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Michael J. Vogel  
*George Fox University*

Mark R. McMinn  
*George Fox University, mcmminn@georgefox.edu*

Mary A. Peterson  
*George Fox University*

Kathleen Gathercoal  
*George Fox University, kgatherc@georgefox.edu*

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# Examining Religion and Spirituality as Diversity Training: A Multidimensional Look at Training in the American Psychological Association

Michael J. Vogel, Mark R. McMinn, Mary A. Peterson, and Kathleen A. Gathercoal  
George Fox University

What sort of psychotherapeutic approaches might work well with a client who identifies as Muslim, and would they be different from what might work well with a client who identifies as Christian, a client who identifies as atheistic, or client who identifies as Buddhist? Despite ethical commitments to religiosity and spirituality training, it seems that most training programs in professional psychology have neglected to incorporate content from these areas of diversity into their curricula. The current study evaluated religious and spiritual diversity training in both APA-accredited doctoral programs and predoctoral internships, garnering the perspectives of 292 students, interns, faculty, and training directors (54.9% response rate). Results revealed a clear hierarchy of preparatory efforts with regard to diversity training, with least attention given to the dimensions of diversity pertaining to disabilities, age, religion, and spirituality. Participants also perceived several areas of advanced competency to be neglected, including preparation efforts related to consultation with religious and spiritual leaders and understanding the major world religions and spiritual systems. The findings also revealed that doctoral programs and predoctoral internships rely on informal and unsystematic sources of learning to provide training in religious and spiritual dimensions of diversity, including clinical experiences and peer interaction. Coursework, research, and didactics are rarely used to enhance religious and spiritual diversity training. Implications regarding current perceptions of training in religious and spiritual diversity are included.

*Keywords:* diversity training, multiculturalism, religion, spirituality

Psychologists have long been committed to studying the many dimensions of multicultural diversity contained within the human condition—social, racial, ethnic, and otherwise. This commitment

has often positioned the psychological community at the forefront of sociopolitical and legislative movements, advocating on issues such as racial equality in education (e.g., Benjamin & Crouse, 2002) and support for individuals who identify as GLBT in light of anti-GLBT legislation (Haskell-Hoehl, 2008; Levitt et al., 2009). The value of diversity in professional psychology has continued to grow over the past three decades, so much so that it has since become integral to its identity (Fowers & Davidov, 2006). In the American Psychological Association (APA), this growth is evident at an organizational level through the hiring of a Chief Diversity Officer as well as the institution of The Task Force on Enhancing Diversity and through advancements seen in the *Ethics Codes* (APA, 2002), accreditation guidelines, and resolutions of various councils (e.g., APA, 2006, 2008a, 2008b).

With this growth have come ever-broadening conceptualizations of diversity as reflected in advances in education, training, research, and theory. For at least the past two decades, the APA *Ethics Codes* (APA, 1992, 2002) have included religion as a relevant dimension of diversity, alongside gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, and socioeconomic status. The APA has also charged psychologists with an ethical imperative to exercise awareness of and respect for religious diversity that should, in turn, influence education, training, and supervised experience. So important are training and other preparatory experiences with religion and spirituality for professional psychology, the APA has included them under the purview of their standards for graduate school accreditation (e.g., APA, 2007). The field of professional psychology generally, and the APA specifically, val-

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MICHAEL J. VOGEL received a MA in clinical psychology from George Fox University. He is currently a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology at George Fox University. His primary research interests pertain to the clinical implications of religious and spiritual diversity, the process of clinical supervision, and the identification of barriers to treatment.

MARK R. McMINN received a PhD in clinical psychology from Vanderbilt University, and is Board Certified in Clinical Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology. He is currently a professor of psychology at George Fox University. His primary research interests pertain to spiritual and religious issues in psychotherapy, technology and practice, and a positive psychology of food.

MARY A. PETERSON received a PhD in clinical psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology, and is Board Certified in Clinical Psychology through the American Board of Professional Psychology. She is currently Department Chairperson and Associate Professor at George Fox University. Her research interests include primary care psychology and clinical training.

KATHLEEN A. GATHERCOAL received a PhD in developmental psychology from Case Western Reserve University. She is currently a professor of psychology at George Fox University. Her research interests include the history of psychology, program evaluations, and the implications of post-modern philosophy in psychology.

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THIS ARTICLE should be addressed to Michael J. Vogel, Department of Psychology, George Fox University, 414 North Meridian Street, #V104, Newberg, OR 97132. E-mail: [mvogel08@georgefox.edu](mailto:mvogel08@georgefox.edu)

ues doctoral training in religious and spiritual diversity as a matter of professional ethics and conduct. The recent launch of a new journal, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, also suggests that the APA is investing more attention in religion and spirituality as dimensions of diversity, as does the spate of books on the topic being published by APA Books (e.g., Aten & Leach, 2008; Aten, McMinn, & Worthington, 2011; Miller, 1999; Plante, 2009; Richards & Bergin, 2000, 2005; Shafranske, 1996; Sperry & Shafranske, 2004).

## Religion and Spirituality

As constructs, *religion* and *spirituality* have grown increasingly elusive and debatable because of the historical and lexical shifts that have occurred within psychological science. William James (1902/1961) suggested that religion was a personal phenomenon intended to unite oneself with the divine. Presumably, he held spirituality equivalent to the ideological commitments within an organized system or inherited tradition. For James, religion encompassed spirituality, and to speak of one was to speak of both; there was no need for differentiation. This view seemed to prevail throughout 20th century psychological research, which has emphasized the personal expressions of religiosity without reference to its communal aspects or variations from spirituality (Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Pargament, 1997).

More recently, a trend has emerged in the literature to view religion and spirituality as distinct and rather independent constructs (Hill et al., 2000; Hood, 2003; Plante, 2009; Wulff, 1997; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Miller and Thoresen (1999), for instance, suggested that all people were spiritual, the broader of the two constructs, but not everyone could be considered religious. Empirical support for this conceptual shift seems to come from the findings that a small portion of the American population identifies as spiritual rather than religious (Gallup, 2003). Members of the APA, too, have endorsed that their spiritual beliefs were more important to them than their religious ones (McMinn, Hathaway, Woods, & Snow, 2009).

Whether or not religion and spirituality are truly two sides of the same coin, two coins altogether, or anything else is yet disputable. Psychologists have nevertheless come to a general agreement about one thing: the relationship between religion and spirituality is multidimensional and complex. In fact, religion and spirituality may be distinct constructs that unite as complements in the search for the sacred across several spectrums of experience (cf. Hill & Pargament, 2003; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). By way of simplistic analogy, grammar serves as a vehicle for meaning just as religion, perhaps, serves as a vehicle for spirituality; the structure of one perfects the essence of the other. Although religion and spirituality have been distinguished in the present study, the assumption remains that they share a complementary relationship. Continuing to distinguish them is done in hopes of acknowledging the growing number of people, both psychologists and laypeople, who also make this distinction.

Those living in the United States tend to be highly committed to their religious convictions (Gallup Polls, 2009). To be sure, polls over the past several decades have consistently revealed that the majority of adults profess belief in God and that most claim to be at least fairly religious (e.g., Gallup Polls, 2009). Religious belief is so prevalent that 94% of Americans tend to identify with a particular affiliation, and 55% attend services at a church or

synagogue once a month or more (Gallup Polls, 2009; Gallup & Lindsay, 1999). These religious communities in which the majority of Americans participate have been reported to serve the lives of congregants in meaningful, important ways (Ellison & George, 1994). Whether viewed as a function of religious orthopraxy or spiritual exercise, 90% of Americans choose to engage in prayer on a regular basis (Gallup Organization, 1991). Clearly, religion and spirituality are important for most Americans.

It would seem, however, that psychologists are not as personally invested in religious commitments as the individuals they serve. Indeed, they are significantly less likely to attend a church, synagogue, or mosque than most of the U.S. population and also tend to disregard religious affiliations, beliefs, and values (Delaney, Miller, & Bisonó, 2007; Shafranske, 2000). Delaney et al. (2007) reported that, compared with the general public, clinical psychologists in the APA were about half as likely to be theistic, significantly less likely to pray, and more than three times more likely to describe religion as unimportant to their lives. The underrepresentation of religiosity (and presumably spirituality) within the psychological community could have both positive and negative consequences. Standing outside of religious traditions might provide psychologists with a useful vantage point from which they can evaluate the psychological implications of particular faith beliefs and practices of religious communities, such as teachings that promote oppression, misunderstanding, and discrimination. Conversely, it might render psychologists less aware and appreciative of religious beliefs and communities, especially if religious diversity is not covered adequately when training psychologists. Schulte, Skinner, and Claiborn (2002) note that, at their worst, nonreligious or religiously uninformed professionals might impose these values on their clients in an insensitive manner.

There is a case to be made that, as dimensions of diversity, religion and spirituality are inherently valuable and deserve attention from professional psychologists at all stages of training and practice. However, that reasoning only begins to scratch the surface. As conceptualizations of diversity are refined and become increasingly sophisticated, psychologists are beginning to appreciate the fusion among religion, spirituality, and all other dimensions of diversity (cf. Constantine, 1999). Religion and spirituality have been recognized as integral to understanding the racial and cultural identities of most, if not all, Americans (Cross, 1995; Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995). The ethnic and racial identities of American Indians and African Americans, for instance, cannot be fully appreciated without first investing serious attention into the study of their relevant religious and spiritual commitments (Choney, Berryhill-Paapke, & Robbins, 1995; Leong et al., 1995). Training in religious and spiritual diversity is necessary not only in and of itself, but also for its value in appreciating other dimensions.

## Current Training With Religious and Spiritual Diversity

Training in professional psychology generally, and as it relates to religion and spirituality specifically, spans many domains and modalities. Although the task of preparing trainees to meet the needs of religiously and spiritually diverse populations seems daunting, it is also necessary to help endow students with the tools to act with basic competency and sensitivity. Fortunately, those called to train future generations of professional psychologists in

these matters are not without resources. [Aten and Hernandez \(2004\)](#), for instance, have adapted a model to address religion and spirituality in clinical supervision. Similarly, [Worthington and colleagues \(2009\)](#) have advocated for a matching model to systematically train therapists (at secular programs) in clinical practice and research. These approaches represent the beginning stages of a movement seeking to provide trainees with the knowledge and skills necessary to address religious and spiritual issues. Many APA training programs have models to help guide their training efforts in religious and spiritual diversity.

Despite the ethical commitments, professional interests, sheer prevalence of religiosity and spirituality among the American population, and availability of relevant training resources, it seems that most psychological training programs have generally neglected to incorporate content from these areas of diversity into their curricula ([Hage, 2006](#); [Hage, Hopson, Siegel, Payton, & DeFanti, 2006](#)). This is a matter of concern in that practicing psychologists will almost certainly serve clients with religious commitments within the context of their therapeutic work ([Eck, 2002](#); [Watts, 2001](#); [Yarhouse & VanOrman, 1999](#)), and prior clinical training will predict their willingness to address religious and spiritual issues ([Hathaway, Scott, & Garver, 2004](#)). Furthermore, clients have indicated a preference for the inclusion of these dimensions in the context of therapy ([Ganje-Fling, Veach, Kuang, & Houg, 2000](#); [Rose, Westefeld, & Ansley, 2001](#)), even regarding therapists who incorporate spirituality and religion to be more competent than other therapists ([McCullough & Worthington, 1995](#)).

Within the past decade, only five known survey studies have been reported regarding the adequacy of religion and spirituality training among doctoral students in professional psychology. Three of these have been surveys of doctoral program directors of training ([Brawer, Handal, Fabricatore, Roberts, & Wajda-Johnston, 2002](#); [Schafer, Handal, & Brawer, 2011](#); [Schulte et al., 2002](#)), one has studied training directors at doctoral internship sites ([Russell & Yarhouse, 2006](#)), and one investigated doctoral student perspectives on diversity training, though little attention was given to religion and spirituality was not considered ([Green, Callands, Radcliffe, Luebbe, & Klonoff, 2009](#)). These studies indicate that systematic efforts to train psychologists in religious and spiritual diversity are limited, at best. Because perspectives on religious and spirituality training may vary over time ([Schafer et al., 2011](#)), and perhaps based on the role held by various respondents, it is difficult to determine contemporary perspectives on religious and spiritual diversity training from multiple informants.

The current study focused on the need for a comprehensive, multidimensional evaluation of APA training programs with regard to religious and spiritual diversity. Five identified roles were included: Directors of Clinical Training (DCTs) for doctoral students, Training Directors (TDs) for predoctoral interns, faculty for doctoral students, doctoral students, and predoctoral interns. Eight sources of learning were also considered in this study to identify the modalities being commonly employed throughout each stage of doctoral training.

### **A Multidimensional Study on Religious and Spiritual Diversity Training**

A total of 532 doctoral students, doctoral-level faculty, DCTs at doctoral programs, predoctoral interns, and TDs at predoctoral internship sites were invited to participate in the present study.

Parallel forms of a survey were constructed to assess training efforts in either religious or spiritual diversity. The survey materials were returned by 325 participants (a 61.1% return rate), although only 292 completed the questionnaire (a 54.9% inclusion rate). All participants were recruited from a random sample of 50 doctoral programs in clinical or counseling psychology and 60 predoctoral psychology internships in good standing with APA accreditation bodies. The participants were 204 females and 88 males ranging in age from 22 to 73 ( $M = 35.66$ ,  $SD = 11.55$ ). Most self-identified as non-Hispanic White (77.19%), whereas some participants self-identified as Asian (6.67%), Black (6.32%), Hispanic/Latino (5.96%), Native American (1.05%), or Other (2.81%). The participants indicated that they were affiliated with a Scientist-Practitioner (57.64%), Practitioner-Scholar (32.29%), Local Clinical Scientist (9.38%), or Other (0.69%) model of training. Among the doctoral students, 11.81% ( $n = 15$ ) were in their first year of graduate school, 18.11% ( $n = 23$ ) were in their second year, 30.71% ( $n = 39$ ) were in their third year, 21.26% ( $n = 27$ ) were in their fourth year, 15.75% ( $n = 20$ ) were in their fifth year, and 2.36% ( $n = 3$ ) were in their sixth year. On a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*Not at all important; I have none*) to 5 (*Extremely important; it is the center of my life*), participants were asked to rate their religiosity and spirituality. Both were rated in the moderate ranges, with religion ( $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) being lower than spirituality ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ),  $t(291) = 11.72$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = .57$ .

In the spring of 2011, information and survey materials were sent to the campus mailboxes of 90 doctoral-level, tenure-track faculty from 50 APA-accredited programs. APA accredited programs were determined from the APA website, and faculty were randomly selected after being identified from the programs' websites. All doctoral-level faculty were mailed an envelope containing a letter inviting their informed consent to participate, a \$2 incentive for their consideration to participate, a survey of their perceptions of training in either religious or spiritual diversity, and a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher. They were also sent a separate postcard on which they could indicate their willingness to disseminate information and survey materials to doctoral students in their program. Using the tailored design method ([Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008](#)), a series of follow-up emails were then sent to participants and faculty liaisons approximately 1 and 3 weeks after the initial contact. A total of 41 faculty surveys (45.6%) were included in data analyses, including 21 surveys emphasizing training in religious diversity and 20 surveys emphasizing training in spiritual diversity. Information and survey materials were then sent through these faculty liaisons to 256 doctoral students from 50 APA-accredited programs of which 127 were included in data analyses (a 49.6% response rate), including 80 surveys emphasizing training in religious diversity and 47 surveys emphasizing training in spiritual diversity.

A total of 50 DCTs at APA-accredited doctoral programs were also invited to participate, using a similar method as with faculty. A total of 27 surveys (54.0%) were included in data analyses, including 13 surveys emphasizing training in religious diversity and 14 surveys emphasizing training in spiritual diversity.

To get the perspectives of interns and internships TDs, information and survey materials were sent to the campus mailboxes of 60 TDs at APA-accredited predoctoral internship programs. A total of 38 surveys (63.3%) were included in data analyses, in-

cluding 21 surveys emphasizing training in religious diversity and 17 surveys emphasizing training in spiritual diversity. They were also asked to disseminate invitations to 76 predoctoral interns, resulting in 59 surveys (77.6%) included in data analyses. The predoctoral interns returned 36 surveys emphasizing training in religious diversity and 23 surveys emphasizing training in spiritual diversity.

### Combining Religion and Spirituality Questionnaires

Parallel surveys were constructed to measure the perceptions of diversity training from each of the identified roles of training. One set of surveys emphasized training in religious diversity, whereas the other set emphasized training in spiritual diversity. All forms of the survey instrument that were sent to participants involved with doctoral training contained 28 items in total. An item about coursework was omitted on the survey instruments sent to participants involved with predoctoral internship, who received forms with 27 items in total. The surveys were divided into two sections: one to measure the perceived effectiveness of diversity training and another to measure the perceived frequency with which various methods of training are used. The first section, measuring the perceived effectiveness of training, contained 19 items and used a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*) to determine the extent to which participants agree with statements about the diversity training at their particular programs. Items 1 to 7 assessed basic competency in religion or spirituality vis-à-vis other hallmark dimensions of diversity, whereas items 8 to 19 examined advanced competency in either religious or spiritual diversity. The second section, measuring the perceived frequency of training methods, contained either 8 or 9 items and also used a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *Never to Always*) to gauge the perceptions being offered by participants on training practices.

To help determine the most appropriate analyses, a  $2 \times 5$  multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was first conducted with the 7 types of diversity as dependent variables (see Table 1). The independent variables were Condition (religious diversity questionnaire vs. spiritual diversity questionnaire) and Station (doctoral student, doctoral faculty, doctoral DCT, intern, internship TD). A main effect was discovered for Station, Wilks'  $\lambda$  (28, 997) = .824,  $p$  = .002, but not for Condition. A similar analysis was conducted for the 12 items that measured perceived effectiveness of training (see Table 2). Again, a main effect was discovered for Station, Wilks'  $\lambda$  (48, 1011) = .561,  $p$  < .001, with no main effect for Condition. A main effect was also discovered for the seven perceived frequency items (see Table 3) based on Station, Wilks'  $\lambda$  (28, 773) = .678,  $p$  < .001, but not for Condition. Based on these findings, the data from the surveys emphasizing religion and those emphasizing spirituality were combined for subsequent analyses. Though there are theoretical and substantive differences between religion and spirituality, respondents did not report receiving more or less training in spirituality than religion. Thus, the remainder of results and discussion will refer to the joint construct of religion and spirituality, as data from the two conditions are combined.

### Item and Station Differences

Table 1 shows the ratings on the seven items measuring perceived effectiveness of diversity training, rank ordered from the highest to lowest in perceived effectiveness. A repeated-measures MANOVA showed overall differences in the item scores, justifying a profile analysis where each item was compared with the following item on the rank ordered list using a paired-sample  $t$  test. Items that are significantly different from the preceding item are identified in Table 1. Group differences were also found among the Stations, which were further explored using Scheffé post hoc tests.

Table 1  
Item and Group Differences in Perceived Effectiveness of Religious and Spiritual Diversity Training

Item <sup>a</sup>	Overall ( $n = 292$ )	Doctoral students ( $n = 127$ )	Doctoral faculty ( $n = 41$ )	Doctoral DCTs ( $n = 27$ )	Pre-doctoral interns ( $n = 59$ )	Intern TDs ( $n = 38$ )	Group diff
Issues related to ethnic and racial diversity	4.32	4.31	4.28	4.52	4.14	4.51	T > I
Issues related to socioeconomic diversity	4.07*	4.02	3.95	4.07	4.12	4.31	—
Issues related to gender diversity	3.78*	3.72	3.95	4.19	3.46	4.05	T, D > I
Issues related to sexual orientation diversity	3.75	3.65	3.98	4.11	3.42	4.05	T, D > I
Issues related to diversity pertaining to disabilities	3.45*	3.35	3.28	3.63	3.27	4.10	T > F, I, S
Issues related to age diversity	3.44	3.31	3.55	3.44	3.39	3.82	—
Issues related to religious/spiritual diversity	3.40	3.25	3.40	3.44	3.37	3.90	T > S

Note. Possible scale responses for each item range from 1 to 5, with 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Items arranged in descending order based on overall (aggregate) ratings of perceived training effectiveness in religious and spiritual diversity (which are combined). Group diff refers to group differences (Scheffe test,  $\alpha$  = .05) for particular items, where S = doctoral students, F = doctoral faculty, D = doctoral DCTs, I = pre-doctoral interns, and T = internship TDs. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences between the five Stations with regard to gender diversity,  $F(4, 287) = 5.05, p < .001$ , ethnic and racial diversity,  $F(4, 287) = 2.62, p = .035$ , sexual orientation diversity,  $F(4, 287) = 4.93, p < .001$ , diversity pertaining to disabilities,  $F(4, 287) = 5.81, p < .001$ , as well as religious and spiritual diversity,  $F(4, 287) = 3.24, p = .013$ .

<sup>a</sup> Parallel items emphasizing religious diversity combined with those emphasizing spiritual diversity for data analyses.

\* Indicates rating significantly lower than the preceding item at the  $p < .001$  level, using a paired-samples  $t$ -test.

Table 2

*Item and Group Differences in Perceived Effectiveness of Religious and Spiritual Diversity Training, Advanced Competency*

Item <sup>a</sup>	Overall ( <i>n</i> = 292)	Doctoral students ( <i>n</i> = 127)	Doctoral faculty ( <i>n</i> = 41)	Doctoral DCTs ( <i>n</i> = 27)	Pre-doctoral interns ( <i>n</i> = 59)	Intern TDs ( <i>n</i> = 38)	Group diff
18. Considering religion/spirituality when determining whether behavior is abnormal	3.66	3.68	3.64	3.60	3.61	3.77	—
9. Case conceptualization in light of clients' religious/spiritual values	3.40***	3.22	3.36	3.60	3.46	3.86	T > S
8. Ethical guidelines and professional standards for religion/spirituality	3.11***	3.02	3.13	3.16	3.15	3.31	—
14. Conducting research that is sensitive to religious/spiritual diversity	2.86***	2.91	3.33	3.24	2.58	2.31	D, F > T, F > I
13. Self-reflective practices during work with religious/spiritual clients	3.07**	2.70	3.03	3.44	3.37	3.63	T > S, I > S
12. Countertransference issues with religiously/spiritually committed clients	2.89**	2.46	2.92	3.08	3.29	3.60	T > S, I > S
10. Assessment methods that consider religion/spirituality in clients' lives	2.86	2.66	2.90	3.00	2.92	3.34	T > S
19. Views of personhood from the perspectives of major religions/spiritualities	2.76	2.73	2.67	2.88	2.86	2.69	—
16. Consultation skills related to religious/spiritual diversity	2.62*	2.54	2.36	2.72	2.64	3.11	T > F
15. Understanding the major world religions/spiritualities	2.52	2.42	2.51	2.84	2.51	2.71	—
11. Implementing religious/spiritual interventions in clinical work	2.46	2.22	2.28	2.56	2.73	2.97	T > S
17. Interdisciplinary collaboration with religious/spiritual leaders	2.35	2.16	2.28	2.60	2.42	2.80	—

*Note.* Possible scale responses for each item range from 1 to 5, with 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Items arranged in descending order based on overall (aggregate) ratings of perceived training effectiveness in religious and spiritual diversity (which are combined). Group diff refers to group differences (Scheffe test,  $\alpha = .05$ ) for particular items, where S = doctoral students, F = doctoral faculty, D = doctoral DCTs, I = pre-doctoral interns, and T = intern TDs. Significant differences were found between the Stations with regard to case conceptualization,  $F(4, 287) = 2.79, p = .027$ , assessment,  $F(4, 286) = 3.64, p = .007$ , implementation of interventions,  $F(4, 286) = 4.70, p < .001$ , countertransference,  $F(4, 283) = 11.94, p < .001$ , self-reflective practices,  $F(4, 286) = 7.54, p < .001$ , research,  $F(4, 284) = 5.67, p < .001$ , consultation,  $F(4, 285) = 2.68, p = .032$ , and interdisciplinary collaboration,  $F(4, 287) = 2.93, p = .021$ .

<sup>a</sup> Parallel items emphasizing religious diversity combined with those emphasizing spiritual diversity for data analyses.

\* Indicates rating significantly lower than the preceding item at the  $p < .05$  level. \*\* Indicates rating significantly lower than the preceding item at the  $p < .01$  level. \*\*\* Indicates rating significantly lower than the preceding item at the  $p < .001$  level.

Similarly, Tables 2 and 3 show ratings on the 12 items measuring perceived effectiveness in diversity training with advanced competency in religious and spiritual diversity emphasized and ratings on the nine sources of learning, respectively.

## Implications

### Distinguishing Religion and Spirituality

No significant differences were found between perceptions of training in religious and spiritual dimensions of diversity, though the respondents self-identified as significantly more spiritual than religious in their personal lives, which was consistent with previous research findings (e.g., McMinn et al., 2009). These findings raise questions about whether or not adequate disambiguation between the constructs of religion and spirituality has occurred within the training programs of professional psychologists. Whereas respondents noted a

personal distinction between religion and spirituality, the failure to find differences between corresponding training efforts may have been the artifact of a time when religion and spirituality went undifferentiated within professional psychology. On the other hand, it is possible that the findings indicate both have been relatively neglected in terms of training and correspondingly subjected to a floor effect.

### Basic Competency in Religion and Spirituality

Respondents reported a hierarchy among the items measuring the training effectiveness in areas of basic competency. Training in ethnic and racial diversity was perceived to be most effective, though pre-doctoral interns tended to be significantly less confident about the overall effectiveness of their training than were intern TDs. Socio-economic status (SES) was perceived to be the second-most effectively trained tier of diversity. This is interesting in light of previous research that showed most doctoral students neglected to include SES

Table 3

*Item and Group Differences in Perceived Frequency of Religious and Spiritual Diversity Training by Source of Learning*

Item	Overall ( <i>n</i> = 292)	Doctoral students ( <i>n</i> = 127)	Doctoral faculty ( <i>n</i> = 41)	Doctoral DCTs ( <i>n</i> = 27)	Pre-doctoral interns ( <i>n</i> = 59)	Intern TDs ( <i>n</i> = 38)	Group diff
22. Practicum Experiences (e.g., supervision, client contact) <sup>a</sup>	3.27	3.14	2.93	3.44	3.38	3.69	—
23. Peer Interaction (e.g., student-led dialogue, peer feedback) <sup>b</sup>	3.14*	3.02	2.89	3.33	3.33	3.34	—
21. Advisers and Mentors	2.95**	2.85	2.86	3.17	2.94	3.28	—
26. Extracurricular Pursuits (e.g., conferences, voluntary readings)	2.90	2.80	2.64	3.22	3.00	3.09	—
27. Research (e.g., peer-reviewed articles)	2.80	2.81	2.89	3.11	2.67	2.72	—
25. Didactics, seminars, and/or grand rounds	2.80**	2.48	2.57	2.83	2.98	3.78	T > D, F, I > S
24. Personal therapy	2.18	2.02	2.36	2.56	2.27	2.19	—
20. Coursework (e.g., assigned readings, class projects) <sup>c,d</sup>	2.82	2.77	2.64	3.39	—	—	D > S

*Note.* Possible scale responses for each item range from 1 to 5, with 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, and 5 = *Always*. Doctoral students, doctoral faculty, and doctoral DCTs asked to rate perceived frequency of religious diversity training related to doctoral studies, whereas pre-doctoral interns and intern TDs asked to rate perceived frequency of religious diversity training related to pre-doctoral internship. Open item concerning the use of other sources of learning omitted from data analyses due to limited responses. Items arranged in descending order based on overall ratings of training effectiveness in religious and spiritual diversity (which are combined). Group diff refers to group differences (Scheffe test,  $\alpha = .05$ ) for particular items, where S = doctoral students, F = doctoral faculty, D = doctoral DCTs, I = pre-doctoral interns, and T = intern TDs. Significant differences were found between the Stations with regard to the perceived frequency of training by means of practicum experiences,  $F(4, 283) = 2.94, p = .021$ , peer interaction,  $F(4, 283) = 2.71, p = .031$ , as well as didactics, seminars, and grand rounds,  $F(4, 279) = 12.74, p < .001$ . The item pertaining to the use of coursework was analyzed in a separate one-way ANOVA incorporating the ratings of only those Stations involved with doctoral studies (i.e., doctoral students, doctoral faculty, and doctoral DCTs). Significant differences between these Stations were found,  $F(2, 189) = 3.94, p = .021$ , with a post hoc Scheffe test indicating that doctoral DCTs perceive coursework to be used more frequently for religious and spiritual diversity training than doctoral students.

<sup>a</sup> Wording of items concerning practicum experiences slightly altered to reflect training during pre-doctoral internship. <sup>b</sup> Wording of items concerning peer interaction slightly altered to reflect training during pre-doctoral internship. <sup>c</sup> Omitted from survey of pre-doctoral interns and intern TDs. <sup>d</sup> Doctoral DCTs did not acknowledge use of other sources of learning; overall rating based only on responses of Stations involved in doctoral studies.

\* Indicates rating significantly lower than the preceding item at the  $p < .05$  level. \*\* Indicates rating significantly lower than the preceding item at the  $p < .001$  level.

in their personal definitions of diversity (Green et al., 2009). Gender diversity and diversity of sexual orientation came next on the perceived hierarchy of training effectiveness, and significant differences were found among the perceptions of interns and training directors regarding these dimensions of diversity, with the latter appearing more confident that training was effective than the former. At the bottom of the perceived hierarchy of training effectiveness were the dimensions of diversity pertaining to disabilities, age, religion, and spirituality. Respondents perceived training in these areas as moderately effective, with intern TDs tending to be most confident about training efforts.

### Advanced Competency in Religion and Spirituality

The survey items intended to measure advanced competency with religious and spiritual diversity indicated that training efforts were quite varied across APA-accredited programs. Even with the broad range of training efforts, several themes are apparent in the data. One is that respondents from each of the identified roles perceived trainees to be moderately well prepared to account from religion and spirituality when determining whether behaviors were abnormal. Respondents also believed that current training efforts fostered familiarity with the ethical guidelines and professional standards relevant to religious and spiritual issues. On the surface these findings suggest that guidelines advanced through the *Ethics*

*Code* (APA, 2002) are being realized in training programs, which would deserve a good deal of recognition and praise. Another apparent theme is that respondents perceived training efforts around case conceptualization and self-reflective practices with religious and spiritual diversity to be moderately effective. Taken together, the results suggest that some areas of advanced competency are being moderately well supported during training at APA-accredited programs.

There are also concerning themes apparent in the data with regard to training in religious and spiritual diversity. Respondents implied that trainees were generally unprepared to address countertransference reactions that might arise during their clinical work with clients who identify as religiously or spiritually committed. It should be noted that doctoral students were least optimistic about this area of advanced competency, which might actually represent their general sense of clinical inexperience rather than a particular bias against religious or spiritual diversity. This explanation also seems tenable for the neglect perceived in training efforts with regard to considering religion and spirituality while conducting assessment with clients. Respondents noted that trainees were not learning about the ways clients who identify as religious and spiritual viewed personhood. Perhaps this finding is most telling about the training efforts with regard to these areas of advanced competency, as it seems the anthropological assumptions

(e.g., mind-body dualism) of religiously and spiritually committed clients have not been considered at most APA-accredited programs. This raises some potential concerns about how adequately trainees have really been prepared to address religion and spirituality in their clinical work, as they seem to experience limited training in these areas of practice.

Respondents generally agreed that some advanced competencies have been neglected in training. Most training programs have not prepared trainees to understand the basic worldview assumptions (e.g., metaphysics, ethics) of clients who identify as religious and spiritual. Perhaps not all that unexpectedly, the respondents also indicated that trainees have not been prepared to implement religious and spiritual interventions into their clinical practice even with the many informative resources that exist (e.g., [Aten & Leach, 2008](#); [Aten et al., 2011](#); [Miller, 1999](#); [Plante, 2009](#); [Sperry & Shafranske, 2004](#)). Two other advanced competencies situated at the bottom tier of training in professional psychology might rightly be juxtaposed with an ethical guideline from the APA. The *Ethics Code* (APA, 2002) clearly stipulates that professional psychologists ought to consider consulting and/or making referrals when working with populations outside of the boundaries of their competence (see Standard 2.01a). The field of professional psychology very much values collaboration with other disciplines, including those whose focus is religious and/or spiritual issues. However, respondents from nearly every station indicated that trainees were not being prepared to consult or make referrals across disciplines for their clients who identify as religious and spiritual. These sorts of training standards are unsatisfactory for professional psychology at present-day, as there are now a number of relevant resources available to those involved with training (e.g., [McMinn, Aikins, & Lish, 2003](#)).

### Sources of Learning

APA-accredited doctoral programs and predoctoral internships were largely perceived as relying on informal, unmethodical, and unsystematic sources of learning to provide training in religious and spiritual diversity. The respondents from every station indicated that trainees most frequently learned about religion and spirituality through their clinical experiences, particularly through their supervision and contact with clients. This suggests that these dimensions of diversity are primarily discussed in reaction to events that occur in the clinical setting; trainers may rarely bring up religion and spirituality proactively. The next most frequent source of learning for trainees was believed to be peer interaction, a finding that was generally consistent with previous research (e.g., [Choi, Gray, Gregg, Gathercoal, & Peterson, 2011](#)). This suggests that trainees more often consult with each other than with trainers, identifying those peers with religious and spiritual backgrounds as experts or representatives. Perhaps most concerning about these findings, trainers are depending on these sources of learning to the exclusion of others; clinical experiences and peer interactions are the only sources of learning above 3 on a 5-point scale.

To know how trainees are learning is one thing; to know how they are not is another. Respondents indicated that trainees do not often learn about religious and spiritual diversity from their advisers and mentors. Perhaps this finding represents the power differential that exists between trainees and trainers, although it also seems to represent missed opportunities for professional guidance

and learning. Neither were extracurricular pursuits, such as professional conferences and voluntary readings, perceived to be frequent sources of spiritual and religious diversity training. It seems that trainees rarely access the many professional resources available to them, either through the APA (e.g., Division 36 Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality) or other professional organizations (e.g., Christian Association of Psychological Studies). Coursework is infrequently assigned to doctoral students for the purpose of religious and spiritual diversity training. Respondents also indicated that trainees do not often learn about religious and spiritual diversity from the growing body of professional literature on these topics. Respondents differed in how frequently they believed didactics, seminars, and grand rounds were used for religious and spiritual diversity training. Whereas intern TDs perceived that these sources of learning were often used, doctoral students perceived that they were rarely used for such purposes. These differences almost certainly represent the training modifications that occur in the transition between doctoral programs and predoctoral internships, which tend to rely more on these sources of learning. Be that as it may, intern TDs believed that didactics, seminars, and grand rounds were being used significantly more often than did predoctoral interns.

### Recommendations

As professional interest continues to mount toward religion and spirituality, it seems likely that training at APA-accredited programs will reflect these changes. Future research should be conducted to monitor any progress to training curricula that might occur as a consequence of these changes, both considering the perspectives of trainers and trainees. Diversity training in professional psychology ought to be ongoing and regularly monitored.

Based on current information, it appears that professional psychologists may hold a double standard toward religious and spiritual diversity, perceiving these dimensions to be significantly less important than several others (e.g., gender, ethnicity). The prevalence of these dimensions of diversity in the U.S. population must be considered throughout the course of training for many reasons, including their relevance as protective or adaptive factors (see [Plante & Sharma, 2001](#)). The following recommendations are offered using a top-down approach, beginning with the organizational level and proceeding toward the individual level.

### Ethics

The APA *Ethics Codes* have done well to include religion explicitly for more than two decades, which may have once been thought to encompass both religion and spirituality. Because the U.S. population has begun to differentiate religion and spirituality, as have those in professional psychology, the APA should consider accounting for these cultural shifts in future *Ethics Codes*. Spirituality should become as explicit a dimension of diversity as religion or ethnicity. There should also be continued effort toward practice guidelines for working with religious and spiritual clients ([Hathaway & Ripley, 2009](#)).

### Licensure and Continuing Education

Although standards for licensure may differ among states, it makes sense for the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards

(ASPPB) to audit and review its Examination for Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP) to gauge its sensitivity to issues of religious and spiritual diversity. The EPPP is often used for licensing purposes, and therefore it should reflect subject matter that is relevant to practice in the United States and Canada. With support from the APA, the Item Development Committee of the ASPPB should consider the inclusion of religion and spirituality under the rubric for Social and Multicultural Bases of Behavior. Licensure is an ongoing process for professional psychologists, and it tends to require a substantial amount of continuing education (CE) credits. Taking this into account, the APA should strongly encourage (and perhaps incentivize) independent studies and workshops for CEs emphasizing religious and spiritual diversity.

### Accreditation for Training Programs

All programs in the current study were in good standing with the CoA, the accrediting body of the APA whose guidelines (APA, 2007) explicitly promote training efforts related to multicultural diversity. Because these findings suggest that several dimensions of diversity have been neglected, the CoA should reconsider its process for reviewing training related to these areas and provide remediation plans to negligent or inadequate programs. Programs in the APA should be encouraged to implement curriculum additions and modifications to better account for religious and spiritual diversity during training. The APA deeply values multicultural diversity, and negligence in addressing these dimensions—religion, spirituality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or otherwise—during training is entirely preventable.

### Faculty Recruitment and Retention

Programs accredited by the APA should promote the visibility of religious and spiritual diversity by recruiting faculty with expertise in these areas. When faculty identify themselves as having expertise in religion or spirituality, then programs should actively retain these individuals and encourage them to serve as mentors for trainees with shared interests. At the same time, programs should assure that all faculty have basic competency in these areas.

Religious and spiritual diversity training in professional psychology is pluralistic, which means that atheism, agnosticism, and particular religious and spiritual beliefs are all legitimate topics for critical appraisal, scientific study, and professional discourse. Still, diversity training requires a degree of tolerance, which means that expressions of hostility toward religion and spirituality, whether overt or covert, should not be tolerated among faculty any more than similar comments directed toward other areas of human diversity.

### Curricula Modifications

The finding that religion and spirituality were most often addressed in the context of supervision implies a reactive stance to training, where these areas are only brought up when religion is a particularly salient resource or concern. This is an out-of-sight-out-of-mind approach, and should be considered far from ideal. It seems that APA-accredited programs seldom offer proactive training opportunities with emphases on religious and spiritual diversity, dimensions which often become incorporated into a survey curriculum of multicultural diversity (Russell & Yarhouse, 2006).

Just as training programs support curricula emphasizing sexuality, ethnicity, and gender, they should also promote curricula with emphases on religion and spirituality.

### Literature

There is a growing body of scientific and theoretical literature related to religion and spirituality, much of which is available through the APA Publications Office (e.g., *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*). Despite the abundance of peer-reviewed articles and books, trainees are seldom accessing these types of resources. Training programs should thus do more to incorporate literature on religious and spiritual diversity into their preparatory efforts. To accomplish this objective, trainers may assign readings from peer-reviewed articles as well as books published by the APA with an explicit focus on religion and spirituality in psychological practice (e.g., Aten et al., 2011; Miller, 1999; Plante, 2009; Richards & Bergin, 2000, 2005; Sperry & Shafranske, 2004). As trainees more regularly access the scientific and theoretical literature, they almost certainly will become more familiar with the worldview assumptions (e.g., metaphysics, ethics) held by many religious and spiritual clients.

### Extracurricular Pursuits

Both inside and outside of the APA, there are extracurricular pursuits related to religious and spirituality available to those in professional psychology. Inside of the APA, Division 36 (Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality) regularly offers events at Mid-Year Conferences and the Annual Conventions of the APA. There are also professional organizations outside of the APA facilitating reflection on professional psychology from particular religious and spiritual perspectives (e.g., Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Institute for Sufi Psychology). Trainees should be encouraged to participate in these sorts of extracurricular pursuits, thereby affording them opportunities to network and consult with professionals who have expertise in these areas, while also providing them with didactic opportunities for development.

### Collaboration and Consultation

Trainees in the current study were seldom learning to collaborate or consult with religious and spiritual leaders. In light of how little preparation trainees receive in these areas, ethical concerns with regard to scope of competence seem warranted. Training programs should therefore promote interdisciplinary collaboration between trainees and religious or spiritual leaders, emphasizing for trainees that these relationships should be considered multidirectional (McMinn et al., 2003). This allows trainees to build a referral base while also networking with experts in various religious and spiritual disciplines, which almost certainly will promote greater interdisciplinary consultation. Training programs should also provide opportunities for consultation with religious or spiritual leaders through the use of guest lecturers, helping trainees to understand other worldviews and develop a common dialogue (cf. Plante, 2003).

### Self-Awareness

Professional psychologists value self-awareness, although the current findings suggest that trainees might not be growing more

self-aware in their work with religious and spiritual clients. Trainees were not all that prepared to practice self-reflection while working with clients who identify as spiritual or religious, and were even less prepared to explore their countertransference to these dimensions of diversity. Although there are several ways to become more self-aware, personal therapy might be one of the most effective for professional psychologists (cf. Daw & Joseph, 2007; Pope & Tabachnick, 1994). Where self-awareness is lacking, particularly around issues of religious and spiritual diversity, both trainers and trainees should be strongly encouraged to participate in personal therapy. Biases toward religious and spiritual diversity cannot be addressed if they are not brought into awareness, suggesting that training programs should cultivate an environment willing to identify, confront, and defy these attitudes.

### Conclusion

Among APA-accredited training programs in professional psychology, there appears to be a distinct hierarchy of prominence among the dimensions of diversity, with relatively little attention given to the dimensions of diversity pertaining to disabilities, age, religion, and spirituality. Trainees also receive minimal preparation in consultation and collaboration with religious or spiritual leaders. Furthermore, it appears that doctoral programs and predoctoral internships are relying on informal and unsystematic sources of learning to provide training in religious and spiritual dimensions of diversity. The most common sources of learning used to prepare doctoral students and predoctoral interns are clinical experiences and peer interaction, whereas the least used included coursework, research and didactics, seminars, and grand rounds. Training programs willing to better incorporate these dimensions into their curricula will become more enriched and effective.

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