

Solution Focused Teaching: An Evidence-Based Integration Between Teaching, Theory, and Practice

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Despite suggestions touting the use of solution focused brief theory as a counselor education teaching modality, a dearth of research exists for its practice (Bradley et al., 2013). The authors detail Solution Focused Brief Therapy, discuss theoretical practices and techniques integrated into teaching, and discuss themes emerging via a qualitative content analysis. The authors offer specific examples of solution focused teaching that can be implemented by counselor educators and supervisors when working with counselors-in-training and supervisees. The implications of utilizing a solution focused teaching modality are reviewed to include the perspectives of counselors-in-training regarding the protocol. Themes suggest students perceived rapport with faculty, thought instructors using the method were competent, believed they learned through use of the method, were focused on course material, and believed methods used would pass on, through them, to clients.

Keywords: solution focused brief therapy, solution focused teaching, advisees, students, instruction

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Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) has been touted as an effective approach to use as a teaching modality in counselor education classrooms (Bradley et al., 2013). Despite these suggestions and additional research inferring efficacy when using solution focused approaches with clients, little evidence can be found for using the approach while teaching counselor trainees (Stark & Bruhn, 2014). In response to this dearth of research and to explore the perceptions of students exposed to the practice, the authors conducted a qualitative content analysis to glean the perspective of 10 students exposed to the practice. Several themes emerged to help counselor educators wishing to utilize the framework. Outcomes inferred that a Solution Focused Teaching (SFT) model was perceived by students as offering a new method for learning, a technique thought to engage students in course material, create rapport with faculty, and offer self-efficacy and a model for students' future practices.

To best understand the protocol and research outcomes discussed later in this article, counselor educators need insight into the background of SFBT and its premises, a rationale for its use in teaching, details concerning the specific protocol used, and how the teaching model may indirectly influence students' work with clients. A synopsis of the research questions, methodology, analysis, and discussion appears at the end of this article.

Introduction to SFBT

SFBT was created by Insoo Kim Berg, Steve de Shazer, and their colleagues and clients at the Milwaukee Brief Family Therapy Center in the early 1980's and has been widely used across different counseling settings since its development (Beauchemin, 2018; Burwell & Chen, 2006; Franklin et al., 2008; de Shazer et al., 2008). The therapy is

goal oriented and focuses on collaborating with the client to identify counseling goals that aid in the client's success (Wedding & Corsini, 2018). This approach is "one of the leading schools of brief therapy throughout the world" (de Shazer et al., 2008, p. 1).

Some guidelines for this therapy include:

- If it isn't broken, don't fix it.
- If it works, do more of it.
- If it's not working, do something different.
- Small steps can lead to big changes.
- The solution is not necessarily directly related to the problem.
- The language for solution development is different from that needed to describe a problem.
- No problems happen all the time; there are always exceptions that can be utilized.
- The future is both created and negotiable (de Shazer et al., 2008, pp. 1-3).

These guidelines provide direction for the counselor as they ask questions, encourage, and build rapport through specific techniques with the client or student. They offer promise in not only assisting clients but may also impact student learning in the counselor education classroom. Specific techniques used in SFBT and in the SFT teaching protocol are discussed in detail later in this article. Before detailing techniques, however, it is important to set the foundation, so counselor educators understand the importance and benefits for using SFBT in teaching. The following section discusses the rationale for using SFBT in the counselor education classroom and during student advising sessions.

Rationale for Use of SFBT in Teaching

The benefits for using SFBT as part of a teaching protocol with students enrolled in counselor education programs are numerous. To start, SFBT, when integrated into the teaching environment, may offer enhanced student learning while also offering support to students (Bradley et al., 2013). These are important concepts since links between student learning and supportive teaching have been touted in the literature (Harden & Crosby, 2000; Ramani & Leinster, 2008). Professors who create a bond between themselves and students do so by stimulating positive emotions in lieu of stimulating negative emotions. They provide encouragement and praise, such as that offered through SFBT's complimenting technique (Forsyth, 2004).

This supportive environment also offers the ability to strengthen the professional relationship and rapport between faculty and students. By reinforcing positive capabilities and avoiding saying negative things about students' capabilities (Forsyth, 2004), SFBT provides "a positive, collegial, solution focused stance" (de Shazer et al., 2008, p. 4). SFBT's compliments offer a "gentle nudging to do more of what is working" (de Shazer et al., 2008, p. 5). Counselor educators can use these interventions to strengthen the working professional relationship with students while also promoting students' strengths and capabilities.

SFBT teaching protocols combine active engagement and strengths-based modalities to encourage students while lessening resistance. The approach has been touted as improving morale while decreasing hostility between the faculty member and student (Froeschle & Nix, 2009), and may be useful when dealing with resistant students (Metcalf, 1995). This is important since hostility can undermine any goals and objectives

developed with advisees (Sperry, 2002). In short, using techniques from SFBT may promote a supportive environment, enhance rapport with advisees, and strengthen the counselor trainee as a person and future counselor. At the same time, utilizing SFBT with teaching involves greater focus on the subject matter and involves a different type of relationship than does individual counseling. Counselor educators may need to remind themselves to shift focus from that of a counseling environment to one focused on teaching when incorporating the techniques in the classroom.

Present Studies and Rationale for Integrating SFBT into Teaching

Currently, research exists on the use of solution focused strategies in counselor supervision and K-12 teacher development (Kelly & Bluestone-Miller, 2009; Moro et al., 2016; Wallace et al., 2020). Despite the aforementioned research, however, a dearth of information related to using solution focused strategies specifically in counselor education classrooms or advising sessions exists. A synopsis of available research follows.

Working on What Works (WOWW), as developed in 2002, was designed to help teachers best manage their classrooms by focusing on what is going well rather than what students are doing wrong (Kelly & Bluestone-Miller, 2009). The program was based on the idea that better relationships in the classroom improve the overall functioning of the classroom by changing dynamics and hierarchy. Overall, making these changes increases teacher effectiveness (Wallace et al., 2020). In an evaluation of WOWW programs in 30 classrooms, Wallace et al. (2020) found the program to change relationships in the classroom by shifting the focus to strengths rather than deficits. Additionally, using the

solution focused based program increased student attendance and teachers' perceptions of improvements in the classroom.

Stark et al. (2017) first conceptualized a program to support teacher development based on solution focused concepts. The authors developed a solution focused strategy for promoting teacher development and the goal of their program was to produce a framework for integrating solution focused strategies and developmental instructional supervision for use in teacher development. Similarly, McGhee and Stark (2018) sought to understand the experiences of undergraduate students enrolled in an instructional leadership course in which they received solution focused supervision. Preliminary results indicated participants reported favorably about solution focused supervision strategies. However, the authors suggest more research is needed to fully understand the benefits of solution focused language in instructional problem solving (McGhee & Stark, 2018).

Juhnke (1996) first introduced solution focused strategies into counselor supervision with a practical approach where supervisors focused on the existing strengths of their supervisees. The goal was to shift the focus from "problem focused thinking to possibility-oriented thinking" (Juhnke, 1996, p. 49). Later, Stark and Bruhn (2014) implemented a solution focused approach to the supervision of school counseling students. Finally, Moro et al., (2016) provided a case example on how solution focused supervision can empower counseling students to manage their own personal reactions or personalization to clients. Based on the authors' experiences, they found solution focused supervision strategies to be effective in training novice counselors (Moro et al., 2016).

Solution focused techniques and ideas have been implemented into K-12 classrooms as classroom management strategies, integrated into teacher development programs, and used in counselor supervision. However, there is still a lack of research on implementing SFBT techniques into counselor education classrooms.

Teaching's Impact on Student Practice

Guzzardo et al. (2020) touted the importance of caring relationships between faculty and students in higher education. These authors further contended that positive faculty/student interactions influence achievement, personal development, and future success. SFT offers an approach that has potential to build supportive relationships with students. Because graduate students often model faculty characteristics and behaviors when becoming teachers (Schroeder, 2022), the same might hold true for graduate students becoming counselors. Knowing this, the current study discusses the integration of positive solution focused strategies into counselor education and supervision. The following section describes the specific framework used in the study.

The SFT Framework

The goal of a counselor educator is multifaceted, including having their own clinical experience and skill sets, maintaining knowledge of the ethical and legal guidelines of the profession, as well as ensuring that counselors-in-training are aware of and prepared to fulfill their professional duties in the community upon graduation (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). Because counselors-in-training who reported higher levels of resilience were more inclined to view themselves as more capable and prepared to accomplish their duties as counselors (Karaman et al., 2018), a need exists for research supporting approaches such as the SFT classroom approach that

aim at empowering students and supporting student engagement through strengths. The following sections detail the protocol used in the study.

SFT Techniques

Several SFBT techniques have been touted to work best within the SFT framework. These techniques include complimenting, the Miracle Question, exception questions, scaling, providing feedback, and asking coping questions (Bradley et al., 2013; de Shazer & Berg, 1997). These same skills, as used in counseling sessions, can also be utilized by counselor educators with counselors-in-training in the classroom as described below.

Complimenting

Complimenting highlights client strengths and uses statements directed to clients such as, “you never give up,” when pointing out perseverance. This technique can also occur indirectly through statements such as, “How did you do that?” to infer overwhelming success. Compliments help graduate students discern strengths that aid in future success (De Jong & Berg, 2002).

Miracle Question

The Miracle Question is often used to help people verbalize the direction for which they wish to move when they are having a difficult time expressing the nature of the problem being faced (de Shazer et al., 2020). As counselors-in-training, not every theory or therapeutic intervention is understood, and their professional identity is not yet solidified. The Miracle Question can help counseling students express where they see themselves as a clinician in the future or where they see their client after making progress. Below are some examples of what this might look like in the classroom.

The Miracle Question might be stated to a client such as, “If you went to sleep and a miracle occurred, what would be different?” When directed to a student it might sound like, “If everything on this assignment was perfect, what would look different in it?” The miracle question helps students or clients take ownership and take personal responsibility toward their own changes and goals (De Jong & Berg, 2002).

Exception Questions

Exception questions ask the receiver of the question to discern times when things were going well. For a client, it might be a time when a problem did not exist and. For a student, it might be an assignment that received high marks. Exceptions require the client or student to focus on the possibility of success when changing things in ways that worked previously. The technique allows students to reflect on what went well previously and apply successes to the present (De Jong & Berg, 2002).

Scaling

Scaling can be used to have students or clients measure their perceived progress towards various goals (de Shazer et al., 2020). Once counselors-in-training verbalize goals that they have for themselves, they can measure their baseline at the onset of the goals as well as their ongoing progress towards achieving the goals. Counselors-in-training may have goals about their ability to internalize and apply theories and interventions with clients, to gain confidence in their ability to work with clients or certain populations, or to administer assessments and interpret assessment results accurately. No matter what the identified goal, counselor educators can gain better understanding of how to further assist counselors-in-training with moving closer to

achieving their goal through the use of scaling. Below are some examples of what this might look like in the classroom.

- “On a scale from 1-10, with ‘1’ meaning the problem controls you and ‘10’ meaning you are in complete control of the problem, where are you?”
- “On a scale from 1-10, how motivated are you to ____?”
- “What would it take to get up to a ____?” (De Jong & Berg, 2002).

Feedback

Feedback consists of three parts: complimenting, the bridge, and the task. Because feedback begins by complimenting people and providing them with validation about the work they are doing (de Shazer et al., 2020), students immediately receive validation and encouragement. Next, as part of SFT, counselor educators demonstrate a team approach through bridging, and finally, ask trainees to take a step further and build upon their skills via a task. This might entail asking students to utilize theoretical approaches outside of their comfort zones, work with clients on difficult issues, work on personal skills, or expand their professional identities. Below are some examples of what this might look like in the classroom.

- “You have been very brave in telling me about that. It takes a lot of courage to own this decision (*compliment*). I agree with you that you need to figure out what to do about ____ (*bridge*). I am thinking you could _____” (or “What do you think might be a strategy you could use to improve?”).
- “It sounds like you are accurate in your understanding of the client’s struggles with ____ (*compliment*). I agree there might be another way to approach this issue with them given that they have been resistant in treatment (*bridge*). I

wonder if using a ____ approach might be something they would be more comfortable with (*task*)?”

Asking Coping Questions

Coping questions are used to gain insight about how people are managing their current situations (de Shazer et al., 2020). Counselors-in-training are often balancing their academic expectations and professional aspirations along with many other demands of daily life involving family, relationships, work, friendships, finances, health, and mental health. Counselor educators might encourage the use of good self-awareness and self-care routines for counselors-in-training. These practices may help counselors-in-training uphold their ethical obligations to maintain their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (ACA, 2014). Below are some examples of what this might look like in the classroom.

- “How did you manage to make it here today?”
- “Where is your strength coming from that you have the courage to ask for help?”

Using these kinds of solution focused interventions in the classroom can help counselors-in-training work through personal struggles and barriers they may face with their professional identities, as well as assist them in managing difficult client cases that they might be struggling with. SFT in counselor education can be beneficial in many classroom formats, such as face-to-face, online, hybrid, 15-week terms, 8-week terms, and accelerated summer and holiday sessions.

SFT, through incorporation of the techniques discussed earlier in this section, offers a unique approach when working with students in the classroom. Knowing the

perspective of counseling students for whom this protocol is used may assist counselor educators looking for additional teaching methods that positively impact students. In that light, this research offers insight into the perspectives of students regarding their own personal learning, their thoughts on teaching techniques, and perceptions on ability to transfer learning to assist their future clients. Research questions consisted of the following:

1. What are students' perspectives on learning in a class taught using SFT as an approach?
2. What are students' perspectives of teaching techniques used in a course taught using SFT as an approach?

Methods

Qualitative Content Analysis was used in this study to analyze written surveys completed by an entire class of 10 students. Because content analysis allows for both latent (deep) and manifest (surface) analysis yet has no specific requirements for number of participants, it best fits the nature of this study (Bengtsson, 2016). Participants' written thoughts were examined, categorized, and coded into themes. More information is detailed on this process in the analysis section later in this article.

Ten students in their second semester of a counseling program volunteered to participate in a qualitative study whereby perspectives of learning and teaching techniques would be shared. Of these 10 students, five self-described as being White females, one student self-described as being an African American female, three described themselves as other, and one student described herself as a biracial female. All students were enrolled in the same clinical mental health counseling program and career

counseling course. All students were also completing field experience hours with actual clients during their time of exposure to the teaching modality.

Procedures

Upon IRB approval, convenience sampling was used to find 10 volunteer clinical mental health counseling student participants. To recruit students, the researcher spoke face-to-face and privately with ten students who completed a career counseling class that used SFT methods and techniques as the major teaching philosophy during the previous semester. During this same semester, students were also working with clients in practice as part of their field experience. All students were given consent and informational forms and, upon agreement to participate, a written confidential survey about the previously taken career counseling course. Students were given a survey along with a postage paid envelope addressed to the researcher. Students were instructed not to include return addresses or identifying information and to mail the envelope in a community mailbox.

To ensure students did not feel coerced into participation, the researcher did not teach the course and did not share responses with the instructor or other program faculty. In addition, grades had already been assigned for the course and the class used in the study was the last course taught by the specific instructor in their master's level program. Because the researcher was an outside entity from the program, confidentiality as to who participated was kept as well as anonymity as to which student wrote each response.

Survey

Students were not asked to complete demographic information to maintain confidentiality of responses. The researcher did not know which responses belonged to

each participant. Each survey took about 30 minutes to complete (see Appendix for the survey given to participants).

Researchers' Positionality

The primary researcher is a White female who is faculty in a counselor education program. The first researcher has taught in both state and private universities and used SFT in the classroom prior to this study. She is skeptical of SFT as a stand-alone theoretical approach in counseling sessions but is a proponent of its techniques overall. Prior to this study, she used experiential teaching techniques and discussions in the classroom. She has been trained in qualitative analysis and coding procedures and has approximately 20 years' experience as a counselor educator and researcher. A second researcher, a White male who had no exposure to SFT also assisted with data analysis. He was unfamiliar with SFT's use in the classroom and used class discussions as a primary teaching tool prior to this study. He was also trained in qualitative analysis and coding procedures and has approximately 10 years' experience in research and teaching. An outside audit researcher also helped later in the study had 10 years' experience as a qualitative researcher and no exposure to SFT.

Data Analysis

Latent content analysis was used to code survey data. Manifest levels were first uncovered leading to discernment of latent levels. Content analysis is a qualitative methodology that organizes data so meanings can be found resulting in conclusions (Bengtsson, 2016; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). The authors selected latent content analysis prior to data collection because it takes participants' written thoughts, examines communication through this written text, draws conclusions from the data, and offers in

depth analysis as needed when analyzing survey data (Bengtsson, 2016; Berelson, 1952). First, surface level (manifest) analysis was used by each researcher independently and, later, they met as a group to code written survey responses by learning environment or tone perspectives (e.g., the learning environment), learning experiences, and likes and/or dislikes. Next, each participant's response was read to discern depth of meaning independently and, later as a group (latent analysis). Since this initial process led researchers to the unanimous outcome that all responses indicated a positive learning environment and learning, Bengtsson's (2016) steps could then be used to code and establish themes in the data analysis. This unanimous outcome needed to be checked for bias before proceeding, however.

Because researcher worldview and backgrounds are important considerations when discussing the credibility of qualitative research (McLeod, 2011), it is important to note that the first researcher is White and has SFT experience (McLeod, 2011). To reduce any consequential bias, a second researcher (White male without SFT experience) assisted in data analysis. Both researchers independently read all responses and determined content categories based on answers to the survey questions. Researchers devised content codes and categorized answers independently. To offer trustworthiness of the study and manage researcher perspectives and potential bias, researchers then met and compared independent findings and categories. Finally, an audit researcher without SFT exposure was utilized later in the study to further eliminate bias. Each researcher followed the steps below both independently and later met as a group to utilize the analysis as described below.

The first stage of content analysis, decontextualization, was used to create units of meaning. As each response was read, a list of codes was created within each category. For example, initial codes such as, “learning,” “climate,” and “professor” were unanimously created. Because each researcher had different codes determined independently, consensus was reached by reading the text many times. Because each researcher entered the study with differing perspectives, researchers used bracketing before looking at data and were careful to help one another by pointing out any perceived biases in coding. The initial separate themes, “Classroom Learning” and “Personal Learning” were combined into “Students believed they learned in the class” to encompass thoughts conveyed. Other themes were separated since researchers believed they conveyed more than the theme shared. For example, “Students Believed they were Competent” was made a separate category from “Students Believed they Learned in the Class.”

The second stage of content analysis, recontextualization, was then used. Based on code alignment, words and inferred meanings were included or excluded based on code alignment. All inferences were added via verbiage into an excel spreadsheet. To capture all meanings, units were split as discussed above and the same verbiage was often pasted under more than one code.

Next, researchers read written survey responses many times to ensure that meaning units and codes were fluid. Codes that fit in two or more categories were discussed and placed concisely. Each comment was compared for fit within each manifest content category. As a result, latent content themes emerged through decontextualization, recontextualization, categorization, and compilation.

To further offer confirmability in the study, a third researcher who was not involved in the initial study was asked to review and audit the data analysis. This third researcher had 10 years' teaching and research experience, was unfamiliar with SFT, and was not privy to the original themes. This third researcher categorized data independently, offered results in person and in written form (via paper/pen) to the first researchers. The new data are intended to further eliminate researcher bias from the first researchers and add new perspective. The data audit and analysis added the following additional theme to the original results, "Students Believed They Offered Better Services to Clients." All three researchers believed this theme should be added. This new code was then entered into the excel spreadsheet to allow for further organization and analysis.

Once this new subtheme was added, categorization of new data (as read by all three researchers) further formulated similar groups and ensured researcher agreement. All three researchers reached consensus as new data were added to the spreadsheet. Subthemes emerged and were compared across all categories for fit. Researcher triangulation or agreement on content and themes was reached to help facilitate trustworthiness of the study (Erlingsoon & Brysiewicz, 2017).

The final stage in content analysis, compilation, was used to compare participant responses to subthemes and category revisions, themes, and subthemes. Each researcher read the content individually one more time to ensure nothing had been missed. This final stage in the analysis resulted in common themes merging all responses uniformly when the researchers met as a group. Finally, each participant's responses were tallied within final themes.

Results

Several themes emerged in response to the analysis. Each theme is described below.

Theme 1: Eight of the ten students felt support and increased rapport with the instructor.

Student comments indicated perspectives of support from their instructor in the classroom. For example, eight of the ten students made the following comments. “The best part of this class was the instructor. I’ve never felt such support.” Another student stated, “The professor is very interested in students as individuals and respectful and encouraging of our unique input and perspectives.” A third student said, “We felt very cared for.” Other students wrote, “I feel like I can do this even though it is hard because of the professor’s concern,” “I think the instructor likes and cares for the students”, “The professor has a gift in making you feel respected,” “I like how (professor) treats everyone like they are competent,” and “(Professor) treats everyone well.”

Theme 2: Students believed the professor was competent.

Half of the students indicated the course instructor was competent in the classroom. Five of the ten students made comments about the abilities of the professor. For example, one student said, “(Professor) is genuinely interested in each one of us. (Professor) is gifted in this way.” Another student said, “(Professor) really knows how to teach.” A third student said, “I learned more from this class than any other because the teacher is better.” The remaining students wrote, “(Professor) has a gift. (Professor) is the best professor I ever had,” and “I wish I had this instructor for all of my classes.”

Theme 3: Students believed they were competent.

Five of the 10 students described feeling better prepared after taking the course. For example, a student said, “Thank you for the support. I almost gave up the profession before this class.” Another student stated, “I wish I had taken this class before (some other courses). I feel better prepared now.” A third student wrote, “I had heard this topic was going to be a waste of time, but I do feel prepared now.” And another stated, “I am ready to use this information with clients after taking this class.” A fifth student wrote, “I do think I could use what I learned in this class.”

Theme 4: Students believed they learned in the class.

Six of the 10 students made positive comments about their learning and no students commented negatively about their learning in the course. Such comments included, “I learned more than I have in all my other classes,” and “The subject matter was more interesting than in other classes... I learned a lot more because of it.” Other students wrote, “I do think I could use what I learned in this class,” and “I loved this class because it was easy to learn in.”

Theme 5: Students were interested and focused on the subject matter.

Half of the students stated they were more attuned to the class material than in other courses. For example, one student said, “I thought this would be boring, but I found it more intriguing than other coursework.” Another student stated, “I thought career counseling was going to be a waste of time but the way this class was taught made it so interesting that I changed my mind to focusing on career counseling once I graduate.” A similar comment from another student was, “I never intended to use career counseling but, after taking this class, I have decided to make this my focus.” Another student wrote,

“I really don’t think I will do career counseling, but this class made learning it enjoyable.”

Theme 6: Students believed they offered better services to clients.

Half of the participants made comments indicating they believed exposure to SFT improved or would improve their future interactions and practice with clients. Because students were at the end of their program, all had completed internships while exposed to SFT. Students made comments such as, “The way the faculty interacted with students served as a role model for helping difficult clients.” Another student remarked, “The empowerment we received in the course when the professor would ask us to find times when things were better is something that I found helpful when I used it with my own clients.” A third student stated, “The professor pointed out everything we did a good job on. This helped me so much and I used it with my clients. It was effective.” A fourth student said, “The support from Dr. X’s (name redacted) class was such a great role model for me in the field when I was working with depressed clients. I loved how (instructor) always pointed out everything positive.” The fifth student said, “I am going to treat my clients like I was treated in this class. I want them to feel cared for like we did.” Although these respondents represent only a small number of students, it may be a springboard for additional research attempting to understand how SFT techniques might indirectly impact the practice of those exposed.

Discussion

Despite the lack of research related to the effectiveness of implementing a SFT protocol in the classroom, the aforementioned research suggests promising opportunities for counselor educators and counselors-in-training. All of the research that surfaced was

positive in nature and data did not indicate any impediments in the learning process. Tolman et al. (2021) noted that one of the main barriers preventing the evolution of teaching methods was an intrapersonal factor related to faculty perceptions of students lacking knowledge. The research from this study suggests, perhaps, students appreciate empowerment, encouragement, validation, and assistance when they are learning counseling materials. These are all things that the SFT protocol offers.

One of the other main themes that surfaced was the idea of competence, specific to not only the students but also the professor. Universities have been accused of inadequately preparing students for the workforce, which limits opportunities for employment after graduation (Abelha et al., 2020; Knight & Yorke, 2003; Small et al., 2018). With adequate training and education, students feel confident in their ability to both understand and apply their knowledge. This is important in the field of counseling since the services provided directly impact the general public at individual, familial, and societal levels.

The demand for mental health professionals has increased significantly since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, placing practitioners at an increased risk of managing large caseloads and experiencing burnout (American Psychological Association, 2021). This demand supports the need for competent and well-rounded counselors entering the field. The SFT protocol can afford counselors-in-training the opportunity to manage difficult cases referred out by clinicians who are already experiencing burnout or who are at capacity. Wardle and Mayorga (2016) found that a significant number of master's level counseling students were either at risk of burnout or already experiencing burnout. The

SFT protocol focuses on building a sound foundation of encouragement to appropriately manage treatment concerns presented by clients.

One might contend the most important theme evolving from this research involves students' future practice in the field. Students believed they offered better client services and inferred ties to the teaching protocol. The fact that all 50 states require education and training to attain and maintain licensure to work with clients, one might surmise the importance the field places on education and training with regard to practice (ACA, n.d.). Additional studies might extend findings of this study to determine whether connections between training protocols and future practice are evident.

Limitations

As with any research study, limitations are evident. Because the primary researcher was a proponent of the use of SFT techniques, bias may be evident. The addition of researchers unfamiliar with the protocol who consistently pointed out bias may help minimize this concern. The study also used an outside reviewer to eliminate this bias as much as possible. Also, this research cannot be generalized to groups beyond those who participated in this study. Finally, this research cannot state whether SFT is efficacious or compares to other approaches. Additional quantitative research may be needed to address these questions.

Implications and Conclusion

SFBT has long been seen as an effective therapeutic model for working with clients (de Shazer et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018). It focuses on solutions rather than problems and the tenets of SFBT appear in settings outside of therapeutic relationships. Recent research infers brief therapy techniques as being helpful

for teachers in managing K-12 classrooms, teacher development, and increasing the effectiveness of clinical supervision for future mental health professionals (Juhnke, 1996; Stark & Bruhn, 2014; Stark et al., 2017; Wallace et al., 2020). However, there is little research looking at the effectiveness of solution focused techniques being implemented in counselor education classrooms or how exposure might impact students' future practice. The findings of the current study inferred students felt better supported in their coursework, reported being more interested in course topics, believed they learned in a course using the method, thought both they and their instructor were competent in the subject matter, and thought exposure to SFT improved their own services to clients. In all, students had an overall high perception of the course and subject matter when the instructor infused solution focused strategies into their teaching.

Although the current study cannot dictate whether SFT is efficacious, and more research is needed on larger populations and in a variety of courses, these findings offer a glimpse of the benefits of implementing SFBT strategies into counselor education classrooms. By focusing on student strengths, providing validating feedback and encouraging students to recognize their own success by using coping questions, faculty may enhance the overall morale of the classroom environment. In addition, faculty may see students as more willing to take on new and challenging concepts. Finally, implementing SFBT strategies into teaching benefits faculty and students alike. Students may take responsibility and ownership of their learning, have an increased sense of competency and be more satisfied with their educational experiences. Faculty might encounter less resistance from students, be viewed as competent and effective by their students and may see higher overall faculty evaluation scores.

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Appendix**Survey**

1. Describe the teaching strategies and learning environment in your career counseling class.
2. Describe what you remember about the course.
3. How did learning occur in this class?
4. Describe anything you liked or disliked about the class.
5. What thoughts do you have about how this class was taught?