

Issues and Insights

Spirituality: Implications for Professional School Counselors' Ethical Practice

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The separation between church and state (e.g., public education) is contentious. Furthermore, schools and many professional school counselors (PSCs) may choose to disregard and/or discount spirituality. This article (a) presents the importance of spirituality in counseling, (b) explores legal statutes and ethical standards relating to spirituality as a component of multiculturalism and professional school counseling, and (c) offers steps and strategies to support the ethical practice of PSCs. A case example and implications are discussed.

The division between church and state is contentious, which has led to indistinct legal statutes relating to spirituality and public schools. As Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, and Thomas (2004) noted, "Efforts to identify the appropriate relationship between government and religion have generated substantial controversy in our nation[, and] . . . schools have provided the battlefield for some of the most volatile disputes" (p. 25). Therefore, schools and many professional school counselors (PSCs) may work to avoid the controversy by disregarding and/or ignoring the topic of spirituality (Sink, 1997). Furthermore, PSCs may believe that "dialogue on spiritual and faith issues is thought to detract from the progress of counseling and to be inappropriate or even 'taboo' for a 'value-free' public school setting" (Sink, 1997, p. 59). Thus, many counseling professionals do not integrate spirituality into their counseling (Young, Cashwell, Wiggins-Frame, & Belaire, 2002). Counselors may also avoid this area because of concern about their knowledge base, having a different religion from the student, or being biased against spirituality. Additionally, students' spiritual beliefs often influence their coping strategies when presented with various life challenges (e.g., relationship issues, educational choices, and vocational planning; Shimabukuro, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 1999).

However, students' spiritual beliefs and practices may play a significant role in their educational, social, emotional, and physical well-being. For many students, spirituality is an important component of the counseling process for promoting constructive change (Curtis & Davis, 1999; Frame, 2000; Myers &

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Williard, 2003; Sink, 1997). Furthermore, *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005) advocates that PSCs work to support the academic, vocational/career, and personal/social development of all students. More specifically, the association recommended that PSCs designate the majority of their time and energy "in direct service to all students so that every student receives maximum benefits from the program" (ASCA, 2005, p. 13). ASCA (2004) noted the importance of PSCs' diversity competencies (i.e., awareness, appreciation, knowledge, understanding, and skill base) in relation to supporting students' academic success and ethical practice. Additionally, the multicultural counseling competencies of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD; see Roysircar, Arredondo, Fuertes, Ponterotto, & Toporek, 2003) stipulate that multicultural competent counselors provide counseling services relevant to students' human diversity (e.g., gender, spirituality, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background), supporting an effective counseling process. Furthermore, the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling (ASERVIC; n.d.) has advocated that counselors integrate clients' spiritual beliefs within the counseling process to support clients in achieving their counseling goals. Within professional school counseling, these beliefs can support students' academic, personal/social, and career development. Hence, PSCs who disregard the spirituality of students and their families (when students present spiritual concerns) may be practicing inconsistently with the professional goals and competencies established by ASCA, ASERVIC, and AMCD.

There are multiple and varying definitions of spirituality. For the purposes of this article, *spirituality* is defined as a person's unique way of believing and experiencing an ultimate human condition that often integrates his or her beliefs and values about a transcendental reality into his or her worldview and personal identity (Shimabukuro et al., 1999; Wolf & Stevens, 2001). Furthermore, spirituality tends to be internal, affective, universal, and personal and is related to one's sense of meaningfulness and connection (Richards & Bergin, 2005). Within this definition, spirituality may include but is not limited to an individual's religious beliefs. As MacDonald (2004) stated, "Spirituality contains numerous values, and religion is one expression of spirituality" (p. 294).

The majority of persons in the United States report that they are spiritual (Young et al., 2002). Spirituality is often a fundamental socializing force in one's development. For many, including school-age youth, spirituality is central to their identity and personal meaning and is often cited as the most important aspect of their lives (MacDonald, 2004; W. R. Miller, 1999). Because students may have concerns of a spiritual nature that affect their mental health (G. Miller, 2003), PSCs need to be able to address these possible concerns and use students' spirituality as a resource to support change.

Additionally, a PSC cannot understand and appreciate various diverse student populations without awareness of their spiritual histories and beliefs, which are often "blind spots" for many counseling professionals (W. R. Miller, 1999; Shimabukuro et al., 1999). Spirituality is a component of multicultural counseling (Lonborg & Bowen, 2004); therefore, it is important that PSCs

understand and appreciate that spirituality is a component of student diversity (Souza, 2002). Understanding the students' views in this area can help the counselor understand and treat their presenting problem (W. R. Miller & Thoresen, 1999). Consequently, not discussing these influential constructs is no different from disregarding a student's gender, sexual orientation, and/or cultural identity/ethnicity. Furthermore, Sperry (2007) suggested that professional counseling ethical standards advocate the importance of both cultural and spiritual sensitivity. However, many PSC preparation programs and multicultural counseling texts fail to discuss the issue of spirituality and/or religion and its role in ethical practice (Kiselica, 2003; Myers & Williard, 2003; Weinrach, 2002). Furthermore, until recently, little research and literature have explored spirituality as a specific issue within counselor education (Souza, 2002).

Despite this lack of attention to spirituality in counseling, it seems that more consideration is being given to the issue. The American Counseling Association (ACA; 2005), ASCA (2004), ASERVIC (n.d.), AMCD (see Roysircar et al., 2003), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2001) CACREP *Accreditation Standards and Procedures Manual* all include codes and statements relating to spirituality and discrimination. Additionally, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev.; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) now includes "spiritual problems" as a V-code criterion. Furthermore, the June 2004 special issue of the ASCA journal, *Professional School Counseling* (see Sink & Richmond, 2004), focused on spirituality and school counseling. Therefore, the issue of spirituality as a component of diversity and multiculturalism within counseling is now gaining attention as a subject that needs to be discussed in the counseling process.

The purpose of this article is to support PSCs' ethical practice concerning spirituality as a component of multiculturalism. More specifically, this article (a) introduces the importance of spirituality in PSCs' practice, (b) presents trends in the spiritual diversity of students within schools, (c) identifies legal statutes and ethical standards related to students' spiritual diversity, (d) offers steps and strategies to support PSCs' spiritually sensitive practice, and (e) presents a case example that demonstrates the steps and strategies supporting counselors' ethical practice.

Spiritual Diversity

Spiritual diversity is a part of today's society and schools. The demographics of the population of the United States are changing rapidly, with a significant increase in both racial and ethnic diversity. This was clearly reflected, for example, in the 2000 U.S. Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002), which demonstrated the decreasing gap between majority (69%) and minority (31%) races, ethnicities, and cultures and logically assumes increasing spiritual and religious diversity as well. Therefore, PSCs will increasingly be counseling students and their families with "differing customs, traditions, values, and perspectives towards life events and the counseling process" (Baruth &

Manning, 2003, p. 4). Thus, ethically, PSCs need an awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the counseling needs of spiritually diverse students (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2003).

The spiritual composition of the United States is changing. The following statistics relate to religious diversity, which reasonably infers spiritual diversity. In 1990, 90% of the American adult population identified themselves with one or another religious group; however, in 2001, this number had dropped to 81% of the respondents (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001). Additionally, the number of Americans classifying themselves as Christian has declined, whereas the percentage of non-Christian Americans has increased. According to Kosmin et al. (2001), the number of Americans who did not identify themselves with any religious group has doubled from 1990 to 2001. The religious identity of the United States seems to be changing, as does the ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of the population (Baruth & Manning, 2003). Therefore, the spiritual beliefs, traditions, and values of the students with whom PSCs work are in flux. To meet these changes, PSCs need to address students' diversity and not make assumptions that their students hold the same or similar spiritual beliefs and traditions as themselves.

Ethical Standards and Spiritual Diversity

Legally, the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (as cited in Fischer, Schimmel, & Stellman, 2003) states that all students have the federal constitutional right to equal protection under the law (including spirituality). Additionally, the First Amendment specifies that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" (U.S. Constitution as cited in Fischer et al., 2003, p. 170). As Cambron-McCabe et al. (2004) noted, "Students have a free exercise right to engage in private devotional activities in public schools as long as they do not interfere with regular school activities" (p. 30). Moreover, PSCs have the right to explore spiritual issues with students when both the counselor and student agree such issues are related to counseling, and PSCs have a right to disclose spiritual views when asked by students (Richards & Bergin, 2005). Furthermore, professional counseling ethical codes and standards of practice do address spirituality as a component of diversity and multicultural counseling.

ACA addressed the issue of spirituality and ethical practice. Specifically, ACA (2005) stated that "Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status/partnership, language preference, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law" (Standard C.5.). In association with ACA, in 2001, CACREP added a spirituality program requirement to the multicultural standards area in its revised CACREP standards. Furthermore, ACA (2005) suggested that "Counselors actively attempt to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of the clients

they serve. Counselors also explore their own cultural identities and how these affect their values and beliefs about the counseling process" (Section A). On the basis of these ethical codes, counselors choosing to disregard a student's spirituality may be practicing unethically.

Moreover, ASCA (2004) has recommended that PSCs advocate for the rights of diverse and traditionally disenfranchised populations and work to ensure that students of culturally diverse backgrounds (i.e., cultural and spiritual diversity) receive appropriate services and opportunities that promote students to achieve their academic and developmental potential. Furthermore, ASCA (2004) has recognized "religious/spiritual identity and appearance" (Standard E.2.d) as a critical component of PSCs' ethical practice and students' developmental and academic success (ASCA, 2005), therefore, necessitating deliberate efforts by all school personnel to work to increase their cultural-spiritual awareness, appreciation, understanding, and skill base. ASCA (2004) has provided PSCs with fundamental guidelines from which professional ethical practice is derived. The first of these tenets specifies that

Each person has the right to be respected, be treated with dignity and have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations regardless of ethnic/racial status, age, economic status, special needs, English as a second language or other language group, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, family type, religious/spiritual identity and appearance. (ASCA, 2004, p. 1)

Moreover, ASCA (2004) advocated that a PSC "has a primary obligation to the student, who is to be treated with respect as a unique individual" (Standard A.1.a). In addition, ASCA (2004) stated that an ethical PSC "affirms the diversity of students, staff and families" (Standard E.2.a) and "expands and develops awareness of his/her own attitudes and beliefs affecting cultural values and biases and strives to attain cultural competence" (Standard E.2.b). Consequently, in practicing ethically, PSCs respect the spiritual diversity of their students and work to increase their students' self-awareness relating to the role their values and beliefs may play in their counseling. This is not suggesting that spirituality must be the focus of a PSC's practice, but rather spirituality should be a topic discussed in the counseling process to the extent the student focuses on it.

Steps and Strategies to Support Spirituality in PSCs' Ethical Practice

To promote and create a counseling climate that appropriately addresses students' spirituality, a PSC needs to take proactive and purposive steps. The following suggested steps and strategies for PSCs working with students from diverse spiritual groups (i.e., having different values, traditions, and beliefs) are based on a conceptual integration derived from Casas and Vasquez (1996), G. Miller (2003, 2005), Roysircar et al. (2003), and West (2000). These suggested steps and strategies focus on PSCs' professional and personal development, supporting their spiritual sensitivity and ethical practice.

Increase Self-Awareness of Personal and Professional Beliefs

The first step for PSCs is to work to become self-aware of their professional and personal beliefs, stereotypes, assumptions, values, and biases that influence their professional practice with students and, specifically, with students from diverse spiritual backgrounds. As in any area, PSCs bring their own biases on spirituality to a counseling setting. These biases can be the result of professional experiences (e.g., education, training, clinical experience) or personal experiences (G. Miller, 2003).

G. Miller (2003) outlined issues related to countertransference (i.e., counselors projecting feelings onto their students) such as (a) projecting personally on existential student issues, (b) inaccurately assessing the involvement of spiritual concerns for the student, (c) treating concerns of this nature by avoidance or being too readily drawn into this area that is tangential to the student's main concern, or (d) making an inappropriate disclosure or intervention. For example, counselors may focus their interventions on students' need to find a "higher power" when this may be the counselors' own goal for themselves and not relevant to the students. PSCs' awareness of possible bias can reduce the presence of countertransference, allowing for counseling to focus on the welfare of the student. PSCs can address countertransference issues by (a) examining their own views; (b) working on their own spiritual development; (c) obtaining supervision; (d) being exposed to different spiritual beliefs; and (e) knowing the literature, assessment issues, spiritual development models, implicit and explicit counseling approaches, and similarities and differences between spirituality and counseling (West, 2000).

Additionally, it is important for PSCs to reflect on the role their own culture and life experiences will have in their work with spiritually diverse children and youth. Counselors are not objective; therefore, their beliefs, values, and biases are a part of every interaction they have, including their counseling. For this reason, PSCs need to continuously self-assess, increasing both their understanding of their beliefs and the role their values may play in their professional practice. This is not to suggest that PSCs should become totally objective beings, but rather counselors should work to increase their insight and appreciate their beliefs while enhancing their understanding of their students' spiritual beliefs, traditions, and practices.

Furthermore, PSCs need to reflect on their own spiritual development. Spiritual development, here, is seen as *spiral*, where one does ongoing assessment of one's views because new knowledge and experiences are *fluid* in relation to one's interactions with the past, present, and future. Spiritual development often evolves with other forms of human development (e.g., physical, emotional, cognitive, and intellectual) and may also be influenced by such experiences as near-death experiences, terminal diagnoses, spiritual reawakening/rebirth, and religious/spiritual conversions. Thus, PSCs need to assess a student's spirituality with the perspective that spiritual views are spiral and fluid. Within this spiral, fluid view, the cultural context of the student needs to be examined. One strategy for the assessment of cultural factors is called "ADDRESSING" (Hays, 2001, p. 5); that is, Age and gen-

erational influences, Developmental and acquired Disabilities, Religion and spiritual orientation, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic status, Sexual orientation, Indigenous heritage, National orientation, and Gender. This strategy can assist the PSC in being assured that broad ranges of cultural factors are being included in the assessment process (including spirituality). Also, G. Miller (2005, p. 109) provided an ADDRESSING assessment checklist that can be used by PSCs in assessing the spiritual dimension of both the PSC and the student in order to better understand how cultural factors can influence the counseling process. Thus, by using G. Miller's (2005) assessment checklist, PSCs not only can gain a deeper understanding of the importance of spiritual dimension for the student but also may identify their own spiritual and religious internal biases and potential countertransference issues and how those may affect their counseling.

Appreciation of Students' Spirituality in the Counseling Process

The second step is for PSCs to consider how students' spiritual diversity may influence their beliefs, values, behaviors, and worldview, consequentially resulting in a varied and unique way of meaning making about one's life and the world. If PSCs do not understand and appreciate the role that diverse spiritual beliefs and traditions may play in their students' lives, they may misinterpret and categorize students' behaviors and thoughts. An individual's spiritual beliefs influence his or her reaction to "challenging" and "difficult" experiences (Shimabukuro et al., 1999). For example, during traumatic and stressful occurrences (e.g., loss of a loved one), some spiritual groups emphasize family connection, and a student may not attend school for a prolonged period. A PSC who is unaware of the diverse spiritual beliefs and traditions of such students may misinterpret their poor attendance as lack of motivation and poor parental leadership, whereas contextually their behaviors are normal and functional. Therefore, if PSCs are working with spiritually diverse students, it is important for them to consult with cultural experts, read the professional literature relating to these diverse groups, and ask their students to educate them about their spirituality and culture.

Tailoring Counseling Interventions to Students' Specific Needs

The third and final step is for PSCs to tailor their school counseling services (e.g., individual counseling, consultation services, and classroom guidance) to their students' spiritual beliefs and traditions. In settings where church and state are separate, the PSC and the PSC's supervisor may need to ask for permission to incorporate spiritual interventions as a part of counseling, especially with adolescents (Richards & Bergin, 2005). Students from a nonmajority cultural and/or ethnic group have been found to benefit from the integration of individual and systemic counseling approaches (Casas & Vasquez, 1996), which are often integral components of a comprehensive professional school counseling program (e.g., individual counseling, the classroom guidance curriculum, and consultation with parents/primary

caregivers and teachers). Therefore, we suggest that PSCs provide individual counseling services to their students and work collaboratively with students' families to support systemic change (consultation services). Students do not live in isolation; therefore, to support their holistic development, their primary system (family) also needs to make accommodations (Lambie & Rokutani, 2002). For PSCs to work effectively with all students, they need to account for the complex interaction of the multiple influences on students' behavior (i.e., family, school, peers, and physical/biological and psychological elements), including their spirituality.

Additionally, PSCs may facilitate classroom guidance services intended to support spiritual understanding and sensitivity. As stated in ASCA (2005), the "purpose of the guidance curriculum is to provide all students the knowledge and skills appropriate for their development" (p. 22). Furthermore, Sink (1997) suggested that classroom guidance may support "a process whereby students are better able to create meaning and purpose for their lives" (p. 64). For example, a PSC may implement and facilitate classroom guidance lessons related to spiritual difference and sensitivity. It is suggested that PSCs tailor these lessons to the needs of their school population (e.g., guidance lessons relating to the diverse spiritual groups within their school). For additional elaboration regarding facilitating classroom guidance and spirituality, please see Sink (1997).

PSCs also need to account for students' development in tailoring their school counseling services. G. Miller (2005) provided an overview of life span developmental theories that may be helpful to the PSC in spiritual assessment and intervention. Some of these developmental theories examined have been developed by Piaget (1950), Erikson (1963), and Fowler (1981). With regard to Piagetian theory, Worthington (1989) organized those areas related to spirituality in (a) *early childhood*, symbolic representation means symbolizing objects of faith; (b) *late childhood*, logical thinking focuses on religious questions; and (c) *adolescence*, formal operational thought addresses conceptualizing the complex interactions between religious faith and life experiences. The PSC who considers the cognitive development of the student may be better able to determine the nature of the student's spiritual life and struggles as well as choose more age-appropriate interventions. A useful method for doing so was developed by Ivey, Ivey, Myers, and Sweeney (2005), whose developmental counseling and therapy not only incorporates an assessment of a person's cognitive and emotional development but also includes specific parallel questioning strategies to assess spiritual and religious development, as well as offering appropriate interventions by matching counseling strategies with developmental level.

In terms of Erikson's theory, Worthington (1989) outlined the stages related to PSCs as (a) Initiative versus Guilt (3–6 years), being focused on a sense of purpose; (b) Industry versus Inferiority (6–12 years), developing a sense of adequacy; and (c) Identity versus Role Confusion (12–18 years), having the possibility of a commitment to faith. Understanding the student's life stage may help the PSC understand the student's possible struggles and strengths

with regard to spirituality because life stage development often parallels and/or evolves along with basic human development issues.

Fowler's (1981) stages-of-faith model offers stages that include the age ranges with which PSCs work: the Intuitive-Projective stage (3-7 years), the Mythic-Literal stage (7 to puberty), and the Synthetic-Conventional stage (puberty to adulthood). In the Intuitive-Projective stage, the child has fantasy and imitation not constrained by logic, yet the child can be affected by the faith of adults they encounter. In the Mythic-Literal stage, the child absorbs his or her spiritual community's beliefs and symbols, literally resulting in a story that is linear, coherent, and gives meaning to the child. In the Synthetic-Conventional stage, the child conforms to his or her spiritual community's beliefs and values with an emphasis on authority—these beliefs and values have typically not been reflected on or examined deeply by the child. By understanding the stage of faith development occupied by the student (child), the PSC can again better understand the young person's spiritual perception and choose more appropriate counseling strategies (please see Ivey et al., 2005, for specific strategies).

According to Worthington (1989), typical spiritual issues may be age related. For example, in childhood, the issues of death, self-discipline, perception of God, and school concerns are common. In adolescence, issues are often related to sex, alcohol/drug use, and identity. A PSC who is aware of these common spiritual concerns may use such concerns as a possible indicator of related spiritual struggles for the student.

It is important for PSCs to have awareness of their professional boundaries and competencies. PSCs cannot meet the counseling needs of all students. With reference to spirituality, some spiritual concerns that students have may be out of the scope of practice for the PSC and the school environment. ASCA (2004) has suggested that the PSC "functions within the boundaries of individual professional competence and . . . monitors personal well-being and effectiveness and does not participate in any activity that may lead to inadequate professional services or harm to a student" (Standard E.1.a-b). Therefore, when appropriate, the PSC should offer referral and liaison services to students whose needs are beyond the PSC's professional competencies and the appropriateness of a school setting. Possible referrals may be made to spiritual leaders, pastoral counselors not affiliated with the school, and community mental health agencies.

G. Miller (2003) provided an ethical decision-making tree that PSCs may find helpful as they sort through ethical dilemmas related to spirituality. For example, G. Miller (2003) suggested that should religious or spiritual issues arise in the counseling process, the PSC could talk openly with the student about the use of religious or spiritual interventions. This prompted G. Miller (2003) to include a sample informed consent form that PSCs can use as a guide in developing an informed consent form with specific spiritual intervention techniques. Such consent forms can reduce the likelihood of ethical dilemmas related to the spiritual aspect of counseling in a school setting.

Becoming a spiritually sensitive PSC requires a purposeful and conscientious effort. It is a continuous developmental process in which the coun-

selor must work to increase his or her self-awareness and understanding of diverse spiritual groups. To appropriately match diverse students, there is an increased need for PSCs and their comprehensive professional school counseling programs to become spiritually sensitive. The following case example illustrates a PSC's implementation of the aforementioned suggested steps and strategies when working with this student and his family.

Case Example

While working as a professional high school counselor, the second author was given a referral for a 16-year-old male Native American in the Lumbee tribe. Randy had recently moved with his family to the area from his original home, which was located approximately 100 miles away. The family was from an area of the state with a large concentration of Native Americans. The reason for the referral was Randy's lack of academic achievement since enrolling in his new school. As the PSC spoke with the student, Randy identified feeling disconnected from his new school and expressed that he missed his friends and family as well as his "culture."

During counseling, both Randy and the counselor discovered the importance of Randy's cultural and spiritual beliefs as they related to Lumbee traditions. Randy discovered that perhaps he had taken for granted his cultural and spiritual beliefs and that having moved away, he now realized how important these aspects of his life were to him and to his overall identity. Because moving back to his former home was not a realistic goal (his family moved for reasons of employment), Randy and the counselor decided to further explore how his beliefs and spirituality could be used to strengthen his transition. Specifically, Randy spoke about the importance of prayer and ceremonial participation with his people.

The counselor and Randy, with Randy's permission, also decided to invite his parents to a session. Both discovered that the entire family was experiencing a difficult transition with the move and that the family members too felt disconnected from their spiritual beliefs and values with their people. With all the transition of the move and the parents beginning new employment, they relayed that perhaps they lost temporary sight of the importance of their spiritual beliefs and customs.

Having attended and participated in several state ceremonial gatherings, the family was aware of a local Native American Association (approximately 20 miles from their relocation) that represented several nations in the state and held regular meetings and ceremonial gatherings. However, outside of the state gatherings, the family never really considered participating in the association, on a regular basis, as a way to maintain their spiritual and cultural connections. Additionally, the family agreed that continuing their daily prayers was important, another aspect that they had not continued with their move. Finally, Randy had aspirations to continue his education after high school, and the family agreed that attending the college "back home" would be an important step in motivating Randy to continue achieving academically in his new school.

Related to the aforementioned steps and strategies outlined, this case illustrates several important considerations. First, as part of increasing one's own self-awareness in personal and professional beliefs, this case example demonstrates a PSC's awareness of how a student's being separated from his spiritual connection influenced academic achievement. The larger culture of the United States tends to place a value on the ability and adaptability to be mobile and relocate for reasons of economic and personal advancement, often with little consideration toward how such mobility and relocation may influence personal well-being. Second, the PSC's acceptance in considering the role and importance of cultural and spiritual disconnectedness of the student and his family demonstrates an appreciation of how spirituality and spiritual needs are important components in the counseling process. Third, involving the family in the counseling process supports the tailoring of counseling interventions to students' specific needs, with family being an important influence and consideration in working with Native American students (Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Herring, 1990). Equally important, a PSC's knowledge of local resources that can help support the spiritual beliefs of their constituents is an essential tool in the coordination of services to those needing them.

Conclusion

Spirituality has a fundamental influence on one's holistic development and socialization. Choosing to disregard a student's spiritual beliefs and traditions may be deemed unethical practice. Therefore, for PSCs to practice ethically, they need to make a conscientious effort to be spirituality sensitive counselors. This is not to suggest that spirituality must be the focus of all PSCs' practice, but rather PSCs need to discuss this powerful socializing force and allow their students to further explore this component of their lives to the extent that they choose.

Spirituality was not included in the current emphasis on multicultural counseling competencies, and, as noted previously, most multicultural counseling texts failed to include chapters relating to spiritual diversity. However, the professional ethical codes and competencies for PSCs (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2004; ASERVIC, n.d.; AMCD, i.e., Roysircar et al., 2003) clearly addressed the importance of students' and their families' spiritual diversity.

For PSCs' ability to speak to students' spiritual diversity, they need to work on the steps and strategies presented in this article: (a) increase self-awareness through personal reflection and supervision; (b) understand and appreciate the role of students' spirituality in their lives, behaviors, and coping skills; and (c) tailor their comprehensive school counseling services to the diverse spiritual needs of their students and families. The religious/spiritual identity and appearance of the school population in the United States is rapidly changing; therefore, PSCs need to also make accommodations to their professional school counseling programs and practices to ethically and appropriately match this population transformation.

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