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## Teaching Students to be Spiritually Sensitive: Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

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## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Challenge

Spiritual diversity may not be recognized or understood by a social workers operating from a different worldview.

Background

Methods

Results

Conclusions

Limitations

**SPIRITUALLY**

Destructive

Competent

Sensitivity to spiritual diversity is an important quality for it can help social workers eradicate social isolation and promote social justice.

(Hodge, 2016; Hodge & Bushfield, 2006; NASW, 2015; CSWE, 2015; Lubben, Gironde, Sabbath, Kong, & Johnson, 2015)

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## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Challenge

Social work research has focused on teaching goals, objectives, and assignments for face-to-face courses on spirituality.

Background

Education to promote spiritual awareness is broadly supported, but more research is needed to evaluate how spiritual awareness enhances spiritual sensitivity and informs spiritual competence.

Methods

This study evaluates an asynchronous, online undergraduate social work course intended to inform spiritual competence.

Results

Conclusions

Limitations

(Seyfried, 2007; Northcut, 2004; Bethel, 2004; Mulder, 2014; Hodge, 2005; Coholic, 2006; Barker & Floersch, 2010; Wasner, Longaker, & Borasio, 2005; Ingersoll, 1997; Singletary, 2005; Reese, Chan, Perry, Wiersgalla, & Schlinger, 2005; Lun, 2015; Mulder, 2014; Gumz, Wall, & Grossman, 2003; Hunt, 2014; Hodge & Derezotes, 2008; Schafer, Handal, Brawer, & Ubinger, 2011; Raskinsku, Kalad, Yoon, & Curlin, 2011; Ai, Moulton, Picciano, Nagda, & Thurman, 2004; Modesto, Weaver, & Flannelly, 2006)

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Question 1: What assignment(s) is “most meaningful”?

Question 1a: How does spiritual sensitivity manifest?

Question 1b: How does spiritual sensitivity inform spiritual competence?

IRB, Category 1 Exempt, Research for Educational Practices

Survey for Q1 (N = 16, 43% total response rate) (more  )

Six-Phase Thematic Analysis for Qs 2 & 3 (N = 37)

Co-investigator audited and consolidated final results (more  )

(Braun & Clark, 2006; Noble & Smith, 2015)



## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Figure 1. Results for Survey 1 (n=6)

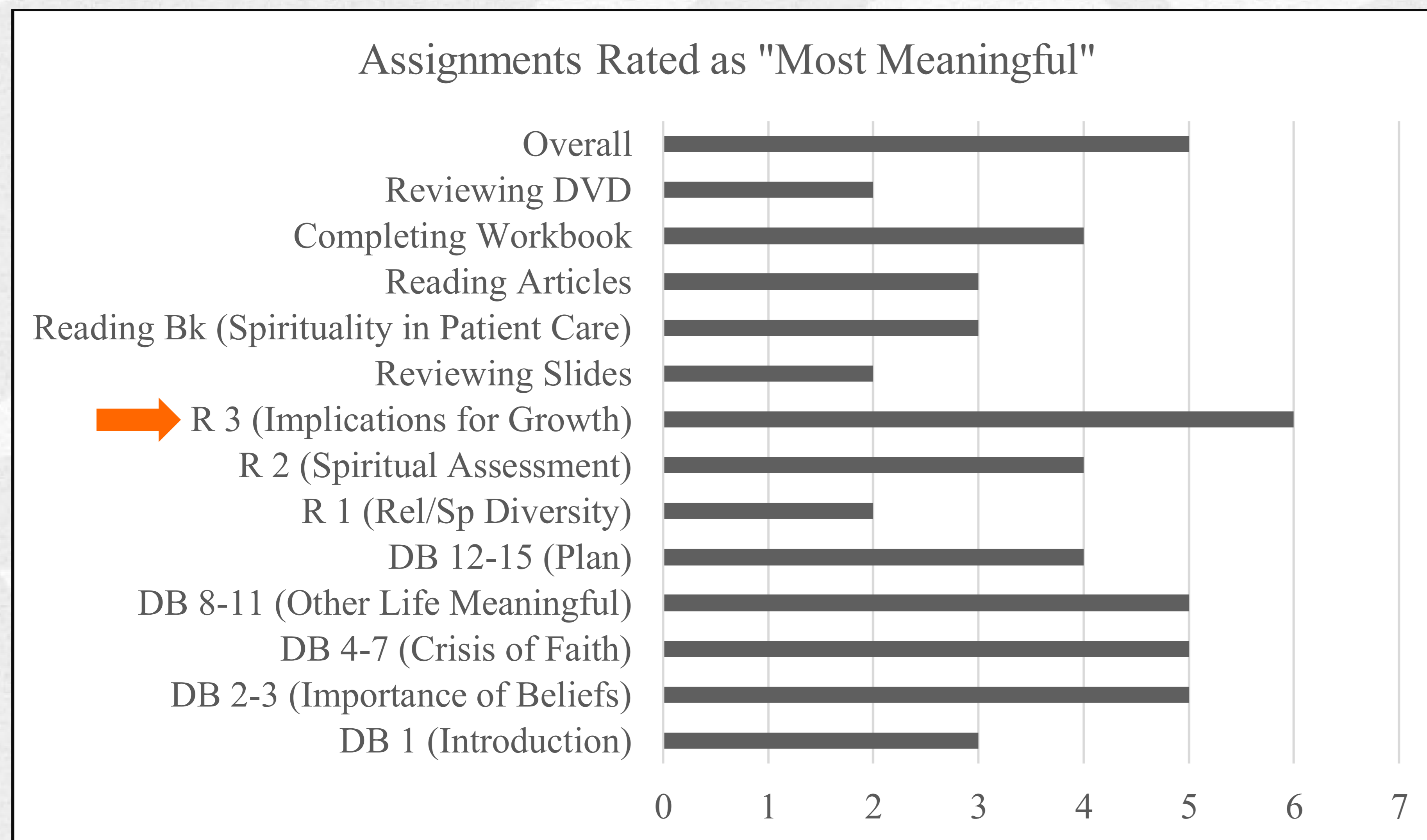
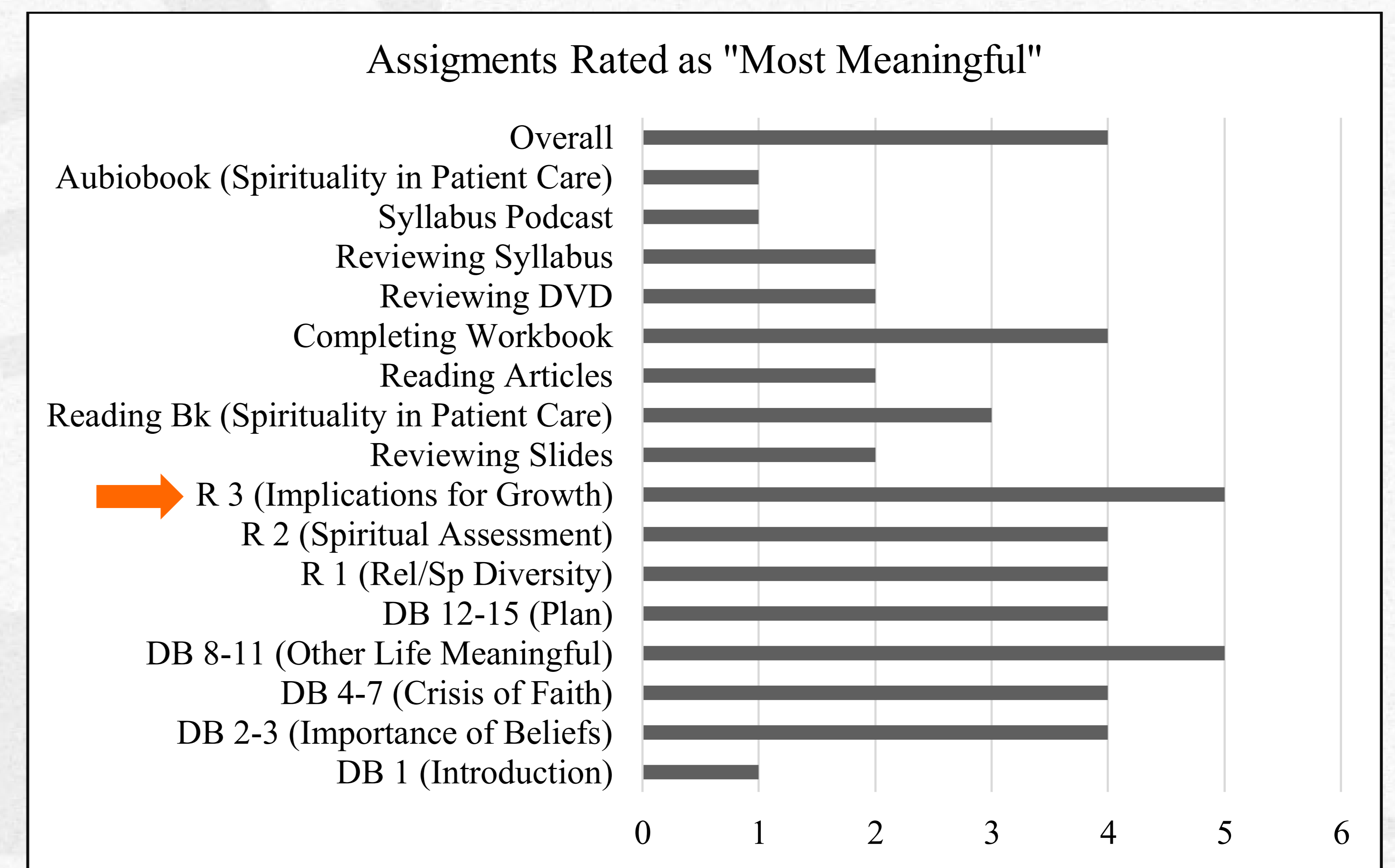


Figure 2. Results for Survey 2 (n=10)



(Callahan, Benner, & Helton, 2016)

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## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

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This study lends insight into how spiritual awareness relates to the experience of spiritual sensitivity and inspires the desire to further develop spiritual competence.

- Students recognized that personal and relational qualities can serve as an expression of spiritual sensitivity.

Example response:

“Discovering a client's spirituality is much more than asking, ‘What is your religious affiliation?’ I must go much deeper than that if I am to provide competent and sensitive care. It is essential for me to truly listen to clients. I have learned that there are often underlying problems that can be discovered in even the most seemingly innocent of commentary. I must be sensitive to these often very quiet, almost silent, confessions and cries for help.”

(Callahan, Benner, & Helton, 2016)

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## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Challenge

Background

Methods

Results

Conclusions

Limitations

- Students recognized the potential for spiritual diversity and need to address related discomfort as part of the delivery of client care.

### Example responses:

“One insight is my stereotypical view of religion, in that in many ways, it is hypocritical. Although I never considered myself to fall into the judgment of others, it is not easy for me to believe in something in which I know little to nothing about. This insight has allowed me to become more consciously aware of my prejudice and negative emotions associated with those who believe in something, and has allowed me to be understanding and judgment free when discussing spirituality and religion with individual’s whose views are different than mine.”

“I believe that it is important to remember that not all those who proclaim a certain faith or belief have the same experience. This can range from true atheist to agnostic to true believer of a particular religion, persons may find themselves at different degrees of belief or non-belief at different times in the situation. Their faith may be dramatically affected by their medical experience, or it may be unchanged. Above all things I think that it so important that we understand that every person’s spiritual journey must be respected as being uniquely their own.”

(Callahan, Benner, & Helton, 2016)



## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Challenge

Background

Methods

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- Students also recognized the need, desire, and potential to build spiritual competence through practice and the support of others.

Example responses:

“Continuing education is important in all fields and spiritual care is no exception.”

“I will continue to research new methods of spiritual assessments. I will consult with various agencies for regulations and standards on patient / client care. I will ask for help when necessary to find answers for competent care. More education might be required for efficient treatment services. Growth will come with practice and over some time.”

“I also find it important for growth to learn from others. I think experience always helps you grow. If I can gain some insight and advice from someone who has ‘been there’ and ‘done that’ I think it will be very beneficial to my professional development.”

(Callahan, Benner, & Helton, 2016)

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## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Challenge

Education can help students develop spiritual awareness, respect for and comfort with spiritual diversity, and skills in providing spiritually competent assessment (Mulder, 2014) and care.

Background

Methods

Students would like to further develop spiritual competence (Furman, Benson, Grimwood, & Canda, 2004; Graff, 2007; Ai, Moulton, Picciano, Nagda, & Thurman, 2004; Mulder, 2014).

Results

Students need the support of spiritually competent practitioners, supervisors, field instructors, and faculty (Mulder, 2014; Armour, Rubio, & Bain, 2004; Birkenmaier, Behrman, Berg-Weger, 2005).

Conclusions

Limitations



## Learning from a Spirituality Course Evaluation

Challenge

The current study assumes the ability of students to identify the experience of meaningful course work is an accurate indicator of spiritual sensitivity.

Background

Methods

Although study results seemed to reflect student spiritual awareness, it is unclear if it was an individual assignment or course as a whole that facilitated student change.

Results

Conclusions

There is no evaluation of enduring change, knowledge transfer, or consequences of overestimation of spiritual competence after students completed this course.

Limitations

