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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

NARRATIVES OF COMPETENCY, CREATIVITY, AND  
COMFORT: RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY  
IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

R. David Johns

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education

December 2014

This Dissertation by: R. David Johns

Entitled: *Narratives of Competency, Creativity, and Comfort: Religion and Spirituality in Counselor Education*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education

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## ABSTRACT

Johns, R. David. *Narratives of Competency, Creativity, and Comfort: Religion and Spirituality in Counselor Education*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2014.

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of counselor educators relating to religion and spirituality and to understand the impact of those beliefs and experiences when teaching and supervising counseling students. Because spiritual and religious values are an integral element of human understanding and development, current standards, ethical codes, and competencies mandate that counselors are aware of and provide culturally sensitive interventions. Currently, there is a gap in counselor standards, ethics, competencies, and practice as students report receiving mixed messages from counselor educators about appropriate skills for addressing spiritual and religious concerns. Counselor educators may not be prepared to teach about religious and spiritual concerns. A broader understanding and analysis of the dynamics of religion and spirituality related to teaching and supervising are essential in order to better train counselors and counselor educators. Semi-structured interviews elicited thoughts and feelings related to religion and spirituality and how those thoughts and feelings fostered or inhibited counselor training. Implications for counselor educators were discussed.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It is difficult to put into words the gratitude I feel for those in my life who have encouraged me, supported me, challenged me, and helped me to arrive at this moment. I could not have accomplished this dream without you.

My research committee spent innumerable hours on my behalf in order to get through this doctoral process. I would like to thank them for their efforts on my behalf.

To Dr. Heather Helm who interviewed me on admission day and has served as chair of this committee, your knowledge of the program and the process has served as a guide. You promised me you would lead me through the dissertation process and you did. You also encouraged me to be creative and include research poetry in this dissertation. Thank you for your help and guidance.

To Dr. Linda Black, thank you for your assistance in the initial literature review for this project. I will always remember the warm conversation we had about my spiritual past. Thank you for encouraging me to use my voice.

Dr. Betty Cardona, thank you for your tireless faith in my abilities. During the two years I worked as your graduate assistant, you gave me extraordinary experiences that provided a strong basis for my career as a counselor educator. It is fitting that you should be part of my committee.

To Dr. Fred Hanna who served as an initial committee member, thank you for encouraging me to co-author my first journal article. You have taught me so many things about change and theory.

To Dr. Silvia Correa-Torres, thank you for graciously serving as a replacement committee member. I am sorry our paths did not cross sooner.

To Dr. Maria Lahman who served as the initial faculty representative until your sabbatical. You helped me to remember my love for stories and poetry, which served as the basis for this research project.

Many others have helped me along my doctoral path. I would like to thank my participants Gary, Sue, Ava, Mark, Kelly, Theresa, Roxanne, Clark, and Robert who willingly gave their time to be interviewed. You shared so many of your experiences with me. Your stories have touched my soul and inspired me. I am sure they will inspire more counselor educators in years to come.

To my parents, Rex and Carolyn Johns, how can I thank you for the many things that you have taught me? What I have learned from you is strength of character, integrity, hard work, and love. I also was taught to love and enjoy learning. Those are attributes that carry me through life's difficulties.

To my siblings, Craig, Brent, Charlynn, Marianne, Nathan, and Kristen, you and your families have given me moral and spiritual support throughout this doctoral endeavor.

To my ancestors who sacrificed so much for religious and spiritual freedom, your examples of determination have been a compass in my life.

To Kelly Crim, who has taught me so much about empathy, compassion, and understanding. You have been steadfast in helping me to see the positive despite the stumbling blocks. Your friendship and example is inspiring.

To Dr. Sunda Friedman TeBockhorst, thank you for accompanying me to the precipice of Outer Darkness and then gently leading me to a new life. Thank you for mentoring me and helping me through the hoops. Your kindness, professionalism, and wisdom will be forever appreciated.

Dr. Kristi Lee, thank you for your cheerful voice, helpful encouragement, and constant reminder to “Put your shoulder to the wheel, push along,” you are a fellow pioneer.

Dr. Diane Stutey, I will be forever grateful that our paths crossed. You have been a faithful friend and have provided support and guidance since we first met. Your strength of character and fortitude has been an inspiration. I could not have survived without you.

Dr. Lisa Kosena Forbes, you have been a great friend throughout this doctoral process. Your insight and questions were invaluable.

Dr. Judith Crews, your example of responsibility, professionalism, and caring are an inspiration to me. Thank you for your friendship that is so meaningful.

Krista Tippet, when I read your book *Speaking of Faith*, I was drawn to the intersections of religion, faith, spirituality, and science. During the long commute to and from school, your podcasts from *On Being* have served as intellectual food for thought. Your interesting questions have honed my own ability to ask questions that are far-reaching and meaningful.

Tom and Kris Stoeber, thank you for your support and efforts on my behalf. I have found refuge in our friendship. Vacations with you have added joy and levity to the arduous process of this doctoral process. Kris, your edits and comments have honed this document and helped craft this document.

The members of St. Michaels, Boise and St. John's, Denver, you have literally prayed me through this doctoral process.

Tom and Alice Farquhar-Mayes, our friendship has been a source of joy and delight. Thank you for your support and constant reminders that "it will all work out."

To my fellow doctoral students, Cynthia, Joel, Aaron, Kylie, Jenna, Jenny, Jessica, and Janessa who have worked through this process with me, your friendship and encouragement has been an inspiration.

Lastly, to my husband Jim East, you have asked me many important and significant questions that have changed my life. There are three that I would like to recount now. The first in February 2003, when you asked "And tell me again why you are not a counselor?" This set a trajectory that has led to the counseling profession and this doctoral dissertation. The second in February 2006 when you asked me to marry you, and the third time was a series of questions on a dark night in October 2010. It was then that you helped me realize I could study religion and spirituality for my dissertation, I just needed a shift. Your questions that night were the genesis for this dissertation. Your brilliance never ceases to amaze me. Keep asking me those questions; they spur me to new heights. Jim, you have supported me by being my therapist, cook, maid, chief worrier, tech support, editor, and many other jobs. Without you, I would not have



achieved this monumental task. I now promise to “start living life.” I also promise “no more degrees.”

*Ex Amore Veritatis Lumen*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Spirituality and religion are intrinsic to the client condition. Counselors understand that a client's spiritual and religious values—as much as their emotional state, intelligence levels, and family background—are part of their human condition. Counselor educators, therefore, have a responsibility to teach the necessary skills, raise awareness, and impart knowledge to counselors-in-training so they may better serve their clients. The purpose of this research was to document counselor educators' narrative experiences regarding religion and spirituality in the hope of better understanding how these lived experiences might influence teaching and supervision of counseling students.

Religion and spirituality are considered as a subset of multiculturalism (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992); if counselor educators are not prepared to address the cultural concerns of religion and spirituality, then these important aspects of multicultural counseling might not be adequately addressed. It is important to gather this information from counselor educators so as to learn about counselor educators' experiences about religion and spirituality. This is important because counselors who are aware of their own biases and preconceptions and who possess knowledge of client spiritual and religious values can better provide culturally sensitive counseling interventions (Cashwell & Young, 2011; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009).

This narrative inquiry was designed to understand how counselor educators' lived experiences with religion and spirituality affect their thoughts, beliefs, and comfort level teaching these important concepts. Understanding counselor educators' experiences with religion and spirituality has implications for the counseling profession. It is hoped that the findings of this study might assist counselor educators to better address the dynamics of religion and spirituality and, in time, prompt further discussion and research. The results of this research might also serve to guide counselor educators toward a more culturally informed teaching and supervision approach. This qualitative study examined counselor educators' experiences with religion and spirituality and aspects that might influence instruction and training.

### **Background and Context**

Religion and spirituality are fundamental to human existence and culture (Armstrong, 1993; Wilson, 2002) and until recently have generally been considered as synonymous constructs (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). For the purposes of this document, the definitions of religion and spirituality aligned with the writings of Zinnbauer et al. (1997) and Walsh (2009). In general, religion is seen as an organized and institutionalized belief system associated with a faith community as well as church attendance, whereas spirituality relates to aspects of human experience that can also comprise mystical experiences as well as transcendent beliefs and practices (Walsh, 2009; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The aspects of spirituality and religion are more fully described later in this chapter.

Professional counselors are committed to honoring the diverse needs of their clients including those clients who have religious and spiritual backgrounds that differ

from their own. Professional counseling organizations—the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2005, 2014), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES; 2011), the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2009), the Association for Spiritual Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC; 2009), and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD; Hays & Erford, 2010)—have statements addressing the need for counselors to possess knowledge, skills, and awareness so they can work effectively with people of differing faiths, religions, and spiritual backgrounds. It follows, then, that counselor educators would teach and supervise in a manner consistent with those professional goals.

While there is a growing body of counseling literature related to religion and spirituality, data about counselor educators' personal experiences with religion and spirituality, by way of contrast, are scarce. Equally sparse are data on how these experiences affect teaching and supervision around these topics. Specifically, interviews were conducted with counselor educators considered non-experts about religion and spirituality in the counseling field. A “non-expert” in this dissertation meant that the participant had not published a journal article, book, or other thought piece about spirituality and religion nor had taught a course about spirituality or religion. What was unknown was how the experiences of counselor educators affected when, how, and if they taught or supervised about spirituality and religion. The knowledge gathered from this study will help to better ascertain the current state of training for the role of religion and spirituality in counselor education programs.



The majority of people in the United States reported that they had spiritual and religious values and beliefs (Gallup Polls, 2012; Kosmin & Keysar, 2009); scholars conjectured that clients in the United States would want to discuss religious and spiritual topics in counseling (Cashwell & Young, 2004; Robertson, 2010). Because religion and spirituality affect client development (ACA, 2005; ASERVIC, 2009), these topics merit scholarly attention. Several scholars have published theories of faith, religion, and spirituality work that can assist counselors in addressing the spiritual and religious needs of clients (e.g., Allport, 1950; Fowler, 1981; Poll & Smith, 2003; Rizzuto, 1979). Other scholars have identified the spiritual and religious needs of an array of diverse clients: the role of spirituality and bereavement within Latino and African American cultures (Schoulte, 2011), traditional Sikh healing practices to reduce stress (Sandhu, 2005), Native American healing practices (Rybak, Eastin, & Robbins, 2004), Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer (LGBTQ) Mormons (Johns & Hanna, 2011), suicidal clients (Colucci & Martin, 2008), sexual counseling with Islamic and Jewish couples (Turner, Fox, & Kiser, 2007), genetic counseling (Reis, Baumiller, Scrivener, Yager, & Nancy, 2007), and family therapy (Walsh, 2009).

Researchers (Knox, Catlin, Casper, & Schlosser, 2005; Morrison, Clutter, Pritchett, & Demmitt, 2009) have used qualitative and quantitative methods to study client expectations about religion and spirituality in counseling and found that clients expected their counselors to be able to address their spiritual and religious concerns. In addition, Smith, Bartz, and Richards (2007) conducted a meta-analysis in which they concluded that counseling interventions informed by religious and spiritual competence benefitted clients.

The field of counselor education and supervision has undergone a number of changes in the past 50 years (Black & Helm, 2010). Spirituality and religion have been identified as components of a multicultural revolution within counseling (Sue, Bingham, Porché-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999). The increased number of journal articles, books, and dissertations published since 1970 is one indicator of the growing importance of spirituality and religion (Powers, 2005).

Professional organizations have begun to advocate for the inclusion of spiritual and religious topics and provide guidelines for counselors and counselor educators: American Counseling Association (2005, 2014), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (2011), the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2009), Association for Spiritual Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (2009), and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (Hays & Erford, 2010). It remains unclear, however, if counselors use religious and spiritual interventions in a consistent and identifiable manner (Cashwell et al., 2013). The mere existence of competencies and standards do not necessarily mean that counselors and counselor educators understand or implement them. This study, therefore, sought to shed light on the personal experiences of counselor educators about spirituality and religion and how these experiences affected how they trained and supervised.

According to the ACA (2005), the primary responsibility of a counselor is to respect the dignity of the individual and promote the welfare of the client. This is accomplished by enhancing human development and embracing personal worth and the unique aspects of the individual. In part, a counselor can promote the welfare and respect the dignity of clients through honoring the networks including religious and spiritual

organizations that hold meaning in a client's life. When counselor educators include spirituality and religion within the counseling curriculum, they adhere to the ethical injunction to promote the welfare and spiritual development of clients (ACA, 2005).

The best practices of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (2011) are intended to enhance the ACA (2005) Code of Ethics and to provide guidelines for counselor education programs. The best practices of ACES state that all supervision is multicultural and supervisors are expected to be competent in the multicultural aspects of supervision and teaching. Supervisors are expected to attend "to the full range of cultural factors" including "spirituality, religion, and values" (ACES, 2011, p. 9).

In a similar vein, CACREP (2009) standards "are written to ensure that students develop a professional counselor identity and master the knowledge and skills to practice effectively" (p. 2). In order to practice effectively, counselors should have knowledge and skills to address human development within the multicultural context. These are important skills that "promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind, or body" of clients (CACREP, 2009, p. 11). It follows then that counselor educators have the task to ensure that counseling students have the skills and knowledge to promote wellness as it relates to religion and spirituality.

In verbiage similar to the CACREP (2009) standards, counselor self-awareness is a core element of the multicultural competencies adopted by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (Hays & Erford, 2010) and posited by Sue et al. (1992). According to these competencies, a multiculturally competent counselor is aware of his/her own personal religious and spiritual values and beliefs as well as the beliefs and values of their clients. Although awareness is paramount, multicultural

counselors must also possess the ability to “contrast their own beliefs and attitudes with those of their culturally different clients in a nonjudgmental fashion” (Sue et al., 1992, p. 482). The AMCD standards imply that counselors should respect religious and spiritual values that might affect clients’ worldview and their psychosocial functioning. Training increases understanding and ability to work with multicultural populations and their particular spiritual and religious beliefs (Sue et al., 1992).

In addition to the multicultural competencies, ASERVIC (2009) has adopted competencies for addressing spiritual and religious issues in counseling. These competencies inform counselors on how to be proficient when addressing the spiritual and religious needs of clients. Six factors guide ASERVIC competencies: (a) culture and worldview, (b) counselor self-awareness, (c) human and spiritual development, (d) communication, (e) assessment, and (f) diagnosis and treatment (Cashwell & Watts, 2010; Robertson, 2010). The spiritual and religious competencies provide a guide for counselors to maintain a therapeutic relationship with their clients whether or not the beliefs and values of the client are different or incompatible with their own (Robertson & Young, 2011).

The aforementioned paragraphs have provided the context for spirituality and religion within the counseling profession but have not addressed an historical perspective that might affect how religion and spirituality are viewed by counselor educators. From an historical perspective, some deemed that psychology and mental health were “in opposition to spirituality and religious experience” (Hage, Hopson, Siegel, Payton, & DeFanti, 2006, p. 217). A number of theorists and scholars (e.g., Allport, 1950; James, 1902; Jung, 1933; Maslow, 1971) have affirmed the role of religion and spirituality as an

important dimension of counseling. Other theorists and scholars (e.g., Ellis, 1980; Freud, 1930; Skinner, 1962) have inferred that these religious and spiritual beliefs are neurotic, irrational, or pathological (Burke et al., 1999; Frame, 2003; Robertson, 2010). The beliefs that the scientific principles of psychology were antithetical to those of religion fed into a history of antagonism dating back to the Enlightenment, prompting widespread professional disregard for religion and spirituality (Burke et al., 1999; Hage et al., 2006, Robertson, 2010; Stloukal & Wickman 2011).

This antagonism also sprang from some of the “isms” of the scientific method (rationalism, determinism, reductionism, and positivism) that disparaged religious beliefs and behaviors as irrational or superstitious (Adams, 2012; Burke et al., 1999; Hage et al., 2006; Hagedorn & Gutierrez 2009; Robertson, 2010). Burke and colleagues (1999) asserted that because counseling was a relatively modern profession, the field has been influenced by “secular sphere of medicine” and the “rationalism of the scientific method” (p. 251). This self-consciously secular influence made religion and spirituality unpopular in the “intellectual circles that gave birth to the most theories in counseling, science, or law in the twentieth century” (Burke et al., 1999, p. 251).

Throughout its history, the field of counseling has witnessed succeeding theories or forces. Thus, multiculturalism is considered as the fourth force of counseling following the psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and existential-humanistic forces (Ratts, 2009). Religious and spiritual diversity is a subset of multiculturalism (Sue et al., 1992). Yet scholars such as Helminiak (2001) have suggested that spirituality is a universal psychological phenomenon--an aspect that is part of the human core. Scholars (Allport 1950; Fowler, 1981; Poll & Smith, 2003; Rizzuto, 1979) also have posited that

individuals have a spiritual and religious development. Because of the universality of religion and spirituality, some scholars (Stanard, Sandu, & Painter, 2000) have suggested that religion and spirituality should be considered the fifth force of the counseling profession. In contrast, Ratts (2009) suggested that social justice be considered the fifth force of counseling. At this time there seems to be no consensus on this point; whether religion and spirituality is subsumed under the multicultural force of counseling or becomes a force unto itself remains to be seen. Regardless of how religion and spirituality are classified by the scholars within the counseling profession, there is mounting evidence that clients expect counselors to have the skills to address religion and spirituality within counseling (Knox et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2009; Rose, Westefeld, & Ansley, 2001) and that spiritual and religious interventions benefit clients (Smith et al., 2007).

The prevailing secular culture might affect counselors' and counselor educators' perceptions about religion and spirituality (Kelly, 1995). Professional concerns about the separation of church and state might prevent mental health professionals from addressing their clients' religious and spiritual issues (Burke et al. 1999; Kelly, 1994). In a study that differentiated between state and religious institutions, Kelly (1994) found that a "significant number" (p. 234) of state-affiliated counseling programs did not include spiritual and religious content.

Despite the secular culture of the United States and the belief of the separation of church and state, scholars have noted a growing trend within counselor educator programs to address the issues of religion and spirituality within the counseling curriculum (Cashwell et al., 2013; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010). Yet some

counselor educators might not view themselves as adequately trained to address religious and spiritual concerns in their supervision and teaching responsibilities. A study of counselor educators conducted by Young, Cashwell, Wiggins-Frame, and Bellaire (2002) found that 46% of counselor educators thought they were *prepared* or *very prepared* to teach about religious and spiritual competency.

If 46% of counselor educators consider themselves prepared to teach about spiritual and religious competencies, this leaves 54% of counselor educators who do not consider themselves prepared. If roughly half of counselor educators consider themselves unprepared to teach about religion and spirituality, then it is reasonable to suppose that counseling students might report a similar lack of preparedness. Robertson (2010) surveyed counseling students to determine their reported level of competency using the Spiritual Competencies of ASERVIC. Robertson reported that 5% of the survey respondents were familiar with the ASERVIC competencies and 41% of the student respondents believed their training had laid the necessary groundwork for them to work with religious and spiritual topics with their clients. More than half (56%) of the respondents in this survey reported they were not prepared to work with clients' spiritual and religious concerns (Robertson, 2010).

However, Robertson (2010) also found that levels of training did affect perceived levels of capability; students who had a religious or spiritual background, or who had taken coursework in spirituality and religion, believed they were more prepared than those who were not trained or those who did not have a personal religious or spiritual background. Similar research conducted by van Asselt and Senstock (2009) led them to conclude that "personal spirituality, spiritual experience and spirituality training did

significantly influence treatment focus as well as self-perceived competence to counsel a client with spiritual concerns” (p. 412).

Similar perceptions of preparedness were found by Young, Wiggins-Frame, and Cashwell (2007) who studied counselor perceptions of preparedness and training needs relating to religion and spirituality. In a survey of ACA members, respondents indicated that spiritual competencies were strongly supported, 27.9% indicated a neutral belief about their preparedness, and 15.6% did not believe they were prepared to counsel using the spiritual competencies. Respondents from this survey indicated a need for additional training in order to be better prepared to meet the needs of their clients who presented with religious or spiritual topics (Young et al., 2007).

Other research provided different perspectives. In research conducted by Adams (2012), she concluded that counseling students received mixed messages from counselor educators about religion and spirituality. Adams surveyed counseling students and asked them about a variety of topics related to religion and spirituality; one finding was that many students believed addressing spiritual or religious concerns was either unethical or inappropriate. Adams suggested that students might confuse the injunction of doing no harm and not imposing values with the skills of setting aside personal beliefs when counseling. These beliefs reported by students seemed to be contradictory to the stated competencies, ethical values, and standards accepted by the counseling profession about religious and spiritual concerns.

Adams (2012) also reported that counseling students might receive mixed messages from counselor educators about the proper inclusion of religion and spirituality during their counseling training. These mixed messages might be related to counselor



perceptions about their preparedness in addressing spiritual and religious topics (Adams, 2012). While most counselors agree that religious and spiritual topics in counseling are important, some counselors and counseling students report a lack of preparedness to address these topics (Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2007). These mixed messages might also be related to counselor educators' perceived inability to integrate spiritual and religious topics in teaching and supervision (Young et al., 2002). In a review of literature regarding training and spirituality, Hage et al. (2006) posited that the lack of competence and confidence that students and counselor educators report "is most likely related to a lack of preparation" (p. 227).

The preceding paragraphs have attempted to delineate the current context for counselor educators. Counselors and counselor educators subscribe to standards, guidelines, and ethical codes of such organizations as ACA, ACES, AMCD, ASERVIC, and CACREP. In recent years, these organizations have modified their codes and added language to address the roles of religion and spirituality within counseling. These organizations provide standards and direction for counselor educators to address spirituality and religion as important components within the counseling curriculum. Although certain segments within the counseling profession have eschewed the significance of religion and spirituality, the counseling profession as a whole is demonstrating a growing awareness and acceptance of religion and spirituality. These developments coupled with the secularism of the United States—rooted in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution providing for a separation between church and state—provide a backdrop for the current situation in the counseling profession and might affect how counselor educators view religion and spirituality within the counseling

curriculum. The aim of this study was to better understand counselor educators' lived experiences in their roles as teachers and supervisors as to when, if, and how they address religion and spirituality in their roles as counselor educators.

### **Problem Statement**

Many counselors and counselor educators understand that religion and spirituality are important components of a client's life and that proper clinical skill that addresses religion and spirituality can have a beneficial effect for clients. One manifestation of this shift in focus is the evolving standards of counseling organizations such as ACA, ACES, AMCD, ASERVIC, and CACREP, which include language and injunctions for counselors and counselor educators to address religion and spirituality for the benefit of the client. While this shift continues apace, researchers report that training has not kept up; however, professional taboos, implicit and explicit, regarding religion and spirituality remain.

Currently, there is a gap between counselor standards, ethics and competencies, and practice as students might be receiving mixed messages from counselor educators about appropriate skills for addressing spiritual and religious concerns (Adams, 2012). Adams (2012) reported that some students believed addressing spiritual or religious concerns was either unethical or inappropriate. According to Adams, students might confuse the injunctions of doing no harm and not imposing values, setting aside personal beliefs when counseling. These student beliefs seemed to stand in contradiction to the stated competencies, ethical values, and standards accepted by the counseling profession about religious and spiritual concerns. Further research could delve into the experiences, thoughts, and beliefs counselor educators have about religion and spirituality. This

research added to the body of literature about some of the misperceptions some counseling students reported and sought to provide a clearer understanding of the link between student understanding and counselor educator practices.

Because some counseling students reported confusion about the proper inclusion of religion and spirituality with clients, mixed messages might stem from various factors. Historic perceptions and beliefs have influenced counselors, counselor educators, scholars, and theorists. The scientific method has been a guiding force in research about counseling, while other forces such as psychodynamic theory, humanistic and existential theories, cognitive and behavioral thought, and the importance of multiculturalism have also influenced how counselors provide clinical services. Although some scholars have acknowledged the importance of religion and spirituality, others have eschewed the importance of these beliefs and still others have modified their theories and beliefs.

In addition, some scholars have observed that the secularism of the United States and the separation of church and state doctrine are ill understood and might cause counselor educators to ignore or overlook religion and spirituality in their teaching and supervising responsibilities. These factors might affect the preparedness of counselors and counselor educators. If nearly half of counselor educators (Young et al., 2002) reported they were unprepared to teach about religion and spirituality, then a study of the perceptions and lived-experiences of counselor educators was warranted to understand the circumstances that determine when, how, and if counselor educators address these important topics.

The cited research about religion and spirituality provided evidence that there are multiple dynamics that might affect how, when, and if counselor educators teach about

religious and spiritual topics. Currently, there is a paucity of information about the lived experiences of counselor educators and their struggles or successes in teaching when religious and spiritual topics arise. While there is a plethora of information about religion and spirituality, tensions seem to exist for counselor educators and those tensions have not been fully explored. Consequently, this research study set out to explore the meanings, stories, and experiences of counselor educators and the role of religion and spirituality in supervision and teaching counseling students. This narrative inquiry was designed to improve understanding in the profession about how counselor educators' lived experiences with religion and spirituality affected their thoughts and beliefs and comfort level teaching these important concepts. This study was conducted to provide counselor educators with a greater understanding of the quandaries and solutions counselor educators have toward teaching these principles.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the lived experience of non-expert counselor educators as related to religion and spirituality in their role as a counselor educator. I have chosen a narrative inquiry approach since Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that narrative inquiry be utilized as a research tool to capture, through stories, the details of life experiences. Participants chronicle their experiences through language and language represents perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs (Polkinghorne, 1988). From the chronicle of lived experiences, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs can be better understood; these views provide evidence of the participants' experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005).

A primary role of a counselor educator is to disseminate knowledge about ethical and sound counseling practices. Counselor educators have supervisory and teaching experiences that can be examined to better determine when, how, and if counselor educators address religion and spirituality. Knowing these experiences can inform teaching and supervision practices. Therefore, the overarching research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- Q1 What are counselor educator's personal lived experiences with spirituality and religion?
- Q2 How do these experiences affect their teaching and supervision of counseling students?"

The narrative data of this research study were elicited through qualitative research interviews. Results garnered from this narrative research might have implications for the counseling profession.

### **Rationale and Significance**

The rationale for this study was predicated on the belief that understanding counselor educators' lived experiences with religion and spirituality could strengthen teaching and supervisory practices, increase multicultural awareness and understanding, and bridge the gap between counselor standards, ethics, competencies, and counseling practice. Many clients who seek counseling hold religious and spiritual beliefs that are fundamental to their being. Clients may come to counselors and expect to discuss many facets of their life including their spiritual and religious values. If counselors are unable to sensitively address the religious and spiritual needs of their clients, this might alienate clients who might inadvertently perceive counselors as being dismissive of their beliefs and of who they are (Hinterkopf, 1994). Shafranske and Malony (1996) stated that

nuances of belief and practices are varied and diverse; these “play a decisive role in an individual’s psychology” (p. 566). Furthermore, the counselor can better understand clients’ needs through a study of comparative religions; this knowledge must be complemented with thorough clinical sophistication and skill to create a proper therapeutic bond (Shafranske & Malony, 1996).

In addition, researchers have concluded that the therapeutic bond is strengthened when counselors judiciously utilize interventions congruent with the clients’ beliefs and values (Cashwell & Young, 2011; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000). Counselor educators are charged with educating counseling students about the multicultural aspects of religion and spirituality. If counselor educators disdain, respect, or have ambivalence about religion and spirituality when teaching and supervising, this will likely affect how students perceive the importance of these topics. Therefore, it is critical that counselor educators understand the potential dilemmas associated with teaching about religion and spirituality in the counseling field. Having an increased understanding of counselor educators’ experiences about religion and spirituality and how counselor educators facilitate, ignore, or impede the dissemination or discussion of religious and spiritual beliefs might lead to changes in mentoring, pedagogy, education, and training standards.

### **Assumptions**

Because researchers have assumptions that might affect the research task, researchers have the duty to understand and report these assumptions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009). Personal assumptions and biases undergird the form of inquiry, data collection, and data reporting. Asking researchers to

provide a personal justification for their assumptions brings added awareness for both researcher and reader to understand how personal assumptions might affect the research process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The delineation of personal assumptions does not necessarily change the assumptions; rather, it makes the research process more transparent and credible (Morrow, 2005). While an in-depth discussion of my assumptions and biases is delineated in Chapter III, I provide a brief overview to orient the reader.

I have multiple assumptions and biases that influence this research. One assumption is the power of words. I believe language has the ability to convey powerful stories and emotions. I have admired people who write and speak in an eloquent manner. Since my childhood, I have collected quotations from a myriad of people who have expressed what I want to express. In my life, I have always sought for exactly the right word, *le mot juste*, to express what I meant. As part of my journey with words toward self-expression, I was fortunate to learn French and be exposed to its rich and precise vocabulary. Knowing another language has influenced my knowledge of my native tongue. While words matter and possess great power, I also realized that what was not spoken was equally important. Stories, spoken and unspoken, have great meaning and can be used for greater understanding.

I also have assumptions about religion and spirituality. One of the strongest assumptions I hold is that all people live their life through some manner of value system. Although many people might express doubt or unbelief in a god or Higher Power, they also have some inner code that guides their decisions. For me, this moral code is a marker of spirituality. People who have a belief in a god or Higher Power often are

guided by a specific religious or moral code. I believe the codes humanity lives by are multi-faceted and integral to human development and human interaction.

I believe religion and spirituality are important facets of the human condition, are separate constructs, and yet both have significant similarities. Spirituality and religion can involve belief in a deity, spiritual or mystical experiences, the performance of rituals, as well as value systems and beliefs about morality and ethics. These ideas can be religious or spiritual or they can be both. For those who adhere to a religion, religions provide a set of rules for individuals; these rules prescribe rituals and practices for relating to the organization as well as to the Divine. Religions are generally an organization or community with a hierarchical component. Most often, religions are organized so the representatives of the religion act as intermediaries between the believer and the Divine. As such, religious organizations also presuppose a relationship with a specific synagogue, temple, mosque, or church. I consider spirituality to be based on a relationship with something greater than the self, most often a Higher Power or god(s). Spirituality also tends to move toward an internalized state of transcendence.

Religion tends to be focused on external practice or rituals, yet some external practices have spiritual dimensions. Some practices, such as prayer or meditation, might be considered both religious and spiritual. If the focus of the practice is to gain acceptance by a group or organization, then it is generally considered a religious practice. When it is practiced to become closer to a Higher Power, then it is a spiritual practice. These are not mutually exclusive. Certain customs can fulfill both a spiritual and a religious role for an individual. Each individual determines what is religious and what is



spiritual for him/herself and determines the relative importance of these constructs within his/her own life.

Religions are organizations and religion presupposes a relationship with a place the faith community has agreed on: a synagogue, temple, mosque, church, storefront, or even a home. Spirituality is based on a relationship with something greater than the self, most often a Higher Power or god(s). Practices and beliefs might be only religious, only spiritual, or have religious and spiritual components.

For me, respect is an attitude of mutual understanding and reverence for a differing belief or disbelief. Religion and spirituality are important facets of human behavior and counselors do well when they have the knowledge, awareness, and skills to work with the faith backgrounds of clients. While counselors cannot be expected to master all the nuances of all religious and spiritual traditions, counselors can be knowledgeable about the importance of religion and spirituality and of spiritual and religious traditions. They can be trained to ask questions and be comfortable addressing a client's spiritual or religious concerns; in doing so, they will be more effective in helping their clients navigate their concerns. When counselors are attuned to the religious and spiritual needs of their clients and intervene in an appropriate manner, the quality of the therapeutic relationship and the progress the client makes toward his/her goals can be remarkable. I believe counseling professionals and the clients served by them will benefit from added understanding of how to better teach counselors-in-training to intervene in a meaningful and culturally adept manner through honoring diverse religious and spiritual values.

My personal experiences with religion and spirituality have been manifold and are foundational in my thoughts and actions. I have a long lineage of forbearers who sought religious freedom and liberty. I was raised in the Mormon faith and have studied various religions and their sacred texts. I have spiritual practices based in Christian and Buddhist meditation practices. I also practice yoga and attend the Episcopal Church. My varied background and varied beliefs play out constantly in my life and affect me in deep and profound ways. I believe that having knowledge about a variety of religious and spiritual belief systems helps me when working with clients.

I also have first-hand knowledge of the deleterious effects a religious community can have on one of its members. I also have first-hand knowledge of the power of grace a religious community can provide. These spiritual and religious experiences play an important part in my daily life and are part and parcel of my assumptions of this research. Finally, I believe people who have religious and spiritual beliefs are affected in complex and meaningful way; these beliefs can be an important part of the counseling process.

Another assumption I have is that the counseling profession as a whole does not adequately understand the religious and spiritual values people possess. While spirituality and religion are often subsumed within multiculturalism, they are often overlooked and sometimes maligned. My own experience within counselor training or in agency-based settings is that when religious or spiritual topics are introduced, there is discomfort with the subject and the discussion is quickly skirted and replaced with a safer topic. I believe that having conversations and expanding the knowledge base of counselors about religious and spiritual values ultimately benefits the counseling

profession and increases counselors' ability to provide meaningful and effective counseling.

### **Delimitations**

The following delimitations were used when recruiting participants for this research study. I recruited counselor educators who taught at master's and doctoral levels at CACREP-accredited institutions within the United States. Counselor educators taught at private, religious, or public institutions and had completed two years of teaching post-doctoral work. Another delimitation was the counselor educator participant was a non-expert in the field of religion and spirituality. Two conditions defined a non-expert. First, a non-expert counselor educator was someone who had not published a journal article, book, or other thought piece about spirituality and religion. The second condition was the participant had not taught a course on spirituality or religion. These delimitations were employed to better understand perspectives and experiences those who research and publish about religion and spirituality might not have acknowledged or considered. This narrative inquiry was designed to understand how counselor educators' lived experiences with religion and spirituality affected their thoughts and beliefs and comfort level teaching these important concepts.

### **Definitions and Key Terminology**

**Non-expert.** A non-expert is a counselor educator who has not published a journal article, book, or other thought piece about spirituality and religion. Another criterion of a non-expert is that a counselor educator has not taught a course on spirituality or religion.

**Religion.** Defined as (a) a belief in god(s) or a Higher Power; (b) an organized, institutionalized belief system, set of practices, or being part of a faith community; (c) an explanation of faith that interprets past and present experiences, might predict the future, and offers pathways toward understanding the ultimate meanings of life and existence (Walsh, 2009); and (d) an expression that is “denominational, external, cognitive, behavioral, ritualistic and public” (Richards & Bergin, 1997, p. 13).

**Spirituality.** Defined using ASERVIC’s description:

The animating force in life, represented by such images as breath, wind, vigor, and courage. Spirituality is the infusion and drawing out of spirit in one’s life. It is experienced as an active and passive process. Spirituality also is described as a capacity and tendency that is innate and unique to all persons. This spiritual tendency moves the individual towards knowledge, love, meaning, hope, transcendence, connectedness, and compassion. Spirituality includes one’s capacity for creativity, growth, and the development of a values system. Spirituality encompasses the religious, spiritual, and transpersonal. (Miller, 1999, p. 499)

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Spirituality, Health, and the Human Condition**

Throughout the long expanse of time, spirituality and religion have played a major role in the human condition. Karen Armstrong (1993), the noted religious scholar, suggested that human beings are spiritual animals and argued that *Homo sapiens* could also be classified as *Homo religiosus*. From an evolutionary standpoint, belief and religion have benefitted humanity and are a part of the genetic and cultural heritage of humanity (Wilson, 2002). Neuroscientists also believe that the human brain has created spiritual and religious experiences for thousands of years (Newberg & Waldman, 2009). Psychologists such as Viktor Frankl (1975) posited that psychological wholeness for human includes the integration of somatic, psychic, and spiritual aspects of humans. While religion and spirituality can be linked to the universal condition of humans, religion and spirituality have also been linked to physical health and wholeness (Sternberg, 2001).

From an evolutionary and neuroscience perspective, belief in the soul, religion, and spirituality are considered adaptive behaviors for humans and the idea of *wellness* is closely linked to belief (Newberg & Waldman, 2009; Wilson, 2002). The descriptions of wellness, wholeness, spirituality, and the helping professions are also historically linked

to the religious and spiritual understanding of the human soul (Cashwell & Young, 2005; Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008; Elkins, 1995; Lake, 2012).

However, Cole (2009) reported that many counselors who study the multicultural aspects of humanity focus on the dominant discourses of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality without considering how the categories of difference, identity, and disadvantage are *connected*. The idea of the interplay of multiple categories of difference, identity, and disadvantage is referred to as intersectionality and is a theory developed by African American feminists such as Crenshaw (1989) and Hooks (1989). Within the framework of intersectionality, the term *positionality* serves to classify, categorize, and construct the social values “assigned to individuals according to various components (e.g., beliefs, concepts, and structures that define social practice)” (Harley, Jolivet, McCormick, & Tice, 2006, p. 216). The social location of positionalities “possess rank, have value, and are constructed hierarchically, particularly those that are visible and discernible” (Robinson, 1999, p. 73).

The theory of intersectionality posits that the dynamics of disadvantage do not occur from a single factor (i.e., race) but from the interactions of multiple factors (i.e., race *and* spirituality *and* sexuality *and* gender). Because the multiple identities of a person’s life are intertwined and are difficult to extract one influence from another, intersectionality provides counselors a way to conceptualize the multiple identities of a person. Like the intersections of a of a traffic intersection, intersectionality comprises the multilayered and interlocking roadways, exits, and traffic patterns (Crenshaw, 2003).

Within this intricacy and complexity, Shields (2008) suggested that intersectionality would presuppose that counselors identify systemic and internal

oppression, privilege, and the laws and history that position some groups over others. Therefore, the identities of an individual rely on each other for meaning (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989). However, Miville and Ferguson (2014) asserted that members of the counseling profession have primarily used an “either/or” perspective when studying and discussing perspectives of identity. Furthermore, Ferguson, Carr, and Snitman (2014) explained that some clients attempt to maintain a clear set of boundaries between their multiple identities, which may promote a relative sense of safety, yet may result in living a fragmented and incongruous life. While this might be an effective strategy for some, this fragmentation has the potential to engender psychological distress due to the near-constant vigilance it takes to lead such a life (Ferguson et al., 2014). Such psychological stress not only has the potential to affect an individual’s resilience and mental well-being but might also affect their physical well-being (Newberg & Waldman, 2009; Sternberg, 2001).

While some counselors and scholars might overlook the intersections of an individual’s multiple identities (Cole, 2009), others are beginning to understand the importance of studying and acknowledging these multiple viewpoints (Miville & Ferguson, 2014) including the intersections of spirituality and religion with other positionalities (Fukuyama, Puig, Wolf, & Baggs, 2014). Yet, among the helping professions, counselors and psychologists agree that the study and understanding of religious and spiritual needs of clients is important (Smith et al., 2007; Young et al., 2007). In recent decades, counselors have been more attentive to the *zeitgeist* of modern-day spirituality and religion (Post & Wade, 2009; Smith et al., 2007; Young et al., 2007).

Surveys such as the Gallup Polls (2012) and the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS; Kosmin & Keysar, 2009) provide evidence that the majority of those who reside in the United States have religious and spiritual beliefs and follow spiritual and religious practices. These surveys also indicated the high importance Americans assign to religion, spirituality, and religious beliefs. Since Americans attach such importance to the concepts of religion and spirituality, counselor educators and counselors are likely to work with clients and students who have religious and spiritual beliefs (Cashwell & Young, 2011; Robertson, 2010). Although the conclusions of these studies suggested that Americans assign high importance to religion and spirituality, they did not address client needs or perceptions about the need to address religion and spirituality in counseling. I next look at research that suggests clients find value in discussing religion and spirituality within the context of counseling.

### **Client Perceptions About Religion and Spirituality**

#### **Quantitative Research**

In a research study by Rose et al. (2001), the researchers sought to examine client beliefs and preferences for addressing spiritual topics and whether it was appropriate for counselors to address religious and spiritual concerns in a counseling session.

Participants from nine counseling sites participated in this study including a university counseling center, psychology training clinic, a Lutheran Social Service center, a women's center, community mental health centers, and private practices. A total of 74 clients participated; 87% of them were women and 14% were men, an average age was 31.6, and age ranged from 18–67 years. The majority of participants were White (92%), 3% were Black, 3% were international clients, 1% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and



another 1% were Hispanic. Without stating exact numbers, the study reported that “approximately 60% report some current religious affiliation ... and nearly 40% of participants reported no current religious affiliation (Rose et al., 2001, p. 63).

Over half (55%) of the participants indicated a preference to discuss religion and spirituality (Rose et al., 2001). Those respondents indicated the reason for discussing these topics was that religion and spirituality were (a) essential for growth and healing; (b) personally important; (c) central to human personality, behavior and worldview; and (d) relevant to their problems. Twenty-two percent of participants reported that discussing religion and spirituality would depend on other factors such as their relevance to the problem at hand, or they would discuss spiritual issues but not religious issues, or it might depend on the qualities of the counselor. Thirteen percent of respondents reported that they would not want to discuss spiritual or religious concerns in counseling. Reasons given were that religion or spirituality was not relevant to the problem of counseling or they would prefer to discuss with clergy. Some offered that they were unsure of their own beliefs and would not discuss religious and spiritual issues in counseling. The findings of this study by Rose et al. (2001) were significant because 40% of the participants did not report a religious affiliation and yet 77% reported it was appropriate in counseling to address spiritual and religious concerns in some situations.

Further evidence that clients expected counselors to work with spiritual or religious concerns was demonstrated in another survey study. Morrison et al. (2009) investigated client perceptions about the role of spirituality in counseling. The research questions sought to ascertain (a) the degree clients reported spirituality as being incorporated in counseling, (b) if clients reported a desire that spirituality be incorporated

in counseling and (c) if clients perceived that discussing spirituality in counseling would help, hinder, or have no effect on the process of counseling.

Morrison et al. (2009) recruited clients from two counseling practices in a Midwestern city. Seventy-three clients responded to the questionnaire. Sixty-three of the sample received counseling from a Christian counseling center and 39.7% from a secular counseling center. Respondents were aged 18-63 years, 94.2% of respondents were Caucasian and the remainder was made of African Americans or Hispanics, and 78.9% of respondents were females and 21.1% were male.

The researchers used the Experiences in Counseling Questionnaire (EQC), which has one open-ended question and 18 multiple-choice questions. The EQC was developed in conjunction with relevant literature and was reviewed independently by three counseling professionals. A chi-square analysis was used to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the clients from the Christian practice and the secular practice (Morrison et al., 2009).

One research question examined the degree to which spirituality was discussed in counseling sessions (Morrison et al., 2009). Clients from both counseling centers reported that spiritual topics were discussed with their current counselors; 93% of clients from the Christian practice indicated that spiritual topics were examined during counseling sessions. These same clients reported that the subject of spirituality was most often instigated by the counselor. In contrast, 31% of the clients who attended secular counseling sessions indicated that spirituality was a topic of counseling. These clients indicated that when spirituality was brought up, it was the client who most often initiated

the conversation. Morrison et al. (2009) indicated that the differences in responses to this research question were statistically significant.

Morrison et al. (2009) also wanted to determine if clients wanted spiritual topics addressed in counseling to a greater or lesser degree. Only 50 clients responded to this question and nine of those were from the secular practice group. The following descriptive statistics were not statistically compared because of the inadequate size of the sample. Of this group, 16.7% indicated they would like more spiritual concerns to be addressed in counseling, 72.9% believed spirituality should be included in counseling at the level they had experienced, 4.2% reported they would like spirituality to be discussed less often, and 6.3% did not indicate a preference.

A third goal of this research (Morrison et al., 2009) was to ascertain if clients believed that addressing spirituality in counseling helped, hindered, or had no effect on the progress of the counseling process. None of the clients responded that addressing spirituality in counseling had been unhelpful. A few clients (10.2%) believed addressing spirituality in counseling was neutral--being neither helpful nor unhelpful. Of this sample, 16.3% believed that addressing spirituality was moderately helpful and 73.5% indicated that addressing spirituality in counseling was helpful in reaching counseling goals.

Morrison et al. (2009) concluded that because of the relatively small sample size and the high proportion of respondents from the Christian counseling center, results from this study were tentative. In this study, the client's self-report of the value of inclusion of a spiritual component in counseling varied and was dependent on whether or not a client attended counseling at the secular or Christian counseling center. Nevertheless, this

study added to the growing body of evidence that spirituality is being incorporated in counseling and spirituality is considered helpful to the counseling process. Some clients believed that counselors should address spiritual concerns in counseling. The preceding paragraphs have outlined results from quantitative research that demonstrated clients expect counselors to address religious and spiritual topics in counseling. Qualitative research also shed light on the need to address spirituality and religion with clients.

### **Qualitative Research**

In a qualitative study conducted by Knox et al. (2005), the researchers deliberately sought out participants who were not in counseling for spiritual or religious reasons and whose therapist was not a religious counselor. Knox and her colleagues presumed that clients or counselors who sought out religious or spiritual counseling services would expect that religious or spiritual conversations would ensue. Knox et al. wanted to better ascertain the experience and responses of clients who did not have expectations of a spiritual or religious counselor or expectations that a spiritual or religious topic would be specifically addressed in counseling. In this study, 6 of 12 participants considered themselves religious or spiritual and did not identify with a specific spiritual or religious group, three participants identified as Catholic, and the remaining three were familiar with religious or spiritual groups such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, paganism, and Unitarian Universalism.

In this study, there was one male and 11 female participants who were all White; participants reported on counseling with current and previous counselors. Participants had worked with a median of 6.5 counselors, had a mode of three therapists, and had been in counseling for a median of two years. The respondents interviewed were

working with non-religiously affiliated counselors in outpatient therapy at the time of their interviews. Participant ages ranged from 21 to 56 years. They sought counseling for concerns such as loss, family-of-origin concerns, depression, anxiety, and trauma.

Researchers asked participants about their “experiences of having raised religious or spiritual issues in therapy as well as their insights into what made such experiences either helpful or harmful to the treatment” (Knox et al., 2005, p. 289). Since religious or spiritual topics were not identified as core problems, the religious and spiritual concerns topics sprang naturally from the therapeutic conversation. Participants reported that during their counseling sessions, they examined religious or spiritual topics frequently--ranging from every session to once a month.

Participants also reported that discussing spirituality and religion was ultimately important in resolving the issues that brought them to counseling. Participants were asked to discuss helpful and unhelpful events relating to spirituality and religion that occurred in their counseling sessions. All 12 participants experienced helpful events in counseling and from those helpful events, three topics emerged. First, helpful events in counseling focused on existential struggles related to religion and spirituality. Second, participants were able to discuss the support they received from spiritual or religious people or organizations. Third, participants indicated that helpful events included conversations about religious or spiritual practices such as meditation (Knox et al., 2005).

While all the participants in this study experienced helpful events in their counseling, 6 of the 12 also reported unhelpful events (Knox et al., 2005). The discussions that resulted in unhelpful events were equally initiated by counselors and by clients. These unhelpful events occurred when the participant felt judged or when the

participant believed the counselor tried to impose their beliefs on the participant.

Unhelpful events resulted when counselors tried to read a client's aura or were judgmental. Examples of unhelpful comments included statements that the participant was "too Catholic" or was told that because the client could not embrace her childhood religion the participant "could not expect spiritual help" (Knox et al., 2005, p. 296). Participants expressed that when their spiritual or religious beliefs were not accepted or were put down, they felt anger and frustration. These unhelpful events were considered injurious to the client because the client stopped counseling or did not seek counseling for extended periods of time. In the case of the participant whose aura was read, the participant believed the counselor was negligent in the counseling session (Knox et al., 2005).

In addition to the helpful and unhelpful events reported in the study by Knox et al. (2005), a third type of experience occurred--when the participant considered raising a spiritual or religious concern in the counseling session and decided not to raise that concern. Three participants reported that despite their personal belief that addressing spiritual and religious topics would be helpful, they chose not to for fear of being judged or because they felt uncomfortable because of the perceived differences between the participant and the counselor. Specifically, participants desired to talk about their personal connection with God and the many "questions they experienced when trying to understand religious/spiritual concepts" (Knox et al., 2005, p. 297).

One of the participants reported a positive interaction with the counselor despite the decision not to bring up the religious and spiritual concerns. The negative consequences of the decision not to address these concerns caused a barrier in the

counseling process; one participant reported that this barrier precluded her from working with her therapist on some of the concerns that really mattered to her. From this qualitative study, Knox and her colleagues (2005) concluded their research supported the idea that (a) clients desire to discuss their religious and spiritual concerns, (b) conversations about spirituality and religion are regularly integrated into the counseling session, and (c) when counselors respectfully work with religious and spiritual concerns, the counseling experience can be enhanced and improved.

### **Meta-Analysis**

The qualitative and quantitative research cited in the preceding section suggested that clients believed addressing religious and spiritual concerns were important components to the counseling process and factors in counseling could hinder or promote growth. What it did not address was whether counseling from a spiritual or religious perspective was beneficial. This subject was addressed in a meta-analysis conducted by Smith et al. (2007). These researchers wished to ascertain the outcomes, methodological strengths, and limitations of research with spiritual outcomes. They conducted a “quantitative literature review (meta-analysis) that allowed for the systematic aggregation of data across studies and the statistical investigation of potential moderation effects” (Smith et al., 2007, p. 644).

To find suitable outcome studies, the researchers searched several databases and searched for root terms related to spirituality and religion (i.e., spirit, religion, faith, worship, pray). They then cross-searched the religious and spiritual root terms with root terms related to psychotherapy (i.e., counsel, therapy, session, intervene) and further crossed the search with root terms related to the construct of outcome (i.e., outcome,

effective, compare). Smith and his colleagues (2007) limited their search for outcome studies published between 1981 and 2005. In addition, they consulted previous reviews of studies on spiritually-oriented therapy. While educational interventions, qualitative studies, and case studies were not included of the 31 studies considered, they were written in English and comprised quantitative data. Outcome data were considered relevant if they contained a mental health intervention with a spiritual or religious component.

Among the outcome studies in this meta-analysis (Smith et al., 2007), common clinical concerns were anxiety/stress, depression, eating disorders, perfectionism, existential well-being, and forgiveness. Some of the treatments included in these studies were focused on prayer or contemplative prayer, dreams, psycho-education related to empathy, cognitive-behavioral therapy using conditions and imagery to counter irrational beliefs, rational emotive therapy using the Bible to dispute beliefs, and study of religious texts (i.e., Koran, Bible). The meta-analysis studied outcomes from populations as diverse as Malaysian Muslims, cancer patients, divorced Chinese women, college students, inpatient clients with eating disorders, Christians, and HIV/AIDS patients.

Sophisticated coding and analysis were used to create conservative effect size estimates that were uniformly coded so each study was accorded a single effect size in the omnibus analyses (Smith et al., 2007). A random-effects model was employed to account for the between-studies variance and then random-effects weighted regression models as well as analyses of variance (ANOVAs) evaluated the effects of moderating variables. Statistical significance was set at  $p < .10$  due to the small amount of studies



under consideration. Across the 31 studies, the random-effects, weighted average effects size was 0.56 ( $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% confidence interval = 0.43 -0.70).

This meta-analysis was an appraisal to determine if other variables moderated the spiritual or religious interventions. The effectiveness of specific variables examined was (a) client differences by age and gender, (b) the type of research methodology, and (c) the different characteristics of the spiritual intervention. Smith et al. (2007) reported that the overall effect size of the 31 studies in the meta-analysis is 0.56; therefore, it was of moderate strong magnitude and greater than averages across other psychotherapeutic outcomes (average was 0.48). The results of the research led them to conclude that age and gender did not alter client outcomes and, therefore, findings might be generalizable across differing types of populations. They concluded that “spiritual or religious adaptations to psychotherapy effectively benefit clients” (Smith et al., 2007, p. 651). Intervention such as prayer, reading sacred texts, and discussing religious or spiritual issues could help the counseling process. In addition, the effectiveness of religious and spiritual interventions was enhanced when clients applied their specific religious and spiritual beliefs to attain treatment goals. The findings of Smith and his colleagues pointed to the need for continued understanding of the implications spirituality and religion have in the lives of clients and, by extension, to the continued commitment counselor educators have to address issues of spiritual and religious competence in the counseling curriculum.

## **Spiritual and Religious Competencies**

### **Client Growth and Development**

Helping clients establish wellness, growth, and development is a core element of counseling. The social and cultural diversity standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) are written as guidelines to counselor educators to ensure that students have the proper counseling skills and knowledge. The CACREP (2009) standards also suggest that counselors have an awareness of “culturally supported behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind or body” (p. 11). Wellness through mind, body, and spirit allows clients to live a fulfilled life. Similarly, the competencies set forth by the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC, 2009) suggested that a client’s well-being could be enhanced or diminished because of their spiritual or religious background.

The code of ethics established by the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2005) also admonished counselors to encourage the growth and development of clients. Client growth and welfare are cultivated through healthy relationships and healthy relationships can be bolstered through religious and spiritual leaders and organizations (ACA, 2005). Further, the ACA ethical code suggested that counselor educators infuse multicultural and diversity topics when teaching and supervising counseling students. In the most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013), clinicians are instructed to assess the religious and spiritual aspects of a client’s background or identity. Similarly, the best practices of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES, 2011) suggested that

counselor educators address religious and spiritual values within their teaching and supervision of counseling students.

Counseling associations such as ACA, ACES, ASERVIC, and CACREP have affirmed the importance of religious and spirituality in clients' lives. The Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (2009) has the most comprehensive competencies addressing spirituality and religion. To better understand the ASERVIC competencies for spirituality and religion, I present a brief history of their inception, look at the competencies in detail, and finally discuss what researchers have discovered about the use of spiritual and religious competencies.

### **Inception of Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling Competencies**

The Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (2009) is a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA) that had its genesis in a Catholic association dating from the 1950s. The details of this transformation were outside the scope of this document; however, details can be found in the writings of Bartlett, Lee, and Doyle, (1985) and Miller (1999). The ASERVIC is the only division of ACA that focuses on the spirituality and religious topics; ASERVIC also provides "leadership to ACA on spiritual, ethical, and religious values (Miller, 1999, p. 498).

In 1995, ASERVIC hosted a Summit on Spirituality; the 13 members of the summit were chosen because they had expertise in the field of spirituality, were members of ACA, and had published articles or books on spirituality. The agenda of this first summit was to (a) define or describe spirituality and (b) explore competencies for counselor while working with clients on spiritual concerns. Members of the summit

reached a consensus on a description of spirituality and created a list of 10 core competencies for spirituality based on eight of the CACREP core guidelines. The 10 core competencies were revised to nine competencies after forums at the ACA and ACES conferences in 1996.

Robertson (2010) reported that the work of the first Summit on Spirituality was groundbreaking; however, despite the efforts of the summit members' best intentions, the verbiage of the competencies was unclear and some of the concepts lacked clarity. For example, competencies 8 and 9 overlapped and did not clearly distinguish the intertwining concepts (Robertson, 2010). While the language of the first set of competencies was clear to summit members, it became clear that others did not interpret the written competencies in the same manner the summit had intended (Cashwell & Watts, 2010). In addition, there was limited empirical validation of the competencies (Young et al., 2002). In 2008, the second Summit on Spirituality was convened to update the competencies from 1995 (Robertson & Young, 2011). This coincided with Robertson's (2010) doctoral dissertation that sought to empirically validate the competencies set forth in 1995. Because Robertson's dissertation was such an integral part of the revision process to the competencies, I next describe the basis for the study before addressing how it affected the revision process of the 2009 ASERVIC competencies for spirituality and religion.

### **Spiritual Competency Scale**

Robertson (2010) developed the Spiritual Competency Scale (SCS) through a large-scale factor analysis ( $N = 662$ ) based on the competencies from 1995. Robertson developed the SCS to address three concerns. The first concern was to "collectively

define spiritual competency and comprehensively represent” the information that “should be included in counselor training” (Robertson, 2010, p. 8). The second goal was to create a measure that would provide a baseline of students’ knowledge of spirituality. The third goal was to provide a reliable and valid instrument that could assess training, measure knowledge about spiritual competency, and provide a factor structure of the spiritual competencies from 1995 (Robertson, 2010).

To create the SCS measure, Robertson (2010) convened a group of seven counseling professionals who were familiar with the 2009 ASERVIC spiritual competencies and spirituality and religion in counseling. Using items gleaned from the literature about spirituality and spiritual competence, this expert panel validated 263 items through a computerized card sort procedure. Each item was matched with one of the competencies. From this procedure, 90 items--10 items for each competency--were used to create the SCS. Sixty-one of the 90 items received unanimous agreement from the panel while 17 items had consensus of 86%. Eleven items had a 71% consensus agreement and one item with 57% consensus was used to ensure the minimum of 10 items per competency required to guarantee statistical relevance.

From the work of this expert panel, the SCS was created with 90 forced choice questions of which 10 items were reverse-coded. Responses were on a 6-point Likert scale that did not offer a neutral option. Each response of the Likert scale was assigned a score (1 = *high disagreement*, 2 = *midrange disagreement*, 3 = *low disagreement*, 4 = *low agreement*, 5 = *midrange agreement*, and 6 = *high agreement*). Since it was unrealistic to expect that respondents would have a perfect score (scoring six points per item), Robertson (2010) decided to set a threshold of five points per item to determine spiritual

competency. This allowed a respondent to score between 450 and 540 points on the SCS and have the score considered a “desirable score” (Robertson, 2010, p. 11). In addition to the questions about spirituality, Robertson included a short form of the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability scale to determine if respondents responded in a socially desirable way, which might have confound the results of the SCS. Finally, 15 demographic and attitudinal questions in both free response and forced choice allowed the researcher to ascertain respondent beliefs about spirituality and religion and provide demographic information.

Robertson (2010) randomly chose counseling programs from a list of accredited programs in the United States. The respondents represented 28 universities of which 18 were secular schools and 10 were religiously affiliated schools. Religious schools represented Catholic, broadly “Christian,” Church of Christ, Mennonite, and mainstream Protestant faith traditions. The majority of respondents indicated they were Christian (63%), Buddhists represented 3%, Muslims were 4%, Jewish were 2%, agnostics were 3%, and atheists represented another 3%. Six percent indicated “Other” for religious beliefs, 4% indicated no religious preference, and 7% of the respondents did not indicate a religious preference. Seventeen states from across the United States were represented and 81% respondents were female and 19% were male. Of the sample, 65% were 30 years or younger, 17% were between the ages of 30 and 39, and 18% were 40 years or older. The sample was mostly Caucasian (82%), 7% identified as African American, 6% were Hispanic/Latino American, 3% were Asian American, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were both less than 1%, and 2% self-reported as “Other.”

Seventy-six percent of the sample attended CACREP-accredited institutions and represented mental health, school, marriage and family, rehabilitation, and pastoral/Christian tracks of counseling. Sixty percent of the sample had completed more than 12 credit hours of course work, 11% had completed 9-12 hours, and 29% had completed less than six credit hours. Some 43% of respondents indicated their personal beliefs influenced their decision to become a counselor. Forty-one percent agreed with the statement that their program had prepared them to address religious and spiritual issues and 56% disagreed with that statement. Seven percent of respondents indicated they were familiar with the ASERVIC (2009) spiritual competencies.

Robertson (2010) concluded from the results generated by this study that the SCS had a high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .93$ ). A perfect score would result in a score of 540 and the cutoff for each item was set at 5. In this sample, the range of scores was from 233 to 462 with a mean total score of 368 ( $SD = 39$ ). Six of the 90 items were endorsed by 80% of the respondents. Additionally, no statistically significant differences were found based on the attitudes or demographics (i.e., gender, race, religiousness, or feeling prepared) and no difference was detected based on the respondents' knowledge of the spiritual competencies (ASERVIC, 2009).

The SCS was retested with a subset of participants two weeks after the initial scoring. Scores from the two trials positively correlated,  $r(53) = .90, p < .01$ . Initially, 37 items did not meet an item-to-total correlation (.30) and a nine factor-solution that matched the nine competencies was reached. Varimax, Oblique, and Promax statistical regression analyses were conducted and the Oblique solution was chosen as the most

appropriate. This resulted in a six-factor solution that accounted for 60.4% of the variance.

The six factors of spiritual competence were labeled as (a) Culture and Worldview, (b) Diagnosis and Treatment, (c) Assessment, (d) Human and Spiritual Development, (e) Counselor Self-Awareness, and (f) Communication. Robertson (2010) reported that the factors more clearly defined the spiritual competencies and “an empirically driven and comparatively less ambiguous template emerged” (p. 18). These six-factors were linked to 14 skill-based guidelines. These skills and factors served as a basis for the current spiritual competencies revised in 2009 and later endorsed by ASERVIC (2009) and ACA (Robertson, 2010; Robertson & Young, 2011). The complete list of the Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling can be found in Appendix A. While the SCS provided empirical support and basis for the six factors of the spiritual competencies, researchers have examined counselors’ and counselor educators’ beliefs about addressing spiritual and religious topics; I review this aspect of competency in the following section.

### **Views on Spiritual and Religious Topics in the Counseling Profession**

Several researchers (Adams, 2012; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2002) in the past two decades have researched attitudes and beliefs of counselor educators, counselors, and counseling students as they relate to spiritual and religious topics in counseling. Some researchers examined competencies of counselor educators, how counselor educators viewed spiritual and religious concerns, and how they incorporated spirituality and religion into the counseling and supervision curriculum. Several researchers examined the attitudes and beliefs of clients, counselors, and



counselors-in-training. Still other researchers studied counselor educators' levels of preparedness addressing spirituality and religion in the counseling curriculum. I provide a review of these studies to demonstrate the need for continued research of how counselor educators approach spiritual and religious needs in the counseling curriculum.

In an exploratory research design, Adams (2012) conducted a study to ascertain the perceptions of counseling students concerning the messages they received in their training regarding religion and spirituality. Adams examined personal religious and spiritual involvement, the level of importance students assigned to the inclusion of religious and spiritual interventions in counseling, and the messages, implicit or explicit, received about religious and spiritual topics in their training. Adams constructed a survey that included the following four parts: (a) participant demographics, (b) assessment of a level of importance of religion and spirituality in their personal lives as well as participants' comfort level with spiritual and religious interventions, (c) assessment of the implicit and explicit messages received from counseling faculty during their counseling training, and (d) and a section where participants penned the messages they had received about spiritual and religious topics in their training programs. In addition to demographic questions, attitudes were assessed on a 10-point Likert scale indicating preferences or beliefs from *least* (1) to *most* (10).

Students ( $N = 118$ ) were recruited from four universities from the southeastern United States and represented first and second year master's and doctoral-level students: the master's-level students were from two CACREP-accredited university programs and one non-CACREP-accredited institution, and the doctoral students were from an APA-accredited program. Students represented master's-level community counseling or

school counseling programs and doctoral students were in a counseling psychology program. Student respondents were given the survey packet in one of their required courses by a faculty member not involved in the research project and packets were returned to the researcher (Adams, 2012).

Respondents reported relative importance of spirituality on a 10-point Likert scale, where low numbers corresponded with low importance or a low level of agreement and high numbers represented a high level of agreement. Responses were aggregated from the Likert scales into three categories: 1-3 indicated a *low level*, 4-6 a *moderate level*, and 7-10 a *high level*. Respondents indicated a high level of religiosity and spirituality: 76.3% considered themselves as highly religious, 16.9% as moderately religious, 68.6% considered spirituality on a daily basis as highly important, and 14.4% reported a moderate level of importance for spirituality on a daily basis. Data points showed that few (7.6%) of the respondents had a low comfort level of discussing religious and spiritual topics, 28.0% reported a moderate comfort level, and 64.4% reported a high level of comfort addressing these subjects (Adams, 2012).

Despite a relatively high level of comfort discussing religion and spirituality, many respondents reported they would not bring up religion or spirituality in the counseling session: 33.1% of the respondents indicated a high degree of likelihood they would ask clients about their religious and spiritual beliefs, 29.7%, had a moderate level of likelihood they would bring up the subject, and 37.3% had a low likelihood of addressing spiritual and religious topics in the counseling session. Thus, two-thirds of counselors might not address the spiritual and religious beliefs of clients despite nearly two-thirds reporting a high degree of comfort discussing spirituality. If respondents

indicated they had a high comfort level of addressing religious and spiritual topics and yet two-thirds of counselors might not address these topics, these responses point to a possible discrepancy between the standards and current trends of practice regarding spirituality and religion (Adams, 2012).

Adams (2012) reported that 28.0% of the respondents were highly likely to consider the ramifications of religious or spiritual beliefs on a client before introducing an intervention, 37.3% had a moderate level of doing so, and 33.9% had a low likelihood of considering the implications of an intervention in light of a client's religious or spiritual beliefs. If 71.2% of the respondents reported a low or moderate level of considering the spiritual or religious ramifications of an intervention, then this reported behavior might raise ethical questions as some interventions might not be appropriate for some adherents to certain spiritual or religious traditions (Basham & O'Connor, 2005).

Another goal of the study was to ascertain respondent beliefs about the possibility of setting aside personal beliefs while counseling clients (Adams, 2012). Of these students, 76.3% reported it was indeed possible to do so. Student perceptions that counselors should set aside personal beliefs are problematic since extant literature suggested it was improbable that counselors would be able to detach personal values from client values when counseling (ACA, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2007; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000). The art of counseling focuses on the experiences of the client and yet is an interpersonal experience between counselor and client (Cowan, 2005). If counselors are not properly taught how to work with personal values as it relates to religion and spirituality, some clients might not receive proper clinical care. Since counselor educators play a crucial role in the training of counselors, understanding counselor

educators' beliefs and attitudes about religion and spirituality and personal values would benefit the counseling profession. Having this knowledge might ultimately lead to better training and delivery of client care.

When asked if the respondent would likely disclose personal religious and spiritual beliefs, Adams (2012) reported that 53.4% of respondents were in the low range of likelihood to self-disclose and 29.7% had a moderate likelihood for such disclosure. Adams suggested that these beliefs might stem from the ACA (2005) *Code of Ethics* prohibiting the imposition of personal values. However, Zinnbauer and Pargament (2000) concluded that despite client and counselor differences in religious and spiritual values, when beliefs were discussed, there was a positive therapeutic outcome.

Adams (2012) noted that counselors' beliefs and values are a significant tool for counseling; therefore, it might be unwise to disregard this significant sense of self. Adams suggested that counselor educators need to be more careful when teaching about imposition of personal beliefs and values. Since counselor educators are charged with teaching and training of counseling students and students reportedly received mixed-messages from counselor educators about self-disclosure and imposition of values within the counseling relationship, it would benefit the counseling profession to better understand how counselor educators view, understand, and relay these topics to counseling students.

Adams (2012) queried the respondents about implicit and explicit messages they had received in their training programs. Respondents were asked if it was inappropriate or unethical to discuss religious or spiritual topics with clients--39.8% of the respondents indicated they were taught either explicitly or implicitly that it was inappropriate or

unethical to address religious or spiritual concerns with clients. If students are taught, either implicitly or explicitly, that it is inappropriate or unethical to address religious or spiritual concerns with clients, some counselor educators might be giving blurred messages that do not reflect current standards set forth by the current ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics*, CACREP (2009) standards, multicultural competencies, and the ASERVIC (2009) spiritual and religious competencies.

While some counselor educators might misinterpret these standards, other counselor educators might not be aware the standards. What is not known is how counselor educators who are non-experts think, believe, interpret, and then relay these standards. The aims of this study were to better understand counselor educators' experience with the subjects of religion and spirituality and when, if, and how counselor educators addressed these subjects when teaching and supervising. For counseling students to feel confident in addressing religious and spiritual topics with their clients, students must receive clear and plain training surrounding these topics. If counselor educators relay these standards, ethics, and competencies to their students in an incoherent or conflicted manner, students will be confused and, ultimately, clients might not fully benefit from the counseling experience.

Although the results of the exploratory study by Adams (2012) shed light on messages counselors-in-training perceived receiving from counselor educators, it did have some limitations. The respondents were predominantly Caucasian, female, young, and from the southeastern part of the United States; therefore, results might not be generalizable to other populations. However, the results from Adams' study might

illustrate a possible trend in the messages counselor educators might be giving to counselors-in-training.

Adams (2012) noted that despite the limitations of her study, students reported an inconsistent message about religion and spirituality from counselor educators. It is unclear if the content of all these beliefs and behaviors were implicit and/or explicit, and if all messages were from counselor educators. However, the messages students received from counselor educators affected counseling behaviors. Adams inferred that students might have been taught appropriate behaviors about the inclusion of spiritual and religious topics but their reported behaviors were inconsistent with what they had been taught. Adams suggested that this might be due to inconsistent messages counselors-in-training received from counselor educators. Adams stated that for counselors to be competent with spiritual and religious concerns in counseling, the messages counselors-in-training receive from counselor educators “need to be clear and consistent” (Adams, 2012, p.78). The questions Adams raised might indicate the need for a better understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of counselor educators and how messages relating to religion and spirituality could be more consistent. If students are getting mixed signals about the difference between imposing values and honoring religious and spiritual beliefs, then it would follow that understanding counselor educators’ attitudes and beliefs about these concerns could provide added information concerning these perceived inconsistencies.

While Adams (2012) examined student perceptions about the messages received from counselor educators, Cashwell et al. (2013) studied clinical behaviors of current counselors who were members of the ACA. Cashwell et al. inquired as to the importance

of clinical behaviors relating to religious and spiritual concerns within counseling, the frequency of utilizing interventions relating to religion and spirituality, and the possible barriers that prevented counselors from implementing religious or clinical interventions. The researchers obtained a stratified random sample of current ACA members; 74 responses were garnered and the demographics of the respondents mirrored the demographics of ACA membership: 73.1% of ACA counselors were trained at the master's level, 89.7% were Caucasian, and 65.4% were female. The average age of this sample was 52 and counselors had an average number of 12.6 years post-master's- level training.

The team of nine researchers met to develop a questionnaire that measured demographics and personal beliefs; 30 items assessed "discrete counselor behaviors, cognitions, and intervention strategies that might be utilized in addressing religious/spiritual topics in counseling" (Cashwell et al., 2013, p. 48). Respondents rated the importance of each of the clinical behaviors using a 5-point Likert scale where 1 indicated *very unimportant* and 5 indicated *very important*. In another section, respondents indicated the frequency they employed the same clinical behaviors previously rated. Respondents indicated their actual usage of the clinical interventions on a 5-point Likert scale (1 indicated *never* and 5 indicated *always*).

Respondents rated the importance of addressing spiritual and religious topics at an above-average rating. Cashwell et al. (2013) reported a moderately strong correlation between the ratings of importance and frequency. Seventy percent of the clinically-based items were rated by respondents as having a significant difference between the frequency of use and the perceived importance. Statistical analysis confirmed that the importance

of religious and spiritual clinical behaviors was consistently rated higher than the actual implementation of the interventions (Cashwell et al., 2013).

Cashwell et al. (2013) asked participants to rate personal religious/spiritual orientation, confidence levels of addressing religious and spiritual topics in counseling, and whether or not the respondent had a spiritual practice. This section was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The analysis of responses indicated this sample was more spiritually oriented than they were religiously oriented: 39.1% indicated they were religious at a level of 6 or 7 on the Likert scale, 87.8% indicated they were spiritual at these same levels, 67% of respondents indicated levels of 6 or 7 on the Likert scale indicating they had confidence in their ability to successfully address religious and spiritual topics in counseling. Of the 32% who did not rate themselves as confident, 82% of these noted the need of increased training about spiritual and religious topics (Cashwell et al., 2013).

As part of their study, Cashwell et al. (2013) assessed perceived barriers to integrating religious and spiritual interventions into counseling practices. Three barriers were cited by the respondents. The work setting represented a barrier of incorporating religious and spiritual interventions. The second barrier was that counselors reported spiritual and religious topics were not addressed unless the client brought these subjects up in the course of counseling. The third barrier was counselors' lack of comfort level addressing spiritual and religious topics.

The study by Cashwell et al. (2013) provided evidence of a trend that counselors and counselor educators believe religious and spiritual topics are important aspects of the counseling. However, the practice and assessment of religion and spirituality are



misunderstood, underutilized, and might not be adequately addressed in counseling education programs (Adams, 2012; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2007). Cashwell et al. (2013) concluded from the discrepancies between the reported importance and frequency utilization of spiritual and religious clinical practices that perhaps counselors who were attentive to ethical considerations of doing no harm and imposition of counselor values might not be properly assessing for religious and spiritual topics and miss opportunities to clinically and appropriately intervene. This conclusion echoed the findings of Adams (2012) that counseling students received mixed-messages, that counselor educators should carefully consider how they taught about imposition of counselor beliefs and values, and whether or not it was ethical to address the religious and spiritual needs of clients.

In this study, 32% of the counselors did not rate themselves as having confidence to address spiritual and religious topics in counseling (Cashwell et al., 2013). While it is unknown the exact level of experience of those individuals who noted a lack of experience, the average age of the respondents was 52 and the average years of counseling experience was 12.6, suggesting some counselors with over a decade of experience did not have certain skills to adequately assess and address topics of religion and spirituality with their clients. It also suggested that these mixed messages within counselor training might be long-standing. Cashwell et al. (2013) suggested that further research could be conducted to “inform and guide counselor training and to increase understanding of how to effectively engage clinical interventions” when working with clients (p. 57). The aim of this research study was to understand counselor educators’ beliefs and attitudes that guided their decisions as to when, if, and how they incorporated

religious and spiritual topics in their roles as teachers and supervisors. The role of counselor educators as gatekeepers is clearly a piece of the puzzle and knowledge from this study could be a part of the solution to better train counselors.

While Adams (2012) and Cashwell et al. (2013) suggested that counselors and counseling students might receive conflicting messages about doing no harm, imposition of values, and messages that might impact the extent to which counselors utilize religious and spiritual interventions, other researchers have made inquiry into counselor educators' inclusion of religion and spirituality in the counseling curriculum. Nearly two decades ago, Kelly (1994) conducted a national survey to assess how counseling and psychology programs included religious and spiritual topics in their training programs. Three questions guided the survey: the extent to which researchers sought to know that religious and spiritual concerns were handled in coursework and supervision; how the religious and spiritual concerns were similar or different in religious, independent, or state institutions; and finally, the opinions of those who answered the survey with regard to the important and impact of spiritual and religious topics in educational programs.

Kelly (1994) sent surveys to the program heads of 525 counselor education programs throughout the United States and 343 surveys were returned. Of the respondents, 264 were program chairs of state affiliated institutions. Kelly reported that more than 75% of the programs represented were accredited by CACREP and the American Psychological Association (APA). Not all questions were answered by all respondents; therefore, each category had a different sample size, standard deviations and means were not reported, not all sample sizes were reported, nor were percentages reported in all cases. Kelly alternated between sample sizes and percentages. Of the

respondents who represented the training programs, the majority were male (67.9%) and White (80%). Most respondents reported their age as between 40 and 59 (75%). A majority (45%) of respondents reported their religion as Protestant ( $n = 154$ ), 20% ( $n = 67$ ) were Catholic, 3% ( $n = 10$ ) were Jewish, and 10.5% ( $n = 36$ ) reported being agnostic, atheist, or of no religious preference.

Kelly (1994) reported this survey was in six parts that included yes/no questions, Likert scaled questions, and a section in which the respondents could add their views and comments. The first research question addressed the extent religious and spiritual concepts were addressed and incorporated in counselor education courses, non-course activities, and supervision. Many programs did not have course work that addressed religious and spiritual topics, 12.76% of programs included a spiritual/religious course, and 9.92% included course components about religion/spirituality. Most programs did not provide spiritual/religious supervision related to the client ( $n = 177$ ) or to the intern ( $n = 171$ ).

The second research question explored whether the type of institution (religious, state, non-affiliated) played a part in including religion and spirituality in the counseling curriculum. Kelly (1994) used a loglinear model to explore the interactions of three variables: (a) religious/spiritual curriculum, (b) type of institution and size of the program (<100 students, 50-100 students, >50 students), and (c) university affiliation. Kelly determined by loglinear analysis that state institutions “had significantly more curricula without spiritual-religious content ( $z = 3.55, p < .01$ )” (Kelly, 1994, p. 232). Religious institutions had greater than expected religious/spiritual content in the curriculum ( $z = -3.25, p < .01$ ). The loglinear analysis led Kelly to conclude that the Z value linked with

the independent universities and the relationship between spiritual-religious content and program size were both non-significant.

Kelly's (1994) third research question asked the respondents to rate the importance of religion and spirituality in the counseling program the respondent represented. Kelly reported that "fewer than half ( $n = 141$ , 45.3%) of the respondents considered religion/spirituality as *very important* or *important* topics in counselor preparation" (p. 232) and 41% indicated that spirituality and religion were *somewhat important*. To examine this question further, Kelly employed a hierarchical loglinear analysis to compare the interaction of university affiliation and relative importance of spiritual/religious topics. Kelly found that the  $Z$  values computed for the university affiliation and *somewhat important* and *important* categories were not significant.

Kelly (1994) commented that the percentage of programs that included courses, course content, and supervision relating to spiritual and religious concerns were low and these low numbers were similar to training programs for psychiatrists and psychologists. Kelly also remarked that in comparison to religiously-based institutions, state universities had significantly less spiritual and religious course content. This is notable because state-ran universities train more counselors than religiously-based universities (Kelly, 1994). In Kelly's study, respondents from state institutions noted apprehension related to ethical, philosophical, and legal concerns about including religious and spiritual training in the counseling curriculum.

Kelly (1994) noted that despite these concerns of counselor educators from state institutions, religious and spiritual issues were germane to the lives of many clients and he advocated further research. Specifically, he urged researchers to address how state

institutions might ethically and legally incorporate spirituality and religious concerns into the counseling curriculum. Kelly also called for continued investigation of diversity factors that might affect the inclusion of spirituality and religious topics when teaching and preparing counseling students. Kelly's research noted that many counseling programs do not incorporate spiritual and religious concerns in the counseling curriculum. Since spirituality and religion are part of the human condition and standards and ethical guidelines accepted by members of the counseling profession suggest that clients can benefit from having spiritual and religious topics addressed in counseling, there is a discrepancy between praxis and the standards within the profession. This inconsistency might be part of the mixed signals counseling students receive from counselor educators.

This dissertation study was a response to Kelly's (1994) and Adams (2012) calls for continued research. This study examined the attitudes of counselor educators regarding the gaps and barriers of including spiritual and religious topics into the counseling education curriculum. The purpose of this study was to better understand the lived experiences of counselor educators to better recognize when, if, and how they addressed religion and spiritual topics when teaching and supervising counseling students.

While Kelly's (1994) study included both counseling and psychology programs, Pate and High (1995) sought to understand how CACREP-accredited programs included religious and spiritual beliefs in the counseling curriculum. Pate and High sent 72 questionnaires to the heads of CACREP-accredited programs and received 60 responses to their survey. The questionnaire included questions that evaluated the program the

respondent represented. Respondents were also asked to report how faculty in their program addressed the client's religious and spiritual values through the counseling curriculum.

Pate and High (1995) reported that 60% of the programs represented in their research addressed client religious beliefs and practices in their curriculum. Religious and spiritual beliefs of clients were usually addressed in the multicultural coursework. Respondents indicated that 67% of surveyed CACREP programs included religious practices and beliefs in practicum training and 33% taught students to include client religious beliefs and practices in the intake procedure.

While many counseling programs in Pate and High's (1995) study addressed religious and spiritual topics in their curriculum, what is not known is the extent to which these topics were addressed. It is not known why some other programs did not include these topics. Neither the barriers nor the elements that foster the inclusion or exclusion of spiritual and religious topics within the counseling curriculum were explored in depth. Similarly, what is not known is why two-thirds of the counseling programs do not teach students to include religion and spirituality during the intake procedures. Research addressing why or why not these topics were or were not addressed might add to the knowledge base of the counseling profession.

The final question of Pate and High's (1995) survey asked respondents to rate the level of importance the counseling education program placed on the counselor's awareness of a client's religious beliefs and practices. This perception was rated on a 5-point scale for which 1 signified *not important* and 5 signified *very important*. Pate and High reported that the mean response was 2.92 for this question. Of the respondents,

60% indicated that the counselor's awareness of a client's religious beliefs and practices was of some importance (3 on the Likert scale), 14% responded that addressing this topic was of *no importance*, 10% indicated this topic as *important* (4 on the Likert scale), and 5% rated it *very important* (5 on the Likert scale). While 10 to 15% of the respondents to Pate and High's study indicated that counselor awareness of client spiritual and religious concerns was *important* or *very important*, this left 85% of respondents who believed these topics had some importance or no importance. This demonstrated ambivalence within the counseling profession of the importance of addressing religious and spiritual concerns within the counseling curriculum.

While it might be alarming that 14% indicated these topics were of no importance, perhaps more concerning was the ambivalence of 60% of respondents who indicated religious and spiritual concerns of the client were of *some* importance (Pate & High, 1995). If 60% of counselor educators believed religious and spiritual topics had some importance and 14% believed these topics had no importance, this might be part of ambivalent messages counseling students receive from counseling faculty. The present research sought to investigate the concerns and assumptions that might demonstrate the ambivalence counselor educators might have when teaching about spiritual and religious topics.

Pate and High (1995) noted the percentages from CACREP-accredited programs were higher than the Kelly (1994) study that included psychology and counseling training programs. They also noted that 30% of the students in counseling programs could graduate without knowing the possible impact religious and spiritual beliefs could have for clients. Pate and High suggested that spiritual and religious concerns of clients are

akin to race, gender, and sexual orientation. They proposed that the counseling profession would not be satisfied with research that indicated one-third of counseling programs disregarded race or sexual orientation in the counseling curriculum. Pate and High reported that their study reinforced the conclusion of Kelly's (1994) study--counselor educators had a duty to engage in continued dialogue in order to incorporate religious and spiritual values more consistently into the counseling curriculum. In response to Pate and High's findings, this research study continued the dialogue about counselor educators' beliefs about spirituality and religion and explored the barriers and elements that foster teaching spiritual and religious competency within the counseling curriculum.

While Kelly (1994) and Pate and High (1995) sought to understand how counselor educators and counseling programs rated the importance of religion and spirituality within the profession and the extent to which counselor educators addressed religion and spirituality, other researchers examined how spiritual and religious competencies were perceived and understood by counselor educators.

In 2002, Young et al. published a study based on spirituality competencies established by the first Summit on Spirituality in 1995 (Miller, 1999). Young et al. sought to ascertain the ability of CACREP-accredited programs to utilize and integrate spiritual competencies in teaching and supervision. Three research questions were the basis of the study: the first sought to rate the importance of the perceived competency for preparing counselors-in-training, the second sought to ascertain the level of preparedness to integrate spiritual competencies in teaching and supervision, and the third rated the



perceived ability of the faculty to include spiritual competencies into the CACREP curriculum.

Young and colleagues (2002) sent a survey to a representative of each of the then 136 CACREP-accredited counseling programs. They received completed surveys from 94 counseling programs. Respondents were individuals from CACREP-accredited programs that offered masters, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees. Seventy-five percent of respondents represented public institutions. Of these public institutions, 78% did not offer a specific course on religion and spirituality while 70% of their programs addressed religion and spirituality throughout the curriculum (Young et al., 2002).

The survey instrument was constructed by the researchers and was based on the competencies set by the Summit on Spirituality in 1995 (Young et al., 2002). The survey instrument was designed in five parts to evaluate (a) the type of counseling program and the courses offered, (b) perceptions of the preparation level and degree of infusion of the spiritual competencies while teaching students, (c) views on counselor-based competencies, (d) client-based competencies, and (d) interventions and techniques related to the spiritual competencies (Young et al., 2002).

To rate the perceptions of counselor educators' ability to prepare and ability to infuse the spiritual competencies into the curriculum, a 5-point Likert scale based on importance and preparedness was utilized (Young et al., 2002): 1 on the Likert scale indicated *very unimportant* or *very unprepared* and 5 indicated *very important* or *very prepared*. Internal consistency of this scale was rated by calculating coefficient alphas; Cronbach's alpha was .96 and the reliability coefficients of the subscales were relatively

high (General Competencies = .88, Counselor-Based Competencies = .87, Client-Based Competencies = .89, and Interventions/Techniques = .94).

To ascertain if there were differences in responses from public and private institutions, a multivariate analysis was used because of the possibility that a religious institution might have more of a religious focus in the counseling curriculum (Young et al., 2002). However, the results of the multivariate analysis indicated no significant differences between the respondents from public and religious institutions,  $F(3, 79) = 1.137, p > .05$ . This finding was similar to the Kelly (1994) finding that the statistical difference, whether or not a counselor educator taught at a public or religious institution, was not significant and did not affect the likelihood of including religious or spiritual content when teaching or supervising (Young et al., 2002).

Using the competencies set out by the first Summit on Spirituality, Young et al. (2002) surveyed counseling programs accredited by CACREP. At that time, there were 136 accredited programs and 94 representatives responded. Each program was solicited to provide information about their program and attitudes about the then newly written spiritual competencies (Young et al., 2002). In the first research question, Young et al. sought to identify attitudes and beliefs about the importance each spiritual competency held for counselor educators as they taught counselors-in-training. Twenty-six items rated the individual spiritual competencies; the overall mean was 3.83 (of 5). The researchers concluded that respondents had a *moderate strong agreement* regarding the importance of the spiritual competencies. All items except one had a mean score greater than 3 and 10 items had a score of 4 or greater. There was one exception that was scored at 2.92—it addressed the importance of helping students self-conceptualize life span

development from two different spiritual development models. These descriptive statistics were reported in their entirety in the article by Young et al. (2002).

The second research question addressed perceptions of counselor educators and their ability to incorporate the spiritual competencies in supervision and teaching. The overall mean to this section was reported as 3.3. Young et al. (2002) suggested that those who responded saw themselves as *moderately prepared* to address the spiritual competencies in training programs. “Just under half of the respondents (46%) viewed themselves as prepared or very prepared” to teach to the spiritual competencies (Young et al., 2002, p. 28). The researchers commented that this statistic raised questions as to whether or not counselors-in-training would receive the requisite training necessary to be prepared to use the spiritual competencies with clients. In addition, counselor educators who responded also indicated they needed additional training and curricular guidelines to better teach the spiritual competencies.

The last research question rated the respondents’ perceptions of their colleagues to adequately infuse the spiritual competencies into the counseling curriculum. The overall mean rating to this question was 2.93. Young et al. (2002) reported that counselor educators who responded to this survey appraised their colleagues as less capable than themselves of incorporating the spiritual competencies into the counseling curriculum.

Data points from this research by Young et al. (2002) led the researchers to conclude that the representatives of this sample were in moderate agreement--spirituality and religious values were of prominent importance to clients. Young et al. also noted their concern as to the likelihood students would be exposed to religious and spiritual values of clients. They noted this concern was raised because 46% of respondents

deemed themselves as prepared or very prepared to incorporate spiritual and religious topics into the counseling curriculum.

Further, Young et al. (2002) speculated that many counselor educators were uncomfortable with and uncertain of how to address religion and spirituality in the counseling curriculum. Their conjecture echoed that of Adams' (2012) conclusions that counseling students received mixed messages from counselor educators. If counselor educators expressed uncertainty as to how to address these issues (Young et al., 2002), this might be a component to the mixed messages counseling students received (Adams, 2012). Since Young et al. (2002) expressed their concerns that many counselor educators reported not being prepared to teach about religion and spirituality, their concerns led them to challenge the counseling profession to incorporate additional research, training, and course guidelines that would provide counselor educators the necessary tools to better address spiritual and religious values of clients. This research of counselor educators' lived experiences with spirituality and religion might provide insight to the dynamics of how, if, and when counselor educators address religion and spirituality when teaching and supervising counseling students. While the Young et al. study focused on counselor educators' attitudes and experiences about religion and spirituality, other studies have focused on attitudes and beliefs of counselors in the field.

In a study to ascertain the importance of the first set of spiritual competencies, Young et al. (2007) surveyed members of the ACA. Three guiding questions asked (a) the relative importance of the spiritual competencies, (b) the level of preparedness counselors perceived practicing within the spiritual competencies, and (c) if respondents believed they needed more training to incorporate religious or spiritual topics when

working with clients. Surveys were sent to a 1,000 ACA members and 505 members responded. Questions ascertained demographic details and respondents tended to be female Caucasian holding a master's degree. Eighty-two percent indicated they were spiritual while 48% indicated they were religious. While 18% of the respondents had not received any training about religious or spiritual topics, many other respondents had. These modes of training included course work (47%), workshops (40%), journal articles/books (50%), and pastoral care training (15%).

Survey questions rating importance and levels of preparedness were rated on a 5-point Likert scale: 1--*very unimportant* or *very unprepared*, and 5--*very important* or *very prepared*. The first research question examined the importance of the initial spiritual competencies (Miller, 1999), and each of the nine was rated as to importance to the counseling field. Young et al. (2007) reported the mean importance and percentage of agreement for each of the nine competencies. They reported respondents agreed that the spiritual competencies were important; each of the nine competencies received a mean of 3.5 (of 5) or greater. The overall mean for all the competencies was 4.2. The authors concluded that the overall mean indicated a strong support from these respondents.

The second research question rated the level of perceived preparedness to practice within the guidelines of the spiritual competencies. Over half (56%) of this sample indicated they were *prepared* or *very prepared* to work with the spiritual competencies in their clinical work, 27.9% indicated a neutral response, and 15.6% were *unprepared* or *very unprepared* to do so. Statistical analysis indicated no differences for education level, race, or employment setting. Statistical correlations existed for those persons who self-rated as spiritual or religious. Respondents who rated themselves as spiritual had

more correlations than did those of religious persons. Young et al. (2007) explained that this difference might be due to the fact that the spiritual competencies were designed to be inclusive; those respondents who were religious might not view the competencies as in line with their religious beliefs. Correlations also existed for responses to the competencies and the perceived importance of counselors receiving training to utilize the spiritual competencies when working with clients (Young et al., 2007).

As with any research study, limitations existed; what was unknown from this study was how those counselors who rated lower levels of spirituality might respond to the importance of the spiritual competencies. Additionally, it was not known if there would be differences in the responses of those who chose not to respond--specifically if they chose not to respond because they did not believe spiritual and religious topics were important. Despite these limitations, the authors concluded that many counselors believed addressing spiritual and religious topics was important and training was still needed. With regard to training, the Young et al. (2007) stated that training modules should be expanded from “self-awareness components” and include components wherein the student can “understand conceptual models and intervention techniques” (p. 51). Further, they suggested that research should focus on helping counselors to more effectively intervene with spiritual and religious topics.

The previous research cited provided evidence that some counselor educators in the past decades have included spiritual and religious topics when teaching the counseling curriculum. However, counselor educators have varying degrees of comfort, desire, and ability to address the religious and spiritual components the ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics*, ACES (2011) *Best Practices*, CACREP (2009) *Standards*, *Multicultural*

*Competencies*, and the spiritual and religious competencies (ASERVIC, 2009) have set forth. Additionally, some counselor educators rated their peers' ability to teach about religious and spiritual topics as inferior to their own. Still others suggested that enhanced training could increase their ability to teach to the spiritual competencies. These inconsistencies might show ambivalence, lack of empirical data, or lack of knowledge on the part of counselor educators. As noted earlier and previous to Robertson's (2010) construction of the Spiritual Competency Scale (SCS), there were no empirical data to validate the spiritual and religious competencies set forth by ASERVIC.

The Spiritual Competency Scale (SCS) was designed to build the factor structure of the spiritual and religious competencies as formulated by the members of the first set (Robertson, 2010). In addition, Robertson (2010) set out to generate a baseline measurement of counseling students' knowledge of spirituality and to have a tool to assess levels of training and the acquisition of spiritual competency. Seven hundred participants from 28 universities responded to her survey. Respondents represented both secular and religious-based institutions. Seventy-six percent of the respondents were enrolled in CACREP-accredited programs and respondents were from a variety of faith traditions (i.e., Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, agnostic, and atheist).

Forty-one percent of the student respondents indicated their counseling program had laid the groundwork to address religious and spiritual issues in counseling; yet 5% of the respondents knew about the spiritual competencies and 95% were unaware of the existence of the spiritual competencies (Robertson, 2010). Of those who reported they believed they were prepared to utilize the spiritual competencies, 31% of them had taken a course specifically to address these competencies, 56% of the respondents indicated

they were not prepared to work with clients and address their spiritual and religious needs, 32% indicated a desire to address these topics infused throughout the counseling coursework, and 53% indicated the need for a separate course to address these topics.

Furthermore, of the 90 items on the SCS, students endorsed 20 of them at or above the competency indicator of 5 (of 6). Seventy of the items had a mean score below 5.00. These lower than expected scores raised concerns for the counseling field because the majority of the respondents (76%) were from CACREP-accredited school. Robertson (2010) concluded that the results of this study presented the counseling profession with “unequivocal evidence that students’ knowledge of the material associated with the Spiritual Competencies is insufficient” (p. 20).

Robertson (2010) noted a discrepancy: while 5% of the respondents knew of the ASERVIC (2009) spiritual competencies, clients, students, professional organizations, and counselor educators believed it was important to include spiritual and religious topics in counseling. This represented a gap in stated values and beliefs about the importance of addressing religious and spiritual topics and knowledge. If 95% of counseling students were not aware of the ASERVIC spiritual competencies, then it falls to counselor educators to bridge this gap. Further, Robertson stated that in order to bridge this gap, the counseling profession must develop coursework and measure the efficacy of including spiritual and religious topics in the counseling profession. The SCS is a potential tool to reach those goals (Robertson, 2010).

The preceding section examined how researchers have studied spiritual and religious competencies in the past 20 years. Researchers reported that counselors and counselor educators believe that spirituality and religion are relevant and useful when



counseling clients (Kelly, 1994; Young et al., 2002). Yet some research indicated that some counselor educators did not address spiritual or religious topics in their curriculum (Kelly, 1994) or that counselor educators were not adequately trained to teach about religious and spiritual topics (Young et al., 2002). Since counselor educators reported they might not be trained to address religious and spiritual topics, Robertson's (2012) assertion was a logical step. She emphasized that many counselors have not been adequately trained in how to integrate religious and spiritual topics in counseling and that "the efficacy of training for facilitating spiritual competency remains in question" (p. 8). Adams (2012) suggested that part of the puzzle of inadequate training of counseling students might be the implicit and explicit messages they received from counselor educators. While the research cited provided insight as to the current state of pedagogy regarding spirituality and religion, it did not address if training in these topics made a difference when working with clients who presented with spiritual or religious concerns. I next examine studies that addressed this important question.

### **Influence of Spiritual Experience and Training**

In an effort to better understand if counselors had training about spiritual and religious topics in counseling, van Asselt and Senstock (2009) utilized a survey-based research design. Their goal was to determine if counselor variables of spiritual beliefs, spiritual experiences, or training would explain differences in the focus of therapy regarding spiritual themes. Van Asselt and Senstock surveyed members of the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), members of the ASERVIC, and a sample of graduate level counseling students from a non-religiously affiliated university.

Of these three different organizations, 50.7% were members of AMHCA, 42.3% were members of ASERVIC, and 7% were counseling and psychology students.

From the sample of 520, 31.9% were men, 67.9% were women, and 1.9% selected the Other category. While the majority of respondents indicated their religious preference as Christian/Protestant (46.9%), 17.5% were Catholic, 4.6% were Jewish, 1.7% were Buddhist, 11.9% indicated Other, and 17.3% indicated they had no religion. Participants were asked to rate their level of spiritual involvement; 45.6% indicated a high level of spiritual involvement, 30.0% indicated some involvement, and 20.2% indicated limited/no involvement. Ages ranged from 22 to 86 years of age ( $M = 47.29$ ,  $SD = 12.07$ ). Levels of education ranged from bachelor's degrees to doctoral degrees: 2.1% had a bachelor's degree, 61.9% had a master's degree, and 30.8% had a doctorate. Participants' years of experience as counselors ranged from less than a year to 45 years.

With regard to training and teaching regarding spirituality, some respondents (9.8%) indicated they had taught a course on spirituality, 42.1% had taken a course on spirituality, 48.5% had spiritual topics as course content in their training, 18% had presented an educational session on spirituality at a professional conference, and 6.4% had presented a poster session at a conference. A majority (53.9%) had attended an educational session, 22.3% had attended a poster session at a conference, 10% had published a journal article about spirituality, 79% had read a journal article about spirituality, and 73% had read a book regarding spirituality and counseling.

To measure spiritual experiences and perceptions of the respondents, van Asselt and Senstock (2009) utilized the Index of Core Spiritual Experiences (INSPIRIT) developed by Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Zuttermeister, and Benson (1991). They

measured well-being in four dimensions (biological, psychological, social, and spiritual) utilizing the Spiritual Health Inventory (SHI) developed by Veach and Chappel (1992). Van Asselt and Senstock (2009) reported that in their literature review, they had not found an instrument to measure counselors' self-perceptions of spiritual concerns or a measure to assess competence when counseling clients with spiritual concerns. Because of this deficit in counselor assessment tools, van Asselt and Senstock developed four case scenarios to measure counselor perceptions and competence.

A focus group was utilized to review and critique the four case scenarios, to ensure the scenarios focused on spiritual topics, and that the questions for assessment were easy to understand. For each of the scenarios, the participant rated three items. The first item had the respondent rate his or her level of agreement that the focus of therapy for the scenario could be clinical. A 4-point Likert scale was utilized: 1 indicated *strongly disagree* and 4 indicated *strongly agree*. For the second item, the respondent identified one of four themes the treatment focus should be (clinical, religious, spiritual, or other). The first two items were designed to differentiate themes the respondents chose for each of the case scenarios. The third item rated the respondents' perceived level of competence on a 5-point Likert scale--1 indicated *not at all* and 5 indicated *very competent*.

Van Asselt and Senstock (2009) reported a complex and multi-layered set of data analysis was employed to determine a total score for each of the four scenarios and then an average score for each participant was calculated. Once the average score was obtained, a chi-square analysis was used to determine if the control variables of age, years of experience, or education explained differences in participant outcomes. Four

treatment themes (clinical, religious, spiritual, treatment) and one competency theme were analyzed. The clinical factor had a Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .80$ ), religious theme ( $\alpha = .72$ ), spiritual theme ( $\alpha = .69$ ), primary treatment theme ( $\alpha = .70$ ), and competence ( $\alpha = .84$ ); thus the alpha scores were moderate. Van Asselt and Senstock determined that the alpha score for the INSPIRIT questionnaire was .90; therefore, all the items in the INSPIRIT were retained for statistical analysis. Two factors were found for the SHI: the first factor (spiritual experiences) had an alpha of .87 and the second factor (spiritual well-being) had an alpha of .80, thus allowing for the inclusion of all items of the SHI.

Analysis revealed that the aggregate of control variables (age, years of counseling experience, and education) "did not significantly account for differences in counselors' choice of treatment themes" (van Asselt & Senstock, 2009, p. 416). However, the years of counseling factor did make a difference ( $p = .03$ ). The more experienced counselors were, the less likely that spirituality was a treatment theme in the case scenarios.

For the treatment themes, the control variables of age, years of counseling experience, and education did not account for differences as a group. However, the four primary independent variables of INSPIRIT scores, SHI Personal Spiritual Experiences, SHI Spiritual Well-Being, and training in spiritual topics did explain differences when respondents chose treatment themes: 55% of the variance was accounted for by the INSPIRIT and the SHI Personal Spiritual Experience scores ( $p < .01$ ; chi-squared = .74).

The control variables of age, years of counseling experience, and education did explain a significant portion of the variance for the Counselor Self-Perceived Competence theme,  $F(5, 515) = 13.43, p < .0001$ . The four primary independent variables of INSPIRIT scores, SHI Personal Spiritual Experiences, SHI Spiritual Well-

Being, and training in spiritual topics made a significant difference related to self-competence theme; they “accounted for 11.2% of the variance, or 22.8% of the total variance of self-perceived competence” (van Asselt & Senstock, 2009, p. 417).

Van Asselt and Senstock (2009) noted that the INSPIRIT and SHI were chosen as instruments for their study because of their validity; there might have been other instruments more suited to the study of competence and training and thus a limitation to this study. They noted that their results might also be specific to this particular study and be another limitation. Nevertheless, they concluded that having spiritual training and personal spirituality influenced how counselors addressed spirituality when counseling clients. Counselors with more training believed themselves to be more competent in addressing spirituality in counseling: “when a counselor is more spiritually aware, his or her ability to recognize a client's spiritual concerns is also greater” (van Asselt & Senstock, 2009, p. 417). Thus, competency and awareness of the spiritual concerns of clients is crucial in better helping the client. Since it is important to address the spiritual and religious needs of the client, it follows that the study of spiritual competency of counselors and counselor educators is both necessary and relevant.

In the preceding section, I examined several studies that shed light on the attitudes and beliefs of counselor educators concerning the importance of addressing spiritual and religious competencies. In addition, the studies cited highlighted how counselors, counseling students, counselor educators, and researchers rated levels of perceived competence and how training might influence these attitudes and beliefs. The research cited (Adams, 2012; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2002) have led researchers to conclude that counselors' and counselor educators' ability

to adequately address religion in counseling and counseling curriculum might be inadequate.

Notably, Pate and High (1995) reported that 30% of the students in counseling programs could graduate without knowing the possible impact religious and spiritual beliefs could have for clients. Robertson (2010) found that only 31% of students had been exposed to spiritual competency through counseling coursework and 41% were prepared to work with clients and their spirituality. These statistics were 6-16% larger than Kelly's (1994) findings that 25% of counseling programs included religion and spirituality in their curriculum. While it does denote increased attention to these topics, it still indicates room for increased research, training, and awareness.

Pate and High (1995) suggested that spiritual and religious concerns of clients were akin to race, gender, and sexual orientation. They proposed that members of the counseling profession would not be satisfied with a research that indicated one-third of counseling programs disregarded race, gender, or sexual orientation in the counseling curriculum. Further, they asked if the members of the counseling profession would find it acceptable "that only 15% of responding program heads indicated that counselor awareness of any other aspect of client diversity was *very important*?" (Pate & High, 1995, p. 5).

Pate and High (1995) suggested their study reinforced the conclusion of Kelly's (1994) study--that counselor educators had a duty to continue research and dialogue in order to incorporate religious and spiritual values more consistently into the counseling curriculum. When Pate and High (1995) reported their finding concerning CACREP-accredited training programs, they challenged the counseling profession with two

provocative questions. First, they asked if the counseling profession would be satisfied with the knowledge that a third of counseling students had not been taught about gender, race, and sexual orientation. Second, they asked if the counseling profession could “accept as appropriate... that only 15% of the responding program heads indicated that counselor awareness of any other aspect of client diversity was very important” (Pate & High, 1995, p. 5).

Robertson (2010) found that 69% of students had not been exposed to spiritual competency through counseling coursework, 41% were prepared to work with clients and their spirituality, and 5% were aware of the spiritual competencies. These statistics were not significantly greater than Kelly’s (1994) findings that 25% of programs included religion and spirituality in their curriculum. Perhaps the counseling profession should reconsider an updated question by Pate and High (1995): if 69% of CACREP-accredited counseling programs ignored competencies around racism, gender, and sexual orientation, would the counseling profession be satisfied with those statistics?

I conjecture that counselor educators would be appalled at those statistics if they related to sexual orientation, gender, or racism since (a) religion and spirituality are a fundamental and vital component of the human condition (ASERVIC, 2009; Hathaway, Scott, & Garver, 2004; Young et al., 2007); (b) intersectionalities are greater than race, gender, and class (Cole, 2009; Fukuyama et al., 2014; Robinson, 1999; Shields, 2008); (c) counselor educators are charged with the duty to teach counseling students how to incorporate religion and spirituality into counseling sessions (ACA, 2005; ACES, 2011; ASERVIC, 2009; CACREP, 2009; Sue et al., 1992); (d) there are discrepancies as to the ability and effectiveness of counselor educators to adequately teach to the spiritual

competencies (Adams, 2012; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2002), and since (e) counselor educators may be giving counselors-in-training mixed messages about spirituality and religion (Adams, 2012). These inconsistencies within the counseling profession should be of concern. This incongruence within the counseling profession is notable because counselor educators might ignore essential human development (ASERVIC, 2009; Hathaway et al., 2004; Young et al., 2007) and might be in violation of professional ethics (ACA, 2005; Basham & O'Connor, 2005). Therefore, the aim of this research was to broaden the understanding of counselor educators regarding spiritual/religious competency and training and to help close the gap that exists when addressing these important topics.

The cited research about religion and spirituality provided evidence that there are multiple dynamics that affect how, when, and if counselor educators teach about religious and spiritual topics. These multiple and complex dynamics might cause confusion on the part of counseling students (Adams, 2012), might depreciate the importance of human development (ASERVIC, 2009; Hathaway et al., 2004; Young et al., 2007), and might be in violation of professional ethics (ACA, 2005; Basham & O'Connor, 2005).

Because there is a paucity of information about the lived experiences of counselor educators and their struggles or successes in teaching when religious and spiritual topics arise, this research study is essential. It is critical that the tensions existing for counselor educators be examined. Examining these tensions more completely might have implications for teaching practices and might impact counselor educators, students, and clients. Consequently, this research study explored the meanings, stories, and experiences of non-expert counselor educators and determined the themes that emerged



from discussion about how, when, and if counselors taught about religious and spiritual topics. I next address the methodological procedures to explore these matters.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research was to explore the personal lived experiences of non-expert counselor educators related to spiritual and religious topics in the counseling profession. The previous chapter outlined the need for this study by delineating the current gap between commonly accepted standards (CACREP, 2009), competencies (Cashwell & Watts, 2010) of spiritual and religious topics, and existing praxis. This narrative inquiry was designed to provide insight into the assumptions, ideas, and concerns counselor educators about spiritual and religious topics when teaching and supervising counseling students. Having a greater knowledge of counselor educators assumptions and concerns might lead to a better understanding of when, how, and if counselor educators address these subjects. The following overarching research questions guided this narrative research:

- Q1     What are counselor educators' personal lived experiences with spirituality and religion?
- Q2     How do these experiences affect their teaching and supervision of counseling students?

This chapter outlines the methodology used to understand these lived experiences.

As a guide to researchers, Crotty (1998) outlined four elements that researchers must address: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methods, and methodology. These elements served as a guide for the methodology for this research study. Epistemology

provided a foundation for the study, the theoretical perspective was a philosophical stance for the study, the methods outlined were the techniques and procedures that were utilized, and the strategy or methodology was the plan of action for the study. I next examine the four elements that provided the undergirding of this narrative research study.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and describes the nature, conditions, and possibility of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). Because epistemology informs how knowledge is learned and is a philosophical grounding, a researcher must establish, explain, and justify the epistemological stance. Therefore, I next describe the constructivist epistemology on which this study was conducted.

The constructivist epistemology is defined as an interpretive research stance and assumes multiple realities (Merriam, 2000). Constructivism is considered to be the polar opposite of objectivism. Constructivism assumes that learning and understanding are an “internally mediated reality,” whereas objectivism is an “externally mediated reality” (Jonassen, 1991, p. 8). Thus, objectivism assumes that truth or reality exists independently of human knowledge or perception and that a person assimilates the objective reality (Jonassen, 1991). While the emphasis of objective knowing is the *object*, i.e., what is observed, the emphasis of constructivism is the construction of reality in the mind of the learner. Knowledge is constructed and understood based on personal experiences and beliefs (Jonassen, 1991). The tenets of constructivism hold that the mind interprets events, objects, and perceptions based on a personal knowledge base; thus, there are multiple realities (Jonassen, 1991).

While constructivism can be distinguished from objectivism, constructivism must be distinguished from social constructionism. Social constructivism posits that knowledge is constructed within social settings; groups collaboratively construct knowledge for one another when they share meaning. Social constructionism consists of “the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Young and Collin (2004) further distinguished constructivism from social constructionism when they explained that constructivism

focuses on meaning making and the constructing of the social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes” while social constructionism “emphasizes that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction. (p. 375)

Since there are multiple realities and interpretations of reality including an emotional content, constructivism focuses “on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Since the individual’s conceptions of the world are created within the mind, constructivism values and affirms the unique and distinctive experiences of the individual and seeks to describe, understand, and interpret the individuals’ reality (Merriam, 2009). Schwandt (2001) added that people create “concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience” (p. 30). The schemata an individual uses to shape their understanding of events often involves stories of meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Experience is multi-faceted and is both personal and emotional. The individual’s expression (construction) of reality characterizes a range of experiences. This describes the *emic* nature of qualitative research, i.e., the personal recounting of experiences and beliefs (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, reality might be intricate or plain, sophisticated or naïve, or informed or uninformed (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). The reality of

the event is personal; it is the meaning the person ascribes to the event that determines relationships and behaviors. Qualitative research seeks to understand personal events. Understanding of the realities of lived experiences is co-created between the researcher and the participant (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Heppner et al. (2008) further described the creation of understanding when they wrote,

construction of a participant is internal; it is only through the interaction between the investigator and the participant, or the interaction between the investigator and the world of the participant, that the constructions of an individual can be understood. (p. 12)

My intent was to interview counselor educators so they could share their experiences and thus better understand the *emic* experiences of non-expert counselor educators of the role of religion and spirituality within the counseling curriculum.

Because lived experiences are personal and imbued with layers of personal meaning, using a constructivist epistemology aligns well with the tenets of narrative inquiry. Story telling creates meaning through narrative schema (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). From a constructivist viewpoint, understanding is created through the dialogue of the participant and researcher (Heppner et al., 2008). The epistemology of constructivism and the methodology of narrative inquiry both assume that meaning and understanding occur through dialogue. The dialogue generated in this study allowed for assumptions and ideas to be discussed in order to illuminate when, how, and if counselor educators addressed religion and spirituality in their teaching and supervisory roles. When describing constructivist research, Crotty (1998) stated that using a constructivist epistemology allows researchers to use “a radical spirit of openness” to understand with a “new or richer meaning” (p. 51). Therefore, research with a constructivist viewpoint allows freedom to circumvent possible conventional meanings of the past.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

Crotty (1998) suggested that researchers provide a theoretical perspective that provides a foundation that undergirds the research. The philosophical orientation provides context and logic for the research process. In keeping with Crotty's outline for researchers, I next discuss the theoretical stance of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics' root idea is related to interpretation and historically to the interpretation of religious texts. A more contemporary view of hermeneutics is the understanding through interaction "that foregrounds and treats as primary the meanings with which historical, social and cultural phenomenon are imbued by reflexive self-understanding and self-reconstituting human subjects" (Clark, 2012, p. 123). According to Clough (2002), a hermeneutic circle describes the process and interpretation of experiences; thus, "any situation of objects as a text" is considered as hermeneutic interpretation (p. 95). Furthermore, interpretive description is considered hermeneutic if the text amplifies the circular involvement with the objects (Clough, 2002). Polkinghorne (1988) also suggested using hermeneutic techniques for narrative data analysis to underscore the process of the underlying patterns of participant stories.

Similar to the epistemology of constructivism, the theory of hermeneutics is based on a humanistic paradigm--a belief that knowing is not objective; rather, knowing is intersubjective--a shared understanding between people (Michrina & Richards, 1996). Intersubjective knowledge is created between researcher and participant through dialogue. While dialogue can cause conflict, hermeneutic theory posits that conflict can be beneficial through resolution. Whether the conflict occurs between two people or through an internal process of the researcher (e.g., cognitive dissonance), a resolution is

posited to lead to a new and congruent understanding of experiences (Michrina & Richards, 1996).

According to Michrina and Richards (1996), there are two types of resolutions. The first occurs as a researcher considers the context of the conflict and seeks for further understanding through dialogue. The second resolution is achieved through the acknowledgement of cultural, personal, and political biases, and further description and negotiation of understanding through dialogue with the participants. Communication is the tool to arrive at the intersubjective truth of the participant. Through dialogue, the participant and researcher negotiate an understanding of this truth. The understanding of intersubjective truth requires time, communication skills, and self-reflection (Michrina & Richards, 1996).

According to Michrina and Richards (1996), validity of the hermeneutic study is achieved when the description and interpretation of the researcher match that of the participant. Validation occurs (a) through dialogue and the negotiation of understanding between participants and the researcher, (b) when the researcher asks for clarification or for more information, and (c) when the researcher repeats in her or his own terms what she or he understands. It is through conversation that the researcher and participant reciprocally influence one another; this influence creates reflections and analysis of thoughts, stories, and ideas in new ways that lead to insight and understanding. While validation can occur through dialogue, the most comprehensive form of validation from a hermeneutic perspective can also occur when participants are given an opportunity to read and comment on researchers' descriptions. These reflective and recursive steps lead

to a better understanding of the meaning of the participant's story as the intersubjective understanding of truth (Michrina & Richards, 1996).

The theory of hermeneutics posits that understanding is not objective; rather, it is a shared meaning agreed upon through the inevitable conflict of thoughts and ideas that are resolved through recursive dialogue (Michrina & Richards, 1996). Dialogue is analyzed through mutual agreement between researcher and the participant in order to expand ideas and understanding of intersubjective truth. The research is validated by acknowledging and analyzing researcher bias and through communication and clarification of any misunderstanding or ideas between the researcher and participant (Michrina & Richards, 1996). Because of the dialogical, contextual, and relational aspects of hermeneutics that seek to find meaning and understanding through interpretation, hermeneutic philosophy was an appropriate philosophy for this research study. Hermeneutics was considered the principal philosophy for this research study because according to Patton (2002), transcripts from narrative interviews are also appropriate for hermeneutical interpretation. Patton (2002) described hermeneutic interpretation in this way:

Hermeneutics provides a theoretical framework for interpretive understanding, or meaning, with special attention to context and original purpose.... Hermeneutics offers a perspective for interpreting legends, stories, and other texts.... To make sense of and interpret a text, it is important to know what the author wanted to communicate, to understand the intended meanings, and to place documents in a historical and cultural context. (p. 114)

Because hermeneutics focuses on the interpretation and context of the narrative, it informs narrative research and was the theoretical foundation for this narrative study.

Clark (2012) described a three-step adaptation for interpreting texts from the hermeneutic tradition based on three principles of hermeneutics. The first principle is the



“deep appreciation that all understanding is historically conditioned” (Clark, 2012, p. 128), the second is to understand the circular and spiral nature of understanding texts, and the third is to acknowledge that the hermeneutic search for understanding is “a mutual process that is conducted through dialogue” (Clark, 2012, p. 130). These guiding principles are Clark’s summary of hermeneutic traditions that were the basis of the theoretical orientation suggested by Crotty (1998).

According to Clark (2012), the first principle of hermeneutic interpretation is based on the context of the text. Osborne (2006) noted the importance of statements within context. In a hermeneutic interpretation, “The context provides the situation behind the text...there is no meaning apart from context, only several possible meanings” (Osborne, 2006, p. 37). Context is understood through historically conditioned understanding; this understanding “embraces our own biography as well as the world of the other, which we are trying to understand” (Clark, 2012, p. 129). The process of hermeneutic interpretation for this study was based the encounters of unique individuals, their individual historical contexts, and began during the data collection process as interview questions were used to uncover meanings of context and background (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009). This beginning interpretation began as the researcher sought to “grasp the individual, his biography, his situation as a text” during the narrative interview (Clark, 2012, p. 129).

The second step for hermeneutic interpretation is to acknowledge the importance of the circular or spiral “nature of understanding” in the “encounter with the text” (Clark, 2012, p. 129). Thus, each reading of the narrative text is read as tentative and provisional; each recursive re-reading of the text leads to new interpretations (Clark,

2012). The spiral nature allows the researcher to refine a hypothesis through an “open-ended movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the reader” (Osborne, 2006, p. 22). Cohen et al. (2000) described the hermeneutic spiral of interpretation as understanding the parts of the text in relation to the whole of the text. Thus, individual texts are understood in relation to other texts; as parts of texts are read and understood, this dialectic analysis alternates attention from the whole to the part to bring both into view simultaneously (Cohen et al., 2000). Thus the dialectic analysis, the spiral of hermeneutic analysis, explores “the meanings of the smallest units of data in terms of ever-increasing larger units of data and vice versa” within the larger context (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 73).

The third principle of hermeneutic interpretation proposed by Clark (2012) is the process of dialogue. This dialogue not only applies to the conversations between researchers and participants but also to the conceptual frameworks, theories, and values employed to analyze data (Clark, 2012). Thus, a component of the dialogical relationship is to eschew hierarchy between researcher and participant in order to move toward mutual understanding. Thus, engaging in a “constructive comparison of the whole” makes the participant’s world intelligible to him or herself and to the researcher (Clark, 2012, p. 130).

The processes of dialogue between researcher and participant, researcher and theory and values, and coupled with the spiral, recursive nature of understanding and the contextual elements of hermeneutical interpretation proposed by Clark (2012) informed the theoretical orientation of this research study. Cohen et al. (2000) provided a succinct summary of the hermeneutic interpretation process:

Data analysis begins with data collection. The tentative understandings of the data that emerge from initial analysis should be subjected to scrutiny as more data are collected. This, in turn, leads to further refinement of these understandings, which will again be scrutinized in light of new data. The tentative understanding should always be in written form. Not only do these writings serve as a record of the analytic process, but... the act of writing itself forms the research process. (p. 74)

The principles outlined by Clark (2012) and Cohen et al. (2000) provided the basis of hermeneutic theoretical understanding for this narrative inquiry.

The focus of this research was to examine the assumptions, ideas, and concerns of counselor educators regarding spirituality and religiosity present when teaching and supervising counselors-in-training. It is anticipated that having a better understanding of the mind-set and assumptions of counselor educators would illuminate the decision process of when, if, and how counselor educators address religion and spirituality when teaching and supervising. Hermeneutics was considered an appropriate theoretical perspective for this research project because hermeneutics is considered the science of biblical interpretation and has its basis in religious understanding that linked to the purpose of this study (Crotty, 1998). While exegesis is the actual term for the explanation of biblical interpretation, the exegesis, theories, rules, principles, and methodologies of the science of biblical interpretation came to be known as hermeneutics (Crotty, 1998). While the term hermeneutics is about 250 years old, the roots of hermeneutics as a discipline of interpretation is at once ancient, religious, and spiritual (Crotty, 1998).

One of the roots of hermeneutics comes from the ancient Greeks. The ancient Greeks made interpretations of text through “the relating of part to whole and whole to part” (Crotty, 1998, p. 89). Finding the relationship between the various parts of the text

was part of the logic of the hermeneutical interpretation of the ancient Greeks. Another root of hermeneutics is derived from the Jewish hermeneutical practices of interpreting scripture (Crotty, 1998). Using the form of *haggadah* (story), the rabbinical practice was to interpret the moral lesson from the story. Another form was legalistic and procedural; from the *halakhah* (procedure), the legal texts were interpreted (Crotty, 1998). Another religious and spiritual root of hermeneutics is from the Christian tradition. The first Christians drew from their Jewish tradition and also interpreted sacred texts. Two major themes grew from the Christian tradition of hermeneutics as theologians and scholar began to interpret sacred texts as both spiritual and literal (Crotty, 1998).

Since hermeneutics focuses on interpretation of texts, it also has a strong link to language. Language is a critical element of human experience since words are representative of perceptions; words represent the images of what one has perceived and words help one to process, remember, and communicate those perceptions (Polkinghorne, 1988). For Clough (2002), “understanding is linguistic” and hermeneutics describes the necessary conditions for interpretation (p. 95). Language or the way we speak shapes the things that one sees as well as the manner in which one perceives them. The quotidian events of situation, practices, events, and personal meaning constitute one’s reality and these perceptions are expressed through language (Crotty, 1998).

Another pertinent notion that made hermeneutics relevant as a theoretical orientation for this study was the etymology of the term. Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word *hermeneuein* that means to interpret or to understand (Crotty, 1998). Hermeneutics, the interpretation of understanding, is also linked to the Greek notions of saying, explaining, or translating. Thus, hermeneutics is the way of translating

experiences outside one's own realm of familiarity to make them more understandable and comprehensible (Crotty, 1998).

Etymologically, *hermeneuein* is also related to Hermes, the Greek god (Crotty, 1998). Hermes (Mercury--the Roman equivalent) was the divine herald from Mount Olympus. On his feet were winged sandals; wings also adorned his low-crowned hat and he carried a caduceus--a staff or magic wand (Hamilton, 1940). The winged-footed Hermes was the messenger of knowledge and understanding (Crotty, 1998; Hamilton, 1940). Hermes was also the god of boundaries and represented those who traversed boundaries (Givens, 2008). As the divine herald, Hermes transmitted both messages and wisdom from the Olympian gods to humans (Crotty, 1998; Givens, 2008; Hamilton, 1940). To translate effectively the message of the gods, Hermes had to understand the perspective and language of the gods as well as the human mind-set and language. Understanding both sets of perspectives gave Hermes the ability to properly relay the messages from the gods in a way humans could understand (Givens, 2008). It is my desire that through this narrative study, both knowledge and wisdom about religious and spiritual topics were translated and transmitted for the benefit of counselor educators and the counseling profession.

I agreed with Clark (2012) that hermeneutic interpretation is based on the understanding of context within dialogue; therefore, I used hermeneutics as a theoretical interpretation that complemented the methodology of this narrative research. Since narrative inquiry and hermeneutic interpretation are based within language and language is how humans communicate, language also is predicated on a relationship; it is in the relationship that language is first understood. I sought to have thoughtful inquiry within

the research interviews in order to understand the participants' point of view. I utilized my natural and incessant curiosity, to observe, wonder, and ask questions.

This curiosity is illustrated by a recent purchase of apple cider vinegar. I noticed the label had an *ichthys*, the sign of the early Christians. Inscribed in the middle of the fish symbol was "3 John 1:2". My mind began to wonder, "What does that passage of scripture say? Why did they choose 3 John 1:2, an obscure Epistle, John's Third Epistle, in fact, and not John 3:16, a far more famous scripture?" My questions continued: "To what religion or denomination do the producers of this brand of vinegar belong?" "How does this symbol affect sales?" I also looked up the scripture ("Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth") and the text only partly explained the mystery, leading me to wonder further why 3 John 2 was chosen over others. I also wondered, "What kind of conversations did the producers of this brand of vinegar have that led them to decide to have this symbol on the label?" This natural inquisitiveness enabled me to pose similar questions when examining the facets of context, a hallmark of hermeneutic theory.

While the dialogue informed the context of the narrative interviews, another principle of hermeneutics was utilized to appreciate the circular and spiral nature of understanding texts. In the past few years, I have been exposed to various spirals, both in theoretical texts and in the natural world. Having a new awareness, I noticed circular spirals more and more often. The circular nature of the planets around the sun, the seasons, the nature of grief, and stages of change all seemed to have a natural and circular progression that informed my understanding of self and of the world. The proliferation of spirals was a logical way to examine and re-examine the texts of this research study in

order to deepen my understanding of the participants' stories. In my work as a doctoral student, I have found that the multiple readings, the discussion with others through texts, and conversations have brought multiple perspectives and added insight to what I am learning. It is in the mulling over, the pondering, that has provided me with insight and clarity. As suggested by Crotty (1998), the hermeneutic spiral provided a theoretical perspective and a foundation that provided and undergirded the assumptions and logic for the research process.

### **Methodology and Methods**

In this chapter, I discuss two of the four elements of research (Crotty, 1998). One element is epistemology or how one knows what one knows. For this research study, I viewed epistemology from a constructivist viewpoint that knowledge is constructed through an individual's personal understanding and perspective (Crotty, 1998). Curiosity and thoughtful questions allowed insight into the individual constructions of counselor educators and the unveiling of constructivist viewpoints occurred during the narrative inquiry interview. By way of theoretical perspective, hermeneutics informed the methodology and provided a context for the process of narrative inquiry and grounded the logic and criteria of the methodology. A third element of a research study is the methodology and the fourth element is the methods utilized. The following section describes the methods and methodology used throughout this research study.

According to Crotty (1998), methods are the "techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some research question or hypothesis" (p. 3). Narrative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Riessman, 2008) use a variety of methods to collect narrative data. I next outline the specific methods utilized within this

research that addressed the *what*, *why*, and *how* of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The methodology provided a rationale for the “choice of methods and the particular forms in which the methods are employed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). I chose the methodology of narrative inquiry because narrative inquiry seeks to understand human experience, meanings, and assumptions embedded within stories. The desired outcome of this research was to understand the assumptions, ideas, and concerns as to when, if, and how participants addressed topics of spirituality and religion when teaching and supervising. Because meaning is made through perception of given events and that meaning is transmitted through language and narrative, I agreed with Clandinin and Connelly, (2000) that narrative inquiry is “the best way of representing and understanding experience” (p. 18). I believe that narrative inquiry as a methodology provided clarity to better understand counselor educators’ experiences and assumptions about religious and spiritual topics in counseling. I believe counselor educators provided an insight through storytelling that shed light on the complexity of teaching spiritual and religious competencies.

To understand the lived experiences of counselor educators, I chose to look at these experiences through qualitative rather than quantitative research methods. As a subtype of qualitative inquiry, narrative inquiry has a focus on the biographical aspects of the person being interviewed. Narrative researchers assume that any phenomenon can be understood when focusing on the discourse of the narrative (Chase, 2011). Because the story telling process is ultimately a meaning making process, narrative researchers focus



on the lived experiences, history, and societal aspects of the participant's story to extrapolate meaning (Chase, 2011).

Meaning is a critical element of narrative inquiry because stories garnered from narrative research are distinctive discourses that make meaning "through the shaping or ordering of experience." It is a method of "understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objecting into a meaningful whole" and connects the "consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, 2011, p. 421). In narrative inquiry, the meaning of an experience is extrapolated from the discourse (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the human experience is presented through a unified explanatory narrative (Polkinghorne, 2005), and themes often emerge from the stories (Riessman, 2008). Another important aspect related to the goals of research is narrative inquiry is viewed as an avenue for understanding past life events and a way to plan for future action (Polkinghorne, 1988). The following outlines the rationale, methods, and methodology used for this research study (Crotty, 1998). A logical place starting point was to address why narrative inquiry was a suitable choice for this study.

### **Why Narrative?**

Narratives and stories are ubiquitous, omnipresent, and pervasive (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988). Because "experience happens narratively," narrative researchers seek to understand the personal experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Narrative schemes are found everywhere in the lives of humanity. Narrative schemes "fill our cultural and social environment" and humans "create narrative descriptions for ourselves and for others about our own past actions. We

develop storied accounts that give sense to the behavior of others” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 14).

Polkinghorne (1988) noted that narratives are innumerable. The history of narrative began with the history of humans. Like religion and spirituality, narrative schemes have been part of human interactions since ancient times (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Storytelling is often a medium of human discourse and “is as old as language itself” (Blake, 2012, p. 12). Throughout time, human experience has been understood and recorded through recursive construction and reconstruction of personal narratives. Narrative, both personal and communal, spans from antiquity to present--from the writings of Herodotus, to the *New York Times*, to social media of Facebook, blogs, or Twitter (Blake, 2012; Blake & Blake, 2012).

Narratives such as the epic poem, *The Iliad*, by Homer are timeless accounts that speak to the experiences of yore and the experiences of the present. War, peace, destruction, creativity, and normality are themes in *The Iliad* that are timely for humanity today (Blake, 2012). Similarly, modern-day poets speak about the pervasiveness of narratives: “We weave/The fabric of own existence out of words/And the right story tells us who we are” (Gioia, 2012, p. 13). Indeed, experience is communicated by narratives and the narratives communicate our humanity by describing our place in the world and our fears, hopes, and dreams.

As Gioia (2012) suggested, the words of stories explain our existence. Stories help humans make meaning, place a person in the context of the world, and are a primary manner in which humans communicate (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Myths and stories are narratives that describe culture, rules, and the beliefs of

civilizations past and present (Campbell, 1972). Sacred texts such as the Bible, the Vedas, and the Qur'ān inspire humans and form people's lives because of the meaning people ascribe to these canonical texts (Smart & Hecht, 1982). Indeed, narrative is universal and ubiquitous:

Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35).

Because stories, poetry, and narrative are communal and universal, qualitative researchers use narrative inquiry as an approach toward understanding lived experience. Brown (2011) described narratives as data that have a soul and narrative inquiry is a means to reflect upon and study experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Because the goal of this narrative study was to better understand the lived experiences of counselor educators as to when, if, and how they addressed religion and spirituality, using a narrative approach provided a means to reflect upon and study these experiences.

### **Justification**

To address the element of methodology and the rationale suggested by Crotty (1998), I next address the *what* of narrative inquiry. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the *why* and *what* of a research study justify the need for the study. This is done by addressing the *why* and the *what* of a phenomenon. The *what* of a the justification serves as a guide for the topic of interest and the *why* guides the social need for the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For Clandinin and Connelly, narrative inquiry is generated by the researcher's personal experiences and serves as partial

justification for the study. The personal and lived experiences of the researcher guide the line of inquiry. The following addresses these justifications.

**Justification (what).** Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2008) provided three justifications for the study of personal narrative. They posited that narrative researchers are able to understand the experience of the construction of self, in light of social relationships, and through interaction with institutions. Second, narrative research focuses on the aspects of selfhood and reveals “the dynamics of agency in practice”; it also serves as a way to document the construction of selfhood “through culturally embedded narrative forms that, over an individual’s life, impose their own logics and thus also shape both life stories and lives” (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 2). A third point of justification is that narrative research focuses on the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of experience that reveal the personal self (Maynes et al., 2008).

The phenomenon of interest in this study was the subjective and intersubjective experiences of counselor educators. The *what* of the inquiry guided the search and recursive re-search of the study, i.e., what was “the experience of interest” or what was “the narrative inquiry about” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124)? The chronicles of counselor educators’ personal experiences and experiences in their roles as teachers and supervisors regarding spirituality and religion were the primary interest of this study. If narrative inquiry asks *what*, it was anticipated that counselor educators’ experiences revealed *what* their assumptions, concerns, and observations were related to the religious and spiritual competencies within the context of the counseling curriculum. How counselor educators narratively articulated their experiences illuminated their lived experiences. Knowing the subjective and intersubjective experiences of counselor

educators and how their sense of self was revealed in the practice of teaching counseling students illuminated the cultural and social implications of teaching and addressing the spiritual and religious competencies (Maynes et al., 2008). Stated differently, the experiences of counselor educators explained the *what* of the narrative interest (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

**Justification (why).** Having addressed the *what* of this study, I next turn to the reasons of *why* I pursued this study. Linked closely to the personal experiences of counselor educators are the social needs for the study and researchers should provide a justification that outlines the social significance of the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Wester (2011), social validity is linked to the positive impact a study can have on the counseling profession. To address the social need for this research, the literature review in Chapter II served as a justification or rationale for the social significance of this study. There, I outlined the lack of knowledge about the spiritual and religious competencies, the theoretical and empirical basis for the competencies, and articulated why topics of religion and spirituality, especially the experiences of counselor educators, should be studied. Chapter II also served as the practical justification for this study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that researchers also provide “the justification of inquiry interest in personal terms” (p. 122). In the next section, I describe my researcher stance, which served as an explanation of my personal narrative that is the genesis of this research.

**Justification (personal narrative).** As Armstrong (1993) and Wilson (2002) have suggested, the human species can be classified as *Homo religiosus*. When I read about this idea of humans as a religious and spiritual species, it rang true for me.

Spirituality and religion have been a part of my life since before I was born. In my DNA are roots of religious beliefs that have formed my life. I was born in a family that had deep belief of God and family. I was raised Mormon--a name commonly ascribed to the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Mormons are also commonly referred to as LDS--an acronym for Latter-Day Saints. Mormonism is a church founded in the United States in 1830, some 50 years after the American Revolution.

While I can be considered as *Homo religiosus*, I could also be considered as *Homo narrativus* since the stories that have defined me--my past, my present, and my future--have been critical for me. Stories have been an integral part of my life. I grew up listening to stories, reading books, and hearing both wisdom and edicts through stories. Through stories, mythology, and literature, my imagination was piqued. I was a voracious reader and read the sacred texts of the Mormon religion, the *Bible*, and the *Book of Mormon*. When I was in fourth grade, I read every book in the *Little House on the Prairie* series written by Laura Ingalls Wilder. In sixth grade, I read the entire collection of Hugh Lofting's books about Dr. Doolittle. I was enamored by words, stories, and books.

Later in my adult years as a French major, I was introduced to works by the French writers and learned to love the wonderful and inimitable manner in which the French language is understood and constructed. When I was a flight attendant, I would travel with two or three books in my suitcase because I never knew if a flight would be cancelled and I would need to fill my time while waiting for my next assignment. Reading allowed me to pass the time learning about myself and the world. It is during

this period that I completed my bachelor's degree in French and was introduced to French literature. I also read self-help books, books on psychology, and literature from every genre. I read two or three books a week. I believe this diversity of knowledge informed who I am as a person and certainly informed me as a counselor.

I see narrative and spirituality as two integral parts of me--parts that are entwined and often times difficult to disentangle. Stories of my family, novels, literature, personal stories, client stories and stories of my friends are pervasive in my life. Like spirituality, they are so present that often I need to be reminded they are there. The narrative of my life guides me like an inner compass. Stories and spirituality define me. As part of the researcher stance, I follow the narrative methodology and now relate stories that illustrate the role of narrative, religion, and spirituality in my life

As part of the LDS faith, family is an important element. Knowing one's family, one's place in a multi-generational family, and the ties that link us to our forbearers is an important part of the belief system. Genealogy is important and knowing one's place in the history of the family of God is of utmost importance. The narrative, the genealogy, and the family history are embedded in my psyche and daily life. The meaning of genealogy is literal and the intent is to delineate the relationships that connect Mormons from the present day back through time to the ancient ancestors. Mormons believe there is a literal and figurative link to our forefathers and prophets of yore--Adam, Abraham, and Israel (Jacob).

Although I do not remember when I first heard the stories of my ancestors, the Bible stories, parables, and stories of those who were faithful to the LDS Church were storied and re-storied throughout my life. I have always held deep regard for my

ancestors who demonstrated their faith and beliefs to sacrifice for what they believed in. My family's genealogical records trace family roots to colonial times when Priscilla Mullens and John Alden crossed the Atlantic on the Mayflower to find a place where they could worship God without persecution. Later, when the LDS Church was established and missionaries converted people from Europe, many of my ancestors joined the LDS Church and made their way to Zion. My ancestors crossed the waters of the Atlantic and traveled across the United States in covered wagons, pushing handcarts, and later by train. The story of Peder Mortensen illustrates this devotion to God, religion, and the spiritual beliefs many of my ancestors possessed.

My paternal great-great-great grandfather Peder Mortensen, his wife, and children lived in Haarbole, Denmark and converted to the LDS Church in 1855. After joining the LDS Church, they endured religious persecution. They soon left Denmark and made their circuitous journey toward Zion in the Great Salt Lake Valley. Peder and his wife, Lena, left their oldest son, age 27, as a missionary in Denmark. The Mortensen family with the remaining six children left for the United States. These children ranged from the ages of 5 to 25.

The Mortensens made their way to Germany, England, and then to the United States via steamship, sailing ship, and trains. When they arrived in Iowa City, the Mortensen family purchased two handcarts as a means of transporting their belongings for the final leg of their journey westward. For me, having the knowledge that my ancestors left their homes and native country, sailed across the Atlantic, and walked across the plains pushing a handcart seemed extraordinary. The Mortensen family endured hardship and many losses, both emotional and material, yet their indomitable



spirit moved them ever westward on their quest. Just these details outlined a brave and epic journey. Another piece of the story added even more richness to the story of faith and perseverance. The patriarch of the family, Peder Mortensen, had rheumatism and could not walk; similarly, the oldest daughter, Lena, was also stricken with rheumatism and could not walk. The Mortensen family made this extraordinary journey together; the able bodied family members pushed their father and sister across the Great Plains in a handcart to their destination of Salt Lake City. This larger-than-life story of their journey demonstrates their faithfulness to God, to religion, and the desire to gather with other like-minded people to escape religious persecution.

The story of Peder Mortensen and his family has deeply influenced me over the course of my life. And like most narratives have multiple layers, I have found greater meanings at different times of my life. As a child, it was a story of faith and a belief in God and devotion to the LDS Church. In the dark moments of my life, I have often garnered additional reserves of perseverance knowing my ancestors endured many hardships and survived. Many other stories exist in the family records of forbearers who sacrificed so they could worship in ways meaningful for them. These chronicles of faith and persistence served as guides in my personal life.

The Mormon religion is a culture deeply rooted in faith and adherence to the principles and teachings of the LDS Church. My daily life was marked by these events: family home evening, family prayer, scripture reading, and church attendance. The teachings of the LDS church were instilled on a daily basis. Although religion played a big part of my everyday life, spirituality for me was omnipresent. Never a day went by that the teachings of the church were not infused in my life in some fashion. I felt a

strong connection to Father, Creator, God. Connection to spiritual things was part and parcel of my life, linked through ancestors and belief that those who lived and those who had died were close and always interested in my well-being. God and my departed family were never far away.

Besides the belief in God, connection, and relationships with church and family, spirituality manifested itself in my life in other ways. For me, the arts have been a way to connect to God, to be inspired, and know beauty. The arts have been a manner of experiencing the ineffable--the deep experience of connection to the divine. Music as an art was a mainstay in our home. I learned to play the piano and sang in choirs throughout my life. I listened to great classical music of the past: the music of Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Bach, and music sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. To this day, there are recordings and pieces of music that instantaneously take me back to my childhood and to the connection I felt with God. I have powerful memories of feeling connected to God when I have sung in various choirs throughout my life. There is something powerful when I sing moving choruses from Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, and Fauré's *Requiem* that make me feel connected to God and to humanity.

Like my mother, I also enjoyed reading. Literature, like music, has also been an inspiration for my life. I will never forget the first time I read *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo; I recognized themes that were fundamental to my spiritual and religious life--struggle, darkness, forgiveness, redemption, and light. Literature like the timeless story of *Les Misérables* has served as a conduit to better self-understanding and connection with the Divine.

My love of words has been a major influence in my life. Poetry, I realize, is another element in my life that has been a part of my life since childhood. While I am not a connoisseur of poetry, I do appreciate the beauty of poetry and have always wanted to take a course in writing poetry. I remember my counseling research class when I first was introduced to the notion of research poetry. We read “Mother Liar” by Maria Lahman (2009). I remember glancing at the article and seeing the whiteness of the page and feeling a sense of excitement to read something that did not have to do with the complexities of statistics. When I sat down to read the poem, I was blown away by the manner in which it spoke to me. It rang true for me and helped me understand the unique situations women face. I was intrigued by the symbolism of women within the text; I was also dumbfounded by the last line that quipped “I should have known better” (Lahman, 2009, p. 1454).

In my research class, we were told that in order to write good research poetry one needed to read poetry on a daily basis. I found poets.org and signed up for their daily email that sends a daily poem to my email inbox. Receiving and reading a poem daily has been a wonderful exercise because I have read poems from many contemporary authors who I would not have been exposed to otherwise. Sometimes it has led me to click on more links to read more poetry, other times it has led me to find and re-read poems in my personal library. When I started rounding up these books, I realized I had a modest collection of poetry with collections of authors such as Baudelaire, Whitman, Rilke, Rumi, Neruda, and Dickenson.

Recently in church when singing the opening hymn, I looked at the hymnal and realized this book had nearly 700 poems all set to music. This experience made me

realize that in my collection of hymnals from various denominations and my own collection of poetry, I literally have thousands of poems at my immediate disposal. I now have plenty of poetry to read on a daily basis.

Recently in my narrative inquiry class, I was again exposed to research poetry and used the transcription of an interview I conducted for the class as basis for a research poem. I have shared the research poem with several people including the speaker of the text. I have received valuable commentary and appreciation for the insight the poem gave to those who have read it. This inspired me to include research poetry as an element of the data analysis for this research project.

My personal counseling experiences have also been a major influence and have been foundational to my understanding of spirituality. When I realized I was gay and was going through my personal crisis of faith, my counselor helped me remember my connection to God. My counselor reminded me that as a child of God, I was loveable and worthy of love. This was an incredible shift of thinking for a young adult Mormon who had been given explicit and implicit messages that sex was dirty and that homosexuals, “those gay people,” were perverse and abominable. Remembering that I was whole, complete, and a child of God was an opening to temporal salvation.

Later, when I found yoga and Buddhist philosophy and psychology, I found solace in the wisdom of this ancient and spiritual tradition that mirrored my own Christian beliefs. For me, yoga started as a physical practice--a way to gain control of the constant migraines I have experienced since childhood. I remember the day I realized yoga was a spiritual practice and brought me closer to the Eternal Presence that is God.

Another point on the spiritual journey was when I started attending the Episcopal Church. I was drawn to the Episcopal Church because of its reputation for quality music and beautiful architecture. I started attending St. Michael's Episcopal Cathedral in Boise, Idaho and was soon captivated by the deep spiritual roots and incredible sense of community. The well thought out liturgy, the story of God's Word, God's love for all his children, and eternal promises to humanity felt warm, safe, and deeply satisfying. The notions of community, reason, faith, scripture, and tradition of the Episcopal Church have been a grounding point in my life for more than a dozen years.

When I decided to become a counselor, I found a new aspect of spirituality. I realized that counseling was a deeply connective medium and that implicit or explicit spirituality manifested itself often. Those moments of intense and beautiful connection, either through joy or sadness, were deeply moving for me. I believe my own knowledge of religion and spirituality has been one of the catalysts, the therapeutic tools that establish deep connection within the counseling context.

In one counseling session, I met with a young woman in her late twenties; she began telling me a story about her family and her faith. Her language used subtle vocabulary I recognized as distinctly Mormon. The clues through language were subtle; soon she revealed she was Mormon. Several minutes later while she was telling me about the distress she felt because of her failed marriage and divorce, I had occasion to summarize her thoughts and feelings. I said something to the effect that she was devastated because her chances to attain life in the Celestial Kingdom, in the hereafter, were greatly reduced because of this divorce. She stopped cold and looked at me intently and asked if I was Mormon. After I told her I had been raised Mormon, she stopped and

said something to the effect of “you get it, you really get it.” That moment was a crucial moment for this client; my response captured the eternal implications of her fears.

Because I was aware of the subtlety of language, the nuance of her narrative, I was able to witness and affirm her spiritual crisis in a profound and meaningful way. This lesson has guided my counseling practice since that moment. I have endeavored to meet my clients in their world by speaking their religious language.

More recently, I have worked extensively with a Jewish man in his thirties; he has an extensive history of depression and hypomania and is laden with guilt and hopelessness. One day while listening to his story, I remembered, or perhaps was inspired, to ask him about his Bar Mitzvah; I specifically asked about the specific Torah narrative he recited. He told me that his reading was about the story of Abram who left the land of Ur and was led by God to the Promised Land. Because Abram obeyed God, he was blessed with progeny and renamed Abraham. This story from the Hebrew Bible became a powerful metaphor for healing and another point of understanding and connection in the therapeutic process. Because I knew this piece of the Jewish culture and made the connection between culture and practice, my client was able to benefit from this knowledge and skill, which ultimately benefitted him.

I believe that having knowledge of religion and spirituality, coupled with counseling skills, can enhance the counseling relationship, lead clients to a better understanding of themselves and their world, and add to the meaning they ascribe to their life. When counselors are informed of religious and spiritual beliefs and explore the complexities of beliefs, it provides a constructivist grounding for the client. It allows them to explore the undercurrents of their life and link to a meaningful understanding of

themselves. Working with the richness and complexity of religious and spiritual topics also created a depth of human understanding for me as a human and as a counselor.

When I was searching for a possible subject for a doctoral dissertation, I was told it was best if I studied a subject that would hold my interest. Without that high level of interest, the path to completing a successful dissertation would be made more difficult. After thought and introspection, I realized once again that spirituality and religion played such an important part of my life and that many of my experiences as a counselor had been guided and informed, either explicitly or implicitly, by religious and spiritual themes. I decided I needed to pursue a path of research about spirituality. When I found the topic of spiritual and religious competencies, I knew the topic would hold my attention and be an avenue to further counselor educators' understanding of this vital component of the counseling profession.

Later when I realized narrative inquiry was a distinct possibility as a research methodology, it confirmed for me that researching spirituality from a narrative viewpoint would not only inform the profession but meld two constructs deeply meaningful for me. It is my hope that this research about religion and spirituality from a narrative viewpoint will add to the body of knowledge of the counseling profession and inspire counselors and counselor educators to a more informed practice.

**Methods (how).** While the preceding paragraphs addressed the justification for the study by answering the *what* and *why* of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advised that the *how* should be explored and discussed as well. Clandinin and Connelly proposed three parts to answering the *how* of narrative research: (a) theoretical considerations; (b) practical, field text-oriented considerations; and (c) interpretive-

analytic considerations. While Clandinin and Connelly suggested the *how* of the study in more theoretical terms, Crotty (1998) proposed that the researcher describe the specific and “concrete techniques or procedures” (p. 6). I next discuss the concrete procedural tasks for this study that were incorporated to address the *how* of narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

## **Procedures**

Narrative inquiry is based on the idea that a person’s life experiences can be a conduit to understanding meaning. Meaning from stories can be understood when researchers focus on the narrative, analyze actions, and connect events in time (Chase, 2011). This theoretical perspective differs from a formalist approach to research wherein a formalist approach would “begin inquiry in theory,” whereas a narrative approach begins “with experience as lived and told in stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 128). The goal of this narrative research was to find meaning within the lived experiences of non-expert counselor educators concerning the subjects of religion and spirituality within the counseling curriculum. I next discuss the Institutional Review Board, how participants were recruited, how data were gathered, and how data were analyzed and written into research texts.

**Institutional Review Board.** Research within the counseling field is an important tool. Researchers who are counselor educators write research texts to improve practices within the field and to expand the base of knowledge within the field (Guiffrida, Douthit, Lynch, & Mackie, 2011; Wester, 2011). Research for the counseling profession is guided by a *Code of Ethics* suggested by the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014). The *Code of Ethics* addresses research concerns such as researcher



responsibilities, participant rights, researcher/participant relationships, reporting, and publication contributions.

Another guideline for counselors who are researchers is the process of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As part of the safeguard to research participants, Institutional Review Boards were established to review and monitor research with human subjects (Christians, 2011). In keeping with ethical practice, this study was reviewed by the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board. A copy of the IRB approval can be found in Appendix B.

**Participants.** Qualitative researchers, regardless of their methodology, use purposeful sampling methods to recruit participants who can inform the researcher as to the nature of lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Hunt, 2011). Purposeful sampling is a powerful tool because the researcher can target information-rich participants. When information-rich participants are interviewed, a great deal can be learned about the lived experiences of the phenomenon in question (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to interview participants who “can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination” (Creswell, 2007, p. 118). A sub-category of purposeful sampling is criterion sampling--the participants are chosen because they meet certain criteria the researcher wishes to study (Merriam, 2009). Criterion sampling is recommended by Creswell (2007) because it can add quality assurance to the research study.

In this study, criterion sampling was used. I interviewed counselor educators who were non-experts regarding spirituality and religion. A non-expert was considered as someone who had not published a journal article, book, or other thought piece about

spirituality and religion. Understanding non-expert counselor educators' assumptions about religion and spirituality provided additional perspectives and experiences to the body of literature. Another criterion of a non-expert was the counselor educator had not taught a course on spirituality or religion. Participants were counselor educators who taught in master's level and/or doctoral level CACREP-accredited programs in the United States. Counselor educators selected taught at private, religious, or public institutions and had completed two years of post-doctoral work. These selection criteria were purposefully broad in scope to get the pulse of the non-expert as to when, how, and if they addressed religion and spirituality in their roles as counselor educators. Data about counselor educators' lived experiences of religion and spirituality when supervising and teaching extended the knowledge base about this topic. The selection criteria were designed to target information-rich participants in order to more clearly understand how counselor educators' lived experiences with religion and spirituality affected their thoughts and beliefs about when, if, and how they addressed religion and spirituality when teaching and supervising.

**Sampling procedures.** The size of a narrative sample is an important part of the research procedure. Creswell (2007) noted that narrative research is typified by one or two participants. He also noted that a larger number of participants could be used to create a collective story. Further, narrative researchers seek out participants who have a story to share about their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). In this study, saturation occurred with nine participants. According to Merriam (2009), saturation occurs when the stories begin to be redundant and no new information is presented. Saturation was

determined when stories began to have a familiar ring to them and when the themes began to coalesce into recognizable and repetitive patterns (Merriam, 2009).

**Participant recruitment.** Participation in this narrative research study was open to all counselor educators who met the delimitation criteria noted above. Participants for this research study represented diversity across types of institutions (state, private, or religious) and across geographic locations within the United States. Other elements of diversity represented gender, race, sexuality, and religious and spiritual beliefs.

Chain sampling was used to obtain participants. Chain sampling (snowball) sampling occurs when participants are found through professional networks (Merriam, 2009). By following the recommendations of professionals, I contacted targeted counselor educators whom I believed met the participant delimitations. The technique of chain sampling ensured that participants were information-rich (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Information-rich participants were those participants who were willing and able to share stories about their experiences with religion and spirituality in their role as counselor educators.

To assemble this group of participants, I began by soliciting participants through professional colleagues and professional organizations. I also solicited suggestions from professional connections with counselor educators from the University of Northern Colorado, Idaho State University, and Seattle University. These professional colleagues made recommendations based on his or her professional experiences; they also made recommendations for participants who might have been willing and able to share their stories about religion and spirituality within their role as counselor educators. Once IRB approval (see Appendix B) was procured, potential participants were initially contacted

by email with an initial request for participation. This initial request provided a brief explanation of the research project and a short explanation of the anticipated tasks and time commitment. Once a participant agreed to be part of this study, they were emailed a copy of the informed consent and demographic questionnaire and were asked to complete these forms and return them to me. Participants reviewed and returned the signed consent form before the first interview. Consent forms advised the participant that any forms transmitted electronically could not be guaranteed with confidentiality because of the risk that a hacker could intercept information in email exchanges. Each participant was given the option to return these forms by the postal service. All participants returned this information by email. I printed out each consent form and added my signature. A copy of the completed and signed informed consent was sent to my research advisor. She has kept these documents in her office in a locked file cabinet. Once the informed consent was procured, I scheduled the first interview with the participant.

**Data collection/field texts.** According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), data from a narrative perspective are referred to as field texts. The term *field texts* underscores that in narrative inquiry, data are constructed and generated from interviews and observations (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Data are designated as field texts because they are neither found nor discovered; rather they are created by the researcher and the participant. Field texts are based on life experiences and can include research interviews, autobiographical writings, journals, conversations, field notes, dictation, letters, and other documents (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Data or field texts also address the *how* of the research study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Data and field texts provided evidence of the experience the researcher

investigated and resulted in language data (Polkinghorne, 2005). Narrative researchers use multiple sources of qualitative data and field texts including participant interviews, questionnaires, field notes, conversations, letters, and observation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Crotty, 1998; Polkinghorne, 2005). The narrative interview was considered the primary source of field text for this study.

Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative researchers increase the credibility of their research by using triangulation. I utilized triangulation throughout the research by using multiple methods and multiple sources of data to confirm the emergent findings (Merriam, 2009). One way of triangulation was the use of artifacts. According to Merriam (2009), artifacts are physical objects within the participant's environment. Representations such as pictures, artwork, poetry, and music that were physical manifestations of participant beliefs or lived experiences were used as artifacts (Merriam, 2009). Participants in this study shared a variety of artifacts including family pictures, artwork, cards, scripture, and poetry.

In the initial email that outlined the anticipated expectations and time commitment, I asked each participant to think of a possible artifact that could be discussed during the second interview. Each participant was asked to provide a picture of an artifact that was personally meaningful and illuminated their personal experiences with religion and spirituality. I asked the participant to share this artifact in the second interview to allow the participant time to think about what might be shared and give him/her time to build some trust and confidence during the first interview. During the second semi-structured interview, I asked each participant to share their assumptions and ideas about their chosen artifact, which allowed for a further point of discussion and

richness in the field text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Using the artifact highlighted in Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) explanation of the fluidity in defining field texts, there is a "virtually endless list of life experiences that might be... turned into field texts" (p. 115). In addition to adding a point of richness in the discussion, using the artifact paid heed to the call that narrative researchers "be open to the imaginative possibilities for composing field texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 116). By using artifacts, triangulation increased the credibility of this research study and answered Clandinin and Connelly's call for imagination when creating field texts.

The varieties of available field texts allow the researcher to further the *experience* of the *experience* and serve to understand and make meaning of the field experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Field texts can be data rich and are dependent on the relational aspect between researcher and participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Field texts can be created by the researcher, the participant, or the researcher in collaboration with the participant. For example, field notes and dictation would be written by the researcher, journals could be written by both the researcher and the participant, and letters might be written by the participant and the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Interviews, member checks, artifacts, and any communication about these were considered field texts for this study. In addition, I composed a reflexive journal to chronicle my own learning process. The use of reflexive journal for this research study is discussed in greater detail in a section focused on credibility. Since the interview was considered as the primary field text, I describe how interviews were used in this study.

**Interview.** Of the field texts suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I used the narrative interview as the main source of data collection. Merriam (2009) noted that

an individual interview is the most common form of qualitative data collection and is often the best way, or only way, to collect data. Interviews were essential because they helped clarify behaviors, experiences, feelings and personal interpretations of the research participant. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to collect information-rich data. The semi-structured interview protocols are included in Appendix C. The interview protocols included interview questions that were “more” structured and “less structured” (Merriam, 2009, p. 89). According to Merriam (2009), a semi-structured interview guide uses a mix of structured and unstructured questions that are used in a flexible manner. The majority of the semi-structured interview was guided by a list of questions that explored the participants’ experiences and assumptions. By using unstructured questions, i.e., questions that were not predetermined, allows the interviewer to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

Semi-structured interviews provided a framework for the interview and the spontaneous questions allowed for rich and meaningful data to emerge. Following Riessman’s (2008) model, interviews were considered as narrative occasions--a discursive, sometimes meandering conversation that helped the researcher and participant collaboratively construct narrative and meaning. Narrative interviews were considered important because it is through remembering and reflecting that the story is reclaimed. The self-reflections of the participant allowed for rich descriptions that helped situate the context of their stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The intent of the discursive interview was to engender detailed accounts that could connect other stories to the overall topic (Riessman, 2008). Thus, storytelling happened regardless of the type of question

asked; stories resulted from open- and closed-ended questions (Riessman, 2008). The semi-structured interview protocol is listed in Appendix C. The initial question was intended to invoke a broad and lengthy discussion about the personal experiences of the interviewee. Guidepost questions were included to serve as catalysts for discussion if the conversation went off topic or the interviewee needed more specificity.

The relational quality of the narrative interview produced reciprocity in the interview process; what was spoken or not spoken was dependent on the relational aspect between researcher and participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) elucidated the relational aspect of the interview and explained that “the specific wording of a question is less important than the interviewer’s emotional attentiveness and engagement” (p. 24) with the participant. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), structured interviews are non-relational; the meaning and content shared within a narrative interview are based on the relationship between the interviewer and participant. Thus, semi-structured interviews were utilized to gain a greater depth of the lived experiences of the participants. Throughout the interviews, I endeavored to maintain an ethical researcher-participant relationship in order to uncover the social and temporal elements of counselor educators’ lived experiences as they related to spiritual and religious topics in the counseling curriculum.

Although I proposed that interviews would be conducted in person, via telephone, or via Skype, all interviews were actually conducted using Skype, a technology-based process in which the researcher and the participant both needed access to a computer and the appropriate software. While Skype did have video recording capabilities, interviews were not video recorded. A hand-held digital recording device was used to record the



interview. Interviewees were advised in the consent form that if they chose this form of interviewing, the conversation would not be video recorded. Although it was anticipated that some interviews might be conducted in person, none were. A third option was to use long-distance phone interviews. This proved unnecessary as all participants chose to use Skype as a medium to conduct the interviews.

In accordance with the IRB, each participant received an informed consent document. All consent forms were signed and returned to me prior to the first interview. The demographic questionnaire was a separate document and was also obtained from each participant before the first interview in the same manner as the consent forms. The demographic form contained 11 questions and elicited information such as gender, age, religious affiliation, types of spiritual practices, and how many years the participant had taught counseling courses (see Appendix D).

Once the informed consent and demographic questionnaire were completed, signed, and returned, the first interview was scheduled. The first interview was a semi-structured interview that made a query into the stories, assumptions, and concerns the participant had regarding religion and spirituality as it related to the counseling curriculum. The first interviews lasted from 60-90 minutes, were audio recorded, and then transcribed. Transcriptions were made by a hired transcriptionist who had a confidentiality policy and provided said policy to me. A copy of this policy is kept in a locked file by the research advisor. After the interviews were transcribed by the hired transcriptionist, I then listened to the audio recording and verified the transcription. Identifying information such as names and places were removed from the transcripts. Participants were assigned a pseudonym. These procedures for anonymity were

completed before sending the transcription to the participants for member checks as well as before sending the transcription to the auditors. Once transcribed, the audio file was deleted; the electronic transcriptions were maintained in a password protected computer and paper copies were maintained in a locked file cabinet.

After the first interview, a transcript was sent the participant and the participant was asked to provide a member check and review the transcripts and the emerging themes before the second interview. Member checks were used to increase the credibility of this research project. During the second interview, the participant and I discussed the participant's assumptions, ideas, and concerns about the first interview, the transcript, and the emerging themes.

**Second interview.** The second interview for each participant was scheduled at least four weeks after the initial interview. Having space between the interviews allowed the interviewee and me time to reflect more deeply on the lived experiences. The purpose of the second interview was to glean in-depth data and provide for the prolonged engagement between me as the researcher and the participant. This prolonged engagement enhanced research credibility and gave us time for deeper reflection. All second interviews were conducted via Skype with the protocol discussed earlier in this document.

As with the first interview, the second interview followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix C). Additional interview questions were asked to elicit information about the lived experiences of the participant as they related to the emerging themes and the transcript. I asked each participant to expand on topics from the first interview that were unclear or needed clarification. I also asked participants to share

stories and experiences related to the emerging themes. Although each participant was asked about data from the initial transcript, no participants asked for information to be removed. Several participants made corrections in the written transcript and returned those minor corrections to me. These corrections were mostly grammatical in nature or clarified words that were unintelligible from the transcription. The intent of the second interview was to garner more narrative information, to clarify themes from the first interview, and to provide a forum for the participant and me to continue the exploration of lived experiences of counselor educators with the topics of religion and spirituality.

After the second interview, the transcript and an updated list of the emerging themes were provided to each participant. Participants were invited to provide reactions to the second interview. As with the first interview, minor corrections were made or suggested by participants and a corrected draft was used for data analysis. Participants were asked to comment on the emerging themes. Participants' comments supported the emerging themes. In one case, a participant suggested verbiage that clarified the categories of one of the themes. This suggestion helped elucidate the themes and was used to describe that theme. Participants were also provided with a draft of Chapter IV and were asked to make comments and clarifications. Once again, clarifications were minimal. An example of the clarification made from this round of participant interaction is I had misstated the number of siblings one of the participant had. This correction was made in a subsequent draft of Chapter IV.

**Reflexive journal.** While the interviews served as the principle form of data collection in this study, journaling was as the secondary type of field text that served as a reflexive practice and as a point of triangulating the data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam,

2009). Reflexivity is implicit in narrative inquiry because a researcher examines how personal beliefs and assumptions affect the process of data analysis (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Creswell (2007) explained that qualitative researchers write based on their personal experiences of culture, gender, class, and personal politics; “all researchers shape the writing that emerges” (p. 179). Therefore, I used personal reflection to chronicle personal interpretations and biases (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Qualitative research and writing affect the writer, the participant, and the reader. Reflexivity serves to consider these multiple viewpoints. Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers reflect on and journal from multiple viewpoints. Some considerations included

- How to report that which is remembered or not remembered.
- What are the personal politics that might be illuminated (e.g., progressive, conservative, repressive)?
- Does the research report correctly connect voices and stories within the context of history?
- How much can the research writer theorize the narrative of the participant?
- Is the writing passive and devoid of the personal responsibility of the writer’s interpretation?

As a researcher, I used these and other questions reflexively to log my personal thoughts and feelings around these and other important questions.

Recording my experiences helped me to better understand how my experiences, both past and present, might have influenced the research process. In addition, I kept a reflexive journal as part of the audit trail to increase the credibility of the research

(Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The reflective journal helped me focus on stories and themes that emerged during the analysis of the data. The reflexive journal was shared with peer auditors as another way to increase the credibility of this research. Peer audits were documented in order to provide evidence of this part of the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflexive journal was considered an integral part of the iterative process to inform and write the final research text. Having discussed the primary modes of field texts, I next describe how the data analysis was conducted for this research study.

**Data analysis.** In narrative research, thematic analysis is a complex, reflexive, and continual process that begins when collecting data (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Reflexivity is a part of the process of data analysis and coding and ensures consistency and credibility of the research (Merriam, 2009). As noted, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection and data analysis. When analyzing the data, I read and re-read the stories from each participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clark, 2012; Creswell, 2007; Riessman, 2008) to uncover the “common themes or plots” by using “hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177). Themes emerged through recursive analysis and were identified as I identified the patterns (Riessmann, 2008), characters, chronology, and plot (Creswell, 2007). Themes were also “developed around an idea or a concern” or emerging tensions across the narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 134).

To code the data, I began to notice the themes of the stories, placed them into broad categories, and then gave them a provisional name or code (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A separate document was created that took quotes from each participant and placed them together thematically. As it was feasible, codes were assigned to these

themes using the words of the participant. This allowed the focus of the analysis to arise from the participants' own words as documented in the field texts. Analysis expanded and contracted as new quotes were added to the thematic documents (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Creswell (2007) suggested using hierarchical picture as an organizational tool for data analysis. A hierarchical picture is simply a "visual diagram of codes and themes and their interrelationships" (Creswell, 2007, p. 169). As themes began to emerge, I drew pictures and used the collection of quotes to outline the themes for analysis. These visual points of departure helped delineate themes and the approach to "begin writing out the story" (Creswell, 2007, p. 171). This visual technique helped me envision an organizational map of the emergent themes.

This visual exercise served to organize and understand the complexities of the narrative data and link the themes and codes to the narrative. As each thematic chunk was analyzed and refined, six themes emerged. As themes were distilled, each theme had facets or categories that further defined it. The six emergent themes and their characteristics are outlined in Chapter IV of this document. The goal of this thematic coding and analysis was to compose a research text that chronicled and summarized participant accounts in such a way that the themes and stories were plausible and credible explanations of the lived experiences of counselor educators (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Due to the nature of a doctoral study, coding was completed independently by the doctoral researcher. Therefore, there was no independent coder. However, once the themes were organized and refined, I sent a record of the themes and categories to each participant and asked them to provide a

member check. Solicitation of feedback from the participants increased the credibility of the research and provided a point of triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

Six of the nine participants responded to my email asking them to provide a member check by reviewing themes and providing feedback. Five of them wrote words of encouragement for my work and support of the six themes. The comments were typified by Gary's response who wrote that the sixth theme "attends to cultural concerns in a manner not often addressed... I see all themes as an accurate reflection of my experiences and dialogues with you." Furthermore, Clark wrote, "I connect with all six themes...I was very relieved while reading through them!" Theresa also mentioned there was "consistent information from participants" within the themes. Theresa also suggested I consider three categories within the sixth theme. After reflection, her three-part solution seemed the most clear and I used her suggestion for naming the three categories within the sixth theme.

Credibility of the study was strengthened by triangulating data with audits from peer auditors (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Specifically, three peer auditors acted as an independent investigator to ensure the themes were plausible, credible, and a logical, step-by-step path could be followed. Peer auditors had completed doctoral coursework including coursework in qualitative methodologies. Auditors made feedback comments that helped refine the themes; these comments were integrated into the final analysis.

In general, the feedback provided by peer auditors supported the themes presented. However, two notable exceptions did affect the final outcome of the themes. Using a reflexive journal was a mechanism to manage bias; peer auditors reviewed the reflexive journal and provided valuable feedback. For example, within my reflexive

journal, I wrote about Clark and how he used the term “bigotry.” One peer auditor noted that when reading my reflexive journal, bigotry could not stand alone as a theme. This comment led me to further evaluate the role of bigotry within the theme. After further reflection, the idea of bigotry was subsumed under the theme of marginalization. Similarly, the theme of modeling was shaped by the comments of another peer auditor who noted two aspects of the modeling theme--modeling from mentors and professors, as well as how the participants modeled to their own students. While there was no independent coder for this research project, credibility was ensured through triangulating data and thematic material from peer auditors and member checks.

One of the challenges of narrative research is to write compelling research texts. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) invited narrative researchers to find creative means to report their research. To better understand the tensions of voice, signature, and audience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that poetry be a means to better understand the story of the participant. Gladding (2005) suggested that the arts, such as poetry, could be helpful for the counseling profession because the nature of art and poetry continually offers new perspectives of viewing the world and different ways of experiencing the world. In addition to chronicling and coding the research texts for themes, I also created at least one research poem for each theme. I outline the manner in which the research poems were created in a later section of this document.

As part of the data analysis, procedures of time, angles, colleagues, and member checks were used to increase the credibility of the research (Givens, 2008). As previously mentioned, two interviews were used to give an in-depth amount of time to garner meaning from lived experiences of the participants. As described in the section



about interviews, participants were involved in this research and data analysis; they were asked to review transcriptions, themes, and codes and provide input into the final results section. Another important part of data analysis utilized the concept of employing multiple angles to increase the credibility of the analysis.

Peer auditors were asked to review and critique the research and data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They reviewed the transcripts and thematic coding to provide insights and discernment of proper codes and themes. These auditors provided feedback as to the saturation point of the themes. These methods were employed to better ensure that data were credibly coded, analyzed, and written in narrative form that effectively reported the lived experiences of counselor educators and their experiences with spirituality and religion when teaching and supervising counselors-in-training. Having discussed the strategies to effectively code the narratives of counselor educators, I next turn to another ingredient of the analysis--that of research poetry.

**Research poetry.** To better understand the participants' stories, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested using creative research texts such as poetry. Because counseling is "by its nature a creative endeavor," creativity is valued in the counseling profession (Gladding, 2005, p. 2). Creative arts such as poetry are valued as a way of learning about and appreciating the lived experiences of humanity and ideas that might be "paradoxical or dialectic" (Furman, 2006, p. 561). Dialectical thinking requires an understanding of context and the use of "metaphor and reframing to transfer knowledge from one context to another" (Hanna, Bemak, & Chung, 1999, p. 129). Gladding (2005) explained that a benefit of using artistic mediums is the process of analysis and evaluation inherent in their creation. Through creative evaluation, both critical and

convergent thinking occur. Creative evaluation is the recursive refining of thoughts and ideas. Because art and poetry both have elements of refinement through recursive evaluation, art and poetry might offer new perspectives (paradoxical or dialectic) of viewing and experiencing the world (Furman, 2006; Gladding, 2005). In the results section of this research study, I use the artistic medium of research poetry as a means to underscore the context and refine thoughts and ideas that emerged from the data.

In recent decades, creative arts such as music, poetry, and dance have increased in importance as tools in qualitative research (Furman, 2006). The trend to express research through creative processes is based on the long history of poetry, which is a powerful tool for expressing emotion and chronicling interactional discovery (Furman, 2006). By using research poetry as a means to elucidate the themes and codes extracted from the field texts, I have joined with other researchers to use creative methods to report narrative research.

Another rationale for the inclusion of research poetry is that the nature of conversations, interviews, speech, and storytelling is more poetic than prose (Richardson, 2000). While some might argue that creativity and analysis are incompatible, Richardson (2000) argued that representing qualitative data through creative analytic practices are compelling because they evoke emotion, re-create experiences, and demand analysis. Evocative forms such as research poetry require analysis and reflexivity and produce self-transformation. Speaking of poetic representation, Richardson noted that poems “invite people in; they open spaces for thinking... that elude us” (p. 930).

According to Lahman et al. (2011), researchers should consider three methodological points when opening up spaces to report research poetry: (a)

accessibility, (b) compressed form, and (c) ability of writing poetry. Although some consumers of research might believe that research poetry is inaccessible and alienating and their expectations might lean to traditional scholarly writing (Lahman et al., 2011), Furman (2006) argued that the compressed nature of research poetry might enhance accessibility for some readers. Another consideration for the inclusion of research poetry is that research should have many methodologies and research paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). One way to increase accessibility is to involve the participant and potential readers in the process of writing research poetry because the aim of poetic research is “to keep qualitative researchers’ pondering” (Lahman et al., 2011, p. 894).

“Words matter” (Denzin, 2000, p. 898). This succinct sentence describes the importance of verbiage within research poetry. Succinct and compressed words can make the poem more accessible for a reader and require the researcher to evaluate the essential (Furman, 2006). This evaluation is a “mulling over each word, space, and punctuation” (Lahman et al., 2011, p. 894). Compressed poems produce effect and images and senses are evoked; a successful poem uses data “that are sensory and evocative in nature” (Furman, 2006, p. 561). What is imaged through research poetry causes the poem to become relevant and metaphorically generalizable for the reader (Furman, 2006). Sometimes what is excluded in a research poem can be mysterious and may be as important as what is included (Lahman et al., 2011). Various poetic forms might help researchers achieve the compression necessary for a successful poem. Poetic forms such as the elegy, free-form, haiku, or tanka might awaken insight and animate emotion (Furman, 2006; Lahman et al., 2011). Stories are told through poetry and the “whittling away of words.” When constructing a research poem, compression can get “to

the heart of the matter” and send powerful message that “may equally intrigue and incite” (Lahman et al., 2011, p. 894).

The third methodological consideration for research poets is training of research poets (Lahman et al., 2011). The amount of training a research poet could be a contentious issue. Some scholars require students to have a certain amount of arts training before undertaking research poetry; others believe anyone can write good poetry (Lahman et al., 2010). While in some cultures, e.g., the Thai and Saudi Arabian cultures, poetry is highly structured and poets are specially trained, other poets such as the American poet Emily Dickinson had no formal training. Dickinson is a famous and beloved poet who wrote most of her poetry for herself and was untrained as a poet (Lahman et al., 2010). This controversy of trained and untrained poets led Lahman and her colleagues (2010, 2011) to propose “good enough research poetry”; to write “good enough research poetry,” they (2010) suggested that the learning process for writing research poetry begins early in life and “one must read, read, read, poetry in order to then write, write, write, poetry” (p. 47). Like most learning, it is in the practice of doing that one becomes knowledgeable and skilled. Like qualitative research, the reflexive and recursive elements allows for data reduction (Furman, 2006). Good enough poetry is a means to increase methodological diversity in research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Good enough research poetry also answers the challenge that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) issued to infuse narrative research texts with creative means of expression. Good enough poetry was drawn from the narrative transcripts to illuminate, elucidate, and compress the lived experiences of the participant.

While research poems might be evocative in nature, they are also accepted as objective research because they are composed from the utterances of the recorded interview and, therefore, are traceable to the participant (Lahman et al., 2010). The process of writing research poems varies from researcher to researcher (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Glesne, 1997). Research poems are written after the data are collected and use the participants' expressions and utterances (Glesne, 1997; Lahman et al., 2010). Extracting words and phrases from transcripts and creating research poetry can be described as found poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Glesne (1997), Furman (2006), and Butler-Kisber (2010) made recommendations for researchers to write research poetry. Although some overlapped in suggestions, each of these authors provided an outline for writing research poetry. I have incorporated the recommendation of these authors to create research poetry that is a representation of the six themes that emerged from the narrative data.

Codes and themes were generated using the process previously discussed in this document; from these codes and themes, research poems were created using the guidelines Glesne (1997) suggested to write research poetry: (a) I used only the words of the participant, (b) language for the poetry was extracted from multiple parts of the interview transcription, and (c) the words used in the poetry represented the participants' manner of speech and speech rhythms. Additionally, in order to facilitate the language of the poem, words or phrases were sometimes repeated, sometimes word endings were added or dropped (e.g., ing, s, ly), and, in some cases, verb tenses were changed (e.g., *would be* to *am*). These changes in tense were indicated by the use of brackets (e.g., help

help[ing], them [students])). Ellipses were used to indicate omissions from the complete phrases or sentences extracted from the field text.

In addition to Glesne's (1997) outline for writing research poetry, I also incorporated the suggestions of Butler-Kisber (2010) to write research poetry:

- A close and recursive reading of transcripts, which allowed themes to pop and cook.
- Extracting and utilizing words and phrases that breathed life into the text.
- Reading examples of poetry that illuminated words and experiences, which served as examples for research poetry.
- Using poetic license to generate poems that had rhythm and flow.
- Using the text from the transcript as a genesis for the title of the poem.

These suggestions were incorporated to highlight the language of the participant into lines and stanzas that were emotional, visual, universal, and relational (Furman, 2006). Using the language of the participant provided an "exploration of the lived experience" and enhanced the findings of the narrative interview (Furman, 2006, p. 562). Because poetry made new configurations of words, it allowed the reader to see, hear, and feel the world in a new dimension. Thus, research poetry is "a *practical* and *powerful* method for analyzing social worlds" (Richardson, 2000, p. 933). In writing the research poems for this study, I chose phrases and words that created a rhythm and flow to highlight the emotional and lived experiences of the participants (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

**Research text.** While coding themes and making interpretation of the field text was one layer of analysis in narrative inquiry, another layer of analysis was writing the research text (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained that in

narrative inquiry, research texts are the multiple iterations that lead to the final publishable text. Research texts are also the written and recorded information communicated between the participant and the researcher in form of letters, emails, and the like (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For this research study, interim texts were written and re-written to explore and refine the themes and stories of the participants.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described the nonlinear “back and forth” of research texts (p. 138). To identify and refine the stories into recognizable themes, interim texts including a reflexive journal, research poetry, and the back and forth communication for the member and auditor checks were used as part of the analysis and the movement toward writing the final research text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The back and forth with member checks and peer auditors served to increase the credibility of this narrative research study as well as create the final research text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The final research text is presented as Chapters IV, V, and VI of this dissertation study.

### **Trustworthiness**

The nature of qualitative research poses some dilemmas of authenticity because of the subjective viewpoint of the researcher and the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hara, 1995; Merriam, 2009). Because qualitative research is based on subjective viewpoints, it has a distinctive language (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). To address these subjectivities, the term *trustworthiness* has been established to address the concerns of rigor, validity, and authenticity (Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (2000) described the benchmarks of rigor within qualitative research as credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. I next outline how rigor was used in this research study.

Credibility has to do with the rigor of the research and the process of communicating the approaches to ensure rigor (Morrow, 2005). To strengthen the credibility of the research, several methodological procedures were utilized: (a) time, (b) angles, (c) colleagues, (d) triangulation, and (e) member checks (Givens, 2008).

Strengthening credibility through time required that I spend sufficient time with the participant to ensure that the proper amount of information was garnered from the interview. Spending time through prolonged engagement created trust and increased the opportunities to ensure the accuracy of information and decreased the amount of misinformation (Creswell, 2007). To increase the credibility factor of time, I conducted two interviews with each participant. The interviews were spaced at least four weeks apart, which allowed time for the participant to reflect on the topics discussed and to generate new stories, ideas, and information. To increase the element of time, I also solicited feedback through member checks from each participant. To strengthen credibility through the use of time, I listened to the interviews after the initial transcriptions were made, which allowed me to hear the participants' stories again and to ensure the quality of the transcriptions. As the transcriptions were coded, each transcription was read and re-read recursively many times to ensure the accuracy of the themes and to write the research texts. This iterative process allowed for a deep understanding of the data and aided in the investigation and analysis of the data.

Using the methodological procedure of angles strengthened the holistic credibility of this narrative research (Givens, 2008). Using the suggestion of Merriam (2009),



member checks were utilized to rule out the possibility of misunderstanding and to ensure that my interpretations rang true for the participant (p. 217). Member checks ensured that the perspectives (angles) from the participants were understood and interpreted correctly. Participants were invited to provide member checks at three different times throughout the study.

Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcription of each interview. Transcriptions of the first interview were given to the participant at least two weeks prior to the second interview. The second transcript was given to each participant no later than two weeks after the second interview. In all cases, no participant requested that information be deleted from the transcript. Some participants made minor grammatical changes to the transcript and provided the researcher with those changes. In one case, the final comments of the participant and researcher not included in the initial transcription were added. This addition provided clarification for the researcher of the assumptions and concerns of the participant. The third member check occurred after the themes were solidified. Each participant was given an outline of the themes and their categories and asked to make comments. All participants responded that the themes accurately reflected their experiences. One participant made comments about the fifth theme, which clarified the categories of the theme; those comments were incorporated into the final analysis. Participants were also provided with a draft of Chapter IV and were asked to make comments or clarifications. This added dimension of contact with the data provided additional credibility of this narrative research (Givens, 2008). The purpose of the member checks was to solicit and correct feedback on preliminary and

subsequent findings and to ensure my data analysis closely matched the intentions of the participant (Merriam, 2009).

Credibility for this research study was also increased through the use of triangulating analysts or auditors (Givens, 2008; Merriam, 2009). A network of analysts (auditors) reviewed and critiqued the research and data analysis; they provided different perspectives on the emerging codes and themes (Givens, 2008). Merriam (2009) suggested that two (or more) qualified analysts could analyze the themes of the data and compare the results of their findings.

For this study, three auditors with qualitative research experience reviewed the transcripts and provided their analyses of emerging themes. One of the auditors was the transcriptionist for this research project; since she had also been trained in qualitative research, was a counselor, and was familiar with the data, her feedback throughout the process proved invaluable. Peer auditors examined and offered an external perspective of the research process. Auditors were asked to review the results of the study and asked questions about the methods employed, the meaning, and interpretation of the research and themes. Each auditor examined at least two of the transcripts from the first round of interviews. The auditors provided feedback as to the efficacy of the interview, any biases they detected, and how those biases might have affected the interviews. This feedback allowed me to adjust and fine-tune questions in the second interview and to ensure that the participants were allowed ample freedom to discuss their personal thoughts and beliefs about religion and spirituality within their role as a counselor educator. Auditors also were asked to provide feedback after the second round of interviews; this was done early in the process so as to further distinguish bias and assumptions for the second half

of the second round of interviews. In addition to auditing the interviews, auditors were also asked to provide feedback on the thematic coding. Auditors were also asked to provide feedback on the initial coding and final coding. Thus, auditor feedback was used to ensure the credibility of this research process (Givens, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

Another way to strengthen the credibility and consistency of this research study was to allow auditors access to the reflexive journal for regular review (Merriam, 2009). Allowing auditors access authenticated findings and created an ongoing process of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Auditors had access to my reflexive journal and were asked to comment on the journal entries at two junctures. The first was midway through the interview process and the second was at the end of the thematic coding. Comments made by the auditors were recorded and changes to the research were tracked and recorded as part of the audit trail.

Triangulation provided another way of ensuring credibility for this research study. Triangulation has to do with the multiple points of data collection, data analysis, and member checks (Givens, 2008). In previous sections of this document, I described in detail how credibility was ensured throughout the research process. I addressed how data were collected over multiple points with multiple sources, how the data analysis was conducted, how an audit trail of the analysis was kept, and how I included participant member checks to ensure credibility. These multiple points and sources were part of the triangulation process (Givens, 2008).

Another criterion of trustworthiness is transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Morrow, 2005). Transferability is the ability for the researcher to provide thick description in such a way that readers can distinguish the similarities between their

situation and that of the study (Merriam, 2009). I followed Morrow's (2005) injunction to enhance transferability by providing extensive and thick information about the researchers' theoretical orientation, the context of the research, the processes of the research, and description of the participants. This detailed description was addressed in previous sections. Research poems for each of the themes added richness to the descriptions (Lahman et al., 2011; Richardson, 2000). The theoretical orientation was discussed in the personal narrative justification. The context of the research was outlined in the literature review in Chapter II, delimitations to describe the participants were first outlined in Chapter I and again in Chapter III, and the type of interview relationship was described in sections describing the informed consent and interview sections. This level of detailed information allows the reader to determine if the information is relevant in context and setting, and therefore transferable (Hunt, 2011).

A third hallmark of trustworthiness is that of dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Dependability has to do with the way the study was conducted and should be reported in clear terms so the study can be repeatable and duplicated (Morrow, 2005). The context of qualitative research evolves over time, can neither be understood as a single moment in time, nor can it be understood solely in theoretical terms (Givens, 2008). In this document, I have outlined the steps and methods used in this research study and the precautions I have used to ensure transparency, dependability, and a high level of rigor (Givens, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005).

The final hallmark of trustworthiness is the acknowledgement that research is never objective. This describes the confirmability aspect of trustworthiness (Morrow, 2005). Morrow (2005) described confirmability as the idea "that the integrity of

findings” is embedded “within the data” (p. 252). Within the idea of integrity of data, Givens (2008) noted that the research text is indeed rooted in the experience of the participant. In keeping with ethical standards of qualitative research, I outlined my bias in the section above (Givens, 2008). As a researcher committed to the trustworthiness and credibility of this study, I have endeavored to report the data free from bias using the principles of trustworthiness and credibility outlined throughout this chapter. Although researchers have their own bias, the data should not reflect that bias. I have made conscientious efforts as a researcher to link data, analysis, and results so the reader can confirm the “adequacy of the findings” on their own (Morrow, 2005, p. 252).

Within the specialized language of qualitative research, the benchmarks of rigor or trustworthiness are described as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). When applied to narrative research, Riessman (2008) stated that trustworthiness is established through two levels: “the story told by a research participant and the validity of the analysis, or the story told by the researcher” (p. 184). Within narrative research, trustworthiness is having “an *explanatory*, *invitational quality*, as having *authenticity*, as having *adequacy* and *plausibility*” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 185 emphasis in original). By ascribing to the principles set forth in the preceding paragraphs, I have sought to conduct a study that combines the elements of trustworthiness within narrative inquiry to illuminate the lived experiences of counselor educators as they related to the subjects of religion and spirituality within the counseling curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the rationale for a qualitative research study. This rationale followed Crotty's (1998) outline to address epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and the methods of a research study. In summary, I used constructivism as the epistemology of this research, which explains how "we know what we know" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Constructivism rejects the positivistic belief that there is an objective truth and explains truth and meaning as constructed through personal interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical stance of hermeneutics provided context for this research. Hermeneutics is the practical mode of understanding meaning, experience, beliefs, and values that occur between individuals (Crotty, 1998). Narrative inquiry was used as the research methodology. The methodology was used as a means to describe and outline a plan of action and a rationale for the use of narrative inquiry (Crotty, 1998). I next outlined the specific methods of data collection and levels of analysis. Throughout this chapter, I have also addressed my researcher stance and how trustworthiness and ethical concerns of the research study were reinforced and strengthened.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings and results of this narrative study. I start by reviewing the operational definitions of religion and spirituality. Next, I present the collective demographic information of the nine participants. A personal narrative profile follows, which is a storied background of each participant. The emergent themes are then presented and supported using participant stories, experiences, and recollections.

#### Operational Definitions

This narrative research sought to explore and understand the religious and spiritual lived experiences of non-expert counselor educators as these related to their roles as counselor educators. Narrative interviews explored counselor educator stories, concerns, and assumptions related to religion and spirituality. Counselor educators shared stories about the role of religion and spirituality from personal and professional viewpoints. Using the operational definitions presented in Chapter I, stories were considered to be *religious* if they had (a) elements of a belief in a Higher Power; or (b) an organized system of beliefs involving ritual or denominational features that sought to explain the meaning of life and existence (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Walsh, 2009). Stories were considered to be *spiritual* if they were active or passive experiences that explained an innate life force that moved the individual toward “development of a values

system” that included elements of “knowledge, love, meaning, hope, transcendence, connectedness, and compassion” (Miller, 1999, p. 499).

### **Participant Demographics**

As described in Chapter III, participants were recruited utilizing chain sampling (snowball) through my professional network of counselor educators (Merriam, 2009). To assemble this group of participants, I began by soliciting participants through professional colleagues and professional organizations. By following the recommendations of professionals, I contacted targeted counselor educators whom I believed met the participant delimitations. The technique of chain sampling ensured that participants were information-rich (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Information-rich participants were those participants who were willing and able to share stories about their experiences with religion and spirituality in their role as counselor educators.

Each participant completed a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). On this form, participants were asked to supply information about their gender, age, race/ethnicity, belief systems (i.e., agnostic, atheist, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim), religious attendance, types of spiritual practices, and the type of institution where they taught and supervised.

The nine participants in this narrative study were comprised of four men and five women. One woman identified as Asian American, one man was African American, and the remaining seven participants identified as Caucasian/European American. Ages ranged from 34-61 years of age, with the mean age of 44.88. As part of the delimitation for this study, all participants taught at CACREP-accredited institutions: one at a private online university, another at a private Christian university, and the remaining seven



participants at public institutions. Cumulative years of teaching as a counselor educator were 82 years, ranging from 4 to 16 years, with a mean teaching experience of 9.1 years.

Two participants--one man and one woman--self-described as *spiritual only* and seven of the participants described themselves as *religious and spiritual*. Of those seven participants identified as Christian, one woman belongs to the Presbyterian Church, another woman attended a non-denominational church, another woman identified no denomination, yet another woman said she was an Episcopalian, and one man reported he attended a Methodist church. The other two men reported they were active members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon/LDS).

Participants reported their church attendance, which ranged from zero to five times per month. Participants also shared how many times they performed spiritual practices on a monthly basis. This ranged from 4 to 31 times a month; two participants did not indicate a numerical amount but responded with the words “numerous” and “many.” These spiritual practices included such activities such as grace before meals, daily devotionals, quiet time, prayer, church and Sunday school attendance, mindfulness meditation, journaling, hiking, yoga, and “caring, meaningful exchanges with others.” Other spiritual practices included Bible and scripture study, ministering to believers, studying literature, walking, and temple worship.

In the demographic questionnaire, participants were asked about their research interests and areas of expertise; these ranged from multicultural counseling, social justice advocacy, leadership, supervision, couples and family, pedagogy, wellness, sexuality, group counseling, qualitative research, counseling skill development, addictions, LGBT issues, school counseling, creativity, ecological counseling, and reality therapy.

### **Narrative Profiles**

Each participant narrative profile is a product of extensive analysis of the data collected from interviews, demographic data, and email exchanges. Each interview was transcribed verbatim except for minimal encouragers, stutters, and silences. All identifying information was deleted from the transcripts. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of each counselor educator participant. In some narratives, counselor educators repeatedly referred to and used names of important people in their life. Where it seemed a name would make the narrative more personable and to preserve the integrity of the participant's story, pseudonyms were also provided. I constructed the narrative profile of each participant in story form. These profiles are based on the interviews and stories of the participants and are punctuated with quotes from each participant. In each narrative profile, a short description of the artifact the participant shared with me is also provided. These narrative profiles highlight each participant's religious and spiritual experiences.

The participant narrative profiles reflect the life stories of each counselor educator's experiences as shared through his/her own words and narratives. The emerging themes were provided to each participant for review and comment and the participants' suggestions have been integrated throughout. Peer auditors reviewed the transcriptions and emerging themes to ensure the integrity of the research process. The auditors responded with comments that upheld or clarified the original themes.

## **Participant Profiles**

### **Gary**

Gary is a 45-year-old African American male who is a counselor educator at a public university in the western United States. Gary was raised in a midsized city in the eastern United States. He is the fifth of seven children reared by his mother, who is now deceased. His father was an alcoholic and left the family when Gary was young. Gary is an active and involved parent and partner. He is currently married to his second wife who is White; they have a daughter who is now nearly five years old. He has two daughters from a previous marriage who are also biracial; they are 9 and 12 years of age.

Throughout his life, Gary has attended Lutheran, Catholic, and Mormon churches. Ten years ago, Gary made a decision to no longer attend church and now describes himself as spiritual but not religious. His spiritual practices include prayer and mindfulness meditation.

As a child, Gary attended a private Lutheran school where he and his siblings were the only African American students. The private school was pivotal for Gary by giving him opportunities other children of color in his neighborhood did not have. Gary originally had planned a career in the Army but then he decided to attend college instead. Through a series of life events, he decided to obtain a master's in counseling and then to earn a doctorate in counseling education.

As a counselor educator, he values relationships with his students and continually looks for ways to contribute to the profession. One of the ways he contributes to the field is to donate to his university scholarship program for counseling students. He also makes

donations to the National Board for Certified Counselors as a way to invest in the counseling profession.

Gary has been a counselor educator for 14 years and has taught at his current university for ten10 years. Because his university is in the West, it is close to a large population of Mormons; thus, a number of his students are Mormon. Many of Gary's stories reflect this culture, which is unique to the western United States. As a counselor educator, his research interests include group work, experiential learning, supervisor development, social and cultural foundations, and social justice.

Gary shared a family photo he considered a religious and spiritual artifact. This artifact was a black and white photo of his grandparents' 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Although, this celebration occurred prior to Gary's birth, he described how this photograph represented a multiplicity of assumptions and experiences related to his spiritual and religious journey.

When describing his own ideas and assumptions about religion and spirituality, Gary became poetic and described religion and spirituality as separate constructs. He described religion as connected to a practice, connected to outward tradition, and a history of "ways of doing and ways of being." For Gary, religion is a practice to do regularly to achieve something. Religion is based on a holy scripture like the Bible or on a creed or catechism that dictates how one should be, how one should pray, how one should interact, and whom one should love. Religion, he explained, moves "from outward to inward," while spirituality moves from the "inward toward the outward."

As part of the inward-to-outward movement of spirituality, Gary shared that he believed spirituality is inherent and without doctrine because "it comes, it moves through

you, and it is pervasive.” For Gary, he could not choose his spirituality because spirituality is a “completely intimate, individual, and personal thing.” Gary referred to time in relationship to spirituality and stated, “With spirituality there is no set time. There is no Christmas in spirituality ...there’s no Lent, there’s no Hanukkah.”

### **Theresa**

Theresa is a 45-year-old female. A first-generation Korean American, she came to the United States with her parents when she was four years old. Her family settled in the South and she has lived there most of her life. Theresa describes her husband as a “good ol’ Southern boy.” They have two children--a son and a daughter. Theresa describes herself as a mother, working mom, counselor educator, aunt, daughter, sister, middle child, heterosexual, Christian, Korean American, and a Southerner.

Theresa was raised Catholic and attended a Korean Catholic church with her parents and siblings. She attended Catholic parochial school from the fifth grade until she graduated high school. She reported that she and her husband and children regularly attend a Presbyterian church. Theresa described herself as both religious and spiritual. She attends church services four times a month and engages in spiritual practices more than 30 times a month. These practices include grace before meals, daily devotionals, quiet time, evening prayer, and church and Sunday school attendance.

Theresa shared photographs of a recent trip to Germany where she visited the death camp at Dachau. Theresa provided a picture of the memorial dedicated to the Catholic prisoners who died or were held prisoner in Dachau. For Theresa, those pictures were representative that God is present in “good times, bad times, and imperfect times.”

Theresa explained that she understands some people differentiate the constructs of religion and spirituality but since she follows a traditional church and religion, “There is not a whole lot of difference between my spirituality and religiosity.” In describing her personal spiritual and religious beliefs, she stated that spirituality and religion is the ability to see the good in people and see their capacity as human. Through her lens of Christianity, the basic idea is that “we are all children of God” and “we all have a gift to give.” Helping others to develop their gifts is a “spiritual journey.”

Theresa has been counselor educator for the past 16 years. She teaches at a public institution in a large city in the South. Her research interests and areas of expertise include multicultural counseling competency, social advocacy and leadership, privilege and oppression, and supervision.

### **Ava**

Sixty-one years old, Ava is a White counselor educator who teaches at a Christian university. She was hired as affiliate faculty in 2005 and began teaching full-time in 2012. She has two master’s degrees—one in business and one in social work. Ava is a licensed clinical social worker in a Western state. She is a doctoral candidate and will soon complete a doctorate in counseling education. Her dissertation examines the remediation process and the effect it has on counselor educators doing remediation.

Ava is the youngest of four children; her oldest brother, who was 10 years older than Ava, committed suicide in 1992. Ava has two adult children from her first marriage. She is married to her second husband and “best friend.” Ava and her husband have raised a nephew, now 18, since he was 12 years of age. They also care for her husband’s

aunt who suffered a stroke several years ago and lives with them. They also have several pets.

Ava has an extensive clinical background. She has worked in her own private practice where she specializes with working with adult survivors of childhood trauma and combat veterans. During the 1980s, she worked with AIDS patients who were on Medicaid in the rural county where she lived. She has experience working in a mental health hospital, as a director of a residential treatment center for at-risk adolescents, and as an executive director at a domestic abuse shelter.

Ava grew up attending Quaker meetings and when she was a teenager, she joined the Roman Catholic Church. After a couple of years, she returned to her Quaker roots. When she moved to west, she attended Quaker meetings for a time and then a Methodist church. When they were dating, her current husband invited her to an Evangelical Christian church and she and her husband have been active in a couple of Evangelical churches.

The artifact Ava shared was a black and white drawing of Jesus holding a baby. Ava described how this artifact is one of several religious objects that hangs on the wall next to her desk. These drawings remind Ava of the call from Jesus to follow him and she derives strength from her relationship with God.

Ava described that her spirituality is such a part of who she is, she cannot separate religion and spirituality. She attends religious services four or five times a month and her spiritual practices include prayer, reading scripture, and ministering to believers. Spiritually, she has “a very close relationship with the Lord.” Religion, she explained, is the organized church with expectations, rules, and regulations. According to Ava, the

rules and expectations are what many people reject from religion. The spiritual aspect of religion is often what people do “away from the [church] building.” Spirituality, she explained, can also be a euphemism for “I’m a Christian, but I don’t like going to church.” Ava described the overlap of religion and spirituality by saying, “The Bible instructs us to be in communion with each other,” to support others and to be in fellowship together, and religion and spirituality meet “in the act of praise and worship.”

### **Sue**

When asked how she would describe herself, Sue immediately discussed the value of her family and the value of hard work. She is family-oriented and values her identity as the mother of two sons. She stayed at home to raise them and did not start her career until she was in her forties. Sue is now a 57-year-old White counselor educator at a private online university. She has been a counselor educator for seven years; for three years she taught at an historic Black college in the South. Her professional interests and research areas include group work, ecological counseling, reality therapy, counselor education, and aspects of human behavior.

Her mother and maternal grandmother were particularly influential for her, especially since her father left when she was young. She is the oldest of four children. Sue described that she is an achiever and hard worker. She is also a caregiver, which is manifested in her work as a counselor educator, in her past experiences volunteering, and as a mother. While mainly an introvert, she draws energy from processing in an external way. She is a Christian, attends the Episcopal Church, and describes her religious beliefs as “conservative and life-centering.” She attends religious services about once a month and performs spiritual practices of prayer, literature, and Bible study on a daily basis.



While raising her sons, she volunteered as a Stephen minister, a lay pastoral ministry for shut-ins. She was a Stephen minister for 11 years. This ministry led to her training as a lay chaplain at a children's hospital. She volunteered in this position for three years. She explained that this "was her favorite job." Since she was not an ordained minister, she could not pursue that elsewhere.

Sue provided two pictures of wall hangings she has in her home. One picture is a plaque that is a house blessing. The other picture has a stylized Celtic cross with a plaque of an ancient Irish blessing. Sue shared that she has moved a lot throughout her life and these artifacts are some of the first things she unpacks and hangs in her new home. She places them in a prominent location so visitors can see them. For Sue, these artifacts represent hospitality and connections she has with her family.

Sue described her assumptions that people can be spiritual without being religious and the religious are not necessarily spiritual. For Sue, religion is a "formal practice" and "gives [one] an opportunity to be touched by those around you." Sue believes that to be truly religious, one must be in touch with a spiritual self. Spirituality, she expounded, is a cognitive domain that understands human nature, the world, and the connection to "anything other than ourselves."

## **Mark**

Mark is a 44 year-old White male who grew up in a small rural city in the western part of the United States. His family has strong historical ties to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was raised in the Mormon faith. He is an active member of the LDS church and attends religious services four times a month; his spiritual practices occur many times a month: daily prayer, scripture study, and church attendance.

Mark is the youngest of 11 children within a blended family. Mark was two years old when his father died in a plane crash. His mother remarried when Mark was eight. His mother had five children and his stepfather had six children. He is married and has four children of his own.

The artifact Mark shared was a photo image of a page from *The Book of Mormon*. The scriptures from this page are referred to as the “Psalm of Nephi.” Mark shared this image and discussed his experience as a Mormon missionary during which he felt a profound sense of peace and “embraced by the arms of God.”

Mark works at a public university in the southern part of the United States. He has been a counselor educator for nine years. His research interests include counselor supervision, developing and teaching basic counseling skills, and the role of emotions in counseling.

Mark described his philosophy as to “practice what I preach, and to try not to preach.” He tries to be the best person he can based on his personal relationship with God. Mark considers himself to be a spiritual being; for him, religion and spirituality “go hand-in-hand.” Mark stated that his religious belief system is important and beneficial for him. Although they are religious practices, keeping the commandments and partaking in ordinances and sacraments also has spiritual components. Most people, he concluded, only see his “outward religion piece”; it is really important for him to be able to share his strong spirituality.

### **Roxanne**

Roxanne started the interview by saying she defines herself by the roles in her life. Right now, her most salient role is that of a mother; she has two boys--a one-year-

old and a three-year-old. She is also a wife and has been in relationship with her husband since she was 18 years old. Before becoming a mother, she related that her primary role was a counselor educator and clinician.

Roxanne is a 34-year-old White female who described her personal belief and value system as fluid and influenced by agnostic, Buddhist, and Christian elements. She expressed that her deepest sense of belief and value is grounded in relationship to others and striving to treat others with respect, love, forgiveness, and generosity of spirit. She considers herself to be spiritual only and does not attend religious services. She has not attended church on a regular basis since she was three years old. She considers her spiritual practices to include meditation, journaling, hiking, yoga, and caring, meaningful exchanges with others. She practices these one or two times a week.

Roxanne has been a counselor educator for seven years and teaches at a public university in the western United States. She is ending her fourth year teaching at this university. Her research interests and areas of expertise include supervision, couple and family counseling, pedagogy, wellness, sex and sexuality, multicultural counseling, and social justice advocacy.

Roxanne provided two artifacts. One was a poem entitled *A Prayer for You* by Rob Brezny. The other was a photo of the iconic painting of a bearded man seated at a table praying before a meal; the picture is entitled *Grace* and was painted in 1918 by Eric Enstrom. For Roxanne, the picture is a “powerful reminder” of her grandmother’s presence. The poem represents the divine feminine and the intersection of spirituality with her work as a counselor educator.

She expressed that she has kept away from organized religion throughout her life. Yet she acknowledged a lot of people find a way to be spiritual in the context of religion and related how her grandmother modeled that intersection of religion and spirituality. When Roxanne observes people who embrace religion and demonstrate incongruence between their behaviors and what they believe, this makes her question how spiritually invested these people are in their religion. Roxanne explained that for her, spirituality is “the heart piece” by which she meant being intentional, caring, and giving, manifested by living her life in a meaningful way that honors her values.

### **Kelly**

When asked to describe herself, Kelly started by saying she has a professional self and a personal self. Professionally, she is a counselor educator and has experience in school counseling and mental health counseling. She described her passion for the advocacy work that accompanies counseling and counseling education. She also described her lifelong passion to help people and to be in authentic relationships with people. Kelly is in her fourth year as a counselor educator. She teaches at a public university in a large Midwestern city. Her research interests and expertise are school counseling, best practices for counselor educators, and creativity in counseling.

Kelly is a single White woman who is 35 years old. She described herself as more spiritual than religious and said her belief and value system was based on Christian beliefs. She does not now attend a church. Kelly was born and raised in the South. She was baptized as a Methodist and as a child she attended a Moravian church that had a “strong church family.” Over time, the Moravian church became more conservative in its teachings and outlook; in her teenage years, her family began to attend the more liberal

United Church of Christ. At first she was upset at having to leave her church family but in time realized that the teachings of the United Church of Christ were more in line with who she was becoming. She eventually was confirmed in the United Church of Christ.

The artifact Kelly shared was a note card she received from her mother. The card is written in calligraphy and has 10 sayings. Each begins with “Take time to:”; some examples of the sayings are “Work. It is the price of success. Pray. It is conversation with God. Laugh. It is the music of the soul” and “Love and be loved. It is the gift of God.” For Kelly, the aphorisms on the note card are reminders that she is part of a greater universe and she is responsible for leading a full and balanced life.

Although Kelly described her professional and personal identities as separate, she also believes she has a spiritual calling to help people. She views her current position as a counselor educator as part of that calling; she recollected that when she was interviewing for her current position, she felt “called to be there.” She related that she sees her spiritual and religious practices as something she does to benefit herself and noted some people may view religion and spirituality as community and interactions with others. She stated that spirituality can be her own and is linked to being in balance and in harmony with the universe.

### **Clark**

Married for 10 years and a father of four, Clark is a White male age 36. Clark considers himself to be an outdoor and travel enthusiast. It is important for Clark to travel with his children because it provides a broader social and culture context for them. He considers it an important part of his job as a father to provide his children with exposure to a wide range of people.

Clark was raised in western Canada in an area heavily populated with members of the Mormon Church. Clark was raised Mormon, went on a Mormon mission, and is currently active in the LDS faith. He explained that he is religious and spiritual and attends religious services four times a month. His spiritual practices include prayer, scripture study, and temple worship; he adheres to these practices “numerous” times in a month.

As a counselor educator, his research interests and areas of expertise include counselor-educator identity and development, digital relationships, and couples counseling. He teaches at a public university in the western United States. He is in his first teaching position and his fourth year as a counselor educator. As a counselor educator, he believes it is an important part of his role to facilitate student self-awareness.

The artifact Clark shared was a picture of a painting entitled *Ascent* by Mormon artist, David Linn. This picture is in black and white and depicts a staircase. Several figures are at the base of the staircase and a man is halfway up the staircase with hands outstretched to those below him. Above him is yet another figure who has an outstretched arm toward the main figure. For Clark, this picture reminds him of his spiritual belief that life is the “essence of helping one another.”

Clark noted that “religion is the exercise of spirituality” and some of his religious practices are defined by church attendance. Religion from a Mormon viewpoint has a cultural impact as well. For Clark, the religious act of Temple worship is a reassurance of who he is as a person from an eternal perspective. One aspect of spirituality for Clark is it is an internal experience that gives him a deeper sense of who he is, where he comes from, and where he is going. Clark shared his own strong belief in God and his “firm

belief that we are all children of a God.” The belief that all humans are children of God reinforces his own sense of family and belonging. Because there is always someone to watch out for him, he feels “driven to do the same for others.”

### **Robert**

Robert is one of four children. His older brother committed suicide at the age of 25. Robert also has a twin brother and a younger sister. He has seven nieces and nephews. His parents are married and in their 70s. Robert is a 47-year-old White gay male who has lived in the South all his life. He reported that he is difficult to put into a box because he has a wide variety of interests that span the gamut from college sports to music and the theater.

He started his career as a counselor educator at a large public university and has remained there for 12 years. His research interests and expertise include addictions counseling, LGBT issues, and drug epidemiology. He has partnered with local churches and synagogues for the past 10 years to conduct research on men who have sex with men (MSM) and methamphetamine usage. He believes counselors can work to build relationships with key religious officials to advocate for various mental health topics in the community.

Robert considers himself to be both religious and spiritual and attends a large LGBT-affirming Methodist Church. He considers prayer and church attendance as spiritual practices; he attends church about two times a month. In discussing his religious and spiritual beliefs, he stated that it has been a long and rewarding process for him to integrate his spirituality and sexuality. This has been an important element of his

professional and personal success in life. Despite some stereotypes that gay men do not have a spiritual life, Robert stated that his spirituality is very important to him.

The artifact Robert shared was the painting entitled *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt van Rijn. Robert had seen this painting at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia. He noted that throughout his life, he had gravitated toward the parable as well as the painting. For Robert, this painting and the parable taught by Jesus about the prodigal son reminded him that God is always present and accepting despite our human faults and weaknesses.

Robert described religion as being more associated with negativity, rigidity, and judgment and spirituality as more free-flowing, more individualized, healthier, and less critical. Personally, Robert did not see religion and spirituality as distinct because of the integration work he has done to see his religious and spiritual journeys coincide. When he “practices religion,” it is in the context of an affirming faith-based, spiritually embracing journey. For Robert, having found a church that allows him to experience the religious aspect along with his spiritual journey has been essential.

### **Emergent Themes**

Through recursive data analysis, six themes were identified: (a) Journey, (b) Spiritual Practice, (c) Relationships, (d) Marginalization, (e) Modeling, and (f) Risk and Taboo. The Journey theme illustrated the transformation of religious and spiritual beliefs of the participants that led to their current belief system. Spiritual practices encompassed disciplined and repetitive actions that increased perspective, connection, empathy, and balance for the participant. Relationships was characterized by connections with others that transformed the participants personally and professionally. The experience of being



personally attacked and/or judged by others and within a larger system delineated aspects of Marginalization. Modeling was linked to the influences of example and Risk and Taboo had to do with the professional hesitancy counselor educators experienced as related to addressing religious and spiritual topics. These emerging themes and plots were uncovered by identifying patterns, ideas, concerns, assumptions, plots, and emerging tensions within the stories as described in Chapter III (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008).

Common assumptions, plots, and patterns are outlined in the following sections and illustrated with participant narrative experiences. Because each theme is supported by numerous stories, I have chosen two to four of the most salient stories. Throughout this section, data are organized and represented through figures and tables to illustrate the emergent themes. In addition, research poetry that emerged from the data is presented as part of the data representation. Research poetry culminates each thematic section and figures and tables are found at the beginning of each section.

Before presenting the emergent themes, I provide a short description of the role of religion and spirituality that infused this research study. Each participant described their religious and spiritual beliefs and assumptions. These assumptions and beliefs were outlined in detail in the preceding section containing participant profiles. Participant assumptions and beliefs provided a backdrop for their stories and experiences. All participants articulated that religion and spirituality were separate constructs. However, Theresa, Ava, Robert, and Mark each stated that for them, the overlap of religion and spirituality was so considerable they saw them as nearly synonymous. Gary shared his assumption that religion and spirituality were distinct but noted that some people might

view them as unified constructs. This unity was described by Mark when he stated that religion and spirituality were “entwined.” Theresa noted there was not “much of a difference” between religion and spirituality. For Ava, her spirituality is such a part of her that she “couldn’t separate it” from her religion.

Most participants described their assumptions about religion and spirituality in contrasting terms. Sue articulated that religion is a “formal practice” whereas spirituality falls within the “domain of cognitions”—an understanding of human nature and a connection to “anything other than ourselves.” Clark described how his spirituality created cognitive meaning and provided him with a deeper sense of who he is, where he came from, and where he is going. Clark juxtaposed the definition of spirituality with religion and explained that religion often has a cultural aspect as well. The cultural aspect of religion was also echoed in Theresa’s explanation of the social support she has found throughout her life through church affiliation and attendance.

A common aspect of spirituality was the idea of spirituality as balance. Clark and Mark described that being spiritually balanced was an important aspect of their life, while Kelly described spirituality as living in balance and harmony with the universe. Roxanne described another category of spirituality when she described “the heart piece” of a connection with others is based on caring, giving, and intentionality. Connection was a common description of spirituality. Gary described his as the energy of intimacy and closeness to others. This type of spirituality he explained is inherent to all people. Theresa’s comment echoed that of connection when she described powerful experiences relating to clients at a women’s shelter and the ability to see another person’s capacity.

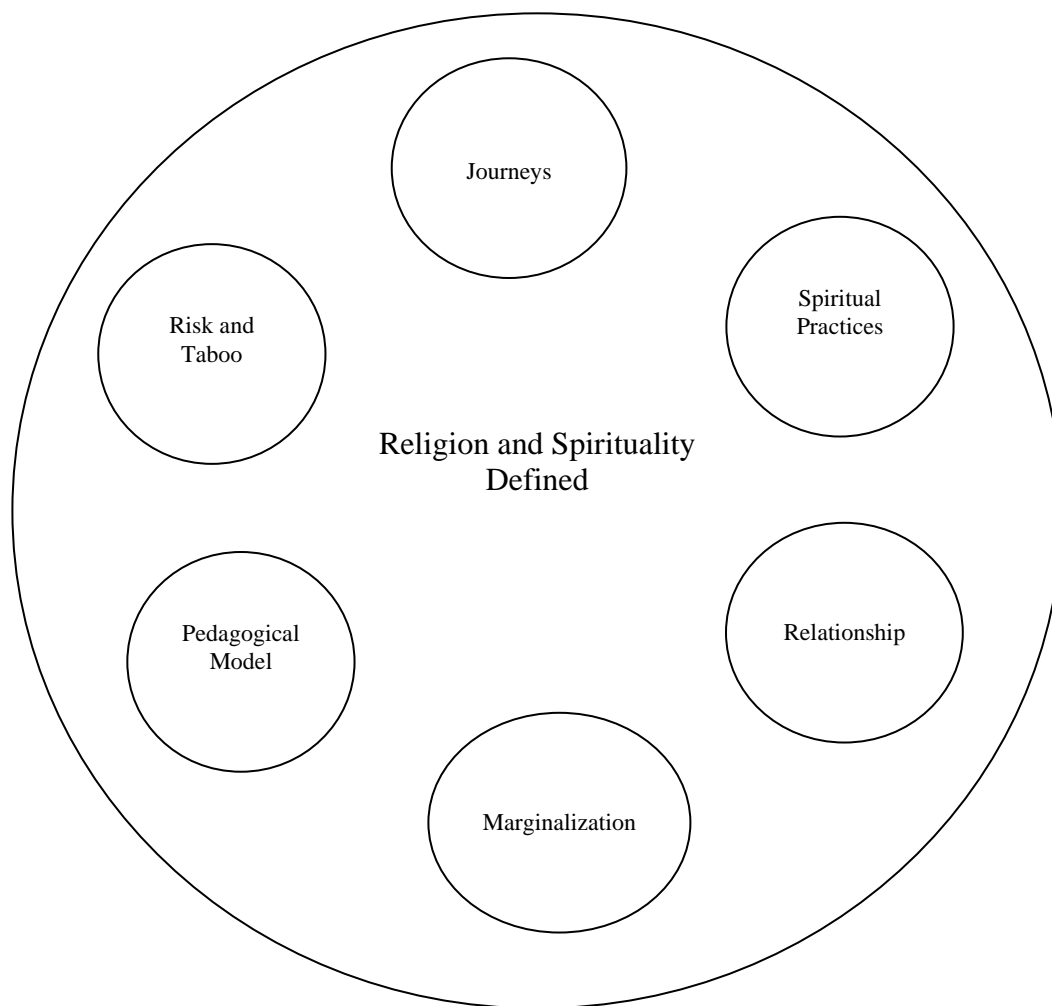
She further explained that a spiritual connection occurs with an outside force, which might or might not be tied to a church or to a Higher Power.

Another frequent assumption was expressed by participants about the nature of spirituality. Robert explained that spirituality is more free-flowing, individualized, and free from criticism than is religion. Ava described how many people see religion as an organized institution replete with rules and regulations.

Participants frequently referenced the rigidity of rules and regulations within some religions. Robert noted that despite the association of the critical nature and rigidity of some religions, religion in and of itself is not necessarily bad; some people can have a “religious walk” that is not negative. He explained that because someone has had a negative experience in a religious setting does not mean all religions have a damning or critical voice in people’s lives. Sue stated that religion gives a person the opportunity to be “touched” by others.

The preceding summarized the descriptions of religion and spirituality as proffered by the participants in this study and provided evidence that counselor educators have the ability to define religion in spirituality in terms supported by relevant literature. Although several participants expressed that their personal religious and spiritual practices were indistinguishable, participant definitions overall aligned with the operational definition of religion and spirituality for this study. Religion was operationally defined as having elements of a belief in Higher Power or related to an organized system of beliefs with rituals and denominational identities that explained the meaning of life and existence (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Walsh, 2009). Spirituality was operationally defined as being active or passive experiences that explained an innate life

force that moves toward the “development of a values system.” Spirituality also included elements of “knowledge, love, meaning, hope, transcendence, connectedness, and compassion” (Miller, 1999, p. 499). The stories related by the participants were infused with religious and spiritual process and content. The organization of the emerging themes of this study against the backdrop of religious and spiritual definitions is represented below (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Organization of six themes against a backdrop of religious and spiritual definitions.

## **Journey**

The Journey theme illustrated the transformation of religious and spiritual beliefs of the participants that led to their current belief system. All nine participants had attended a church regularly for portions of their lives. Roxanne had the briefest exposure, until she was age three, and has not regularly attended church since then. Clark and Mark, both active members of the LDS church, have attended the LDS church throughout their lives and both have fulfilled LDS missions. The other six participants have attended two or more churches of different denominations for portions of their lives. Of the nine participants, three (Gary, Kelly, and Roxanne) do not currently attend religious services. Participants endorsed the theme of Journey as evidenced in Table 1.

Table 1

*Participant Endorsement of Theme One: Journey*

Journey	Endorsement
Gary	X
Sue	X
Ava	X
Mark	X
Kelly	X
Theresa	X
Roxanne	X
Clark	X
Robert	X

All participants shared stories and assumptions about the personal religious and spiritual journeys that led them to their current beliefs and practices. Participant journeys contained elements of personal beliefs and individual circumstances or experiences. Narratives shared by Gary and Theresa illustrated how transformation, clarification of belief, and circumstance affected their religious or spiritual journeys.

Gary attended a Lutheran school as a child, schooling that required Gary and his family to attend Lutheran church services. During roll call on Monday mornings, the teacher asked each student if they had attended church on Sunday. Although required to attend, Gary recalled that he “didn’t mind church.” Among those who attended church were the eight members of his family, one other Black woman “and a whole lot of White people.”

During high school and college, Gary had a friend who was Catholic. When Gary spent the night with his friend, he would attend his friend’s church because the parents had a rule that overnight guests had to attend church. “So I went to the Catholic Church on Sunday,” Gary explained. After college, Gary “went to the Catholic Church religiously.” He “was involved with a woman who was Catholic,” Gary explained, “so I was Catholic.” Gary said after his experience with the Catholic Church, “I spent a lot of time being nothing.”

He later fell in love, he explained, with a woman who was “a native of Utah and born and raised in the LDS Church.” Gary joined the Mormon Church, was an active member, “and believed in the LDS Church” for a period of four or five years. Over time, Gary made two realizations. The first was he saw no place for himself within the church because African Americans had no LDS leadership roles, which he saw limiting any

influence he might have as a Black man. The second realization was he was zoning out and not paying attention during church. He then said, “I can be in any room and connect to my spiritual higher being” without attending a church. He realized attending a church because he was in love was not the best way to establish and maintain the connection he was seeking with God. Gary shared with his then-wife and said he would continue to support her and allow their children to be raised in the Mormon Church but being a member of the church no longer fit for him.

Gary shared that he attended functions at the LDS Church to support his daughters. He is comfortable with his “current lived experiences of spirituality.” Although he is not an active participant in any organized religion, he leaves room for that to change. He sums up his varied religious experiences by saying “those are some of my developmental journeys in regards to religion.”

Theresa also made a change in denomination and has decided that religion is an integral part of her spiritual life. When asked about her religious background, she recounted that her parents met in South Korea; her mother was a Catholic and her father was a Buddhist. Her father converted from Buddhism because her mother would not marry him unless he was baptized as a Roman Catholic.

Theresa related that regular church attendance and religion were “a part of my upbringing.” Her upbringing included prayer and saying grace before meals. Her parents had helped found the first Korean-Catholic Church in the city where she was raised, Theresa realized that church was part of her family’s culture and she recalled watching her parents volunteer in their church community. Part of the family culture was investing in social relationships and experiences formed through associations made at church. It

was a custom to gather after church for potlucks with other members the church, especially for holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Theresa noted that her parents' best friends were church members as were her own.

Theresa moved to the city she now calls home, in part for her counselor educator position but also because her boyfriend Connor, now her husband, lived there. Connor and his family had been longtime members of a Presbyterian Church and Theresa began attending with him and his family. Theresa noted that she was fearful about telling her parents, who were such strong Catholics, that she was attending the Presbyterian Church. However, when they had their daughter, Theresa and her husband decided to have her baptized in the Korean-Catholic Church her parents helped establish. Theresa recalled how meaningful this was for her and for her parents.

Theresa noted that both she and her husband have attended church throughout their relationship; it was an important part of their dating and their married life. Theresa recounted that she and her husband became more invested and involved in the church because they wanted their children to grow up in a faith community and feel a connection with the church. Although she continued to attend the Presbyterian Church, it was not until after her son's birth that she formally joined her husband's church. She recounted that she resisted joining for several years, this despite her involvement with the church. When her son was born, she and her husband debated where to have him baptized. Theresa told her parents she would have her son baptized at their Catholic church out of respect for them. Her parents thought about this for some time, Theresa said, and then told their daughter they felt it was more important for them that Theresa raised her children in the Christian faith and Theresa's family attend church together. Theresa



noted that it was a powerful moment for her to hear her staunchly Catholic mother say this to her. After this conversation with her parents, Connor and Theresa baptized their son in the Presbyterian Church and Theresa officially joined her husband's church. Theresa and her family continue to be active members of the Presbyterian Church.

Each participant discussed their personal journeys of how their religious and spiritual beliefs evolved and the circumstances that led to their current belief system. While six of the participants reported they currently attend church services on a regular basis, three participants do not currently attend religious services on a regular basis. Seven of the nine participants have actively attended church services in two or more denominations throughout their lifetime. Two participants have remained members of their childhood religion. Two participants described their current beliefs as spiritual only and seven participants described their beliefs as religious and spiritual. Table 2 illustrates the dynamics of beliefs, circumstances, and experiences of the participants' religious and spiritual journeys. The research poem entitled *Conviction* illustrates the categories of belief and circumstances, thought processes, and experiences that led them to their current assumptions and practices. Each participant's voice is represented in this poem.

Table 2

*Participant Religious Participation and Spiritual Belief: Past and Present*

	Current Church Attendance	Attendance: Two or more Denominations	Spiritual Only	Religious and Spiritual
Gary		X	X	
Sue	X	X		X
Ava	X	X		X
Mark	X			X
Kelly		X		X
Theresa	X	X		X
Roxanne		X	X	
Clark	X			X
Robert	X	X		X

*Conviction*

We prayed  
 We would say a blessing before meals  
 We would have Bible study on Saturday morning  
 A lifelong perspective that religion is a part of our lives  
 I thought of myself as a Christian and as someone who tries to live as a Christian  
 I am going to keep my Quaker God ...  
 I can talk to Him anytime. I don't have to be in a church

Spiritual connection ... can happen anywhere  
 A conviction of my role and where I belong and why  
 It really just struck me, the whole [Easter] story  
 My faith ... was *my* rock.  
 I personally sought out God  
 I have been led and directed to where I need to be

I have come away from religion but still have found a spiritual way of ... making meaning in my life.

I went to some revival  
Do this prayer and accept Christ  
The vilest anti-gay comments I have heard were [from people] sitting in a pew  
I kept ... a temple recommend  
I would be zoned out  
I have been very hurt by the church, very hurt

A spiritual question  
Is this the kind of person I want to be?  
I was actually looking for a church  
Switched our membership  
Where do [I] want to put ... energy in life?  
It wasn't as much about religion as it was about spirituality  
I can have meaningful, valuable, deep connections with people who I shouldn't have these meaningful, valuable connections with

### **Spiritual Practices**

The theme Spiritual Practices encompassed the disciplined and repetitive actions that increased perspective, connection, empathy, and balance for the participants. All participants except Ava and Gary shared how their religious and spiritual practices affected their professional and personal life. The stories recounted by Roxanne and Mark illustrate how spiritual and religious practices helped counselor educators maintain focus, be more present, and maintain relaxation and health when they taught and supervised. Table 3 illustrates endorsement of those benefits.

When asked how his spiritual and religious practices affected his life, Mark shared that “having a structured religious belief system is very important and beneficial for him.” As part of his spiritual and religious practice, Mark has daily prayers, daily scripture study, and attends church each week. When he is “in tune,” he said he is more empathic and sensitive and is a more effective counselor, instructor, and supervisor.

Table 3

*Participant Endorsement of Spiritual Practices*

	Theme Benefits Endorsed	Productivity Focus	Category Presence Acceptance	Health Relaxation
Gary				
Sue	X	X	X	X
Ava				
Mark	X	X	X	X
Kelly	X	X	X	X
Theresa	X	X	X	X
Roxanne	X	X	X	X
Clark	X		X	
Robert	X		X	X

Mark recounted a “crazy week” during which he was not feeling well and needed to prepare for several things professionally and personally. Because it was such a crazy week, he was also “trying to exercise his faith and trust that the Lord would help him to accomplish his long list of tasks.” One night during this week, while supervising students, he realized that one supervisee “was really off.” He recounted that this student had family and physical situations impacting her clinical work. Mark remembered specifically thinking that he needed to address the concerns of this student and despite the fact that he was tired and ready to end supervision, he did so. At this time, he described

experiencing a “surge of energy.” With this energy, his personal concerns dissipated for the rest of supervision. He and the class had a discussion that was helpful for the student in her time of difficulty. This discussion helped the student recognize how her life events impacted how she counseled her clients. Mark related that had he “not been really in tune,” he would have been unable to focus on the student and address “some of the more difficult questions and concerns that she had in supervision.”

Roxanne echoed Mark’s thoughts. When asked if there were benefits of her religious and spiritual practices, she immediately replied, “There’s a ton of benefits.” Some of the benefits for Roxanne of practices like yoga, hiking, journaling, and meditation were her spirit was renewed and she was allowed to get out of the “academic bubble.” These practices helped her be more relaxed and have a different sense of freedom and positivity. In addition, taking time for her spiritual practice allowed her to be a better model for wellness and balance.

She related that she had taught a multicultural class. A couple of weeks before spring break, she realized the class “started to feel really yucky.” She noticed no one was really participating and there was a lack of relationship with her students. She left the final class before spring break thinking, “What the hell is going on in there? Something needs to happen. There needs to be a shift.”

During her spring break, she was able to attend several yoga classes and have some time away from school. This time allowed her to have “space to be reflective instead of reactive” and then to notice she had been angry and blaming her students. During this time of reflection, she realized something in the classroom environment needed to change; as the instructor she was responsible for setting the context and

building the grounds for the types of conversations she expected. She asked herself, “How can I change the environment?”

As part of her strategic plan, she composed some questions she thought were relevant and brought some food to the next class. She arranged the tables and chairs so it resembled a dining room table. The class time was spent sharing food and building discussions with the guiding questions. Having food and changing the layout of the room “allowed for a different dynamic to come in.” Roxanne shared that if she had not had time for her spiritual practice and allowed time to be reflective, she could have stayed bitter and continued to blame the students for the dynamics of the classroom.

Participants reported experiencing personal and professional benefits of having spiritual and religious practices. Three categories of benefits emerged from the data: the first was increased focus and productivity, the second was an increased ability to maintain perspective and acceptance, and the third category was physical manifestations of relaxation and improved health. These categories are illustrated through stories of participants having an increased ability to maintain focus on teaching and supervising and to take things less personally when they had difficulty with students. Participants also reported that when they maintained their spiritual and religious practices, they felt more energy and creativity and connections with students were easier to maintain. Two research poems emerged from the theme of spiritual practices; the first is an untitled poem extracted from Theresa’s narrative. Short and succinct, it captures the heart of productivity and perspective.

more present  
more focused  
less irritable

The second research poem is more expansive and speaks to how focus, perspective, and health affect counselor educators when they teach and supervise. The words of this poem represent the assumptions and ideas of the seven participants who endorsed this theme (Mark, Roxanne, Sue, Robert, Kelly, Theresa, and Clark).

I am...

in tune  
more relaxed  
less perfectionistic  
more positive  
not so reactive

I can...

take criticism  
have ...motivation  
remain open-minded  
have perspective

I feel...

connected  
compassion  
empathy  
creativity  
present  
genuine  
balanced  
healthy

## **Relationships**

Every participant in this study discussed the value of different types of relationships and how those relationships affected them. The Relationship theme was defined by participants as connections with others that transformed them personally and professionally. Some relationships were with family members and others were with counselors, mentors, supervisees, and counselor educators. Three categories within the theme of Relationship emerged through the storied experiences of the participants. Encouragement and caring was the first category within the stories about relationships.

Participant stories were marked by someone who recognized the participant's potential and cared enough to encourage and help the participant achieve one or more goals. Trust was a common facet of these relationships and enabled the participant to achieve something she or he had not originally planned or thought they might be capable of achieving. In many of the stories, the person who was encouraging and trusting continued to be a part of the professional or personal circle of colleagues and friends. Table 4 provides evidence of the theme of Relationship and its three categories. These varied experiences with people affirmed that relationships with students and clients were an important component of their role as a counselor educator. Stories related by Roxanne and Clark illustrated how counselor educators valued relationships marked with encouragement, care, trust, and longevity.

Roxanne shared that being present in a "here-and-now kind of way" was important to her because it helped students begin to uncover parts of themselves of which they were unaware. For her, the value of relationships was solidified throughout her master's degree and her relationship with Dr. Bretz, the chair of the counseling department. Throughout her master's degree, she began to observe the faculty in their role as counselor educators. During her internship, she began to realize the weight of seeing clients on a full-time basis. She began to wonder if a full-time position would "sustain her" and if it was a good career fit. Because she saw that burnout and isolation could affect her, she began to think about the counselor education program.

At one point, she went to Dr. Bretz's office to discuss the possibility of pursuing a doctorate. His reply was an affirmation and one she described as a "real honor." "If you didn't ... talk to me in a couple of months," Dr. Bretz told her, then "I was going to ...



talk to you.” She remarked this support solidified for her that she could “actually do this.” This conversation gave her permission, she said, to apply for the doctoral program and to seek out other professional relationships that helped her see her own potential as a counselor educator.

Table 4

*Participant Endorsement of the Relationship Theme*

	Theme Relationship	Encouragement Caring	Category Trust	Continued Relationship
Gary	X	X		X
Sue	X	X		
Ava	X	X	X	
Mark	X	X	X	X
Kelly	X	X	X	X
Theresa	X	X	X	
Roxanne	X	X	X	X
Clark	X	X	X	X
Robert	X	X		

During her doctoral program, Roxanne maintained two important relationships: one with Dr. Bretz, the department chair, and another with Dr. Friedman, her doctoral advisor. She stated that when she was having a “crappy day,” she would go to Dr.

Bretz's office just to cry and unload. Then, in his inimitable manner, he would give her chocolate and a Kleenex and listen to her complaints and help her sort out whatever problems were bothering her.

Both Dr. Bretz and Dr. Friedman also provided mentorship and support throughout Roxanne's doctoral program, often pushing her to do more than she thought she could do. Because of their encouragement and vision, she published her first journal article and became secretary for a counseling organization while in her doctoral program.

This support and mentorship continues today. Roxanne regularly relies on their help. Since her program is currently undergoing CACREP re-accreditation, she calls them for support. Next year, Roxanne will be a co-chair for the department and has already been in conversation about how to navigate some of the decisions of her new role. She remarked that Dr. Friedman and Dr. Bretz are "touchstones" in her professional life.

Recently, Roxanne had dinner with Dr. Friedman and another counselor educator at a conference. During dinner, the other counselor educator said, "It seems like the people who graduated from [your university] ... have this really cool connection" and the professors there "attend to your students a little bit differently." Dr. Friedman looked at Roxanne and asked her to describe her experience. With a tear in her eye, Roxanne responded that her relationships with Dr. Friedman and Dr. Bretz "changed my life." She said they helped her see in herself something she did not see before. She recounted that she could feel Dr. Friedman getting choked up and he added,

I think in all the years [at this university] what I have learned is it is all about relationship. I can pour all of the knowledge and all things like that into people's heads, but that is not the basis of what I do. It is about being really present in relationship, and that is the most I have to offer.

For Roxanne, this example of relationships is the type of environment she would like to create for her students as she continues to develop as a counselor educator.

While Roxanne shared meaningful experiences with her professional mentors, Clark highlighted the relationships forged during his doctoral and master's training. While Clark was a doctoral student, he supervised Trent. Trent was a master's level student and also was LDS. Clark recalled that he and Trent were watching one of Trent's counseling sessions on tape. Clark's experience watching the tape was that Trent was distant, standoffish, and not very open. Clark wondered if his experience was because he is more extroverted and Trent is more introverted. When Clark and Trent began discussing Trent's reactions, Trent described his own reactions to the client because the client was gay and having relationship struggles.

Clark recalled observing how uncomfortable Trent was and was able to relate to that same feeling of discomfort. While sitting with Trent in supervision, Clark remembered his own transformative experience during his master's training. This occurred with Harper, a cohort member who was also a lesbian. One day, they spent four hours after class talking about the assumptions each had made about the other. One of these assumptions was that he, being LDS, and Harper, being a lesbian, should automatically be in conflict because of their supposedly different values and beliefs: "We were supposed to clash and weren't supposed to see eye to eye on things." This conversation was punctuated with laughter and crying. It was a "hard, transformative conversation" that was "life-changing" for Clark. At this time in his life, Clark was experiencing a lot of inner conflict about how he should and should not be with regard to

people; yet he felt very connected to Harper. Clark shared that it “was at that moment that I felt very transformed” because this conversation transcended social expectations.

While remembering this transformative experience with Harper, Clark felt pain for Trent. Clark shared his impressions of Trent’s struggle and shared with Trent that there was so much more to his life and more to who he was than what he was thinking in that moment. Clark was concerned that Trent did not want to talk about his struggle nor did he want to acknowledge what was driving his inner conflict. At one point during supervision, Clark said to Trent,

It seems like it is really hard for you to be able to care for someone who you think you are not supposed to care about, because you think you are supposed to have these fundamental differences.... It seems like you are perpetuating that by being angry about it, but not willing to talk about it. I am worried about you and I am worried about what that is going to do to you unless we talk about it, because I think it is important to be able to acknowledge your struggle and also the impact this is having on your client.

Trent’s reaction was “this has never happened to me before; no one has ever welcomed this conversation.”

Clark noted from this point forward, they were both able to be open about their beliefs and share the hidden influences that affected how the counseled clients were treated based on religion and religious practices. Clark and Trent maintain a professional relationship and Trent regularly works with the LGBT population. Clark explained that this story demonstrated a “thread of compassion, love, and awareness” about people who are in relationship. For Clark, this thread of connection with others “reaffirms my spiritual perspective.”

All participants shared how professional and personal relationships had affected their roles as counselor educators. Connection with others is a meaningful component of

being a counselor educator and the aspects of encouragement and caring, coupled with trust, often resulted in a significant and meaningful relationship. Mentors helped guide counselor educators in their path toward their current profession and relationships strengthened their belief in humanity, in the profession, and in themselves. One research poem entitled *Touchstone* captures the spirit of the value found in relationships and represents the assumptions expressed by Roxanne and Clark.

*Touchstone*

open  
helpful  
connection  
changed my life

### **Marginalization**

Each participant shared a variety of experiences of being marginalized because of who they are or what they believe. Two categories within this theme surfaced from the stories of the participants--having been personally attacked and/or judged by others within a larger system. All participants indicated that on some level they had been personally attacked for who they were or what they believed in and all participants believed the attacks came from the larger systemic culture. While some experiences directly impacted the manner in which they taught and supervised, other experiences of marginalization had impacted their professional life in other ways such as tenure and promotion. Kelly, Ava, and Mark's stories illustrated how experiences of being judged and marginalized affected when, if, and how they addressed religion and spirituality with their students. Table 5 presents the participants' endorsement of being marginalized.

Kelly is a liberal Christian who grew up in the South and attended a liberal United Church of Christ. Kelly shared that as a counselor, she would be judged because of her

more liberal beliefs. When she worked as a counselor in the South, she was “always scared that clients were going to make assumptions about me.” Because so many people in the South are conservative Christians, she was afraid just being from the South would imply she was part of the conservative spiritual and religious majority. She asked herself if she was a silent and liberal minority among the conservative majority.

Table 5

*Participant Endorsement of the Marginalization Theme*

	Theme Feeling Marginalized	Category Personal Attack	Systemic Attack
Gary	X	X	X
Sue	X	X	X
Ava	X	X	X
Mark	X	X	X
Kelly	X	X	X
Theresa	X	X	X
Roxanne	X	X	X
Clark	X	X	X
Robert	X	X	X

Kelly shared an experience about three years into her current professorship. It was a memorable experience for her because she knew her coworkers within the department did not “know tons about me.” At work she did not share much about her life

outside of work. One day she was chatting with one of her closest friends at work, who was Catholic. During their conversation, another coworker, whom she believed to be atheist, joined the conversation. They were talking about religious identity and Kelly said, “I am a Christian” and the friend said, “Me too.” The male coworker replied,

What?! Are you serious? I had no idea that you had any religious beliefs whatsoever.... I have always thought you were a good person and I have always appreciated your positive and facilitative attitude and how much you participate at work and how you want to get to know people, but I just didn’t know it was tied to being Christian.

Kelly was “really thrown” by this experience, which caused her to think about how she wanted to present herself as a Christian. She reasoned, “I was thrown for a loop [because] I don’t ever want to be embarrassed by my religious identity or my spiritual identity.”

In the interview, Kelly took on her concern about her openness about her religious and spiritual beliefs. This occurred as Kelly discussed her artifact—a card she received from her mother. The card had 10 sayings rendered in calligraphy, each beginning with “Take time to . . .

*Work.* It is the price of success.  
*Pray.* It is conversation with God.  
*Laugh.* It is the music of the soul.  
*Love and be loved.* It is the gift of God.

In discussing the card, Kelly wondered if she should move the card from her home to her office. Her first thought was the card might be inappropriate for display in her office. She then wondered if having it in her office “might open doors. I wonder if others would connect with it,” Kelly said, “and start a conversation that otherwise might not happen?” As a catalyst for conversations about religion and spirituality, the card might allow her, she said, to “be a more authentic person at work too.” In the interview, I

suggested it might be similar to the pink triangle or the LGBT flag that some professors post to indicate it is a “safe zone.” Kelly remembered that when she posted an LGBT “safe space” sticker, nearly a dozen people asked where they could get a sticker. Having considered this option, Kelly observed, “It is just like giving permission. People just need permission to cross those lines and talk about those scary things.”

While Kelly’s experiences stemmed from the fear of being judged and closing off helpful conversations with some coworkers or students, Ava recounted that she felt marginalized and judged *because* of her religious beliefs. Ava shared that she attended a secular and private university as a doctoral student. The first year for her was difficult “because there was so much Christian-bashing going on.” She related that “the liberals talked about being tolerant” except “they were tolerant of everything but Evangelical Christians.” She added she was “very close” to transferring to a Christian university. Before making that change, she decided to pray more about it. Her answer came, she related to me in her interview, and the Lord said, “Be bold.” She said her response was “I don’t want to, Lord.” To which God replied, “Just trust me and be bold.”

Feeling the call to be bold, she attended her next class. The professor had a Master of Divinity, and she thought, “Oh, thank you, Lord, finally a Christian that I can relate to in my class.” The irony was the professor was “an M.Div. who was really mad at God” and the class proved not to be the “nurturing place that I was looking for.” At one point, the professor said something derogatory about Christians. Ava recounted,

Because God told me to be bold I was, like, “okay, I am a Christian” and [the professor] looked at me and said, “Well, at least you are not one of those Bible-thumping fundamentalists.” I said, “Yes. Yes I am,” and he said, “Well, it’s not like you are a Bill Moyers clone,” and I just looked at him, and he goes, “or, maybe you are,” and he finally dropped it.



By acting with boldness, Ava followed her “Spirit’s leading” and found other Christians in this class. She explained that Christians are reluctant to stand out because they do not want to be seen as judgmental and they do not want to be seen as the target. This experience “probably changed things more for me than anything else because I wasn’t hiding anymore.”

While Ava felt empowered and “out” as a person of faith, Mark had different experiences related to his religion and spirituality. The first formative experience Mark had took place when he was a doctoral student working alongside two other students—another LDS man and a lesbian woman. In his first year as a doctoral student, his small cohort of three carpooled with a second-year student, Sheila, to a regional ACES conference.

Sheila, he explained, identified herself as an LGBT ally in the car and confronted both Mark and the other LDS man about their religious beliefs. Mark recounted that it started out as a conversation but turned accusatory and hostile because “she had an agenda...and...had planned out the whole thing.” Mark explained, “It wasn’t a genuine discussion because Sheila challenged *me* as a person and made accusatory remarks like ‘I don’t know how you can be a counselor having the beliefs that you do, and I don’t know how you can feel good about yourself.’” For Mark, these comments were “deep, personal attacks” that shook him to his core. Mark felt traumatized because as a career counselor he had had positive experiences working with a wide range of people, many of them gay and lesbian.

After having been trapped in a car for some three hours with these accusations from a fellow student, the group arrived at the conference just in time to see a recently

graduated student receive an “emerging leader” award. In accepting her award, she shared how much she liked her job: “It is so awesome because the only White guy in the office has an earring and long hair, and isn’t this typical White male.” These comments “came on the heels,” Mark related, of the hostile and “traumatic experience.” Mark began to question himself and wondered if he should be in counselor education, much less an “emerging leader,” because he was a White male who did not have “an earring and long hair.” In this marginalized state, Mark walked around the conference thinking, “should I be here?” He related how this experience “shaped and dimmed my view of how safe...it was to talk about religion” as a counselor and counselor educator because “I really put a wall up.” Since then, Mark related he has not spoken about religion and individual beliefs with his students.

Another defining experience that affected *if* he would initiate conversations about religion and spirituality with his students occurred during his first year as a counselor educator. Mark had moved from to the South for a teaching position, this despite some fear about possible antagonism toward his Mormon beliefs and background. One day during class, one of his students said her friend was a Mormon. Mark was worried the student might say something he disagreed with and considered if he should “sit back” without responding or say something. In the end, he engaged, “Oh, well that’s great, I am a Mormon too.” He did this in part as a “way to deflect” because he did not want them to delve into his religious beliefs. Yet he shared with his students that he was Mormon, grew up out West, and his great-great grandfather was a polygamist with multiple wives. This he stated in a matter of fact way because he is proud of this part of his family and religious history. What he did not realize was few at his university were

knowledgeable about the present-day LDS Church. After word got around, he learned most people in his new academic community thought Mormons still practiced polygamy. His candor backfired because it was based on fear. On the one hand, Mark believed “it was perfectly clear” he was merely trying to be candid about his family history, polygamy included. On the other hand, candor is not helpful if people do not know much about the history of your faith tradition. He learned that few people in his new community knew he and other 21<sup>st</sup>-century Mormons are not polygamists and deplore the practice of polygamy among offshoot Mormon sects. This, he explained, was the “last time that I brought up my faith and religion.... “Unfortunately,” Mark added, “it kept me from talking about religion in general.”

The preceding stories illustrated the emergent theme of marginalization and represented the two categories of having been personally attacked and/or judged by others within a larger system. Two research poems emerged from the data. The first poem is untitled and is extracted from the ideas and assumptions voiced by Theresa, Ava, Mark, Roxanne, Kelly, and Clark.

religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*religion ... seems so patriarchal*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*At least you are not one of those Bible-thumping fundamentalists*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*If you couch it in spiritual terms then people are all over that*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*she challenged me as a person*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*That divide ... is alive and well*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*I don't ever want to be embarrassed by my religious identity or my spiritual identity*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession  
*I deal with a lot of bigotry about being Mormon*  
 religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession

*they were tolerant of everything but Evangelical Christians*  
religious bigotry is acceptable in our profession

A second poem emerged from the data representing the theme of marginalization; this research poem is untitled and demonstrates the systemic concerns of marginalization for the participants in this study. This research poem utilizes the words of Sue, Theresa, and Gary.

The fact is, racism is alive and well  
Unless you are a certain demographic

I felt like a novelty  
People look at me sideways

With anyone who is a part of a marginalized group,  
It is a constant struggle to find the support that you need

These struggles are [not] unique to me  
It is just being a non-white male

## **Modeling**

Modeling emerged as a theme from the comments and stories of all nine participants. Modeling was linked to the influences of example. Stories emerged in three categories. The first category included personal stories naming important people in the participant's life. The second category included stories of how other counselor educators managed classroom situations regarding religion and spirituality. The third category included experiences where the participant modeled a classroom discussion of religion and spirituality. Stories across all three categories touched on various facets of counseling values such as authenticity, transparency, facilitative pedagogy, and trust. Table 6 presents a visual representation of the endorsement of the theme and categories of modeling. It is followed by stories representing those categories.

Table 6

*Participant Endorsement of Modeling*

	Theme Pedagogical Model	Personal Example	Category Professor as Model	Participant as Model
Gary	X	X		X
Sue	X	X		
Ava	X	X	X	X
Mark	X	X	X	
Kelly	X	X	X	
Theresa	X	X	X	X
Roxanne	X	X	X	X
Clark	X	X	X	X
Robert	X	X	X	

**Personal stories of modeling.** All nine participants reported being affected in their personal lives by important people who modeled key behaviors. These stories underscored the values and assumptions of the participants. Gary shared a succinct story of the power of modeling behavior in discussing his father. His father was an alcoholic who divorced his mother when Gary was young. Gary described his dad as “a bad drunk” who spent the last years of his life asking for forgiveness and saying, “I am sorry.” Gary says he learned from his father in those later years. He explained his father’s example “teaches me a lot about how to [be forgiving] and how to be authentic.”

For Gary, authenticity is an aspect of modeling that is “intimately connected” to spirituality and religion. He explained that he tries to work with students so they can frame their connection with clients in a way that is not “fake.” Authenticity is important because “no one wants to be tolerated.” He noted that when he is authentic, he feels like he is “centered and connected to who I am as a person.” As a counselor educator, he endeavors to find a way to help students connect “in a way that is meaningful and authentic for them.” Gary noted that counselor educators “have to have this discourse” about religion and spirituality and “we have to figure out as a profession how to do it where it is authentic.”

Roxanne described a “really strong model” of authenticity and genuineness in the way her grandmother “practiced her religion.” Roxanne noted that her grandmother had “genuine concern” as she honored people despite differing beliefs. For example, when Roxanne and her fiancé decided to live together (since “we were practically living together”), she expected disapproval from her grandparents who had “a very firm boundary” that “we shouldn’t live together before getting married.”

But Roxanne wanted to be upfront with her very religious grandparents. She wanted to say to them, “This is what we are doing.” She was dreading their reaction because she said, “I was sort of this golden child.” This was the first time she had not done what her grandparents had expected of her. She remembered sitting on the couch with her grandparents and crying as she told them about her decision and being “so devastated by the idea of them being disappointed in me.” Roxanne could see the “pain and worry” in her grandmother. Yet she also saw her grandmother “didn’t become judgmental towards me.” The core of their relationship remained strong. “The doctrine

...didn't shift her love and acceptance of me." Roxanne closed the story by saying that her grandmother "is one of the few people...who live what is taught."

This experience with her grandmother related to her teaching philosophy as a counselor educator. When teaching the multicultural class, she asks the students to choose a critical incident in which they began to see themselves differently or somehow changed in how they viewed themselves or viewed others. Each student was asked to share a three-minute story about this critical experience. Roxanne shared with her students her own critical incident "that is very personal." She noted that sharing these stories "are very spiritual moments to me" because the students become "really authentic and they are really in tune to each other and take risks and show a part of themselves that you don't always get to see." She shared her own critical incident with her students because she believed if she was going to ask her students to take risks, then she must take risks with her students as well because "it parallels the counseling idea." While Roxanne and Gary's stories illustrated personal experiences of modeling, Mark and Ava's stories illustrated how a counselor educator's actions affected them.

**Professor as model.** Both Ava and Mark related stories from when they were students and how professors modeled respect for spiritual and religious diversity. Mark related that one of his instructors was "really open about" being Catholic; he shared one day how the previous weekend she had attended another church. When she took communion, she realized she "did it wrong." The teacher's vulnerability was a "powerful experience" for Mark because she was so "matter-of-fact and comfortable in her skin." This experience was a catalyst for Mark to share some of his religious past with his students as a new professor.

While attending a class at a secular counseling program, Ava experienced “Christian bashing” on a regular basis. In one course, she addressed the instructor and shared that she felt targeted as a Christian. She said to the instructor and the class, “Here we are told to be tolerant and yet here we are right off the bat bashing Christians. I am a Christian and I don’t like that. I am a person and I have an opinion, and it is okay for me to have my own opinion and my own beliefs.” The instructor’s response was “I have heard that before from other people.” The instructor shared that she was Jewish and often felt bashed as well. This willingness to listen and facilitate a discussion “opened up into this discussion in the class that...immediately changed how we were talking to each other in the class.” The professor modeled respect, she listened, and she didn’t get defensive. She really held a mirror up and said “you can’t do this” and people got it.

When asked why counselor educators might have difficulties listening and facilitating a discussion about topics like “Christian bashing,” Ava replied,

First, as a counselor educator we are a model. Counselor educators have to actually believe and be tolerant themselves of that openness and leave the room open for discussion. They have to be that, in order to model that. They have to live that and it has to be visceral. That is going to set the tone in the classroom.

Ava noted it is important that “counselor educators model accountability, vulnerability, authenticity.” She also discussed the difficulty to model accountability, vulnerability, and authenticity because “it is hard to be humble” and not “feel like you have to defend yourself.” Being humble and non-defensive when hearing feedback is a parallel process with students and counselor educators “have to be willing to hear the difficult feedback just like we ask our students to hear the difficult feedback. We have to be willing to go there.” She noted that if counselor educators model “tolerance in the classroom” and a “willingness to listen” to differing opinions, then students “will step into that place.”



**Participant as model.** While Mark and Ava shared stories from examples set by their professors, Clark and Theresa proffered examples of how they modeled as counselor educators. Theresa noted the importance of modeling when she stated,

I believe everything I do in the classroom and everything I do in supervision is really modeling. If I am teaching a class I am modeling for my doctoral students how to be a teacher. If I am supervising, I am modeling for my supervisees how to be a counselor.

Theresa shared that in group supervision with her doctoral students, she constructs a cultural genogram similar to a family genogram. She outlines the group--herself at one level of the genogram, the doctoral students on another level, and the master's level students on the third level. She models by listing all the cultural groups she belongs to and discusses how they impact her worldview. She encourages each student to "share their worldview" as well as categories of diversity for their supervisees. Then they will "look at the whole board and talk about...some of the biases...and...the potential pitfalls."

She noted that she will have some students in the supervision class during multiple semesters and those students tended to share more each succeeding semester. Because students shared more over time, she noted that in previous semesters students shared fewer points of diversity. She processed the experience with questions such as "what is different this semester?" and "what is different now that we were able to get to being honest now?" This, she said, "just illustrates the importance of having the dialogue of who we are as cultural beings multiple times, it can't just happen once."

Theresa noted that it is difficult for many counselor educators to have conversations about diversity. Part of that diversity conversation must "allow the time and space for someone to talk about their religious or spiritual faith." It is often

acceptable, Theresa noted, to talk about what it means to be female or Asian (she is both) as a counselor. But no one asks, “What does being Christian mean to you as a counselor?” Theresa noted that counselor educators need to “be more comfortable” and “open up the dialogue for other people to have different views. As counselors, I think we have to do that. I see it as a part of the diversity dialogue.” Conversation about diversity is essential for Theresa to be authentic with her students. Clark touched on another category of authenticity when he discussed the importance of modeling vulnerability when teaching and supervising.

For Clark, there is a piece of what he does as a counselor educator “that is very connected to me spiritually.” One of these spiritual assumptions is “it is okay to share stories of vulnerability” with clients and with students. This is a key piece of his philosophy as a counselor educator because “I become more relatable when I can share a story in which I am vulnerable.” He tries to model for students “openness to error” because for Clark, perfection does not exist. Transparency has value despite “the fact that it might be uncomfortable” or “elicit feelings of discomfort” in others. Sharing his own vulnerability as a counselor and counselor educator “is about facilitating awareness.” His hope is raising awareness through sharing his own vulnerability in order that “a series of events” can start in the classroom and carry through the students’ relationship with their clients and ultimately affect how clients relate to others.

When asked to share a story of vulnerability and perfectionism, Clark recalled his first year as a faculty and as a new assistant professor. During this time period, he was “overwhelmed” by the nonteaching aspects of his professorship. “I wasn’t setting boundaries around committee work and around service,” Clark said, “and I think I was

working on four different research projects at the time.” In addition to his work commitments, he had responsibilities to his wife and children and he was seeing clients in his private practice.

One day he met with a new female client who shared with him a “horrific story” of finding her son drowned. Her son had dropped the lid of a sippy cup into a five-gallon bucket, he reached into the bucket to retrieve the lid and fell in the bucket. There was just enough water in the bucket for him to drown. For Clark, this was the first time as a counselor that the story became “so real because at that time I too had a two-year-old and it was almost more than I could handle.” Clark felt connected to that story, not only because of his own son but because he and the client were both Mormon and shared similar beliefs about the afterlife. Despite these points of connection, Clark realized that “even though I was still able to be focused on the client, it was very superficial.”

He shared this story with his students “not to manipulate emotionally” but to express that a counselor never knows when a client’s story is going to “strike a chord with you that is painfully terrifying.” This event made him realize, “Wow, I am out of balance.” During this time period, he had not been seeing his own counselor and related that had he been attending counseling he might have “handled that differently” and he “could have been more present and genuine” with the client. For Clark, the self-reflection in counseling allowed him to advocate for himself, his “own well-being,” as well as the well-being of his clients. He models vulnerability when he shares this story with students in order to teach the importance of resilience, self-care, and self-reflection.

The value of teaching through modeling as a teaching and supervision tool was endorsed by all participants. Robert summarized the significance of modeling when he

shared that from an existential, psychodynamic sense “if I cannot be who I am, then the subtle message that I am sending is that it is not okay for you to be who you are.” The theme of modeling was illustrated by a number of stories. Mark and Ava recounted how their professors modeled to them and how that affected when, if, and how they might address religion and spirituality as counselors. Theresa and Clark related how they taught religion and spirituality by modeling as a counselor educator. Gary and Roxanne shared narratives that illustrated how personal relationships affected how they viewed their assumptions about religion and spirituality when teaching and supervising counseling students. The following untitled research poem represents how counselor educators viewed the power of modeling and the need for counselor educators to teach and supervise through modeling and example. This poem reflects the ideas of Ava, Clark, Roxanne, Gary, and Robert.

M  
A C C O U N T A B L E  
D  
E  
V I S C E R A L  
U  
T  
H  
V U L N E R A B L E  
N  
T R A N S P A R E N T  
I  
C

### **Risk and Taboo**

The theme of risk and taboo when addressing religion and spirituality emerged from all participants except for Clark. This theme had to do with the professional

hesitancy counselor educators experienced as related to addressing religious and spiritual topics. Three categories related to the risk and taboo of addressing religion and spirituality included a lack of training of how to address religion and spirituality with students, the need for self-protection, as well as the need to protect students. Table 7 presents endorsements of this theme and its categories. It is followed by stories shared by Sue, Robert, and Kelly that characterize the common plots and concerns of the participants.

Table 7

*Participant Endorsement of the Risk and Taboo Theme*

	Theme Risk and Taboo	Lack of Training	Category Self- Protection	Protecting Students
Gary	X	X	X	X
Sue	X	X	X	X
Ava	X	X	X	
Mark	X	X	X	
Kelly	X	X	X	X
Theresa	X		X	X
Roxanne	X		X	X
Clark				
Robert	X	X	X	X

Sue explained that “part of the problem” with addressing religion and spirituality was “we cannot have a consistent spirituality, since everyone is not the same religion and people see spirituality differently.” Another part of the problem is in counseling, “we typically tiptoe or just avoid God talk.” There is a good bit of risk involved with talking about God because “people can have some very strong opinions” and these conversations can “set people off.”

According to Sue, part of her role as a counselor educator is to facilitate relationships while protecting all the students. She explains that she has experienced classes where people have expressed strong opinions and beliefs and “when it gets out of hand, people can be hurt.” She worries that if this were to happen in class, “there wouldn’t be time to fix it.” This is a tension for Sue because religion and spirituality are “not in the curriculum” nor do we “train in our programs” about religion and spirituality. Yet there is a need to avail students of their choices and to discuss choices around religion and spirituality as part of a professional response.

When asked about the types of conversations she has with students about religion and spirituality, Sue responded, “Do I bring it up? I am not sure that I do. I think that I respond to what students are taking away as important. So I probably am less inclined to ask something like ‘Is there spirituality that could be explored?’ not unless it was appropriate.” For Sue, it was appropriate to frame conversations about spirituality within the concepts of holistic healing and from an environmental and ecological perspective. Later she repeated that she does not necessarily discuss religion “although we may discuss spirituality.”

Sue also related that the students in the South often see their purpose to become a counselor as “very tied into their spirituality and religion.” Students often “want to talk about God and healing.” Often they ask her why they cannot just tell their clients to see their pastor or minister. It is important for Sue that students realize there is a difference between Christian or pastoral counseling and mental health counseling. The difference, she clarified, is because “we are not teaching the Bible, we are not teaching how...[to] connect Bible passages to theory.” It is a “tough balancing act” because counselors “can tie in cultural as well as spiritual” aspects of counseling. Because she is not teaching counseling students to tie issues to the Bible nor to a particular denomination, she does not bring up religion and spirituality except in terms of an ecological influence. The ecological influence, she explained, “might be the person interacting with their environment”; for some clients, a church or minister might be considered a resource.

Sue shared an experience that occurred in one of the residency classes that illustrates how she *does* address religion and spirituality. One student, Sarah, shared with the class that she would tell her client to call the church and visit their pastor as part of counseling. Sue used this situation to role-play a scenario where the counselor-in-training expressed these beliefs to a client. Another student, Kristi, who was not religious volunteered to role-play the client. Kristi later shared that she volunteered on purpose to see if she could challenge Sarah’s belief system. After the role-play, the class discussion “got really honest” and had a good outcome. This was in part because Kristi shared her reactions when Sarah had suggested she contact her pastor and church. Sue recounted Kristi’s comments:

That made me feel like it was about you and not me. It didn’t occur to me to call a church office because I don’t go to church. It didn’t occur to me to call

somebody else that is not a part of my life. So I felt disconnected from you as my counselor because you are suggesting something that is not a part of my worldview.

It was “a good conversation” for Sarah who thought God must be involved in a tangible way for every client. Sarah was able to realize some clients might have a belief system that does not include religion. Sue noted this type of discussion helps differentiate that she is training students “to understand how any particular influence is helpful in the client’s overall treatment plan.”

While Sue addressed Sarah’s worldview and her assumption that clients could always contact their pastor, Kelly’s student made the assumption religious or spiritual beliefs could be changed at will. Kelly shared an experience working with doctoral students in an advanced practicum in which each of the clients in practicum had different religious beliefs than the doctoral students. One of these situations involved Aisha, a Muslim student, who worked with a female Christian client. The client was in a difficult marriage and thought about leaving it but because of her religious beliefs, she felt she needed to stay in the relationship and work through these problems. Aisha struggled with her client’s perspective because in Aisha’s view, the client needed to leave the marriage because it was abusive and the client’s faith was a hindrance to her well-being.

Initially, Kelly felt unprepared to “delve into” Aisha’s religious and spiritual beliefs and how they affected Aisha’s views about this client. Kelly recounted, “We just moved on.” The client continued to return to counseling and Aisha became more frustrated with the situation. Later in the semester, Aisha expressed her frustration that the client “used God as an excuse for not changing and to stay in this situation.” Aisha also stated she had difficulty with people who have religious beliefs who “could just



change.” Another student, who was from a Christian background, had “a huge reaction” and said to Aisha, “You just don’t take someone’s faith away from them.” Then Aisha replied, “But her faith is a choice and it is encouraging other bad choices in her life.” The other student replied, “Faith isn’t necessarily a choice.”

These students’ comments led to a discussion that religious beliefs might be a characteristic of who someone is as well as personal choice. For Kelly, this was an interesting category to religion and spirituality:

You can’t choose what race you are, and for a lot of people you can’t choose your spiritual or religious beliefs, either. You are born into them or you find them at some point in your life and you feel that that is part of who you are.... I think that may be dependent on the person and how they see the world. Maybe that is why it is such a difficult thing to teach, because some people see it as a choice and others don’t.

Continuing her thoughts about choice, Kelly noted that a lot of people think sexual preference is a choice. Students, she asserted, often see sexuality, spirituality, and religion as choices and often “have a hard time being unbiased towards clients who have differing beliefs or sexual preferences than them.”

Kelly felt scared and “unprepared to really delve into this conversation” about religion and spirituality because she “did not know the best way” to address these topics. Also, she did not know much about the Muslim faith and “didn’t want to step on anyone’s toes.” Furthermore, she noted it is “scary to get into deep water where things unfold very quickly in the classroom.” While she wanted to be sensitive to the students, she also “didn’t know what her role was” because she felt a “duty to be professional” and not cross “personal lines.” Both Kelly and Sue expressed the risk involved in addressing religion and spirituality and respecting the student while ensuring that the biases of the student did not interfere with the counseling process.

Robert's religious and spiritual experiences shed another light on the risks and taboos when counselor educators address religion and spirituality. Robert recalled that he grew up attending a Methodist church but in his sophomore year of high school, several friends invited him to a large Baptist Church. Attending this Baptist Church was important because it promised a larger social network and he had been struggling socially. It was also significant because he had not come out and he heard a lot of vile and negative messages about what it meant to be gay. Later when he had completed his undergraduate degree, he was looking for a job. One of his spiritual mentors suggested that he might be good at working with kids. She told him about an internship position for the youth ministry at the same Baptist church he attended as a teenager. Robert worked as an intern for a year and half, which led to a full time position as head of the Junior High Ministry. During this point in his life, his sexuality "was growing increasingly important." Meanwhile, his brother, an addict and an alcoholic, took his own life.

After his brother's suicide, his parents suggested he attend counseling. Robert agreed because he thought counseling might give him an opportunity to talk to someone about his sexuality. At the first session after the first 30 to 35 minutes, the counselor asked, "So why are you really here?" He could barely blurt it out, Robert recalled, but he replied, "I am dealing with being gay, and that is a problem." The counselor looked at Robert and replied, "That is not a problem. But other people might have a problem with that. But that is not a problem for you." The counselor gave Robert "plenty of space" to come to terms with his sexuality. Her example, he recalled, "taught me a huge lesson about counseling and effective ways to produce change." Through his counseling experiences, Robert realized he was at a "real turning point because I realized I had to

make some decisions.” He met with his boss at the Baptist church and disclosed that he was in counseling and working on issues of his own sexuality. His boss fired him on the spot. After that experience, Robert said he was “done, done, done with religion” and had to “table it for a while.”

The years of his master’s-level training were important because he struggled with integrating what it meant to be gay while trying to incorporate a healthy sense of spirituality after having been exposed to such a negative and rigid belief system. An important experience occurred in a group class when another student said to Robert, “You know, when I look at you and talk with you, I see God through you.” This and other positive experiences helped him “stretch” his spiritual walk.

After his master’s program, he worked in an addiction treatment facility for about three years and related that when working with addictions, “you have to be able to embrace some type of spirituality.” This helped him realize there were “parts of his spiritual walk” he wanted to address. After receiving his doctorate and when he began to work as a counselor educator, he started attending a large gay-affirming Methodist Church. Robert loved attending this church because he had never experienced being with people who were able to integrate spirituality with sexuality.

Because he is gay, he believes some people stereotype him as not having a spiritual life. This is one of the reasons he is open to disclosing some of his spiritual experiences with students. He often shares examples from his own life, such as his brother’s addiction and suicide, as well as his own experiences working for and attending a conservative church. This is most evident in the addictions courses he teaches where he addresses the concepts of a Higher Power and God.

As part of this discussion, Robert explained that many people do not feel safe or they may have difficulty perceiving a Higher Power can be loving, supportive, and understanding. He also asks his students to examine what is it like for them to embrace a sense of a Higher Power and to examine what might be blocking them from being able to tap into that Higher Power. Despite his openness about his “spiritual walk,” Robert was explicit when he stated he tries to “stay away from the word “‘religion’ ... at all costs” because something “in me cringes a little bit when I hear someone say that word.” He does not cringe when people talk about their spirituality.

In discussing counselor educator concerns or assumptions about addressing religion and spirituality, Robert shared that counselor educators want to be respectful of all students and do not want to say or do something offensive or “create an unsafe environment for learning.” Robert voiced concerns that students might not have the spiritual development to be able to integrate religion and spirituality. He explained that counselor educators often do not know to what extent student might embrace religious diversity.

In addition, counselors and counselor educators, he stated, are uncomfortable about talking about religion and spirituality; this lack of confidence “really does stem from our own insecurities about our own [spiritual or religious] walks.” There is a “professional hesitancy” because counselor educators are “taught that you are not supposed to discuss these things” and “you are supposed to keep these things quiet in an academic setting.” Because of this avoidance, counselor educators “have never been trained” how to talk about religion and spirituality. Another hesitancy is that counselor

educators are concerned students view counselor educators “as someone who is knowledgeable” and believable when discussing religion and spirituality.

While counselor educators might want to be perceived as knowledgeable, Robert also noted there are not “very clear guidelines” for counselor educators because spirituality and religion are “not really a part of the curriculum” outside of the 12 Steps program. Further, he stated, “There is nothing in the syllabus” that outlines a discussion about spirituality nor, he added, is there much research about religion and spirituality. If there is, Robert said, “It hasn’t really been publicized.” Robert does not remember trainings that address how to work with clients to develop their “spiritual sense of being.” Robert does not believe there is a strong precedent for research and training regarding spirituality and religion:

I think if we are going to do that, it is going to take a legitimate, proactive, intentional stance of integrating it. I am not even sure if CACREP integrates spirituality in their standards, do they?... Why do we need to teach it if CACREP is not even requiring it?

All nine participants discussed tensions and fears they experienced when addressing the topics of religion and spirituality as a counselor educator. The stories shared by Sue, Kelly, and Robert illustrated the assumptions that there are inherent risks and cultural taboos that prohibit counselor educators from addressing religion and spirituality. Further, some counselor educators believe that religion and spirituality are not in the counseling curriculum. These ideas were described in a variety of ways by the participants of this study. The research poem below, entitled “Professional Hesitancy,” distills the comments of six of the nine participants (Robert, Gary, Sue, Kelly, Theresa, and Mark) in the following lines.

*Professional Hesitancy*

keep ... quiet  
so volatile

protection  
risk

caution  
deep water

tiptoe  
it can set people off

insecure  
out on a limb

uncertain  
i don't know

fear  
respect

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the data collected from the nine participants in this study. The operational definitions of religion and spirituality were reviewed and set as a milieu for participant narratives. Participant demographics were explored and specified and a narrative profile for each participant was outlined. Data were analyzed through hermeneutic recursive data analysis. Six themes were identified through the identification of patterns, ideas, concerns, assumptions, plots, and emerging tensions within the stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008): (a) journey, (b) spiritual practices, (c) relationships, (d) marginalization, (e) modeling, and (f) risk and taboo. These themes were represented through a figure and tables to clarify the different aspects and categories of each theme.

Finally, each theme was further analyzed by distilling the assumptions into at least one research poem that compressed the ideas presented in a distilled and compact manner.

In the next chapter, I discuss the six themes in further detail. The discussion addresses how each theme relates to the research questions for this study. Implications for practice and future directions for research related to this study are also explored.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

This study explored the lived experiences of counselor educators relating to religion and spirituality in an effort to understand the impact these experiences might have when teaching and supervising counseling students. This chapter provides a summary of the study, a discussion of the research questions and themes, as well as interpretations and implications of the data. The chapter concludes with potential limitations of the study and directions for future research.

While the literature in the counseling field about spiritual and religious topics has been more prominent in recent decades, few studies have explored the role counselor educators have when teaching this specific multicultural topic. This research study begins to fill the gap of understanding the experiences and assumptions of counselor educators relating to religion and spirituality in the counseling curriculum.

Participants in this study recounted a variety of lived experiences that provided insight into the many aspects of religion, spirituality, and pedagogy. Participants openly discussed their numerous experiences around spirituality and religion. My perception, based on the content of the narratives, was religion and spirituality were subject matters that influenced the participants across the span of their lifetime. While none of the participants minimized the importance of these topics during our interviews, I noticed varying degrees of comfort when they shared when, how, and if they addressed these



topics with students in the classroom setting. Participants shared that they were interested in the topics of religion and spirituality and their involvement in this study had increased their awareness of these topics. The research participants reported that the process of storytelling helped them reflect on and reevaluate how they might respond in the future when these topics surface when teaching and supervising.

Throughout the interview process, participants acknowledged the importance of religion and spirituality for themselves, their students, and for clients. Whether or not religion and spirituality had merit for counselors and counselor educators in their personal and professional lives was not questioned; the uncertainty lay with the ability to, and comfort level of, discussing these topics with students. While some participants felt confident discussing religion and spirituality, others shared stories of being caught off guard and confused as to how to adequately address these topics with students. Many felt exposed and surprised when these subjects arose and noted that a component of this vulnerability and surprise was their own lack of training. Participants particularly noted their lack of training when religion and spirituality was not in the syllabus or in the curriculum. This disconnect was consistent with the literature that many counselor educators are unprepared to address religion and spirituality with their students (Adams, 2012; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2002).

Based on the participants' descriptions of their assumptions and experiences, it became clear that religion and spirituality were intricate, multi-layered subjects that were deeply personal. I often felt a profound sense of connection during the interviews as participants shared their vulnerabilities, accomplishments, and disappointments. It became abundantly clear that religious and spiritual beliefs were the warp and weft that

guided the participants in many personal and professional decisions. It was not uncommon to see the thread of deeply held beliefs also influenced their decision to become counselors and counselor educators. The thread of religious and spiritual topics was apparent throughout the themes that emerged from the data. Through recursive data analysis, six themes were identified: (a) Journey, (b) Spiritual Practice, (c) Relationships, (d) Marginalization, (e) Modeling, and (f) Risk and Taboo. The implications and conclusions presented throughout this chapter responded to the research questions formulated from participant data, reflective deliberation as a researcher, and information gleaned from the professional literature.

### **Lived Experiences**

#### **First Research Question**

What are counselor educator's personal lived experiences with spirituality and religion?

Participants responded with a myriad of stories that provided insight into the lived experiences of counselor educators. Counselor educators shared stories about the role of religion and spirituality from personal and professional viewpoints. Using the operational definitions of religion and spirituality, stories were considered to be religious if they had elements of belief in a Higher Power or an organized system of beliefs that was ritualistic or denominational and explained ultimate meanings of life and existence (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Walsh, 2009). Stories were spiritual if they were active or passive experiences that explained an innate life force that moved toward "development of a values system" that included elements of "knowledge, love, meaning, hope, transcendence, connectedness, and compassion" (Miller, 1999, p. 499).

Since the operational definitions of religion and spirituality were broad and inclusive, stories from the six themes broadly answered the question of the religious and spiritual experience of counselor educators. However, the Journey theme most specifically answered the first research question.

Every participant in this study discussed aspects of development and identity as it applied to self, students, or clients. Participants in this study often described religious and spiritual identity and developmental transformations as journeys. These journeys had one of three components: one component was that of change in religious affiliation; another occurred when participants moved to another city or state, thus necessitating finding a new religious community that worked for them; and the third component was based on a shift within the thoughts and beliefs of the participant. This shift might have been a strengthening of their previous beliefs or modification of their beliefs.

The idea of a spiritual and religious journey was explicitly shared by Robert and Theresa. However, all participants described ideas and assumptions about their personal religious and spiritual transformations that occurred throughout their life. While spiritual and religious identity was the focus of their comments, other important factors of identity affected their spiritual and religious transformations (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation). Since one of the core values of counseling is humans grow and develop (ACA, 2014; ASERVIC, 2009; CACREP, 2009), it was not surprising that counselor educators discussed religious and spiritual journeys in terms of human development. Participants consistently referred to the changes of identity that form across a person's lifespan. Their comments about identity were consistent with established literature of human growth and development such as cognitive development (Piaget, 1970),

psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963), and moral development (Gilligan, 1993). In addition, participant comments were consistent with spiritual and religious theories of development, e.g., Allport's (1950) psychology of religion, Fowler's (1981) stages of faith, Poll and Smith's (2003) spiritual identity development.

In addition to identity and development, the culture of the participants played a role in their personal journey--not surprising since culture has played a role in spiritual and religious development of humanity over the long span of history (Armstrong, 1993; Wilson, 2002). The cultural importance of religion has also been an important part of American life since colonial times and is manifested in its history of religious diversity (Gaustad, 1982). Furthermore, surveys of the American populace regularly investigated the cultural aspects of religion and spirituality (Gallup Polls, 2012; Kosmin & Keysar, 2009). These surveys measured a variety of topics related to religious and spiritual topics such as belief in God, church attendance, Bible study, prayer life, and religious affiliation. The results of these surveys demonstrated that the majority of Americans are Christian and have spiritual and religious beliefs (Gallup Polls, 2012; Kosmin & Keysar, 2009).

Whether participants shared assumptions and beliefs about themselves, their students, or clients, they discussed religious and spiritual journeys in terms of culture, religious affiliation, and church attendance. Religious and spiritual experiences were framed in context of personal backgrounds and represented a variety of cultures (e.g., conservative, liberal, Korean, African American, Southern, Mormon, Muslim, Catholic, and Lutheran), which is consistent with the religious and spiritual diversity of the

population of the United States (Gallup Polls, 2012; Gaustad, 1982; Kosmin & Keysar, 2009).

The preceding paragraphs examined the religious and spiritual journeys counselor educators reported. The stories the participants shared in this research answered the first research question. The emerging Journey theme most specifically answered this research question. The remaining themes more specifically addressed how personal lived experiences affected how, when, and if counselor educators addressed the topics of religion and spirituality.

### **Second Research Question**

How do these [religious and spiritual] experiences affect [counselor educators] teaching and supervision of counseling students?

The narrative data from this research study provided evidence that religious and spiritual experiences did affect when, if, and how counselor educators addressed religion and spirituality in counseling classes and supervision. Clearly defined patterns of confidence addressing religion and spirituality did not emerge from the data; rather there was a continuum of responses that included points of confidence, hesitation, and avoidance. I next examine how levels of confidence emerged through the themes that emerged from the data.

Not all participants were confident, not all participants avoided, and not all participants were hesitant. Rather, for most of the participants, there were times when they reported they grew in confidence and other times they moved toward hesitation and avoided the topics of religion and spirituality with their students. Participants shared that they hesitated or avoided religious or spiritual topics because they were untrained and unprepared. This is consistent with existing literature wherein researchers found 46% of

respondents believed they were prepared to address religious and spiritual topics with clients (Young et al., 2002) and 53% believed they could practice in accordance with the ASERVIC competencies (Young et al., 2007). Therefore, it was not surprising that participants expressed a variety of competency levels.

The relative strength of participants' religious and spiritual beliefs was not an indication of competency levels. This was in contrast to findings by van Asselt and Senstock (2009) who reported that counselor educators' religious and spiritual beliefs might influence their perceived levels of competency. The current research study added a dimension to these findings and demonstrated that indeed spiritual and religious beliefs could also influence competency levels. However, just because a counselor educator had spiritual and religious beliefs did not automatically mean they felt confident and competent addressing religious and spiritual topics with their students.

**Risk and taboo.** Factors that more strongly affected confidence levels emerged through five of the six themes. The theme of Risk and Taboo was endorsed by all participants. Aspects of this theme included a lack of training and the need for counselor educators to protect themselves as well as their students. One aspect of protection that arose from the literature is the uniquely American idea of the separation of church and state. Burke et al. (1999) and Kelly (1994) raised the question that counselor educators might avoid religious and spiritual topics because of this mandate. What remained inconclusive was how the idea of the separation of church and state affected counselor educator competency levels.

Researchers have found a difference between state institutions and religious institutions as to the amount of exposure students have to religious and spiritual topics.

Walker, Gorsuch, and Tan (2004) reported that 87% of graduates of nonreligious counseling programs rarely or never discussed spiritual or religious topics in their training programs. Kelly (1994) found a “significant number” (p. 234) of state-affiliated counseling programs did not include spiritual and religious content. Kelly conjectured that counselor educators at nonreligious counseling programs might not have addressed these topics because they did not want to impose religious values due to their understanding of the laws related to the separation of church and state. Some participants in this study mentioned these possibilities and indicated their own training did not address how to discuss religious and spiritual topics without imposing values and maintaining proper boundaries between church and state.

Another risk raised by participants had to do with classroom management and the ability to facilitate conversations about religion and spirituality in a way that protected counseling students. For example, Sue stated she believed she wanted to manage the conversations about religion and spirituality because “people can have some very strong opinions” and these conversations can “set people off.” Because discussions involving religion and spirituality can potentially be hurtful, Sue explained that she carefully facilitated these conversations in order to protect students. In some instances, she avoided “God talk” and in other instances led conversations addressing religion and spirituality. Sue, Kelly, and Ava each mentioned that facilitating conversations about religion and spirituality required counselor educators to have leadership skills in addition to the ability to facilitate group discussions. Notable about the findings from this narrative study was counselor educators felt the need to protect their students from the harmful effects of conversations related to spirituality and religion. In my review of the

literature, competency levels were assessed as related to imposing of values, attitudes, and beliefs (Burke et al., 1999; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995); knowledge about religious and spiritual topics (Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009); but not related to skills associated with protecting students.

It is reasonable to believe that counselor educators would link competency levels to protecting students because standards and ethical codes state that counselor educators respect the dignity and promote wellness of students and clients (ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011; CACREP, 2009). The Risk and Taboo theme highlighted the risk of addressing religious and spiritual topics and shed light on an aspect not addressed in previous scholarly writings pertaining to competency addressing religious and spiritual topics. One of the tensions related to religious and spiritual competency that emerged from this narrative study was the need to have respectful conversations about differing beliefs systems without imposing values (ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011; Sue et al., 1992) while protecting students from potentially hurtful and demeaning comments.

Finally, relating to the Risk and Taboo theme, the participants noted they had not been adequately trained to have conversations related to religious and spiritual topics. This finding was consistent with previous research regarding competency levels in which increased training was related to higher competency levels (Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009) and counseling students believed a higher level of training was necessary (Cashwell et al., 2013; Young et al., 2007). Eight of the nine participants in this narrative study linked competency levels to a lack of pedagogical training about religious and spiritual topics. For example, Kelly reported that because she had not been trained to discuss religious and spiritual topics, she felt unprepared to address the



religious needs of her Muslim student. Participants noted they had not been explicitly trained as to how to address religious and spiritual topics with their students. The findings of this narrative study were consistent with previous research and led this researcher to conclude, along with other researchers, that the counseling profession should continue research to better understand how to teach counseling students to address religious and spiritual topics in a more informed manner (Cashwell et al., 2013; Kelly, 1994; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2007 ). While participants identified that increased pedagogical training about religious and spiritual topics would be helpful, other aspects also affected perceived levels of competence.

**Modeling.** Research has linked pedagogical training to perceived competency levels (Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009). Another aspect associated with training is learning through modeling. The influence of example emerged through the theme of Modeling. Modeling experiences positively and negatively influenced counselor educators as to when, if, and how counselor educators addressed the topics of religion and spirituality. Since modeling is considered a general process of learning through example and behavior (VandenBos, 2006), it is not surprising that counselor educators would repeatedly refer to the power of modeling. Indeed, since modeling can teach negative behaviors (Bandura & Walters, 1963) as well as positive behaviors (Oman, 2013), the findings of this narrative study aligned with the positive and negative aspects of previous research findings.

As modeling related to spiritual and religious competency, Adams (2012) reported that students learned implicit and explicit messages from counselor educators that predicted potential behaviors as well as assumptions and ideas about how to address

religion and spirituality in a competent manner. This is in line with research that the quality of supervisory relationships revealed a poor model of “professional and personal attributes” hindered effective supervision and the “absence of professional modeling” did not demonstrate quality professional relationships (Magnuson, Wilcoxon, & Norem, 2000, p. 196). For participants in this narrative study, markers that abetted competency were personal and professional examples of authenticity, genuine concern, and awareness of others; whereas, negative modeling such as disrespect and contempt dissuaded participants from addressing religious and spiritual topics with counseling students. This was an important finding because, apart from the findings of Adams (2012), competency levels in previous research did not account for influences on competency levels related to example and modeling. Rather, previous research related to competency focused on knowledge and self-awareness.

**Relationships.** Yet another theme that influenced whether or not a counselor educator addressed religious and spiritual topics with counseling students was that of Relationships. Eight of the nine participants in this study shared experiences that supported the theme of Relationships. As one example of the power of relationship, Clark shared that he and a lesbian cohort member had a deep and meaningful discussion about how their spiritual beliefs differed and coincided. This conversation was a pivotal moment for Clark and emboldened him to more consistently address religious and spiritual topics. For participants in this study, long- and short-term relationships engendered trust, genuine caring, and were examples of authenticity, vulnerability, and accountability. Participants shared that understanding these characteristics in light of interpersonal relationships aided and abetted their propensity to address religion and

spirituality. By the same token, relationships marked by incivility and contempt did not inspire counselor educators to risk addressing the topics of religion and spirituality with counseling students.

Although I did not anticipate the Relationships theme, upon reflection, it came as no surprise that counselor educators would value the quality of relationships. The quality of the counseling relationship is fundamental to the art and science of counseling. In fact, researchers have found that 30% of the variance in client change is attributable to the quality of the counselor-client relationship (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999). The value and quality of the relationship reverberated throughout the counseling literature (e. g., ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011; Rogers, 1951; Truax & Carkhuff, 1967). Perhaps because relationships are omnipresent, it is easy for researchers to overlook how relationships might affect religious and spiritual competency levels. Yet in the cited literature, there was no consideration of how relationships might affect competency levels. The results of this study provide a first glimpse at the possibility that types of relationships might affect competency levels.

**Marginalization.** The theme of Marginalization appeared on the opposite side of the coin to the Relationships theme. Every participant had experienced marginalization due to gender, sexuality, or religious beliefs. The experiences of marginalization were both systemic and personal in nature. Participants noted one of the factors that inhibited the discussion of religious and spiritual topics was experiences of being judged, belittled, or dismissed because of their personhood or their beliefs. Experiences of oppression, marginalization, and incivility were deterrents for counselor educators to address the

topics of religion and spirituality while positive relationships encouraged counselor educators to risk discussing religious and spiritual topics.

In a profession that values the dignity and worth of the individual (ACA, 2014; Basham & O'Connor, 2005) and strives for social justice (Hays & McLeod, 2010; Ratts, 2009), it was disheartening that counselor educators experienced marginalization to the degree reported by participants in this study. However, higher education is historically a hierarchical institution and has elements of power and marginalization throughout its structure (Palmer, 2007; Twale & De Luca, 2008). So it seems reasonable some counselor educators would align themselves with the oppressive hierarchy upon which higher education has its roots. It also is reasonable that counselor educators would feel the effects of institutional and individual oppression (Hanna, Talley, & Guindon, 2000) and might not feel comfortable addressing the risky topics of religion and spirituality. As with the Relationships and Modeling themes, the theme of Feeling Marginalized (i.e., having experienced marginalization) did not appear in the literature related to competency.

**Spiritual practices.** The final theme that promoted higher levels of competency and confidence when addressing religious and spiritual topics was Spiritual Practices. Counselor educators reported that when they had completed spiritual and religious practices such as yoga, breath work, prayer, worship, and scripture study, they felt more centered, focused, and attuned to the needs of their students. Counselor educators noted that spiritual and religious practices also helped them relax and maintain perspective in light of their demanding job responsibilities. While researchers addressed counselor educator religious and spiritual competency and comfort levels (Robertson, 2010; van

Asselt & Senstock, 2009; Young et al., 2002, 2007), they did not address personal religious and spiritual practices as factors that influenced competency levels. This finding was important since none of the literature cited in the literature review addressed personal religious and spiritual practices as factors that influenced competency levels (Kelly, 1994, 1997; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009; Young et al., 2002, 2007).

In summary, findings from this narrative study pointed to aspects of religious and spiritual competency that might not have been fully considered in previous research. Aspects of competency levels have been considered in previous analyses of religious and spiritual competency including training levels and tangentially how the idea of the separation of church and state might affect whether some counselor educators and counseling programs addressed religious and spiritual topics. Conversely, aspects of modeling, marginalization, relationships, and religious and spiritual practices have not been linked in previous literature to competency levels. Thus, understanding counselor educators' competency levels continues to be multifaceted, illusive, and requires continued inquiry into the complex dynamics of spiritual and religious competency.

In the preceding section, I discussed the results of this narrative study. The chief findings of this study demonstrated that counselor educators' experiences were aligned with a large body of research that outlined moral, cognitive, and spiritual development throughout the lifespan. While previous research findings indicated the spiritual and religious practices of counselor educators might affect competency in addressing religious and spiritual topics in the counseling classroom, the findings of this research underscored a depth that might have been previously misunderstood. Findings in this

qualitative study pointed to some aspects of religious and spiritual competencies not considered in previous research. These possible characteristics included personal experiences of having been marginalized or having been valued in relationships. While previous writings addressed the dynamics of the separation of church and state, they had not made a link to the competency of protecting counseling students or counseling educators. Having discussed the results of the data, I next address implications for practice.

### **Implications for Practice**

In this narrative research study, participants shared assumptions and experiences about religion and spirituality and how those experiences affected when, if, and how they addressed these topics in their work as a counselor educator. The findings of this research have been analyzed and discussed. I next present the implications for practice. As I analyzed the data and re-examined the literature, two aspects related to competency are worth consideration: (a) standards and competencies, and (b) training.

#### **Standards and Competencies**

Professional counseling organizations—the American Counseling Association (ACA); the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES); the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP); the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC); and the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD)—each have statements addressing the need for counselors to possess knowledge, skills, and awareness so they can work effectively with people of differing faiths, religions, and

spiritual backgrounds. It follows, then, that counselor educators would be aware of, teach, and supervise in a manner consistent with these professional goals.

While the purpose of this study was to explore the lived religious and spiritual experiences of counselor educators and to better understand how those experiences affected teaching and supervision, it was notable that participants rarely referenced the established competencies and standards. Of the nine participants, Robert was the only person to mention CACREP (2009) standards. Furthermore, like the other eight participants, he did not reference the ACA (2014) ethical code, the multicultural standards, ACES (2011) best practices, or the ASERVIC (2009) competencies. Within the interview protocol, there was no prompting question such as “What are the standards and competencies that counselor educators need to be aware of when addressing religion and spirituality?” As such, participants did not reference these standards and competencies. Either the interview questions did not lead the participants to address the standards of competency or the participants did not link their assumptions and beliefs to the established standards and competencies.

Robert shared that he discussed spirituality when he teaches the addictions course because it has a “built in capacity for some discussion about spirituality.” Robert noted that because addictions work is so closely aligned to Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12-Step Program, a counselor educator could talk about religious and spiritual topics in this context. Later he did reference the CACREP (2009) standards in relation to religious and spiritual competency. This was interesting because he was the only participant to link religious and spiritual competency to CACREP standards. However, the link he did

make was posed as a question: “I am not even sure if CACREP integrates spirituality in their standards, do they?”

Robert’s question might reflect the CACREP (2009) standards. Within the CACREP diversity standards, only two of the seven tracks (Addictions and Student Affairs and College Counseling) included the term spirituality. The Addictions standard stated that a counselor “understands the role of spirituality in the addiction recovery process” (CACREP, 2009, p. 19), which is in the subsection, Counseling, Prevention, and Intervention. In a subsection entitled Assessment, the language addressing the Addictions track also indicated that a counselor would understand the “assessment of biopsychosocial and spiritual history” (CACREP, 2009, p. 19). The Student Affairs and College Counseling standard included the term spirituality within the Diversity and Advocacy subsection. However no mention of the terms religion and spirituality was made in sections addressing the requirements for Career Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling, School Counseling, and the Doctoral Standards. Therefore, it is reasonable that Robert should ask if the CACREP standards included standards on spirituality and religion because these terms are not prevalent within the CACREP standards. The Doctoral Standards did not include a section on diversity, much less address religious and spiritual diversity (CACREP, 2009).

In the second chapter of this document, I outlined the genesis of ASERVIC (2009) as well as the history of the present day ASERVIC competencies for spirituality and religion. Even though the ASERVIC competencies have been empirically validated with strong internal consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ; Robertson, 2010), there were no specific



directions for counselor educators to incorporate these competencies into the counseling curriculum. Despite the quantity of published research about spirituality and religion and despite the existence of ASERVIC (a division of ACA devoted to religious and spiritual topics), counselor educators in this study did not refer to these resources. What is unknown from this study is why participants did not talk about ASERVIC and the spiritual and religious competencies.

Yet this was consistent with previous research, specifically Robertson (2010) who found that 5% of respondents were familiar with the ASERVIC (2009) spiritual competencies and Dobmeier and Reiner (2012) who found that 13.9% of respondents were aware of the ASERVIC competencies. While the participants might not have been aware of the ASERVIC competencies, if they were aware of them they might not have referenced them because the ASERVIC competencies do not directly address the role of counselor educators in applying or teaching these standards. Therefore, it was not surprising that none of the participants in this study referenced these competencies explicitly. What seemed to be missing from the ASERVIC competencies was specific language that explicitly stated counselor educators should teach these competencies to counselors in training.

While participants made no reference to the ASERVIC (2009) competencies, all participants in this study affirmed the importance of addressing religious and spiritual topics in their roles as counseling educators. The participants in this study also referenced how important it was for counselor educators to be aware of the implications of working with diversity. Sue stated that as a counselor educator, transparency is a point of multicultural awareness and practice. Clark echoed Sue's comments when he

described his reactions and the reactions of his students when he taught his first multicultural class. Robert noted how important it was for him as a gay man to demonstrate knowledge of diversity and practice when working with students. Theresa was explicit in her description of the importance of religious and spiritual diversity when she stated, “I don’t see how you can talk about diversity and not include religion and spirituality as part of that dialogue.” While none of the participants mentioned key competencies addressing diversity such as multicultural counseling competencies (Sue et al., 1992), ACES (2011) *Best Practices*, or the *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014), they all affirmed the importance of diversity within the counseling curriculum.

Like the CACREP Standards (2009), the *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2005, 2014) provides direction for counselors and counselor educators to make ethical decisions. Yet language addressing religion and spirituality is sparse. In March 2014, the American Counseling Association released an updated *Code of Ethics* to respond to a wide range of issues that could complicate ethical practice (Meyers, 2014). The interviews for this research were conducted from mid-February to mid-May of 2014 so it is unrealistic to expect that participants would have had an in-depth knowledge of the revised ethical code. However, like other documents that guide the work of counselor educators, participants did not refer to the religious and spiritual aspects of the ethical code.

The 2005 and the 2014 versions of the ACA ethical code stipulated that counselors should recognize that client involvement with other people and organizations can provide additional support (A.1.d). Specifically, the ethical code stated that these support networks include religious and spiritual systems. In addition the ethical code included the terms religion and spirituality within the code that addresses diversity and

assessment (ACA, 2014, E.8.). In both versions of the code, these were the only times the terms religion and spirituality were used (ACA, 2005, 2014).

Yet, in the glossary of both revisions of the ethical code, terms such as culture, diversity, multicultural competence, multicultural counseling were included. Within these definitions, the words religion and spirituality were excluded. Multicultural competency within the *Code of Ethics* is defined as “awareness and knowledge about self and others” and how awareness and knowledge “are applied effectively in practice with clients and client groups” (ACA, 2005, 2014, p.20). Multicultural counseling is defined as “counseling that recognizes diversity and embraces approaches that support the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of individuals within their historical, cultural, economic, political, and psychosocial contexts (ACA, 2005, 2014, p.20).

The closest the ethical codes (ACA, 2005, 2014) came to inclusion of religion and spirituality occurred in three statements. The first two statements were overt and utilized the terms spirituality and religion. The third statement did not include the terms religion and spirituality in the glossary of the ethical code nor were they included within the definition of diversity. A counselor educator or counseling student would need to infer that religion and spirituality were part of diversity through the terms “cultural” and “psychosocial,” which were used in the definition of multicultural counseling within the glossary.

The exclusion of the terms religion and spirituality within the ethical code was surprising because surveys such as the Gallup Polls (2012) and the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS; Kosmin & Keysar, 2009) provided evidence that the majority of those who reside in the United States have religious and spiritual beliefs and

follow spiritual and religious practices. Kosmin and Keysar (2009) concluded 8 in 10 adult Americans believe in some sort of Higher Power or God and religion plays a role in the life of many Americans. These surveys also indicated the importance Americans assign to religion, spirituality, and religious beliefs. Since Americans attach such importance to the concepts of religion and spirituality, counselor educators and counselors are likely to work with clients and students who have religious and spiritual beliefs (Cashwell & Young, 2011; Robertson, 2010). It was also surprising that the terms of religion and spirituality were not included in the *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014) since researchers have reported an increasing awareness of the importance of religion and spiritual topics for counselors (Dobmeier & Reiner, 2012; Morrison et al., 2009), counselor educators (Cashwell et al., 2013; Pate & High, 1995; Robertson, 2010; Young et al., 2007), and clients (Knox et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2001).

Because the terms religion and spirituality were sparsely mentioned within the *Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2014), I recommend that the code be reviewed for opportunities to include these terms throughout the code. Because they were not included within the glossary of the ethical code nor were they included within the definition of diversity, I also recommend that these terms be included as defined terms within the glossary and within the definition of diversity. Inclusion of these terms would reinforce the importance and relevance of these topics. Furthermore, inclusion would be in line with the recent addition of the terms *social justice*, *social media*, and *virtual relationships* (ACA, 2014; Meyers, 2014).

In addition to the ACA (2005) *Code of Ethics*, CACREP (2009) Standards, and ASERVIC (2009) Competencies, the Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al.,

1992) were specifically constructed as a standard for training counselors about diversity and multiculturalism as well as for accreditation purposes. The concept of multiculturalism and diversity has been adopted by the counseling profession and is considered the fourth force of counseling (Ratts, 2009). Recently, the ACA (2014) updated the ethical code and included language affirming that a multicultural approach is a core value of the counseling profession (Meyers, 2014). The Multicultural Counseling Competencies (Sue et al., 1992) stated that multicultural competent counselors are aware of their personal attitudes and beliefs and have knowledge as well as skills to work with clients of diverse backgrounds. Sue and his colleagues (1992) pointed out that a broad (universal) definition of culture would include aspects of race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, and age, while a more narrow (focused) definition of culture would be limited to race and ethnicity. Sue et al. stated that the narrow and broad definitions of multiculturalism are not contradictory and they espouse the use of both.

Of the 31 statements within the Multicultural Competencies (Sue et al., 1992), two include the terms religion and spirituality and seven include the terms race and ethnicity. Perhaps because the explanation of how narrow or broad culture could be defined occurred on the second page of this article and the competencies were presented in the Appendix *after* the reference section (five pages later), counselor educators might not make the link of a more inclusive definition of culture that includes religion and spirituality. Whether this is a plausible explanation is not known. What is known is the participants of this study did not make the link of religious and spiritual competency to the Multicultural Competencies. The Multicultural Competencies as they have been

written might obscure the role spiritual and religious beliefs have regardless of race or ethnicity.

Yet, the Multicultural Competencies are the starting point for cultural understanding for the counseling profession (Hays & Erford, 2010; Pedersen, Crethar, & Carlson, 2008). As part of multicultural studies, Cole (2009) reported that counselors are interested in the effects of race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality, yet noted that counselors have little understanding of how the categories of difference, identity, and disadvantage are connected. Hurtado (2010) also explained that members of the counseling profession have primarily utilized the concepts of assimilation and acculturation as the standard framework of multicultural understanding. With this framework, the understanding is an individual would assimilate and acculturate into the dominant culture, thereby diminishing uniqueness (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Titzmann, Raabe, & Silbereisen, 2008). Because the concepts of acculturation and assimilation do not address the power differential between groups, using these concepts solely as a way to examine cultural differences reinforces a world view that some cultural groups have superiority (Hurtado, 2010), individual identities are fragmented, and spiritual and religious values are devalued (Ferguson et al., 2014). Another consideration about diversity is identity development models that attempt to explain race, sexuality, and gender might make assumptions based only on behavior (Robinson, 1999) and might not fully explain the inherent complexities of multiple group memberships (Reynolds & Pope, 1991). While these models are useful, they are also limited because social categories such as race, gender, and class are dependent on each other for meaning (Cole, 2009); within these models, there is a noticeable absence of the effects and consequences

of religion and spiritual influences. Because “every individual necessarily occupies multiple categories” (Cole, 2009, p. 170), counselors can better understand the significance and consequences individuals might have who are members of multiple social categories. Therefore, all individuals comprise multiple intersectionalities.

Intersectionality is a concept that addresses the significance and consequences of a person’s multiple and intersecting identities. The concept of intersectionality was posited by Crenshaw (1989) who described an approach to consider the effects, meaning, and consequences of belonging to multiple categories of social groups. More specifically, intersectionality is a term that considers “the meaning and consequences of multiple categories of social group membership” and the effects between and across various levels in society (Cole, 2009, p. 170). If counselors and counselor educators examine the intersections of inequality, they are more likely to view constructs such as race, gender, religion, and spirituality as social processes and structural categories rather than mere characteristics of individuals (Cole, 2009). As mentioned in Chapter II, Cole (2009) noted that because counselors are not habituated to consider the intersectionality of identity, difference, and disadvantage when studying multicultural constructs, these important interactions often are not considered and have minimized the intersections of religion and spirituality with other dimensions of being. Yet, within this qualitative study, the intersections of culture emerged repeatedly. Because this study was focused on the religious and spiritual experiences of counselor educators, the intersections of religion and spirituality with other points of diversity were most prominent. In fact, for seven of the participants, the intersections of religion and spirituality were so great they did not see a clear distinction of religion and spirituality in their personal lives. This

most clearly linked to the theme of Journey, in which participants described their multiple identities and how they tied in with their religious and spiritual beliefs and values. These intersections of religious and spiritual belief and practice informed decisions about when, if, and how they addressed these topics when teaching and supervision.

As counselor educators discussed their religious and spiritual experiences, they spoke of identity and how their identity developed. Because this study asked participants about their religious and spiritual experiences, participants not only discussed their spiritual and religious development but intersections of development from multiple perspectives such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and gender. Since the definitions of spirituality and qualitative research are considered to be holistic and multidimensional, it made sense that many aspects and intersections of personhood would arise from the data.

The concept of intersectionality has implications for counselor educators because human experiences are multi-dimensional, complex, and might be understood within single categories (e.g., spirituality, religiosity, gender, race, and socioeconomic status). Yet, within the counseling literature and the literature cited in Chapter II, religion and spirituality were most often treated as constructs separate from the dominant discourses of racism, sexism, economic status, and classism, if they were mentioned at all. When counselors and counselor educators recognize and value the complex nature of the intersection of reality and experiences, they will be better equipped to help clients and students with marginality, isolation, and internalized oppression (Cole, 2009; Reynolds & Pope, 1991; Robinson, 1999). The data from this study led this researcher to conclude that the intersectionality of religion and spirituality *with* the dominant discourses of



racism, sexism, economic status, and classism might be overlooked or underutilized by the counseling profession. Therefore, counselor educators must understand the intersections of religion and spirituality with other points of diversity are broad. When counselor educators understand this complex and intricate dynamic, it will be reflected in standards, competencies, and ethical codes; ultimately, it will be more consistently reflected in teaching and supervision.

What was unknown from this study was the extent to which participants were aware of the aforementioned competencies and standards. Yet, if the participants were aware of these competencies and standards, they did not discuss them in the interviews. This might link to a lack of training about religious and spiritual competencies. Because the participants did not address the standards, questions arose concerning the visibility, relevance, applicability, and comprehensiveness of the standards. These might be questions for analysis and further study.

### **Training**

One thing that was clear from the results of this research was despite the efforts of many researchers and scholars in the counseling field, participants reported they had a lack of knowledge and training about how to address the topics of religion and spirituality with counseling students. The need for increased training at the doctoral level became apparent since counselor educators repeatedly expressed they were not taught how to address religion and spirituality. Participants repeatedly reported these topics were not explicitly addressed throughout their courses in both the master's and doctoral training. These data supported previous findings that about half of counseling programs do not include training components related to religious and spiritual topics (Kelly, 1994, 1995;

Pate & High, 1995). Yet, this number is increasing. Young et al. (2002) reported that 69% of CACREP-accredited programs ( $N = 96$ ) addressed religious and spiritual topics. Nevertheless, Young et al. reported that 46% of counselor educators believed they were prepared or very prepared to address religious and spiritual topics when teaching and supervising. Students also reported they were unprepared to discuss religious and spiritual topics with their clients (Cashwell et al., 2013; Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009), did not know when it was appropriate to initiate conversations about religious and spiritual topics (Souza, 2002), and received mixed messages from counselor educators regarding religious and spiritual topics (Adams, 2012).

A consistent message from the participants was they felt unprepared and desired more training. This was in line with findings by Young et al. (2002) who reported that 54% of their respondents believed they were unprepared to address religious and spiritual topics. Furthermore, respondents in their study suggested curriculum guidelines and increased training would aid them in addressing these topics (Young et al., 2002). The results of this narrative study aligned with existing literature that trainings about religious and spiritual topics were limited (Hage et al., 2006; Young et al., 2002, 2007). Specifically, Robert said he could not remember having training at counseling conferences that addressed spiritual or religious development for students or clients. Based on the reports of the participants, more research is needed to determine the needs of counselor educators to better equip them in the realm of spiritual and religious competency.

Initial research exists. In fact, researchers have reported that counselors (and by extension counselor educators) with more training and exposure to religious and spiritual

topics believed themselves to be more competent when addressing spirituality (Dobmeier & Reiner, 2012; Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009). Van Asselt and Senstock (2009) also found that when counselors (and by extension counselor educators) had greater spiritual awareness, their ability to recognize spiritual concerns of others was greater. Thus, the findings of the present study as well as others (Dobmeier & Reiner, 2012; Robertson, 2010; van Asselt & Senstock, 2009) suggest that additional training about the topics of religion and spirituality might be beneficial to counselor educators and counseling students.

Those who expressed a higher level of confidence as well as those who had less confidence suggested that training would increase levels of comfort and competence. Despite the fact that participants in this study did not refer to the ASERVIC (2009) competencies and because the current competencies were empirically validated, further study of how the ASERVIC competencies impact counselor educators is warranted.

One of the recurring ideas participants in this study indicated was they did not know how to talk about spiritual and religious topics. On one hand, this was surprising because one of the tenets of the counseling profession is engendering mutual respect based on effective communication (ACES, 2011; Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; CACREP, 2009; Cowan, 2005; Young, 2009). Stated differently, counselor educators and counselors are “responsible for the maintenance of positive and effective relationships” (Ponton & Duba, 2009, p. 120). Despite these values of communication and relationship, findings of this study led this researcher to conclude that having personal experiences with religion and spirituality does not fully equip a counselor educator to address religious and spiritual topics with their students. Rather, it seems other factors also play

into the decision to address religion and spirituality. Types of relationships, marginalization, protection, self-protection, power, and hierarchy influence the decision to address or not address religious and spiritual topics.

The results of the data led this researcher to conclude that religious and spiritual competency is also a systemic concern. Therefore, this researcher recommends that counselor educators individually and systemically work to foster a culture of religious and spiritual inclusion. This could be done by appropriately addressing religious and spiritual topics within the counseling and supervision curriculum, thereby creating a standard of respect and safety around these multicultural topics.

### **Limitations**

The results from this current study added to the body of research about counselor educators' experiences and assumptions about religious and spiritual topics within the counseling education curriculum. While the results of this study might offer some interesting findings, some limitations require consideration. One such limitation was participants' remembered experiences might have affected the data. Data could have been distorted if a participant augmented or minimized the actions of themselves or of others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clough, 2002).

Merriam (2009) suggested that one of the limitations of qualitative research is that the findings might not be transferable to others--in this case, counselor educators. Therefore, the findings of this research study might not transfer to other counselor educators or to other university settings. The findings of this study might be unique to the nine participants involved in this study. Another limitation of this study was these

findings might not have been reported in such a manner that other counselor educators find them applicable to their unique situation.

The original intent for this study was to interview participants from across the United States in hopes of obtaining a wide variety of counselor educator experiences. However, four of the participants taught in the Western United States and four taught in the South. Only one participant taught in the mid-West. No participants were from the Northeastern United States or from Alaska or Hawaii. Participants in this study were highly representative of the Southern and Western states. Therefore, results might reflect bias from the Western and Southern regions of the United States and not be readily transferable to counselor educators in other regions.

Another potential limitation was all the participants in this study were of Christian backgrounds. Seven of the nine participants shared they currently have Christian beliefs. Of the two remaining participants, one participant defined his beliefs as spiritual and another participant shared her belief system was based on agnostic, Buddhist, and Christian beliefs. In addition, two of the participants were active members of the LDS Church and one participant had been a member of the LDS Church. Despite efforts to reduce bias, my own LDS background might have influenced the analysis of the data. I purposefully asked one participant I knew was Mormon to be part of this research because I believed having someone from the LDS faith would be a point of diversity. Surprisingly and by chance, two other participants were also LDS. Having a third of the participant pool with influences from the same religious background might have resulted in data that were biased from the LDS perspective.

Finally, seven of the nine participants identified as Caucasian. Because of the lack of racial diversity in this study, the thematic results might not be representative of counselor educators' experiences. Therefore, the results might not be transferable to counselor educators not from ethnic backgrounds represented in this pool of participants. Having discussed the relative strengths and weaknesses of this research study, I next address implications derived from the findings.

### **Future Research**

There is a scarcity of quantitative research that addresses counselor educator competency with religious and spiritual topics; qualitative research is sparser. This study was an effort to understand the assumptions and experiences of counselor educators relating to competency levels addressing religion and spirituality. What surfaced from this study is the need for continued research to address the particular needs of counselor educators. Participants expressed a desire to learn more about the results of this study. Participants expressed curiosity about how counselor educators might more effectively address religion and spirituality. They also provided practical examples of how they addressed religion and spirituality as well as expressed confusion and reticence to address these sensitive topics. Based on the results of the current study, several potential research directions are warranted.

The current study provided a description about the lived experiences of counselor educators as they addressed religion and spirituality. Future research could expand on the themes identified in this study. Specifically, the themes of Journey, Relationship, Marginalization, Modeling, and Risks and Taboos could be further examined. The counseling literature has started to address counselor educators' perceptions and beliefs

about spiritual and religious competency. While researchers and theorists have posited that an individual's religious and spiritual identity changes throughout their lifetime (Allport, 1950; Fowler, 1981; Poll & Smith, 2003; Rizzuto, 1979), what is missing is a specific understanding of the growth and development of counselor educators. Having a more in-depth understanding of counselor educators' religious and spiritual growth and development might shed light on whether this development impedes or promotes the ability to address religion and spirituality with counseling students.

Although there was extant research on relationships in the counseling process, what seemed to be missing in the counseling education literature was the spiritual nature of relationships between a counseling student and educators and counseling students and clients. The healing aspect of healthy relationships is foundational to the counseling profession (ACA, 2014; ACES, 2011; ASERVIC, 2009; CACREP, 2009; Hubble et al., 1999); yet what is unknown is how spiritual and religious connections affect student-teacher and student-client dynamics. Exploring the spiritual nature of these types of relationships might provide data that could inform counselor educators about the spiritual nature of counseling relationships.

Future research could address how students experience spiritual and religious marginalization throughout their counseling programs. This could be informative to the counseling profession, especially since one participant nearly quit her program because of the perceived marginalization that occurred in the classroom and other religious minorities experienced degrees of marginalization. Some questions for considerations are (a) who are the counseling students who experience marginalization and discrimination in their programs; (b) what are the experiences and mitigating factors for

these students who choose to stay in a program, transfer programs, or leave the counseling field altogether; and (c) is the perceived discrimination from counselor educators, staff, or other students?

Participants wondered how they could respond to student needs and work more effectively with students when supervising and teaching. A number of implications for future research emerged from the theme of Modeling. Participants shared stories about how they modeled discussions of religion and spirituality and how they experienced their instructors modeling these discussions. One research suggestion is to examine personality factors, assumptions, interpersonal characteristics, and pedagogical models of these exemplary and non-exemplary instructors.

Other research could identify teaching approaches that facilitate the discussion of religion and spirituality. Continued research could be conducted to determine if there are counseling programs that have training models for the inclusion of religion and spirituality. This might include both CACREP and non-CACREP-accredited programs. Whether these models are infusion models or specific class models for religion and spirituality, the efficacy of these training models could be examined to determine best practices for training methods.

The theme of Risk and Taboo lent itself to examine how counselor educators perceived the risk of addressing religion and spiritual topics. Two categories addressed how counselor educators might need to protect themselves and their students. An in-depth examination of protective factors could provide information that would illuminate possible barriers. Participants mentioned tenure and student approval as possible dynamics to explore. Some questions researchers could ask include (a) what are possible



disciplinary actions counselor educators might face if they addressed religion and spirituality with students, (b) could tenure be affected by addressing these topics, and (c) what types of institutions or departments implicitly or explicitly discourage addressing religion and spirituality in the classroom?

The preceding suggestions are correlated to specific themes relating to religion and spirituality that arose from this research study. Other possibilities for research continue to surface for me. I wonder how the same participants in this study might respond in 5, 7, or 10 years to the same questions asked in this study. Would the responses be different and if so how? Would new themes emerge? Would themes such as Risk and Taboo have the same intensity?

Although I tried to find participants of differing backgrounds when recruiting participants, no participants in this study considered themselves agnostic or atheistic. Furthermore, only two participants were not Caucasian. Seven of the participants indicated they were Christian and two indicated their beliefs were “spiritual.” This study could be replicated with a group of participants who would represent other diverse categories (e.g., agnostic, atheist, pagan, lesbian, transgender, Latino, Native American, or Indian, etc.). Finding a more diverse viewpoint might corroborate the findings in this study and illuminate other themes relevant to counselor educators.

The delimitation of this study was participants have at least two years of teaching experience. Information about participants’ rank of professorship (e.g., affiliate, assistant, full professor) was not gathered. Because the results of this study suggested counselor educators need to protect themselves and linked that protection to tenure, future studies (qualitative and quantitative) could examine how counselor educators

believe tenure could affect when, if, and how they address religious and spiritual topics with their students.

Another idea for research stemmed from the results of this study and the quantitative results from Robertson's (2010) article describing the Spiritual Competency Scale (SCS). She indicated that the questions on this scale were developed by asking experts in the field of religion and spirituality to complete a computerized card sort procedure. This scale was then validated on a population of counseling students. Missing from these results was how counselor educators might respond to quantitative questions related to spiritual competency. Future research could use the Spiritual Competency Scale on a sample of counselor educators to quantitatively ascertain their religious and spiritual competency levels. If counselor educators respond similarly or differently to students, this would illuminate a different aspect to the question of teaching religious and spiritual topics.

Another line of research arose because I was surprised that two of the nine participants had siblings who had committed suicide. Since suicide is often a taboo subject, I wondered what the experiences of those counselor educators were and how they addressed the topics of suicide and suicide assessment. Are counselor educators who have had family members or clients complete suicide more apt or less apt to address this topic with their students? How do counselor educators address suicide? Although not directly related to the themes of this research, it seemed noteworthy and might be a topic for researchers to consider in the future.

### **Conclusion: A Soul Met an Angel**

Nearly 20 years ago, members of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling convened the first Summit on Spirituality to fashion a description of spirituality and to delineate core competencies for counselors who work with clients and their spiritual concerns (Miller, 1999; Robertson, 2010). Key organizations such as AMCD, ACA, CACREP, ASERVIC, and ACES have statements that provide guidelines for competency when addressing religion and spirituality.

Counselor educators play a key role in the dissemination of knowledge and skills related to these important topics. With the paucity of qualitative research on the competency levels of counselor educators, this study provided much needed insight into the dynamics affecting when, if, and how counselor educators addressed religious and spiritual topics with their students. The results of this study showed that a number of dynamics entered into play when counselor educators addressed or did not address religion and spirituality.

Deterrents to the confident engagement of counselor educators with religion and spirituality include fear, confusion, lack of awareness, and lack of training. Exposure to capable and confident models could be catalysts for counselor educators to more effectively and consistently deal with religion and spirituality in their teaching and supervision roles. Personal belief, as well as religious and spiritual practices, abet both competency and willingness to tackle these sensitive topics. Engaging with spiritual and religious themes and experiences as a pedagogical strategy could enhance relationships and provide powerful models of experience for counseling students. The findings from this study are a springboard for continued avenues of research about religious and

spiritual competency. Finally, this study provided another point of information about competence levels that could further expand the best practices of counselor educators when addressing religion and spirituality.

The following fable seemed apropos as I conclude this study:

A Soul met an angel and asked: “By which path shall I reach heaven quickest—the path of knowledge or the path of love?” The angel looked wondering and said, “Are not both paths one?” (Keen, 1994, p. 93)

My hope is that counselor educators might be inspired to see both paths—love *and* knowledge—as equal competencies in the teaching and supervision of their students. In finding that “both paths are one,” they might hear the murmur of reassurance from angels.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **COMPETENCIES FOR ADDRESSING SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN COUNSELING ENDORSED BY THE AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION**

## **Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling Endorsed by the American Counseling Association (ACA)**

### ***Preamble***

The Competencies for Addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling are guidelines that compliment, not supersede, the values and standards espoused in the ACA Code of Ethics.

Consistent with the ACA Code of Ethics (2005), the purpose of the ASERVIC Competencies is to “recognize diversity and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts” (p. 3). These Competencies are intended to be used in conjunction with counseling approaches that are evidence-based and that align with best practices in counseling.

**This Preamble must accompany any publication or dissemination, in whole or in part, of the ASERVIC Competencies.**

### **Culture and Worldview**

1. The professional counselor can describe the similarities and differences between spirituality and religion, including the basic beliefs of various spiritual systems, major world religions, agnosticism, and atheism.
2. The professional counselor recognizes that the client’s beliefs (or absence of beliefs) about spirituality and/or religion are central to his or her worldview and can influence psychosocial functioning.

### **Counselor Self-Awareness**

3. The professional counselor actively explores his or her own attitudes, beliefs, and values about spirituality and/or religion.
4. The professional counselor continuously evaluates the influence of his or her own spiritual and/or religious beliefs and values on the client and the counseling process.
5. The professional counselor can identify the limits of his or her understanding of the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspective and is acquainted with religious and spiritual resources, including leaders, who can be avenues for consultation and to whom the counselor can refer.

**Human and Spiritual Development**

6. The professional counselor can describe and apply various models of spiritual and/or religious development and their relationship to human development.

**Communication**

7. The professional counselor responds to client communications about spirituality and/or religion with acceptance and sensitivity.

8. The professional counselor uses spiritual and/or religious concepts that are consistent with the client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives and that are acceptable to the client.

9. The professional counselor can recognize spiritual and/or religious themes in client communication and is able to address these with the client when they are therapeutically relevant.

**Assessment**

10. During the intake and assessment processes, the professional counselor strives to understand a client's spiritual and/or religious perspective by gathering information from the client and/or other sources.

**Diagnosis and Treatment**

11. When making a diagnosis, the professional counselor recognizes that the client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives can a) enhance well-being; b) contribute to client problems; and/or c) exacerbate symptoms.

12. The professional counselor sets goals with the client that are consistent with the client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives.

13. The professional counselor is able to a) modify therapeutic techniques to include a client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives, and b) utilize spiritual and/or religious practices as techniques when appropriate and acceptable to a client's viewpoint.

14. The professional counselor can therapeutically apply theory and current research supporting the inclusion of a client's spiritual and/or religious perspectives and practices.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**

UNIVERSITY of  
NORTHERN COLORADO



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: February 11, 2014

TO: R. David Johns, M.Coun  
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [566169-1] NARRATIVES OF COMPETENCY, CREATIVITY, AND  
COMFORT: RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: February 10, 2014

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

**Thank you for a clear and thorough IRB application. There are no requests for modifications, amendments or additional materials.**

**Best wishes with your research and don't hesitate to contact me with any IRB-related questions or concerns.**

**Sincerely,**

**Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair**

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or [Sherry.May@unco.edu](mailto:Sherry.May@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

## Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Time Needed:** 90 minutes

### Preparation:

- Provide participants with informed consent and answer any questions
- Collect a signed copy of informed consent and provide a copy for the participant
- Offer participant opportunity to choose a pseudonym
- Provide participants with demographic questionnaire and answer any questions
- Collect a completed copy of demographic questionnaire

### Initial Interview Structure:

- Today's interview will be audio recorded and I will be asking you questions about your personal and professional experiences with religion and spirituality.
- You have a right to not answer a question or terminate the interview at anytime.
- I will ask you to describe stories that illustrate the topics that we are discussing.
- I will be asking you to describe your attitudes, beliefs and feelings regarding religion and spirituality and your role as a counselor educator.
- If questions arise, please let me know.
- Do you have any questions for me at this time?

### Questions and Prompts:

(Questions that are italicized are prompt questions should the participant need a prompt to expand their narrative).

- Tell me about who you are as a person?
- What are some of the experiences that have shaped you as a person?
- Tell me about your personal experiences with spirituality and religion.
  - *What is your family background in regards to religion and spirituality?*
  - *Is there a story that illustrates how your personal views evolved?*



- How would you describe your journey to becoming a counselor educator?
  - *What religious or spiritual overtones exist within your story?*
- What experiences have informed your current beliefs and thoughts about religion and spirituality as a counselor educator?
- Tell me a story about a religious or spiritual experience you have had in your role as a counselor educator
- We have talked about a lot of things today, is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to share at this time?

## **Second Interview Questions and Probes**

**Time Needed:** 60 minutes

(Questions that are italicized are prompt questions should the participant need a prompt to expand their narrative).

- Since our last interview what are your thoughts about spiritual and religious topics in the counseling curriculum?
- What are your thoughts about the transcript?
  - *Are there any clarifications that need to be made within the transcript?*
- What are your reactions to the themes that were coded from your transcript?
  - *Are there other codes or themes that you see within the transcript?*
- I asked you to provide an artifact to discuss during this interview. The artifact is meant to represent religion and spirituality and your role as a counselor educator. Describe your artifact?
  - *How did you come to choose this artifact?*
  - *How does the artifact that you have chosen represent your experiences with religion and spirituality as a counselor educator?*
- Have you had any interactions with other counselor educators that focused on religion and spirituality?
  - *How would you describe these interactions?*

- *How has thinking about religion and spirituality changed or not changed your approach to your role as a counselor educator?*
- *Are there things that you might do differently in the future regarding training as it related to religion and spirituality?*
- Do you have any other thoughts about religion and spirituality and your role as a counselor educator?

**APPENDIX D**

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

### Demographic Questionnaire

In order to better understand the demographics of those participating in this study, please complete the following questionnaire and return with the consent form.

1. My gender is  
☐ Male  
☐ Female  
☐ Other, (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. My age is \_\_\_\_\_.
  
3. My race/ethnicity is  
☐ African American  
☐ Asian American  
☐ Caucasian/European American  
☐ Hispanic/Latino American  
☐ Native American  
☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  
☐ Other (Please indicate) \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. My personal belief/value system is best described as  
☐ Agnostic  
☐ Atheist  
☐ Buddhist  
☐ Christian (Please indicate denomination) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Jewish  
☐ Muslim  
☐ Other (Please indicate) \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. I describe my religious beliefs as \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. I would describe myself as  
☐ Religious only  
☐ Spiritual only  
☐ Religious and Spiritual  
☐ Religious and not spiritual

7. I attend religious services \_\_\_\_\_ times per month.
8. I have spiritual practice(s) that I perform \_\_\_\_\_ times per month.
9. The types of spiritual practices that I have include  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. I teach at a \_\_\_\_\_ institution  
☐ Public  
☐ Private  
☐ Religious (provide the religious/spiritual affiliation) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
11. Please indicate your research interests and areas of expertise  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_