ACA 2014) states a similar approach by addressing (a) the support that counselors should offer clients, (b) the need for spiritual self-care by the counselor, (c) the importance of counselor's not discriminating based on religion and/or spirituality, and (d) the counselor understanding the effects that religion and/or spirituality may have on assessment results.

SUMMARY

With recent prominence placed on integrating spirituality in the school counseling setting the need to have a deeper understanding of the perceptions of future school counselors on how they might integrate spirituality in a school setting is important. Research addresses that individuals have a spiritual component and providing counsel that addresses an individual holistically is supported in the roles of the counselor set forth by the ethical guidelines; therefore, proper integration of spiritual components in a therapeutic relationship is also important.

METHODS

For the present study, a phenomenological design is appropriate because the researchers are interested in gaining a deeper, richer understanding of a phenomenon by identifying commonalities across participants' lived experiences relevant to the phenomenon (Patton 2001). With the current research, the researchers seek to gain a more phenomenological understanding of spirituality in school counseling practice, with an eye toward informing school counselor training, through an examination of the lived experiences of pre-service school counselors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field? (b) How would pre-service school counselors react to scenarios regarding students' spiritual needs? and (c) What additional training and resources regarding the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field would pre-service school counselors find useful?

PARTICIPANTS

Survey data were collected from 18 graduate student respondents (17 female, 1 male), 7 vignette scenario respondents, 7 one-on-one interviewees, and 7 focus group participants (all 7

qualitative respondents were female) at a large, non-profit Christian university in the Southeastern US. A sample of 10-15 is sufficient to reach data saturation for most qualitative designs (Creswell 2013). The frequency table below describes the demographics of the sample. It should be noted that six of the seven qualitative participants had completed the educational counseling course "Professional, Ethical, and Legal Issues in School Counseling" prior to their participation in the current study.

Table 1. Participants' Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Survey Respondents	Vignette Scenario Respondents	One-on-One Interviewees	Focus Group Participants
African-American	8	2	2	2
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1	0	0	0
Asian	0	0	0	0
Caucasian	7	4	4	4
Hispanic/Latino	1	0	0	0
Other	1	1	1	1
Undesignated	0	0	0	0
n	18	7	7	7

PROCEDURES

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought and obtained prior to securing informed consent during participant recruitment or data collection efforts. The participants were recruited from a conveniently available sample of pre-service school counselors from the second author's graduate-level school counseling "Structured Groups" course. A progressively purposeful sampling strategy was utilized, similar to that of Thogersen-Ntoumani and Fox (as cited by Clark and Creswell 2008), such that initial analysis of the survey data informed sampling for qualitative data collection. Purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative studies when the focus is a particular phenomenon and researchers wish to generate data from participants who have lived experiences relevant to that phenomenon (Creswell 2013). The Likert-scale survey instrument, Spirituality in School Counseling Education and Practice Survey (SISCEPS) was distributed to all students in the class who offered informed consent. Participants whose survey responses indicated a holistic understanding of spirituality in school counseling were invited to take part in subsequent qualitative data collection.

All data were then thoroughly analyzed by the researchers using consensual data

analysis utilizing phenomenological reductionism/bracketing, coding, and memoing to identify themes. Member-checks were conducted for the purposes of establishing trustworthiness.

DATA COLLECTION

The researchers utilized a Likert-scale survey, vignette scenarios, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group for data collection. For qualitative research, data triangulation is used to help lend trustworthiness and is achieved when at least three separate data sources are examined (Schwandt 2010). Additionally, quantitative data collection strategies, such as the Likert-scale survey employed, are appropriate to achieve additional data for qualitative studies. This is especially so when used to qualify participants for subsequent qualitative data collection (Creswell 2013).

SPIRITUALITY IN SCHOOL COUNSELING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE SURVEY

The Spirituality in School Counseling Education and Practice Survey (SISCEPS) is a Likert-scale survey instrument, developed by the researchers, with some questions informed by the Spirituality in School Counseling – Pre/Post-Test (Clark 2012). In addition to demographic information, the survey contains seven statements (each rated "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree") gauging general spiritual knowledge and opinions about spirituality in school counseling education and 16 statements capturing respondents' opinions regarding the practice of spirituality in school counseling as listed:

Spiritual Knowledge
- I understand what spirituality means.

- I understand what religion is.

- I understand the difference between spirituality and religion.

- My school counseling education program has provided me with sufficient information to confidently address students' spiritual questions and needs in my future practice as a school counselor.

- My school counseling education program has provided me with enough information to address confidently students' religious questions and needs in my future practice as a school counselor.

- I believe that I understand my legal rights and responsibilities regarding spirituality and religion in the practice of school counseling.

- I believe that I understand the legal rights and responsibilities of students regarding spirituality and religion in the practice of school counseling.

Spirituality in School Counseling Education

- I feel I have an understanding of the counseling techniques within a counseling setting.

- I would like to learn more about techniques that incorporate spirituality within a counseling setting.

- I feel I have an understanding of different types of religions.

- I think a course in spirituality and religion in school counseling would be helpful.

- I feel I have an understanding of the legal aspects of school counseling.

- I feel I can navigate spirituality and religion in a legal manner.

- I think a course in school counseling law, including issues regarding incorporating spirituality in counseling, would be helpful.

Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling

- I believe that each student has a spiritual aspect to his or her being.

- An understanding of spirituality as an aspect of counseling enables school counselors to better serve their students.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, their sense of self-identity.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, the meaning of life.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, their purpose in life.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, their sense of right and wrong.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, their connectedness with others and their sense of their social skills.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, the concept of inner peace.

- It is important to understand students' experience with, and understanding of, the concept of hope.

- An understanding of spirituality as an aspect of counseling enables school counselors to better discuss concepts such as identity, meaning, purpose, right and wrong, connectedness, inner peace, and hope with their students.

- It is important to pay attention to students' spiritual self-expression in a school counseling setting.

- Spirituality is an important counseling tool for school counselors in rural schools.

- Spirituality is an important counseling tool for school counselors in suburban schools.

- Spirituality is an important counseling tool for school counselors in urban schools.

- I would feel comfortable using spirituality as a counseling tool in school.

- When appropriate, I will integrate spirituality as an aspect of counseling.

Responses to survey questions provided data relevant to the first and third research questions: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field? and (b) What additional training and resources regarding the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field would pre-service school counselors find useful?

The researchers calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine instrument reliability, $\alpha = 0.93$, indicating the instrument has a high degree of reliability. The first seven questions of the SISCEPS represented pre-service school counselors' *Spiritual Knowledge* (Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this question cluster, $\alpha = 0.81$). The next cluster of seven questions sought answers regarding participants' opinions about *Spirituality in School Counseling Education* (Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this question cluster, $\alpha = 0.73$). Finally, the remaining 16 questions gauged respondents' views concerning *Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling* (Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this question cluster, $\alpha = 0.90$).

The SISCEPS was distributed via SurveyMonkey to all pre-service school counselors in the "Structured Groups" graduate level course who had proffered informed consent ($n = 18$). Completed surveys were subjected to an initial analysis, so only participants whose responses showed a higher level of knowledge regarding spirituality and spirituality in school counseling would be invited to respond to the vignette scenarios.

VIGNETTE SCENARIOS

Survey respondents whose answers indicated a higher than average knowledge of spirituality and spirituality in school counseling were invited by email ($n = 7$) to provide written responses to vignette scenarios dealing with spirituality in school counseling. Vignettes have frequently

been used to collect textual data for a variety of qualitative research (Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, and Neale, 2010; Leighton, 2010; Wareing, 2010). Participants for this phase of data collection were provided with the following vignette scenarios:

Vignette scenario 1

- A classroom teacher refers a student to the school counseling office. The teacher reports that the student told him that the student hears evil voices and that the evil voice told her to kill herself. When the student arrives at your office, she affirms the teacher's report and says that she hears an evil voice. Please describe the discussion you would have with the student. What questions would you ask? What service referrals would you recommend for the student? What conversation would you have with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)?

Vignette scenario 2

- A student self-refers to you for counseling. His mother has been diagnosed with terminal cancer, and the family has begun to make end-of-life care arrangements. You manage to calm the student down enough to discuss the situation. The student wants to know what happens when you die and asks you why life is unfair. Please describe how you would reply to the student. What questions would you ask? What service referrals would you recommend for the student? What conversation would you have with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)?

Vignette scenario 3

- A student attends the same church as you and has seen you at church. She self-refers to you for counseling. She is graduating soon and has no idea what she is supposed to do with her life. She asks you how someone can discern God's calling for her life. She asks if she can open the session with a prayer. Please describe how you would counsel the student. What questions would you ask? What service referrals would you recommend for the student? What conversation would you have with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)?

The vignette scenario respondents were given the opportunity to formulate their responses by hand or electronically and returned completed responses to the researchers. The replies provided textual data relevant to the first and second research questions: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field? and (b) How would pre-service school counselors react to scenarios regarding students' spiritual needs?

INTERVIEWS

Vignette respondents were invited to take part in one-on-one interview sessions after class (*n* = 7). The interview sessions were audio recorded on the researchers' password-protected laptops using Audacity voice recording software with smartphone voice memo apps as backup recording devices. The interview style used was semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews use a basic script that heightens researchers' ability to identify themes by having a set of standard questions that are posed to each interviewee. However, the researchers also retain the freedom to go off-script to ask relevant off-the-cuff and follow up questions (Patton 2001). The following interview questions were posed: (a) Could you tell me what you think about integrating spirituality in a counseling setting? (b) What do you know about the legalities of integrating spirituality in a counseling setting? (c) Under what circumstances do you think it would be necessary to integrate spirituality in a counseling setting? (d) When would it be inappropriate to integrate spirituality in a counseling setting? (e) Can you describe some of the ways that your school counseling education program has prepared you so far with regards to integrating spirituality in a counseling setting? (f) Let's say a student comes to you for counseling and he or she initiates a spiritual or religious discussion. Would you feel comfortable answering the student? Why or why not? How would you reply to the student? (g) What other kinds of training or preparation do you think would be helpful in school counseling education to better equip future school counselors in the areas of spirituality and religion?, and (h) Is there anything else you'd like to mention about spirituality, school counseling, and school counseling education?

The interviews were transcribed to provide textual data relevant to the first and third research questions: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field? and (b) What additional training and resources regarding the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field would pre-service school counselors find useful?

FOCUS GROUP

The vignette and one-on-one interview respondents were then invited to consider taking part in a focus group (*n* = 7). The researchers conducted the focus group discussion in a semi-structured style, although a pre-determined list of prompts was employed, the researchers acted mostly as discussion facilitators, inserting prompts during lulls and allowing the participants to

have a free-flowing discussion regarding the phenomena (Patton, 2001). The focus group prompts were: (a) What are the benefits of being able to integrate spirituality as an aspect of counseling? (b) When it comes to spirituality, what legal rights do school counselors, and students have in the counseling setting? and (c) If you could create a course for a school counseling education program to better prepare future school counselors to integrate spirituality in the school counseling field, what would that course be? What assignments would be included? What would you learn about?

The focus group discussion was held on-campus after class and was audio recorded using Audacity voice recording software on the researchers' laptops with a smartphone voice memo application as a back-up. Focus group participants were known to each other from class but were asked not to divulge the identity of focus group participants, or share any responses, outside the focus group. The focus group recording was transcribed to analyze text for themes that would address the following research questions: (a) What do pre-service school counselors know about the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field? (b) How would pre-service school counselors react to scenarios regarding students' spiritual needs? and (c) What additional training and resources concerning the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field would pre-service school counselors find useful?

DATA ANALYSIS

Upon conclusion of data collection, the SISCEPS results were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. The written responses from the vignette scenarios, transcripts from the one-on-one interviews, and focus group transcript were bracketed and hand-coded using phenomenological reductionism, with researcher memoing. The horizons of codes were enumerated, and codes were categorized into identified themes. Using consensual data analysis, the researchers conducted bracketing, coding, and memoing separately then arrived at a group consensus of identified themes (Patton 2001).

Bracketing with phenomenological reductionism is the concept whereby researchers look to bracket in commonalities relevant to the phenomena under exploration across participant responses while simultaneously bracketing out researcher biases (Schutz 1970). Hand-coding takes place as researchers begin to assign meaning to identified, bracketed commonalities using descriptive labels (Patton 2001). Memoing is comprised of reflective

notes regarding the meaning of data that researchers make while collecting and/or analyzing data (Patton 2001). Enumeration of horizons is simply counting the number of times labeled codes appear in the data (Moustakas 1994). Once horizons are enumerated, researchers categorize codes into themes by grouping similar codes together (Patton 2001).

TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative methodology, researchers typically do not have objective statistical results to establish validity and reliability. To address the inductive nature of the qualitative inquiry, trustworthiness is applied. Trustworthiness addresses *credibility* (the idea that the research has internal validity), *transferability* (external validity and generalizability), *dependability* (reliability), and *confirmability* (neutrality and objectivity) (Lincoln and Guba 1996).

Credibility was achieved by triangulation of data (as discussed earlier) and through the use of member-checks. Member-checks are used to allow participants an opportunity to review and comment on conclusions reached by researchers (Schwandt 2010). Transferability was addressed via peer review and enumeration of horizons. Dependability and confirmability were achieved by the researchers' efforts to reach an agreement during data analysis and the use of member-checks. The protocol employed for obtaining member-checks is provided below.

> Spirituality in School Counseling Practice and Implications for School Counseling Education
>
> Debriefing Statement
>
> Thank you for having participated in our study regarding pre-service school counselors' knowledge regarding the integration of spirituality in the school counseling field. This debriefing serves to share with you the results of our study. Additionally, this debriefing serves to increase the trustworthiness of our research by allowing you the opportunity to review transcripts of your participation in a one-on-one interview (if applicable) and to indicate your level of agreement with our conclusions based on the research.
>
> Thank you again for your time.
>
> 1. If you participated in a one-on-one interview session as part of this research, a transcription of your interview will be provided to you at the time of this debriefing. Please take a moment to review the transcript. You can make a note of any corrections you feel necessary on the margins of the transcript. If you participated in the one-on-one interview,

please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. If you did not participate in the one-on-one interview, please skip to question number two (2) below.

The transcript accurately reflects my interview with the researcher.

Strongly Agree/Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
         O   O   O   O

2. The next several statements will summarize the themes we identified during our data analysis. For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement with the validity of the identified theme. You may also use the space provided to make any notes about each identified theme.

- *Spiritual-Religious Literacy*: This includes concepts regarding counselors' knowledge and training in differentiating between spirituality and religion and an ability to recognize spiritual and religious aspects of others' identities.

I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree   /Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
         O   O   O   O

My notes about the theme, if any:

- *Knowledge of Client/Family Cultural Identity and Beliefs*: This refers to the appropriateness of school counselors making the effort to obtain background knowledge about their clients' (and clients' families') cultural identity and spiritual and religious beliefs to better meet clients' needs in school counseling settings.

I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree/Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
         O   O   O   O

My notes about the theme, if any:

- *Setting/Situational Context*: This theme encompasses a knowledge of constraints placed upon (or removed from) school counselors dependent upon counseling setting (public school/religious school/private practice) and school counselors' knowledge of applicable policies in those settings.

I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree/Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

       O   O   O   O

My notes about the theme, if any:

- *Counseling Techniques*: This includes (but is not limited to) school counselors' knowledge of, and ability to employ, counseling techniques such as, holistic counseling, discussion of universal truths, appropriate phrasing, probing questions, crisis intervention, and making referrals to outside service providers.

I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree   /Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

       O   O   O   O

My notes about the theme, if any:

- *Counseling Ethics, Roles, and Standards*: This theme includes the school counselor's knowledge of appropriate ethics, roles, and applicable standards in school counseling (i.e. care, do no harm, confidentiality, not forcing counselor's beliefs, agenda, or values on clients, and waiting for clients to initiate certain spiritual or religious discussions).

I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree   /Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

○   ○   ○   ○

My notes about the theme, if any:

- *Shortfalls in School Counselor Preparation*: Participant identified shortfalls for school counselor preparation indicated that additional courses (or supplements to existing courses) covering applicable theories, spirituality and religion, cultural awareness, and exploration of counseling techniques appropriate to integrating spirituality in school counseling via role play and scenarios would be helpful.

I agree that this theme is a sensible conclusion considering my knowledge of the research topic.

Strongly Agree/Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

○   ○   ○   ○

My notes about the theme, if any:

Four of the seven debriefing statements for member-checks were returned. All four participating in the member-checks "strongly agreed" with the veracity of identified themes and the accuracy of their individual interview transcripts.

RESULTS
Spirituality in School Counseling Education and Practice Survey (SISCEPS)

The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each survey question and appear in Table 2 below.

Table 2. SISCEPS Descriptive Statistics

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation

Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 1	3.67	0.49
Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 2	3.56	0.51
Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 3	3.67	0.49
Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 4	2.78	0.65
Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 5	2.72	0.75
Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 6	2.94	0.64
Spiritual Knowledge Ques. 7	3.11	0.58
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 1	2.94	0.42
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 2	3.33	0.59
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 3	3.06	0.64
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 4	3.39	0.61
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 5	3.06	0.54
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 6	2.83	0.51
Spirituality in School Counseling Education Ques. 7	3.28	0.67
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 1	3.44	0.51
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 2	3.56	0.51
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 3	3.67	0.49
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 4	3.33	0.59
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 5	3.28	0.46
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 6	3.56	0.51
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 7	3.50	0.51
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 8	3.33	0.59
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 9	3.39	0.50
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 10	3.33	0.59
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 11	3.39	0.50
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 12	3.33	0.59
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 13	3.39	0.61
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 14	3.39	0.61
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 15	3.06	0.73
Spirituality in the Practice of School Counseling Ques. 16	3.44	0.51

With the exceptions listed below, all of the questions had mean responses between 3.06 and 3.67, indicating that participants "agree" with the statements worded positively about their sense of self-efficacy regarding their spiritual knowledge, confidence in their school counseling education regarding spirituality, and knowledge about integrating spirituality in school counseling. Survey statements with averages in the lower than "agree" range were: (a) My school counseling education program has provided me with sufficient information to confidently address students' spiritual questions and needs in my future practice as a school

counselor (Mean = 2.78, Standard Deviation = 0.65)., (b) My school counseling education program has provided me with sufficient information to confidently address students' religious questions and needs in my future practice as a school counselor (Mean = 2.72, Standard Deviation = 0.75)., (c) I believe that I understand my legal rights and responsibilities regarding spirituality and religion in the practice of school counseling (Mean = 2.94, Standard Deviation = 0.64)., and (d) I feel I have an understanding of the counseling techniques within a counseling setting (Mean = 2.94, Standard Deviation = 0.42)

These results imply that participants perceive that they possess knowledge of spirituality, have confidence in their school counseling education program, and are comfortable with integrating spirituality in school counseling. However, respondents clearly desire a bit more in their school counseling education in the areas of understanding students' religious and spiritual needs, understanding the ethics of integrating spirituality in school counseling, and being given specific techniques for incorporating spirituality in counseling.

IDENTIFIED THEMES

The written responses to vignettes, one-on-one interview transcripts, and focus group interview transcripts were consensually analyzed using phenomenological reductionism, bracketing, open-coding, and memoing. Horizons for each of the open-codes were enumerated, and similar codes were grouped into identified themes (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Open-codes and Themes

Open-codes	Enumeration of Open-code Appearance across Datasets	Themes
Spiritual & Religious Concepts/Definitions	3	Spiritual-religious Literacy
Spirituality vs. Religion	5	
Client Beliefs	31	Knowledge of Client/Family Cultural Identity and Beliefs
Whole Person Concept	8	
Parental Involvement	11	
Family Cultural Background/Beliefs	23	
Public School Conditions	15	Setting/Situational Context
Religious School Conditions	7	
School Policy	3	
Private Practice Conditions	2	
Political Correctness	11	
Holistic Counseling	14	Counseling Techniques

Phrasing During Counseling	6	
Universal Truths	7	
Probing During Counseling	13	
Prayer During Counseling	11	
Crisis Intervention	6	
Referrals to Other Service Providers	19	
Words of Affirmation	6	
Client Initiated Spiritual or Religious Discussion	26	Counseling Ethics, Roles, and Standards
Counseling Ethics	40	
Boundaries	3	
Counselor's Forced Agenda	4	
Counselor Roles	19	
Counselor Duty	2	
Counselor Transparency	3	
Wounded Healer	1	
Care	5	
Counseling Standards	4	
Theories in School Counselor Preparation	2	Shortfalls in School Counselor Preparation
Spirituality and Religion in School Counselor Preparation	13	
Cultural Awareness in Counselor Preparation	4	
Role Play/Scenarios in School Counselor Preparation	2	

DISCUSSION
Implications of Identified Themes

It should be noted that the top three most enumerated horizons of open-codes were: (a) Counseling Ethics (40 enumerations), (b) Client Beliefs (31 enumerations), and (c) Client Initiated Spiritual or Religious Discussion (26 enumerations). This reveals that, when it comes to integrating spirituality in the practice of school counseling, pre-service school counselors are most concerned with the ethics of not promoting their personal agendas, beliefs, or values and that they seek to achieve this ethical practice by considering the clients' belief systems and waiting for clients to initiate any discussions along spiritual or religious lines.

Implications for Stakeholders

The implications of the overall results for stakeholders then are that we should understand that everyone is a spiritual being with spiritual needs. Pre-service school counselors recognize this but are concerned with the ethics of discussing spirituality and religion in the counseling

setting. Pre-service school counselors believe that having knowledge of clients' beliefs and allowing clients to initiate discussions regarding spirituality is a way to achieve ethical practice. Pre-service school counselors also feel additional training in ethics and how to have spiritual discussions with clients (without promoting personal beliefs, values, or agendas) would be helpful. There are several professional circles that may benefit from the research topic and findings, including agency, community, and private practitioners, school counselors, counselor and school counselor educators, and clients that may be seeking counsel.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the homogeneity of the sample. As previously stated, the purposeful selection was drawn from a conveniently available sample of pre-service school counselors enrolled in a graduate-level "Structured Groups" counseling course at a large, non-profit Christian university in the Southeastern US. Additionally, all of the qualitative respondents were female. Further, the SISCEPS, interview questions, written vignette scenario prompts, and focus group prompts were intended to be piloted but solicited pilot volunteers did not respond. Future iterations of this study would seek to adjust the qualitative data collection strategies to achieve greater face and content validity and to obtain richer data.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future attempts to replicate the present study would benefit from a more diverse sample, drawing from a more gender-balanced sample of respondents from both state universities and religious universities that represent differing faith systems. Additional possibilities for future research would be to approach the topic more longitudinally. How does on-the-job counseling experience change respondents' perceptions of integrating spirituality in a school counseling setting after 3 and 5 years of practice compared with when they were pre-service school counselor graduate students? What specific experiences with integrating spirituality in school counseling would practicing school counselors be able to share?

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