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ſocial, Ecological, and Multicultural Issues Related to Students' Spirituality

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Abstract

Spiritual issues are integrally bound to students' social, ecological, and multicultural worlds and represent important cultural assets. In this article, we explore the association between spirituality and students' experiences in various social contexts. Case examples are provided to highlight the complexity and multi-dimensionality of students' spiritual lives. Implications for counselling in diverse urban schools are discussed.

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Enjeux sociaux, écologiques et multiculturels en fonction
de la spiritualité des élèves

Résumé

Les enjeux spirituels sont totalement liés aux univers sociaux,
écologiques et multiculturels des élèves; ceux-ci constituent
des atouts culturels importants. L'article explore le lien entre la
spiritualité et les expériences des élèves en une variété de con-
textes sociaux. On utilise l'étude de cas pour mettre en relief la
complexité et les multiples dimensions de la vie spirituelle des
élèves. On discute enfin des conséquences de ce type de regard
pour le counseling, lorsqu'il s'exerce en divers environnements
scolaires urbains.

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Using social, ecological, and multicultural perspectives, we discuss
spirituality as deeply influenced by interpersonal relationships, cultural
backgrounds, and surrounding contexts. Spirituality is an important
cultural asset among youth of Color that must be understood as a
multi-layered, socially embedded, community-based strength (Yeh,
Borrero, & Shea, 2011). The multidimensional and complex connec-
tion between students and their spiritual lives is also explored in terms
of their daily interactions in diverse, urban schools. We present three
case examples to illuminate relevant ecologies in youths' spirituality
and development and to underscore the critical role that school coun-
sellors play in supporting and fostering students' spiritual identities.
We believe a systemic-ecological orientation is essential in the devel-
opment of comprehensive school counselling programs in educational
contexts (Sink, 2004).

Recent demographic trends highlight the immense racial, cultural,
and economic diversity of youth in the United States (U.S.), and the
need to understand the array of social forces contributing to students'
spirituality, mental health, and academic success. About 35% of the
U.S. population reported their race to be something other than non-
Hispanic White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The minority population
increased 29%, from 86.9 million to 111.9 million between 2000 and
2010. Overall, the U.S. population has becomes more racially and
ethnically diverse over time, and is likely to continue this pattern.
Children and adolescents, under the age of 18, living in poverty ac-
count for 22% of the total population. Of the total 22%, 13% were

non-Hispanic White, 38% were Black or African American, 35% were
American Indian, 14% were Asian and Pacific Islander, and 32% were
Hispanic or Latino (Annie E. Casey, 2010).

We explore socio-ecological issues and factors in student spiritual-
ity (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) and the reciprocal relationships between
students and their pertinent social contexts (Borrero & Yeh, 2010;
Trickett & Formosa, 2008). Research has consistently revealed that
culturally diverse communities cope with social and academic problems
using social support networks (Colbert & Magouirk Colbert, 2003; Yeh
& Wang, 2000), which is consistent with their collectivistic cultural
values. Hence, connections with family, peers, school personnel, and
community members are essential settings when developing appro-
priate counselling interventions for culturally diverse adolescents.
Interdependent cultural values prioritize multicultural counselling
practices that shift from primarily individually-based models to more
systemic and relational approaches (Yeh et al., 2011).

The role of spirituality has received growing attention in the multi-
cultural and school counselling literature (Herring, 1997; Lonborn &
Bowen, 2004; Tyson & Pedersen, 2000) with several articles that focus
on the specific needs of communities of Color (e.g., Hanna & Green,
2004). We believe that the role of spirituality in urban schools must
be recognized and incorporated into counselling interventions because
ethnic minority youth often consider spiritual beliefs and practices in
their notions of health and coping strategies (Yeh, Hunter, Madan-
Bahel, Chiang, & Arora, 2004).

Specifically, African American and Latino/a cultural values emphasize
religious and spiritual beliefs (Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004; Cook &
Wiley, 2000; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2008; Tiago de Melo, 1998)
for coping with various stressors such as racism and discrimination
(Curry, 2010). For many Latino/a groups, connection with the spiritual
world via folk healers is a culturally relevant method of dealing with
suffering (Sue & Sue, 2007). Spirituality and religious practices have
also been found to serve as a culturally meaningful approach to coping
among Latino/a students dealing with racism and other cultural stress-
ors (Chiang et al., 2004).

A key focus in African-centered coping is spirituality and collective
consciousness that is inextricably linked with their cultural identities
(Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000). African American youth may use
their own spirituality as a way of coping with their experiences with
racism, social injustice, racial trauma, poverty, inequality of education,
and racial microaggressions such as daily slights and insults (Curry,

2010). These cultural stressors contribute to depression and anxiety in the African American youth. School counsellors should include the holistic and spiritual approach when counselling these African American youth because it can help them cope and heal.

Among the many Asian American ethnic groups, spirituality is used to gain strength when dealing with the loss of a family member (Inman, Yeh, Mada-Bahel, & Nath, 2007). Spirituality, along with religious coping, has also been identified as an important and relevant form of indigenous and collectivistic coping (Yeh, Arora, & Wu, 2006). According to Hanna and Green (2004), School counsellors need to understand Asian spiritual and religious traditions to better help Asian American students. Although the spiritual and religious traditions vary, it is important to understand the religion in the cultural context of how it is practiced and who is practicing. In working with Asian families, spirituality is a way to establish a connection and helps communicate empathic understanding.

Socio-ecological Approaches to Spirituality

Recent definitions of spirituality have described the influence of ecological systems. Specifically, MacDonald (2004) defined spirituality in terms of the development of both secular spirituality (relationships, friendships, political affiliations, etc.) and religious spirituality. He further discussed the implications for school counselling and how the school counselling profession needs to move from static worldviews and move toward interactive models that incorporate the spiritual, cognitions, emotions, and the various ecological factors that contribute to human development.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed a theory of development that emphasizes the crucial role of ecological systems that counsellors can adapt to construct multicultural school counselling interventions that support students' spiritual development. Specifically, human development is embedded within five social-environmental systems that exert bi-directional influences within and across the systems. The microsystem consists of an individual's biology and immediate surroundings (e.g., family, neighborhood, school, peers). The mesosystem comprises relationships between multiple immediate environments (e.g., child & school, family & neighborhood). The exosytsem encompasses developmental influence from a setting where the individual has a more passive role in (e.g., availability of school choices based on distance from home). The macrosystem involves the cultural context (e.g., political system, racial/racist climate), including the values and customs of the society.

The chronosystem refers to the socio-historical circumstances and conditions that accompany or transition throughout the individual's life course (e.g., policy influencing undocumented students; see Yeh & Kwan, 2009, for elaboration).

Since many ethnic minority youth have flexible coping strategies depending on the social setting and interpersonal context (Coleman, Casali, & Wampold, 2001), an ecological approach to counselling must incorporate the adaptive, reciprocal, and dynamic nature of students' interactions (Trickett & Formoso, 2008). To best provide counselling to culturally diverse youths' spirituality, it is imperative to understand their peer, family, school, and community contexts. Moreover, counsellors must find ways to collaborate with these various systems to effectively validate and empower youth in their spiritual lives. Below, we briefly discuss some key ecological contexts to consider when working with students' spiritual issues in urban schools.

Peer Context

Research consistently demonstrates that peer relationships greatly influence adolescents' behavior and social experiences (e.g., Allen, Porter, McFarland, Marsh, & McElhaney, 2005) and positive peer connections are related to reduced levels of depression and stress (Licitra-Kleckler & Waas, 1993). Counsellors may foster healthy relationships by promoting cross-cultural sharing, creating peer mentoring groups, and developing programs for peer conflicts and peer pressure (Lee & Cort, 2008). Collectivistic coping refers to culturally diverse youths' inclination to rely on racially and culturally similar peers for social support when coping with a stressful event, such as racism or microaggressions (Curry, 2010; Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2008; Yeh, Borrero, & Kwong, 2011; Yeh, Kim, Pituc, & Atkins, 2008). Peer relationships may influence the extent to which students may feel supported or alienated in their spiritual development. Moreover, peers may feel reluctant to share spiritual behaviors or beliefs for fear of being teased or rejected in their ideologies.

For example, spirituality can simultaneously be a uniting and dividing force when it comes to social relationships. In some ways, students may use the basis of spirituality, whether they are established religious beliefs or more secular beliefs of caring and empathy to help form relationships and ultimately build community within the school setting (Ingersoll & Bauer, 2004). In contrast, conflicting spiritual practices may drive students apart and that adherence to certain spiritual beliefs can often lead to ostracizing by other students. However, within this, school counsellors can help students identify strengths in their spiritual

beliefs and view this as both a way to build social resilience and pride in their spiritual identities (Sink & Devlin, 2011). An important focus on spirituality in counselling is having the opportunity to use individual conversations with marginalized students about the potentially divisive nature of spirituality to effect positive change in the entire school climate and across the school structure itself (Hanna & Green, 2004).

Family Context

The family setting is absolutely critical in understanding youths' spiritual development and practices (Davis, Lambie, & Ieva, 2011). Families provide help to shape important worldviews, role expectations, cultural values and beliefs, gender obligations, lifestyle preferences, communication patterns, immigration histories, and socialization practices (Jones Thomas, 2005). Counsellors must seek to understand how youth define "family" (see McGoldrick, Giordano, & Pearce, 1996) and how the various members of the family system may play a part in spiritual development.

For example, Yeh et al. (2011) used a case example of a high school student to discuss how religious and spiritual identities were directly and integrally related to cultural identity and beliefs. To ignore these important spiritual practices, would be to deny or reject meaningful aspects of what it means to be Samoan (Borrero, Yeh, Tito, & Luavasa, 2010). Moreover, Latina/o and Asian American families highlight respect for elders, strict gender roles, and an emphasis on extended family relationships. Similarly, African American families highly value extended family and have flexible roles in the family system (Jones Thomas, 2005). These cultural priorities may greatly shape how youth think about their own spiritual identity. To best serve culturally diverse adolescents, counsellors should assess family members' immigration history, socioeconomic status, occupational history, language use, role expectations, parenting styles, acculturation level, among other things (Jones Thomas). The use of specific culturally-based questions (Paniagua, 2005) and cultural genograms (Adachi Sueyoshi, Rivera, & Ponterotto, 2001) are useful methods to examine family cultural beliefs and practices (Yeh & Kwan, 2009).

For immigrant families, there is a need to effectively adapt to environmental change in the process of adjustment to a new culture. Contrasting notions of spirituality (and the importance of it) across cultural contexts may influence the extent to which immigrant youth may feel welcome in expressing spiritual beliefs. Research studies have shown that adapting to a new set of cultural norms is difficult and may contribute to family conflict especially among Asian immigrants (Bemak & Chung, 2003; Yeh et al., 2008). As children grow and develop, cultural gaps between parents and children increase primarily because children of immigrant families tend to adopt individualistic values that contradict with their more traditional parents (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Storm, 2003; Yeh, et al., 2003). Intergenerational family conflict may in turn have negative consequences on youths' psychological functioning (Lee & Liu, 2001), which may then influence their spiritual development.

School Context

Urban schools are a structured site where students can potentially seek help and gain support for their spiritual issues. School counsellors are frequently the only counselling option for students due to cultural stigmas with seeking outside professional help and the cost and impracticality of seeing a counsellor in private practice (Shea, Ma, Yeh, Lee, & Pituc, 2009). Many students of Color and their families may also be suspicious of counsellors and not believe they are culturally competent (Bemak & Chung, 2003) or that they may not understand their spiritual issues (Sink & Devlin, 2011). Hence, on-site school counsellors have the potential to offer multicultural interventions that are integrated into students' spiritual lives and busy schedules in school. School-based counselling interventions may effectively address spiritual issues and promote spiritual development (Sink, 2004; Sink & Devlin).

In educating the whole student, it is necessary to include the spiritual dimension of development. Doing so will provide a programmatic framework that effectively supports the welfare and development of students, as well as enhancing the school climate. With the increasing diversity in the U.S., student development of character should not exclude spirituality, giving meaning, identity, value, and purpose to student's lives (Allen & Coy, 2004). It is necessary for educators to take spirituality seriously, as it has proven to be effective in reducing violence in schools as well as facilitating a culture of respect (Allen & Coy). If counsellors and educators were to adopt a more holistic or sociocultural perspective of human development, one that includes spirituality, students and the school community alike would benefit.

Schools have been referred to as "agents of socialization as well as education: that is, they provide a context for socializing students as well as serving an explicitly educational function through the formal curriculum" (Trickett & Formoso, 2008, p. 80). To best serve culturally diverse adolescents, it is important to integrate social and emotional learning in the academic curriculum in order to further use schools to foster positive spiritual development among students. School settings

not only serve culturally diverse youth and their peers, but they may also help parents navigate a new cultural setting through various activities that provide information and resources about their children's development (Trickett & Formoso, 2008), including spirituality.

Community Context

The role of the community context is also important to understand when counselling culturally diverse students about spiritual issues. From an ecological perspective, communities offer resources that include social support systems (e.g., churches, synagogues, community and cultural centers, and so on; Yeh et al., 2006; Yeh & Kwan, 2009). Communities are often equipped to provide culturally meaningful resources and interventions that may accommodate the spiritual interests of a cultural group (Yeh et al., 2004). The community context may also support and strengthen adolescents' cultural and spiritual identities and experiences (Louie, 2001). However, research on the role of community support and resources in spiritual development is limited.

McKay and Paikoff (2007) described the use of community board for improving relationships between schools and communities. Community boards provide voice and power to specific members in the community including, religious leaders, businesses, elders, family members, indigenous healers, youth activists, and school counsellors to name a few. A community board with stakeholders is essential when using an ecological perspective because it can create a space for interventions to emerge from the spiritual worldviews and values of community members (Yeh & Kwan, 2009). Individuals from the community are important partners for school counsellors because they may have immediate cultural and linguistic knowledge and experience with spiritual issues. Community collaborators may also have perceived cultural credibility because they reside in the same neighborhood and socioeconomic setting as the adolescent.

Exploring Lived Experiences of Culturally Diverse, Urban Youth

The case studies below are presented to reveal the complex, fluid, and dynamic lives that youth of Color in our urban schools lead. We present these cases to stress the varied (and often conflicting) contextual spaces that youth navigate on a daily basis. Spirituality can be a powerful force for youth, as it can help them bring meaning to the divergent cultural worlds they experience. The following cases are not portraits of specific youth, but rather represent details from our own lived experiences and our work (as teachers and counsellors) with urban youth over the past two decades.

Case Study 1: Tara and the Role of Peer Relations and Interactions in Spiritual Issues

Tara is a 15-year-old sophomore at Leon High School in San Francisco, California. She is a proud Chicana and the child of immigrant parents from Michoacán, Mexico. For the first time since kindergarten she is attending a school outside of her neighborhood, and while she likes her teachers and classes, she is also questioning her decision to attend school away from her family and friends. Tara had to apply to this (public) school and was excited when she was accepted as it is widely known as the best high school in the city and, Tara hopes, the school that will help her get to college and begin her career goal of becoming a lawyer. She wants to the be the first in her family to go to college, and she wants to be a lawyer so she can help people like her parents—immigrants who come to America with the highest of ambitions, but few resources and advocates.

Tara's questions about her decision to attend Leon are arising more frequently as her sophomore year continues. She has made friends at school, but none of her friends from her neighborhood attend Leon, and she realizes that she misses them more than she realized as a freshman. All of her friends at Leon have lofty career ambitions and are very focuses on school, but Tara is noticing that in her quest to maintain her 4.0 grade point average, she is losing sight of her real goal—to be a role model and leader in her community. She also realizes that her friends from her neighborhood, while they may not be as academically focused as her friends at Leon, are connected with each other, their families, and their communities in ways that she is missing. Recently, during a class assignment in which Tara and a group of classmates at Leon mapped the economic disparities in San Francisco, Tara gained a greater understanding of inequities in San Francisco (especially in the neighborhood where she grew up), how visible they are, yet how few people do anything about it. She was especially dejected by her group mates' (three of who are her friends at Leon) lack of desire to do anything about her findings.

Tara is starting to think that her friendships at Leon are superficial—solely focused on studying and getting A's together. She misses the friends that she grew up with—not just because she is most comfortable around them, but because they bring a level of understanding and meaning to her life that is rooted in their experiences growing up together. She wants to stay connected with them because she feels that they understand her life goals. She is wondering how she can do so and while staying enrolled at Leon.

Case analysis. Tara's questions about staying connected to the friends she grew up with and pursuing her academic aspirations are vital for her self-worth and happiness. Her childhood friends embody a spiritual bond to her community, her family, her past, and her future. The complexity of her peer relationships is evident as she is clearly an adolescent who cares deeply about her friendships and what they bring to her life. As she begins to question the real worth of her friendships at her new high school, it is evident that she is navigating multiple cultural contexts, and she relies on her friends for support. In the school context, her friends help her study and ace her tests, but she is realizing this is not enough for her. In fact, her recent class project reveals that her new friends know very little about who she is, where she comes from, and what she wants to be.

In contrast, she feels that her childhood friends really know who she is—and the reflection she sees of herself from them is the person she wants to be. This level of support and meaning through peer relationships cannot be underestimated. For Tara, it brings a greater cause to her worth, experience, and goals as a student. Looking at Tara's peer supports from an ecological perspective shows that the meaning of her relationships comes in the connections between and within the cultural contexts she experiences. Her friendships cannot be isolated to her experience at school, nor to her childhood memories. Instead, they cause her to question, provide a level of self-awareness, and provide support.

Case Study 2: Tua and Ecological Disparities Between Home and School Support for Spiritual Issues

Tua is a 13-year-old Samoan American male living in Los Angeles, California. He is in eighth grade and he knows he is smart. He knows that he is smarter than his teachers think he is and just recently he is trying a lot harder in school. His two older brother just "dropped out" of high school, and while at first Tua was jealous of the fact that his brother did not need to wake up early every morning to go to school, he is now realizing that he does not want to follow in his brother's footsteps and have to start looking for a full time job when he is sixteen.

Tua's parents both work for their church—the church Tua grew up in and the church where most of his friends go. Tua spends all day every Sunday at church and often spends several hours on Saturdays helping his parents with church preparations and activities. He feels that being Samoan is directly connected to his work at and belief in the church. Like his parents, he knows that family comes before everything else—and his "family" goes far beyond just his brother and parents. His church family takes priority.

Recently, Tua had an experience at school that made him start to question some of his priorities and feel the tensions between his Samoan identity and his role as a student. As he had a few times before, he missed an entire week of school while attending a funeral for church relative. He told his teachers about the funeral and it causing his absence, but considering the fact that the absences came at the end of grading period, the missed days drastically affected his grades for the quarter. He was particularly upset about the "D" he received in his math class, as he was consciously trying harder in the class and doing much better on the tests. Upon talking to his math teacher about the grade, he was informed that the grade would not be changed and he would have to put extra effort into his work during the final quarter to bring up his overall grade.

Tua is struggling with the different priorities at home and at school. He does not question his commitment to his family, his church, his culture, and his belief in Samoan traditions, but he also can see that it is starting to impact his ability to do well at school. He wants to be Samoan and be a good student.

Case analysis. The tensions that Tua feels between his home and school lives reveal the divergent cultural worlds that many youth of color face on a daily base. Not only do these tensions bring him to question his identity as a Samoan, but the incongruent cultural expectations at home and at school force him to question if he can even be successful at school and participate in the cultural traditions that his family expects of him. The potential impossibility of being able to be Samoan and be a successful student creates a new level self-doubt for Tua. His experience shows that some students cannot choose multiple identities across contexts.

From an ecological perspective, it is clear that Tua's spiritual connections span his family, church, cultural, and community relationship. The fact that his spiritual identity clashes with his identity as a student is sever, and shows the cultural (Borrero et al., 2010) that schools can embody for many students. Regrettably, Tua bears the burden of this disconnect, and in some ways is facing a form of institutional discrimination that pushes many students out of school. If school counselors can embrace Tua's spiritual identity as a cultural asset, and see its far-reaching impact across social, filial, and academic settings, they can work to make schools more inclusive, culturally relevant spaces.

Case Study 3: Aaron and Indigenous Coping Response to Violence and Trauma

Aaron is an 18-year-old senior at Fairmont High School in Chicago, Illinois. Aaron identifies as biracial—the child of an African American father and a Puerto Rican mother. He and his parents have moved six different times since Aaron started school, and for the last three years, they have lived in a predominantly African American community in Chicago. School has not been easy for Aaron, but he is proud of the fact that he is just one quarter away from high school graduation. If he keeps the grades he currently has, he will graduate in June. He does not know what he wants to do after high school, but he does believe that he has "beaten the odds" to be in a position to get his diploma.

One of the reasons Aaron feels this way is because one of his better friends at school—Salem—was recently shot and killed in a gang-related fight. Aaron was not a part of the altercation, but Salem was one of the best friends he had made since moving to Chicago three years ago, so the proximity of this shooting was traumatic. Gang violence is a part of Aaron's neighborhood experience and he often hears about shootings. He has never lost a friend, though.

As a senior, Aaron enjoys his independence. Both of his parents work long hours, so he has a lot of time on his own. After school, he works part time at a local music store, but for the most part he is alone. He used to listen to a lot of music with Salem, but without him, Aaron is noticing that he is feeling lonely and unsure about his future. He knows that part of this is because of his lack of plans after graduation, but he also misses Salem. He is starting to question the meaning behind this tragedy and the purpose of all of the violence around him. He realizes that he feels alone in these questions and feelings and does not know how to explore them more fully. Larger than that, he realizes that he is constantly on edge—afraid that he is going to get caught in the wrong place and wrong time in his neighborhood. He feels trapped in his own community.

Case analysis. Aaron is experience stress from the violence he encounters routinely in his neighborhood. While this stress is not new for him, he is starting to realize that he feels depressed about it. He misses his friend—getting to spend time with him, listen to music with him, and have someone to talk to—but he is also more aware of his own fear about the violence around him. Aaron never considered his friendship with Salem to be a huge part of his identity, but the shooting of a close friend has made Aaron think about the meaning of all of the violence around him, and how much it impacts his day-to-day life.

His music and his talks to Salem about music are coping mechanisms that he uses to deal with the stress he feels, but with his friend gone, he needs more support.

From an ecological perspective, Aaron's community context is one that impacts all other aspects of his life—from the time he gets to spend with parents, to the friends he makes (and loses), to the school he attends. As a coping mechanism, his listening to music is a spiritual way for him to escape the confines of his surroundings, and be comfortable with his situation—he can appreciate the work he has put in to graduate high school, take pride in "beating the odds", and just relax. However, the recent jolt to his peer context brings up the harsh realities of the dangers around him and the trauma it can cause. The harsh realities of violence impact his capabilities to embrace his independence, and he needs to find others that he can talk to about his feelings. His fears reach across contexts, and he needs support to navigate these realities.

Implications for School Counselling

The theoretical framework, research, and case studies presented support the notion that students' spirituality must be understood and addressed from social-ecological perspectives. These complex ecological dimensions include peer relationships, family, school, and community settings as interactive and reciprocal contexts and processes. As a socializing cultural site, urban schools must offer support and a safe space for youth to express their spirituality as a cultural strength. Schools must work systemically to meaningfully acknowledge and collaborate with relevant ecological contexts in students' lives. Further, school counsellors need to be cognizant of the larger and often conflicting cultural contexts that students negotiate each day. As we discussed in our cases, social-ecological settings do not exist in a vacuum: They are in reciprocal and dynamic relationship with multiple social and cultural contexts.

Schools need to be aware of how they may be systemically contributing to specific values, beliefs, and practices that are associated with white, middle class, Protestant norms. These perspectives may contribute to an unwelcoming and alienating climate for youth who differ in terms of cultural and religious/spiritual backgrounds. Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, and Suda, (2010) refer to this "Othering" of students as a form of invisibility and oppression. However, spiritual identities should be seen as important assets, and as culturally responsive coping strategies (Curry, 2010; Yeh et al., 2011).

For example, students of Color in multicultural urban schools face numerous stressors associated with violence, poverty, and crime. Given

this context, school counsellors should consider the potential role of spirituality in violence prevention and support for dealing with crime and poverty. For example, spirituality can help enhance planning and the quality of the violence prevention programs. Thereby creating a positive campus environment in which students and their beliefs feel valued and will reduce conflict and potential violence (Allen & Coy, 2004).

School counsellors must also work collaboratively with key social networks to promote spirituality as a critical cultural asset and as an integral part ethnic and racial identity. Spiritual practices and beliefs can facilitate stronger relationships among youth and their families and give youth a sense of connection to their cultural backgrounds (Yeh et al. 2011). Community and cultural settings may also provide organized forums where students can feel safe and close to other members of the community and neighborhood.

School counsellors need to examine their own cultural values, assumptions, and biases if they want to be able to effectively support students' spirituality (Sink & MacDonald, 1998). School counsellors should ask themselves, "Whose values are reflected in my assumptions about spirituality and in my counselling approaches?" In terms of spiritual knowledge, school counsellors should learn about and study within-group linguistic, religious, and cultural differences and avoid making assumptions or stereotypes about groups. As Yeh et al. (2011) contend, spiritual knowledge exceeds historical information and norms and must include values, religious norms, and spiritual beliefs and practices. Hence, school counselling training programs need to address the critical role of self-awareness, emotional growth, and introspective development (Yeh & Pituc, 2008). School counsellors should be open to the psychological advantages of spirituality (Sink, 2004), especially since counsellors are incorporating spirituality in their practices (Morrison et al., 2009).

Addressing and supporting students' spirituality should be a systemic, programmatic activity and comprehensive agenda (Sink, 2004), not just an individual counsellor's goal. School counselling interventions and programs must adapt to the increasing diversity in the U.S. and school counsellors must work collaboratively across teachers, counsellors, students, families, and administrators, to holistically support each student (Sink). This type of comprehensive school counselling program can focus on the growth of the whole student—including his or her spiritual identities. Using a social-ecological and multicultural perspective, we can collaborate with urban schools to offer opportunities for self-examination and spiritual development. In addition, we must interrogate and challenge the white, middle class protestant norms that marginalize culturally diverse students' spiritual perspectives and practices.

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