Balancing Discipleship and Gatekeeping in Counselor Education

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Abstract

Training students to become successful clinicians involves the development and transformation of the whole person, engaging their head in academic knowledge; their heart in awareness, insight, and compassion; and their hands in effective clinical skills and practice. Faith-based graduate programs desire to disciple students in this journey, seeking to bridge the guidelines and standards of gatekeeping with the depth and formation of discipleship and spiritual transformation. According to Dougherty, Haddock, and Coker (2015), the key to effective gatekeeping is clear, consistent, and proactive communication. It is essential that students understand the standards, but also that students recognize the formative and not punitive role of development and remediation plans (Kress & Protivnak, 2009; Spurgeon, Gibbons, & Cochran, 2012). Gatekeeping provides an opportunity for counselor educators to communicate clearly the standards and expectations of what it means to be an effective counselor to students. Discipleship for spiritual formation acknowledges the need for brokenness and struggle as an essential component for growing into deeper Christlikeness (Tan, 2019). This paper identified the theme of intentional programmatic emphasis on spiritual formation through curriculum and faculty modeling as factors in the process of counselor educators balancing this tension.

Keywords: Gatekeeping, Discipleship, Spiritual Formation, Counselor Education, Faith-based, Mentoring
Balancing Discipleship and Gatekeeping in Counselor Education

The development and training of effective clinical counselors mirrors most other master’s level training programs with its emphasis on professionalism and academic rigor through content mastery, training, and professional performance qualifications (Burkholder, Hall, & Burkholder, 2014; Homrich, DeLorenzi, Bloom, & Godbee, 2014). The training process broadens from this cognitive development, however, by also emphasizing critical components regarding the person of the counselor, often referred to as the counselor’s dispositions (Brown & Furr, 2015; Kress & Protivnak, 2009; Foster, Leppma, & Hutchinson, 2014; Rapp, Moody, & Stewart, 2018; Spurgeon, Gibbons, & Cochran, 2012), personal competencies (Brear, Dorrian, & Luscri, 2008; Foster et al., 2014; Kerl, Garcia, McCullough, & Maxwell, 2002; Rapp et al., 2018), or interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviors (Goodrich & shin, 2013; Homrich et al., 2014). These personal dispositions, competencies, or interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviors are difficult to quantify with limited agreement within the research to provide outcome measures for evaluation and effective gatekeeping in the same way that the cognitive elements are maintained through comprehensive national competency exams.

Because the counseling training process engages all aspects of the person of the counselor – the head for content mastery; the heart for self-awareness, spiritual growth, personal healing, and values clarification; and the hands for skill development, practice, and delivery – the ethical mandate for counselor educators to provide effective gatekeeping practices is difficult without clearly defined competencies and expectations (Homrich et al., 2014; Schuermann, Avent Harris, & Lloyd, 2018; Ziomek-Daigle & Christensen, 2010). In Christian clinical training programs, the integration of Christian faith and spirituality, along with the facilitation of the counselor’s spiritual growth or spiritual formation, are additional components of necessary
growth and development for students through the academic and supervision process as it is critical for the counselor to grow in awareness of how his or her spiritual life, religious values, and beliefs impact therapy and can be useful in the work of therapy (Tan, 2009). Boswell, Stark, Wilson, and Onwuegbuzie (2017) discovered that the blended personal and professional mentoring relationship from a faculty member to a student provided the best support for developing both the personal and professional dispositions of the counselor. A mentoring relationship is the key component for a counselor’s personal and professional growth and fulfillment in the field (Boswell et al., 2017; Kolbert, Morgan, & Brendel, 2002; Murdock, Stipanovic, & Lucas, 2013). Jones (2007) discovered that for Christian programs seeking to integrate spiritual faith, spiritual growth, and spiritual formation into their programs and in their relationships with their students, “the most salient factor contributing to the students’ own integration was their professors’ own transparent faith. Specifically, professors who made the most impact had an authentic, growing, personal relationship with God, and these professors also had a non-defensive, appropriately transparent relationship with the students” (p. 338).

Rodgerson (2008) and Tan (2009) both noted how the faith integration is more caught than taught. This process of mentoring spiritual formation through modeling of personal values and beliefs may create tension with the ethical imperative of gatekeeping, both with the concerns for dual relationships or the blurring of personal and professional lines in the faculty and student relationship (Boswell et al., 2017; Brown & Furr, 2015; Kolbert et al., 2002) as well as the necessity of exposing areas of brokenness, suffering, and surrender necessary for spiritual growth and formation (McMinn, 2011; Nouwen, 2010; Tan, 2019).
Gatekeeping

The primary focus for counselor educators is to promote and protect the welfare of the client in all instances, with gatekeeping serving as the means for ensuring this protection with standards for counselor competence at the academic level through coursework and personal evaluation as well as at the state and national level through accreditation and licensure (American Counseling Association, 2014; DeVries & Valadez, 2006; Glance, Fanning, Schoepke, Soto, & Williams, 2012; Homrich et al., 2014; Schuermann et al., 2018). Formalized gatekeeping policies and procedures improve the implementation of remediation plans by promoting a growth mindset culture and establishing regular checks and benchmarks throughout the training process (Gaubatz & Vera, 2002; Gaubatz & Vera, 2006; Hutchens, Block, & Young, 2013; Schuermann et al., 2018). These formalized procedures seem effective in reducing gateslipping regarding professional training and performance competencies through the use of skill assessments during practicum and internships and comprehensive examinations at the end of programs and for state licensure, but the personal dispositions and competencies in the areas of interpersonal and intrapersonal behavior continue to be difficult areas for evaluation and remediation as they lack clear definitions and guidelines in the field (Dougherty, Haddock, & Coker, 2015; Homrich et al., 2014; Spurgeon et al., 2012; Wilkerson, 2006). For Christian programs seeking to incorporate spiritual formation and growth, these personal dispositions can become even more difficult to measure as students incorporate the language of God’s calling and gifting as motivation for entering the field of counseling (Palmer, White, & Chung, 2008). Counselor educators seek to provide mentorship, support, and encouragement to students, acknowledging that the professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal behaviors necessary for effective counselors is a process of developmental growth throughout the training and early
professional course (Prouty, Helmeke, & Fischer, 2016; Rapp, Moody, & Stewart, 2018; Tan, 2009). Balancing the necessity to protect the welfare of clients while supporting the development of counselors in training through mentoring relationships creates the tension inherent in the field as the lines of potentiality, grace, and ethical care blur (Palmer et al., 2008; Rapp et al., 2018).

**Spiritual Formation**

While authors in the literature continue to debate what personal dispositions are necessary for an effective and competent professional and how to measure those dispositions once defined, an additional essential for Christian counseling programs is to integrate faith and spirituality into the training process while also facilitating the spiritual growth and formation of the counselor in training (McMinn & Goetsch, 2013; Jones, 2007; Tan, 2009). Spiritual formation addresses what McMinn (2011) called the third ingredient of integration, expanding beyond the technical training and theoretical orientation elements of integration to inform and form the character of the counselor through cooperative engagement and interaction with the Holy Spirit through God’s Word and God’s people. “Spiritual formation is not a magical occurrence resulting from the presence of Christians gathered together in the same place, whether online or on campus. There must also be intentionality, reflection, engagement, and interaction between and among those gathered” (Lowe & Lowe, 2018, p. 85). Many counseling researchers explored the role and importance of relationships through mentoring relationships between faculty and student (Boswell et al., 2017; Prouty et al., 2016) as well as collaborative relationships with peer-to-peer mentoring and support (Crockett, Elghouroury, Popiolek, & Wummel, 2018; Murdock et al., 2013), but the transparency and reciprocity of relationships that seem to be necessary for spiritual formation seem to be lacking, possibly due to the ethical concerns around dual relationships (Dickens, Ebrahim, & Herlihy, 2016; Kolbert et al., 2002).
This struggle for definition and measurement of spiritual formation is not unique to counseling as Finke and Dougherty (2002) acknowledged “Nearly all seminaries offer spiritual formation as a stated goal, yet few research attempts have been made to measure the outcomes” (p. 109). Many explicitly Christian doctoral psychology programs also seek to incorporate spiritual formation practices into their curriculum, with mixed results in measuring its effectiveness (Fisk et al., 2013; Ripley, Bekker, Kays, & Lane, 2013).

Homrich et al.’s (2014) behavioral descriptors across the themes of professional behaviors, interpersonal behaviors, and intrapersonal behaviors align with many character qualities expected of maturing Christians pursuing spiritual growth. For example, professional behaviors include an openness to learning and experience, expressed well through Paul’s charge to Timothy by sticking with what he has learned and engaging the Scriptures because of their profit for training and growth towards competence and equipping (2 Tim. 3:14-17); prioritizing the client’s interests over your own interests, mirroring Paul’s call in Philippians 2:4; being responsible, prompt, and reliable (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Tim. 3:1-7); engaging effectively as a team member (1 Cor. 12); and supporting the learning of others (Titus 2:1). The second commandment (Mark 12:31) provides an effective overarching standard for the interpersonal behaviors, suggesting expectations for respectful and appropriate boundaries; demonstration of genuineness and empathy; acting with awareness of other’s feelings and perspectives; and working cooperatively and collaboratively with others (Homrich et al., 2014). Intrapersonal behaviors provide even greater connection to the necessity of spiritual formation as these are “characteristics of internal functioning or qualities of the self” (Homrich et al., 2014, p. 131). These qualities include awareness of one’s beliefs to recognize the role and influence these beliefs might have on others, echoed in 1 Peter 3:15; accepting responsibility for one’s actions
and communicating truthfully and accurately (Rom. 14:12); avoiding behavior- or mind-altering substances (Eph. 5:18); managing one’s emotions (Lk. 6:45; James 1:19); being open to feedback from others (James 1:19); and maintaining congruence with thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Phil. 4:4; James 3:13).

Homrich et al.’s (2014) behavioral characteristics provide an important benchmark for initial discussion and engagement of assessment for character competency among Christian counselors in training, but spiritual formation goes deeper. Tan (2019) proposed that “we need to go beyond balanced self-care to stewardship and even sanctified suffering that may at times knock us out of balance and greatly stretch us” (p. 112). The process of growth in spiritual formation is difficult to define, both because it is a very personal experience growing from the inner life of the counselor in training, but also because it requires brokenness, both voluntary and involuntary, which creates its own process and timeline for learning and growth under the direction and work of the Holy Spirit (McMinn, 2011; Nouwen, 2010). The active spiritual disciplines, things like prayer, Bible study, fasting, meditation, confession, corporate worship, and others, are crucial components for spiritual formation, but so also are those spiritual disciplines that are outside of our control, what Tan (2019) cites Gary Thomas as calling the authentic disciplines, including selflessness, waiting, suffering, persecution, forgiveness, mourning, and others. Effective spiritual formation must occur in reciprocal relationship in community with aspects of both voluntary and involuntary brokenness as part of the path toward wholeness and usefulness, awareness and surrender (Howard, 2018; McMinn, 2011; Nouwen, 2010; Tan, 2019). The challenge comes with the role of counselor educators in fostering this formation process as growth and learning coming through the transparent connection in
relationship between faculty and student (Jones, 2007; Rodgerson, 2008; Tan, 2009). Carl Rogers (1961) acknowledged the tension in this role as well, stating:

“In these instances I have almost invariably found that the very feeling which has seemed to me most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is resonance in many other people. It has led me to believe that what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply to others.” (p. 26).

It is difficult to define the boundaries of the role of the counselor educator in guiding, supporting, mentoring, and evaluating spiritual formation as a critical personal disposition for effective Christian counseling. Henri Nouwen (2010) referred to the minister involved in counseling ministry as a wounded healer, suggesting that it is only through an understanding of our pain and woundedness that we can provide a source of healing through hospitality, which is the healing that occurs when we have sufficiently bound our own pain to allow others in to safe community.

**Problem Statement**

The field of counselor education has extensive literature and research to support the process of gatekeeping in areas of professional behavior and competency but continues to struggle to define the non-academic competency behaviors, dispositions, or character qualities (Homrich et al., 2014; LeTourneau, 2016; Rapp et al., 2018; Schuermann et al., 2018). Adding to the complexity of this mix is the need for integrating Christian faith and spirituality in content and spiritual formation as essential elements for Christian graduate training (McMinn & Goetsch, 2013; Jones, 2007; Tan, 2009). Counselors in training learn and develop personal and
professional competencies best through transparent mentoring relationships that model the skills and dispositions of effective counseling and spiritual growth (Jones, 2007; Prouty et al., 2016; Rodgerson, 2008). Critical elements for effective spiritual formation include both voluntary and involuntary spiritual disciplines, struggle, brokenness, and suffering (Tan, 2009). While writers in the counseling literature address the policies and procedures for intervention and remediation of counselors in training and counselor educators experiencing problems of professional competence, I did not find any literature exploring the experience of counselor educators from Christian graduate training programs attempting to balance their roles to maintain effective gatekeeping while mentoring students through the development process of spiritual formation.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the how faith-based counselor educators understand and balance the roles of gatekeeping, discipleship, and spiritual formation of counselors in training. At this stage in the research, I explored the perceptions and experiences of faith-based counselor educators towards the topics of gatekeeping, discipleship and mentoring, spiritual formation, and their view of the balance between these factors. This exploration of experience used a structured interview with demographic and 15 open-ended questions distributed to faculty through the program contacts of the Council for Accredited Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) accredited, faith-based counselor education programs through a survey on SurveyMonkey.

**Research Questions**

**Central Question.** How do counselor educators from CACREP-accredited faith-based graduate programs understand and experience the roles of gatekeeping, discipleship and/or mentoring, spiritual formation, as well as the balance between these roles?
Sample Interview Questions

**Gatekeeping.** For the purpose of this study, Gatekeeping is defined as the process to determine suitability and personal and professional competence of counselors in training to enter the counseling profession.

- How do you understand the concept of gatekeeping?
- How is the concept of gatekeeping introduced to the graduate students in your program?
- At what point or intervals across the program progression do you discuss gatekeeping policies and procedures with your graduate students?
- How do you define the necessary non-academic behaviors, competencies, or dispositions expected of your graduate students?

**Mentoring and Discipleship.** For the purpose of this study, mentoring describes the supportive relationship of the counselor educator for the counselor in training to foster the personal and professional development of the counselor in training toward effectiveness as a future counselor. Discipleship incorporates these elements of mentoring with the additional intention of spiritual formation and growth, incorporating mutually agreed upon standards of Christian character and content within the context of the faith community.

- How do you understand your role as a faculty member in mentoring and/or providing discipleship for your graduate students?
- How does your program implement mentoring and/or discipleship relationships?
- How might the concepts of mentoring and discipleship differ in your understanding and practice of them?
- What is your intended outcome when providing mentoring? Discipleship?

**Spiritual Formation.** For the purpose of this study, Spiritual Formation is defined as the Spirit- and human-led process of maturing in relationship and likeness to Jesus for the glory of God and the benefit of the body of Christ (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

- How do you engage spiritual formation and development with graduate students?
- What is your intended spiritual development outcome for graduate students?
- What role do the spiritual disciplines (i.e., prayer, Bible reading, silence, meditation, fasting, etc.) and authentic disciplines (i.e., brokenness, suffering, mourning, sacrifice, etc.) play in your consideration for supporting spiritual formation in your graduate students?
• What degree of transparency regarding your personal faith and walk process do you provide to students?

**Balancing Roles.** For the purpose of this study, Balancing Roles refers to the preservation of equilibrium or stability between the responsibilities of gatekeeping, mentoring and/or discipleship, and spiritual formation for counselor educators in faith-based graduate programs.

• How do you understand and experience the balance between the expected roles of gatekeeping, mentoring and/or discipleship, and spiritual formation?
• What concerns or issues necessary for spiritual formation and Christlikeness might still provoke remediation and gatekeeping if present in your graduate students?
• If the process of Christlikeness involves both voluntary and involuntary brokenness (Tan, 2019), how do you ensure the welfare of the client in your gatekeeping role while supporting the sanctified or redemptive suffering for spiritual formation to Christlikeness in your graduate students?

**Method**

I applied a phenomenological perspective to understand the lived experience of the counselor educators from faith-based graduate programs in this study, studying the participants’ experiences in functioning in the multiple roles of gatekeeper and mentor, providing personal, professional, and spiritual formation (Creswell, 2013). I used a transcendental phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013) to focus less on my perspective as the researcher and more on the participants’ descriptions of their experiences. Following this method, I (a) selected a phenomenon of interest, (b) bracketed my assumptions around the phenomenon, (c) collected data using open-ended questions on a survey to obtain the experiences and perspectives of counselor educators who experienced the phenomenon, (d) analyzed the data for significant statements and themes, (e) used the significant statements and themes to describe what the participants experienced (textural description) and how they experienced it (structural
description), and (f) described the essence of the common experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

**Role of the Researcher**

To address my role as researcher, I explored my biases, assumptions, and prejudices on this issue to consciously acknowledge and bracket them as a researcher in the structural and textual description process (Creswell, 2013). The intention for the study was to understand and explain the experience of balancing the roles of gatekeeping and mentoring or discipleship for spiritual formation by counselor educators in CACREP-accredited, faith-based graduate programs. I currently serve as a new faculty member at such an institution and my intent in this research was to provide insight and direction to the application of my multiple roles in this position as well as describing the common experiences of others in similar roles around the country.

**Research Design**

**Participants and Procedure**

I utilized 15 open-ended questions, along with five demographic questions, distributed through program directors to counselor educators at CACREP-accredited, faith based graduate programs using SurveyMonkey to explore how the participants understand and experience the roles of gatekeeping, discipleship and/or mentoring, spiritual formation, as well as the balance between these roles. Using the CACREP website to list all currently accredited clinical mental health counseling programs, I selected for inclusion only those programs which provided statements related to missions, values, or intentions for spiritual integration and/or formation of their students either in the counseling program description, the institution’s mission statement, or within the educational goals and outcomes for the program. This delimitation resulted in 35
programs represented for the study. The CACREP program listing provides a program contact person and email and I contacted this program coordinator and requested dissemination of the interview questions to the counselor education faculty. I included some demographic questions at the outset of the interview to provide geographical notations for the anonymous interviewee responses. I allowed four weeks for data collection, sending out the survey link the first week of January and closing the survey the first Sunday in February. I obtained 15 participant responses, 11 of which were complete.

**Design**

As stated in the purpose statement, this study utilized a phenomenological method, exploring, describing, and analyzing the lived experiences of counselor educators in CACREP-accredited, faith-based graduate programs using 15 open-ended questions distributed via online survey. This qualitative method was most appropriate at this time because the experiences of counselor educators balancing the multiple roles of gatekeeper and mentor to facilitate spiritual formation has not been explored. Once I explore and analyze the experiences of these participants to provide an initial theory, a quantitative or mixed method model can be applied to test the effectiveness of the theory (Creswell, 2018).

**Data Analysis**

I used SurveyMonkey (2019) to record, track, collect, and store the responses of the participants. I then reviewed all the responses 10 times to determine if there were common themes in response and experience shared between participants regarding the multiple roles in counselor education (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Once the data was coded with themes, I sought peer analysis for the coding themes and data to ensure my experience was appropriately bracketed and the themes for the participants’ experience were accurate.
Findings

In reviewing the participants’ responses to the open-ended survey questions, content themes aligned with the topic sections for the question groups (Gatekeeping, Discipleship and Mentoring, Spiritual Formation, and Balancing Roles), but it was in comparison between all the responses of the individual participants with one another that produced connections among their respondents across the question group categories. Participants explained how they understood and applied gatekeeping principles individually and as a program, noting the methods for evaluating counselor dispositions, the timing for such explanation and periodic evaluations and reviews throughout the program, with the different program using varied instruments and considerations for what dispositions or character qualities are necessary for counselor competence. About half of the participants (six of 11) incorporated spiritual language and expectations in their gatekeeping process and this distinction between the participants remained evident across all their remaining responses.

Counselor educators who noted intentional institutional or programmatic models and methods for incorporating the spiritual care and formation of students inside and outside of the classroom, also reported how their role in this process was “crucial” and “the most important part of my work.” Formal and informal processes built into the curriculum for fostering relationships to encourage mentoring and discipleship for spiritual growth aligned with faculty reporting program outcomes that seek to facilitate the development and growth of the whole person, spiritual and academic. The counselor educators’ emphases were on the person as God designed them first, then in the application of that person to the role of counselor. This intention was acknowledged in many ways. One stated, “My desire is to see my students grow into the fullness of who God created them to be, and to become healthy, effective clinicians with the vision of
transforming lives for the Kingdom of God through the power of God’s Spirit.” Another explained her goal as “[training] men and women for the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” The difference in responses aligned with whether participants viewed professional development and spiritual formation as dichotomous and separate or intertwined.

All participants acknowledged the importance of mentoring in promoting professional identity for counselors in training, but those who viewed professional development, personal development, and spiritual formation as connected and intertwined reported specific strategies and intentions for providing this dual role of mentoring and discipleship. The primary method for balancing professional mentoring and spiritual formation discipleship with this group of six, though not all used those terms, was through modeling. Modeling occurred through “supportive mentoring interactions,” “inside faculty homes,” “small groups… and lunch with students,” and “authentic transparency.” In fact, the distinctions between faculty responses, and the alignment of their full responses as distinct from one another, was most apparent with the last Spiritual Formation question, “What degree of transparency regarding your personal faith and walk process do you provide to students?” Counselor educators who viewed gatekeeping and mentoring as primarily academic and professional development functions, reported stronger boundaries and safeguards around personal faith disclosures. Others reported being quite open regarding their struggles, stating that “transparency is encouraged for all faculty.”

Discussion

Watson (2018), citing Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2011) suggested that institutions seeking to promote the spiritual and academic formation of students should operate as a “professional greenhouse” (p. 183). Watson (2018) continued by highlighting that in the same way a greenhouse provides the optimal conditions to facilitate growth, so “an organization
should prioritize the creation of a healthy workplace environment that can provide counselors with the relational support and community atmosphere for professional flourishing” (p. 184). This greenhouse environment should have leadership that encourages counselors to balance self-care, emphasize relationships from colleagues and mentors, promote an atmosphere of growth and training through service to one another, and incorporate humor and fun to the atmosphere (Watson, 2018).

The participants’ responses aligned into two distinct categories: those who viewed discipleship or spiritual formation and gatekeeping as distinct but contributory elements and those who viewed them as intertwined and inseparable. A few quotes highlight these distinctions well. First, one participant, when asked about balancing the roles of gatekeeping, mentoring, and spiritual formation, stated, “I maintain professional boundaries” and “professional prevails.” Another responded, “ACA ethical principles first, personal beliefs second.” The tension between these roles is difficult to maintain, but the difference between responses seems to lie with those who report a willingness to remain in that tension. One said, “This is a tall order… However, it is the most rewarding part of my work and calling, so I strive to keep [this balance] a priority.” Another noted, “There is both a balance and a tension between gatekeeping and mentoring.” Institutions with these greenhouse environments seem to have faculty willing and able to incorporate their personal process of brokenness and growth into the training process act as models for students to also balance the tension between spiritual formation and professional development as counselors.

**Conclusion**

Many faith-based, CACREP-accredited institutions are seeking to maintain this balance, though many of the participants also echoed the findings Ripley et al. (2013) identified at Regent
University’s doctoral psychology program in that it is much more difficult to measure spiritual formation than it is to measure academic counselor competencies. Because the process of graduate counseling training can be rigorous and challenging spiritually as well as emotionally and academically, some students may perceive a loss of spiritual formation instead of a gain (Fisk et al., 2013). The atmosphere of the program establishes the tone for what is expected, both to the students from the faculty between the faculty. The distinctions in responses between participants aligned around the intentional and explicit programmatic process and curriculum designed to foster spiritual formation through transparency in students and faculty and promote relationships for support and mentoring between students and faculty. While faculty need to maintain appropriate boundaries with students in relationship, we also need to be willing to live in the tension of those boundaries between broken vessels for God’s use and the demonstration of His strength in and through us. These tensions are not mutually exclusive. As one participant suggested, “I believe that allowing students to flourish spiritually ensures the welfare of the client. Part of spiritual flourishing requires suffering. Suffering in our personal lives allows us to identify with both Christ and our clients.”

**Limitations**

This study contained some limitations. Only having 11 complete responses from the 35 program coordinators contacted limited the depth of description and content for this study. Using structured questions through an email survey also inhibited both individual responses and interaction from the researcher and participant. A further limitation was the element of anonymity attached to the process due to the potential sensitive nature in challenging ethical gatekeeping concepts in CACREP programs. Without anonymity, the researcher could follow-up
for clarification and/or expansion of responses from participants, but the lack of anonymity might also inhibit the transparency of initial responses received.

**Implications for Future Study**

The need for intentional practices that incorporate spiritual formation into the counselor development process are necessary if faith-based schools are to accomplish their stated goal of integration and formation. However, the means for measuring this process as well as the need for increased supports for students throughout this intense training process is evident (Fisk et al., 2013; Ripley et al., 2013). Faith-based, CACREP-accredited schools need standards and measurements that incorporate counselor academic competencies and spiritual dispositions to provide alignment with one another around excellent in developing Christian counselors like the CACREP standards providing a measurement for counselor excellence. Additional research is also needed to explore the means for establishing counselor education programs as “professional greenhouses,” fostering excellence in research, clinical skills, and spiritual growth for this generation. While maintaining the welfare of the client is a critical ethical component for counselor education, faith-based schools may need to review whether this welfare may best be served at times through the acknowledgement of the brokenness and suffering of the person of the counselor in the same way our Christian faith is informed by the person and work of the suffering servant, Jesus Christ.
References


