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PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL: AN ASSESSMENT OF MASTER'S LEVEL
STUDENT COUNSELORS' VIEWS OF SPIRITUALITY (272 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways graduate students in counseling programs perceived spirituality. A set of 36 phrases regarding spirituality was generated from a subgroup of the population being studied, and these phrases were then given to participants to rank on a continuum of +4, "most like my spirituality," to -4, "least like my spirituality." The specific research question that directed the study was: What best expresses students' personal perceptions and/or views of spirituality.

The study utilized Q methodology as a means of identifying and understanding the perceptions of spirituality held by participants. Participants completed Q sorts—the ranking of the 36 statements—and those sorts were then factor analyzed utilizing the PQ Method 2.10 (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2000). Results of the factor analysis produced four different factors, or groups with similar views of spirituality. The four different groups, representing perceptions of spirituality, were identified in the following way: (a) Individual, meaning-seeking oriented spirituality; (b) Deity oriented spirituality; (c) Essence oriented spirituality; and (d) Self-constructing spirituality. Follow-up interviews were conducted with participants who strongly affiliated with the four different factors.

Similarities in perceptions of spirituality among the four factors were evident in both the factor analyses and in the follow-up interviews. Differences, however, were also

evident, suggesting that a concrete definition of spirituality to which the counseling profession adheres may not be as helpful as a tentative statement that invites discussion and reflection.