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# Spiritual Directors and Clinical Psychologists: A Comparison of Mental Health and Spiritual Values (Taken from Chapter 3 of Spiritual Formation, Counseling, and Psychotherapy)

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## **SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS: A COMPARISON OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SPIRITUAL VALUES**

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We surveyed a total of 315 spiritual directors, psychologist members of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), and psychologist members of the American Psychological Association (APA) to determine their respective values on ten mental health themes derived from Jensen and Bergin (1988), and three spirituality scales drawn from the writings of John of the Cross. All three groups endorsed the value of expressing feelings, personal autonomy and maturity, and integrating work and leisure. CAPS psychologists and spiritual directors endorsed more than APA psychologists the values of spirituality, forgiveness, and the three John of the Cross scales. Spiritual directors reported greater endorsement of the self-awareness and growth theme than did psychodynamic psychologists who, in turn, reported greater endorsement than cognitive-behavioral psychologists. The results are examined in light of the pre-Enlightenment paradigm and value system in which spiritual direction and Christian theology are rooted.

Across America, interest in spirituality has boomed over the past 20 years (Barry & Connolly, 1982; Lauerman, 1998; McMinn, 1996; Richards & Bergin, 1997). Accompanying the interest in spirituality, greater numbers are pursuing spiritual direction (Byrne, 1990; Mangis, 1998), and psychologists are paying greater attention to spirituality in clinical contexts (Hinterkopf, 1997; McMinn, 1997; Shafranske, 1996). How might this convergence of spirituality and psychology affect the work of Christian psychologists and spiritual directors? What challenges might be anticipated as spiritual directors and psychologists collaborate and learn from one another? Though it is impossible to precisely predict the outcome of this trend, one means of exploring potential ramifications is by considering central values that under gird the practice of spiritual direction and clinical psychology.

Although it appears that both mental health and spiritual values are present in spiritual direction and psychotherapy, there are different relative emphases within the respective schools of thought (Ganje-Fling & McCarthy, 1991; Mangis, 1998). To date, no empirical studies have investigated the comparative values of spiritual directors and clinical psychologists.

Historically, spiritual direction has largely been understood as having its roots in the lives of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, a collection of monks (abbas) and nuns (ammass) who lived in the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine in the fourth through the seventh centuries (Jones, 1989; Stewart, 1991; Ward, 1990). The tradition of spiritual direction was carried on through the middle ages by religious orders such as the Benedictines, Carmelites, and Carthusians (Leclercq, 1990; Mursell, 1990) up to what members of the Roman Catholic tradition now consider the golden age of both spirituality (Kavanaugh, 1989) and spiritual direction (Leclercq, 1990)—the sixteenth century in Spain. It was during this century that reformers within the Catholic church such as St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and St. Ignatius, had a profound impact on the spiritual lives of both their contemporaries and those who would follow (Brundell, 1990; Kavanaugh, 1989; Sheldrake, 1990). With approximate parallels in pietistic traditions, today spiritual direction is predominantly practiced within Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox traditions (Mangis, 1998).

Viewed through the lens of a Christian paradigm and value system, the paramount goal of spiritual direction is facilitating the directee's movement toward a more mature and life-enhancing relationship with God, often described as union with God (Brundell, 1990; Butler, 1951; Chalmers, 1990; Gabriel, 1950; Groeschel, 1993; Peers, 1946). Becoming more mature spiritually is viewed as a developmental process grounded in foundational perspectives and practices. Maturing takes place as understanding and alignment grow. Key perspectives and practices include: embracing the challenges and suffering inherent in spiritual and personal growth (Allen, 1994; St. John of the Cross 1586/1991); pursuing greater self-knowledge (Allen, 1994; Gabriel, 1950; Giallanza, 1983a, b; Guenther, 1992; St. Teresa, 1566/1980; Stewart, 1991; Watson, 1998); cultivating a disciplined prayer life, particularly meditative and contemplative prayer (Butler, 1951; Culligan, 1993; Merton, 1961b; Merton, 1969); detaching from disordered pleasures (Merton, 1961a; Peers, 1946; St. John of the Cross 1586/1991); authentically sharing with a trusted spiritual guide, (Merton, 1950; St. John of the Cross 1586/1991; St. Teresa, 1566/1980; Stewart, C. (1991) and meaningfully loving one's neighbor (Allen, 1994; St. Teresa, 1566/1980 St. John of the Cross 1586/1991). One prominent figure in the history of Christian spirituality and spiritual direction, St. John of the Cross, was chosen to study in depth to gain a richer understanding of these core values and to guide the development of a questionnaire on values underlying spiritual direction. A brief biography of his life and writings is provided to facilitate an understanding of his values and views on spiritual development.

## VALUES FROM JOHN OF THE CROSS

It is increasingly understood that psychotherapists' views of the human condition directly and indirectly affect how they view disorders and struggles, and consequently how he or she understands growth and healing (Browning, 1987; Jones, 1994; London, 1986; Tjeltveit, 1989). The same applies to spiritual direction, in which the directors' views on the human

condition will impact how they respond to or guide their directees. For John of the Cross, like many other Christian spiritual directors and writers, the world was understood to be created and sustained by God, with human beings having been made in the image of God and designed ultimately for a life-giving union with God. John also understood humans as stained and hindered by sin due to the fall of humankind that, among other things, resulted in humans having propensities to form stronger attachments to limited sources of satisfaction that can be seen and experienced over and sometimes even against the ultimate source of life, which cannot be seen or readily experienced (e.g., God). Additionally, he understood sin as darkening the soul and heart, creating an alienating distance between the soul and God, thus leaving humans lost at a certain level and less able to see God as the foundational source of true life and joy (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991).

Further, John of the Cross viewed humans as having disordered souls, and thus disordered passions. From his perspective, we are distinctly vulnerable to embracing those things (e.g., instant gratification, prestige, power) that can harm us, instead of embracing the virtues and spiritual disciplines that can lead us to God. The process of growing and maturing involves forsaking impure appetites that when indulged, take us away from God, to having increasing freedom from such appetites, culminating in greater purity. In his words, the "rising of the soul, ... is spiritually understood as rising from the lowly to the sublime" (p. 486), where sublime is largely characterized by union with God (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991). John's anthropological views on our ultimate calling toward union with God and purity of soul, as well as his view on sin and impurity, are foundational perspectives that distinctly shape what he values, and consequently, how he views the spiritual life.

Originally Juan de Yepes, John of the Cross was born in 1542 in a small town in Spain. Demonstrating an interest in the spiritual life and possessing strong intellectual gifts, John entered a nearby Jesuit college at age 17. He joined the Carmelite order at age 21, and graduated from an esteemed Spanish university at the age of 25, focusing his education on theology and the humanities (Culligan, 1991; Miana, 1991). Following his graduation, he met fellow Carmelite St. Teresa of Avila, joined her contemplative movement, and began a lifelong career in the Carmelite order that would include many years as a spiritual director, professor, and writer (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991).

John's commitment to the rule of the Carmelites, with its strong emphasis on prayer and the sacraments, supported his passionate desire to mature in the Christian life. He enjoyed spending time in solitude and silence in the beauty of the outdoors, where nature pointed him to God (Kavanaugh, 1991). Those who went to him for confession found him strong and loving, demonstrating his lifelong care and compassionate concern for the flock (Culligan, 1991).

John's life was clearly shaped by trials, tribulations, and suffering. In addition to growing up in poverty and losing his father and brother when he was young, John was at one point unjustly imprisoned and cruelly treated for seven months in a 6-foot by 10-foot cell (Miana, 1991). Likely due to the transforming power of inviting the Lord into his suffering, John clearly valued trials for their significant role in the spiritual life, as demonstrated by his conviction: "As for trials, the more the better" (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991, p. 97).

Informed by his faith and shaped by his experiences, John used his remarkable gifts to write powerfully about the spiritual life. It was during his dark imprisonment that he began his most enduring and internationally-lauded poems: *The Dark Night*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and *The Living Flame of Love*. Upon reading the poems, his directees asked John to expand

on the profound and rich writing. Based on these requests, John wrote his major prose works: *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, and *The Living Flame of Love* (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991). These expansive works, drawing on classic philosophy, theology, and his own experience, reveal important stages in the believer's developmental progression toward union with God. John's life, poetry, and writings have had such an impact on the spiritual life of Christians that he was canonized in 1874 and declared a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church in 1926 (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991).

For this study, three vital topics pertaining to John's understanding of spiritual development are highlighted: his views on maturity, detachment, and the role of trials and suffering in the spiritual life.

### Maturity

John viewed the pursuit of intimate union with God as the central goal of spiritual maturity. In progressing toward union with God, one's character becomes more and more like God's (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991). Growth toward union, characterized by a deeper quality of love and tranquility, is understood as a process involving the sustained engagement of spiritual exercises or disciplines, whereby a richer relationship with God is experienced for longer periods as one becomes increasingly mature. John acknowledges that words can never fully capture the wonder and beauty of a mature soul's encounters with God. Even so, his descriptions of experiences of union with God are profound and poetic (Barry, 1991). One such description of a transformation of the soul in God reads:

...its palate [the soul's] is all bathed in glory and love, that in the intimate part of its substance it is flooded with no less than rivers of glory, abounding in delights, and from its depths flow rivers of living water [John 7:38], which the Son of God declared will rise up in such souls. (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991, p.641)

The nature of this rare maturity has significant implications for an individual's views of people, prestige and wealth. With a growing meekness and humility informed by a deeper "...knowledge of self and one's misery [brokenness]" (p. 641), the mature person is increasingly able to love others in meaningful and tangible ways. The mature person possesses patience in his or her interactions with others, and demonstrates exceptional perseverance, purity, and simplicity of heart. The individual "...no longer follows after [his own] pleasures and appetites" (p. 585), perseveres through hardship and difficulties, and embodies a grounded peace in the midst of life's vicissitudes.

### Detachment

"God does not fit in an occupied heart" (St. John of the Cross, 1586/1991, p. 692-3). Detachment is a concept that is likely foreign to most in contemporary society, yet is well known within the religious communities familiar with the life and writings of John of the Cross. It is a central topic in both *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*. Detachment is essentially the process of removing one's *inordinate* attachments (affections or emotional ties) to temporal and sensory experiences that hinder a person's

ability to love and unite one's will with God above all else. Particular areas he emphasizes include our tendencies to indulge in overvaluing the esteem of others, pleasurable activities, and even spiritual experiences, all of which are of distinct concern when they are valued above God. From his vantage point, these excessive affections or appetites "weary, torment, darken, defile, and weaken [the soul]" (p. 132), significantly impeding its ability to receive the soul-filling wisdom and love of God.

John emphasizes the essential role of solitude, silence, and contemplative prayer as crucial to the process of detaching from inordinate satisfactions derived from limited sources. In quieting the soul through these disciplines, the individual is able first to recognize types of excessive attachment: "In contemplation activity of the sense and of discursive reflection [verbal prayer] terminates, and God alone is the agent who then speaks secretly to the solitary and silent soul" (p. 690). The next step, which is the most extensive and lengthy, is the process of "denying the appetites and repenting of them —through the dark night of the senses" (p. 129). Here the person intentionally weans him or herself from inordinate satisfactions and indulgences in the temporal and finite realm and instead strives for "a will that is wholly with God, and a mind truly set on Him" (p. 341). From John's standpoint, reaching a level of mature detachment is vital to making room for God to more fully enter and enliven the soul.

### Trials and Suffering

John speaks of two major kinds of trials and suffering. The first is the range of difficulties and hardships encountered through living in this fallen world, such as temptations and distresses (e.g., unemployment, loneliness, illness). The second kind of suffering has a more spiritual emphasis. John refers to it as a "tender wounding" (p. 639), when the impure soul in contemplation encounters the purity and holiness of the love of God. In the receptive mode of contemplation, the goodness of God's love enters the dark areas of one's heart, bringing an initial pain, followed by healing and growth. John's essay, *The Living Flame of Love*, deals extensively with this second kind of suffering. John also emphasizes that Satan, opposing God, seeks to use trials to entice humans to draw on temporal and sensory satisfactions, and to form fundamental attachments to such satisfactions, making it more difficult to reach out to an unseen God. Consistent with many spiritual directors, John ultimately views the spiritual life as based on the life and imitation of Christ, thus highlighting further the significant role of suffering in spiritual development. John writes:

Oh! If we could but now fully understand how a soul cannot reach the thicket and wisdom of the riches of God, which are of many kinds, without entering the thicket of many kinds of suffering, finding in this her delight and consolation; and how a soul with an authentic desire for wisdom wants suffering first in order to enter this wisdom by the thicket of the cross! (p. 614)

Trials and suffering are used and redeemed by God to provide occasion for greater purification and perseverance in Him, as the nature of the trial forces the individual beyond his or her own resources. By persevering in trials, and in the hardships encountered in contemplation, the individual's soul is strengthened and purified, and thus able to experience a richer intimacy with God.

## RELEVANT MENTAL HEALTH VALUES

Many authors (e.g., Ganje-Fling & McCarthy, 1991; Jensen & Bergin, 1988; Strupp, 1980) view the minimal attention paid to values in therapy up to the late 1970s as largely due to the impact of Freud's views on the role of the therapist. His classic surgeon metaphor casts the psychologist as performing a technical procedure in a sterile, surgical field in which his or her values are not involved directly in the healing task (Jensen & Bergin, 1988; Strupp, 1980). In this postmodern age, it is increasingly understood that the therapist is a participant-observer, whose values implicitly or explicitly influence the outcome of the therapy process (Bergin, 1991; Mangis, 1998; Strupp, 1980; Tjeltveit, 1992). The growing awareness of values in therapy, particularly the values held by the therapist, has stimulated research on both the religious values of therapists (Bergin, 1991; Bergin & Jensen, 1990; Cross & Khan, 1983; Gibson & Herron, 1990; Shafranske & Gorsuch, 1984) and the values therapists see as pertinent to mental health and psychotherapy (Tyler, Clark, Olson, Klapp, & Cheloha, 1983).

Building on the work of Jahoda (1958) and Smith (1969), Jensen (1986) reviewed the literature pertaining to values deemed important to mental health and developed a questionnaire containing themes devoted to the major values emerging from his review. Using this questionnaire, Jensen and Bergin (1988) conducted a study of the mental health values of professional therapists (e.g., psychiatrists, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, social workers) and obtained useful information regarding what therapists see as important for mental health and psychotherapy. Of the 10 value themes (listed in detail in the Method section), 6 obtained 90% total agreement from the respondents, 2 themes obtained 80% total agreement, and the 2 remaining themes (related to sexual behavior and spirituality) were endorsed by one-third of the respondents, indicating greater diversity in these areas.

Little is known about the values of spiritual directors pertaining to mental health, or about how psychologists would respond to values deemed important by spiritual directors. Ganje-Fling and McCarthy (1991) compared the differences between spiritual directors and psychotherapists concerning techniques, evaluation methods, goals, and concerns discussed by their clientele, yet did not explicitly examine mental health values or spiritual values.

We expected that spiritual directors would differ from psychologists randomly selected from the American Psychological Association (APA), but not from psychologist members of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), on endorsing values promoted by John of the Cross and on the regulated sexual fulfillment, spirituality, and forgiveness themes from the Jensen and Bergin (1988) instrument. We also expected that spiritual directors would differ from cognitive-behavioral psychologists, but not from psychodynamic psychologists, on the self-awareness/growth theme and the suffering scale (see Jones, 1989 for a description of similarities between psychoanalysis and spiritual direction). Finally, we expected that spiritual directors would differ from psychodynamic psychologists, but not from cognitive-behavioral psychologists, on the forgiveness theme from the Jensen and Bergin (1988) instrument. Jensen and Bergin reported that cognitive-behavioral psychologists value forgiveness more than do psychodynamic therapists.

## METHOD

### Participants

Two hundred Christian spiritual directors were randomly selected from the membership directory of Spiritual Directors International (SDI) with the assistance of a SDI staff member. Two hundred Christian psychologists were randomly selected from the membership directory of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS). Two hundred practicing clinical psychologists were randomly selected without regard for their religious preference from the membership directory of the American Psychological Association (APA).

### Materials

The research instrument was comprised of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was developed by Jensen and Bergin (1988) to measure mental health values among therapists. Jensen and Bergin's questionnaire has 69 positively-phrased statements in which respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statements regarding: (a) importance for a positive, mentally healthy lifestyle; and (b) importance in guiding and evaluating psychotherapy with clients. Because Part (b) goes beyond the scope of this project, it was deleted from our instrument. Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale providing three degrees of agreement (High-Medium-Low), an Uncertain midpoint, and three degrees of disagreement (Low-Medium-High). The items reflect 10 value themes: Competent perception and expression of feelings, Freedom/autonomy/responsibility, Integration/coping ability, Self-awareness/growth, Human relatedness/interpersonal commitment, Self-maintenance/physical fitness, Mature frame of orientation, Forgiveness, Regulated sexual fulfillment, and Spirituality/religiosity. No scale reliability data were available from Jensen and Bergin (1988).

The second questionnaire was developed based on central values and perspectives from the writings of John of the Cross. It was designed to reflect important values and viewpoints potentially important to contemporary spiritual directors. To help ensure that the John of the Cross survey was both accurate and representative of his views on spiritual growth and maturity, a draft of the survey was reviewed and critiqued by three experts on John of the Cross, with many of their suggestions incorporated into the final version. The questionnaire items were divided into three scales (maturity, detachment, suffering) with six items per group. Respondents were given the same 7-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement.

### Procedure

Questionnaires were sent in January 1998 with a cover letter describing the purpose of the research. Those who did not respond within approximately two weeks were sent a reminder postcard. Following the passage of two more weeks, an additional packet was sent to those who had not responded.

## RESULTS

Of the 600 questionnaires mailed, 3 individuals returned responses declining to participate, 1 person had passed away, 2 returned questionnaires after the data analyses were completed, and 9 questionnaires were returned as undeliverable. Of the 585 possible responses, 315 returned completed or partially completed questionnaires, yielding a return rate of 54%. Of that 315, 134 were spiritual directors (42%), 72 were from the APA sample (23%), and the remaining 109 (35%) were from the CAPS sample. Overall, 52% of the respondents were female. By group, the APA sample was 51% male, 24% of spiritual directors were male, and 74% of CAPS members were male. The average age of respondents was 51 years, with 80% of the respondents falling between 39 and 65 years of age. Overall, 58% identified themselves as Protestant, 30% as Catholic, 7% as other, 4% as agnostic, 1% as atheist, 1% as Jewish, and 0.5% as New Age. Most (94%) respondents were Caucasian, 2% were Asian-American, 2% were Hispanic, 1% were African-American, and 1% were Native-American. Participants were asked to rank their level of association with multiple theoretical orientations, meaning that a participant could endorse or strongly endorse multiple orientations. Of the two groups of psychologists (APA and CAPS), 89% endorsed cognitive-behavioral, 66% percent endorsed psychodynamic, 76% endorsed family systems, and 70% endorsed humanistic. For purposes of data analysis, cognitive-behavioral psychologists were distinguished from psychodynamic psychologists by examining the relative level of endorsement assigned to the psychodynamic orientation and the cognitive-behavioral orientation. Psychologists endorsing the cognitive-behavioral orientation (e.g., circling *endorse* or *strongly endorse*) and concurrently not endorsing the psychodynamic orientation (e.g., circling the *neutral*, *oppose*, or *strongly oppose*) were placed in the cognitive-behavioral group. Those endorsing the psychodynamic approach, and not endorsing the cognitive-behavioral approach, were placed in the psychodynamic group. Those not meeting either criterion were omitted from the analyses pertaining to theoretical orientation.

Because scale reliabilities were not available for Jensen and Bergin's survey instrument, and because the John of the Cross questionnaire was developed for this research, we computed internal consistency for each of the themes and scales. Cronbach alpha coefficients for the 10 themes from Jensen and Bergin's (1988) scale ranged from .72 to .92, indicating reasonable consistency among items within the themes. The Detachment and Maturity scales of the John of the Cross scale also had reasonable reliabilities: .85 and .75, respectively. The Suffering scale had a modest internal consistency of .61

Response patterns for the three groups are summarized in Table 1. A series of directional inferential tests was then computed, using a conservative alpha of .005 (based on Bonferroni Correction) to control for the inflated Type I error caused by multiple hypothesis tests.

**Table 1 Percentages of Endorsement to Jensen & Bergin (1988) Themes and John of the Cross Scales**

|   | LD <sup>a</sup> | U  | LA | MA | HA | Agree <sup>b</sup> | Mean <sup>c</sup> |
|---|-----------------|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Value Themes from Jensen &amp; Bergin (1988)</b> |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Freedom/autonomy/responsibility                     |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | —  | 6  | 47 | 46 | 99                 | 6.33              |
| APA psychologists                                   | —               | —  | 12 | 50 | 38 | 100                | 6.22              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | —  | 7  | 63 | 30 | 100                | 6.20              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988) sample                       |                 |    |    |    |    | 96                 |                   |
| Integration, coping and work                        |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | —               | 2  | 15 | 51 | 32 | 98                 | 6.12              |
| APA psychologists                                   | —               | 3  | 17 | 55 | 25 | 97                 | 6.08              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | —  | 17 | 57 | 26 | 100                | 6.03              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 95                 |                   |
| Competent perception and expression of feelings     |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | —  | 6  | 48 | 45 | 99                 | 6.32              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 1               | 3  | 13 | 51 | 32 | 96                 | 6.10              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | 2  | 18 | 51 | 29 | 98                 | 6.08              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 97                 |                   |
| Human relatedness/interpersonal commitment          |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | 1  | 5  | 47 | 46 | 98                 | 6.34              |
| APA psychologists                                   | —               | 5  | 14 | 53 | 28 | 95                 | 5.98              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | —  | 6  | 46 | 48 | 100                | 6.33              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 91                 |                   |
| Mature frame of orientation                         |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | 4  | 24 | 46 | 25 | 95                 | 5.83              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 1               | 7  | 33 | 40 | 18 | 91                 | 5.57              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | 4  | 22 | 59 | 15 | 96                 | 5.78              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 84                 |                   |
| Self-awareness/growth                               |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | 1  | 7  | 44 | 47 | 98                 | 6.31              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 1               | 7  | 22 | 47 | 22 | 91                 | 5.73              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | 1               | 7  | 17 | 53 | 22 | 92                 | 5.79              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 92                 |                   |
| Forgiveness   |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | —               | 2  | 8  | 31 | 59 | 98                 | 6.33              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 4               | 10 | 24 | 43 | 19 | 86                 | 5.56              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | —  | 11 | 38 | 51 | 100                | 6.28              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 84                 |                   |
| Self-maintenance/physical fitness                   |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | 1  | 11 | 23 | 64 | 98                 | 6.46              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 1               | 10 | 24 | 31 | 33 | 88                 | 5.80              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | 1               | 2  | 12 | 40 | 45 | 97                 | 6.24              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 91                 |                   |

|   | LD <sup>a</sup> | U  | LA | MA | HA | Agree <sup>b</sup> | Mean <sup>c</sup> |
|---|-----------------|----|----|----|----|--------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Value Themes from Jensen &amp; Bergin (1988)</b> |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Regulated sexual fulfillment                        |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 5               | 20 | 28 | 41 | 5  | 74                 | 5.12              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 29              | 29 | 24 | 13 | 3  | 40                 | 4.15              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | 1               | 6  | 41 | 47 | 5  | 93                 | 5.49              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 63                 |                   |
| Spirituality/religiosity                            |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | —               | 4  | 15 | 28 | 52 | 95                 | 6.18              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 20              | 11 | 22 | 25 | 8  | 55                 | 4.36              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | 2  | 9  | 28 | 61 | 98                 | 6.44              |
| Jensen & Bergin (1988)                              |                 |    |    |    |    | 49                 |                   |
| <b>Themes from John of the Cross Scale</b>          |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Suffering   |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | —               | 2  | 20 | 45 | 33 | 98                 | 6.03              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 3               | 11 | 36 | 38 | 12 | 86                 | 5.35              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | 1  | 9  | 48 | 42 | 99                 | 6.21              |
| Detachment  |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | 1               | 3  | 14 | 38 | 44 | 96                 | 6.08              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 12              | 21 | 26 | 21 | 11 | 53                 | 4.62              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | 3  | 17 | 48 | 32 | 97                 | 6.01              |
| Maturity  |                 |    |    |    |    |                    |                   |
| Spiritual directors                                 | —               | 2  | 13 | 46 | 39 | 98                 | 6.13              |
| APA psychologists                                   | 3               | 12 | 35 | 28 | 21 | 84                 | 5.42              |
| CAPS psychologists                                  | —               | —  | 8  | 42 | 50 | 100                | 6.31              |

Notes. <sup>a</sup>LD=Low Disagreement, U=Uncertain or Undecided, LA=Low Agreement, MA=Medium Agreement, HA=High Agreement. Because the numbers of responses in the high disagreement and moderate disagreement columns were extremely low, they are not included in the table. <sup>b</sup>"Agree" is the percentage of respondents who circled either low, medium or high agreement on the questionnaire scale or theme. <sup>c</sup>The scale values range potentially from 1 to 7, where HD=1, MD=2, LD=3, U=4, LA=5, MA=6, and HA=7.

We expected spiritual directors to differ from APA psychologists, but not from CAPS psychologists, on the maturity, detachment, and suffering scales from the John of the Cross measure, and the regulated sexual fulfillment, spirituality, and forgiveness themes from the Jensen and Bergin instrument. Consequently, a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) was run in conjunction with a priori *t* test contrasts to test the hypotheses. Group comparisons yielded significant differences on all of the expected scales: maturity,  $F(2,313)=33.5$ ,  $p<.001$ , detachment,  $F(2,313)=62.4$ ,  $p<.001$ , suffering,  $F(2,313)=31.5$ ,  $p<.001$ , regulated sexual fulfillment,  $F(2,312)=43.1$ ,  $p<.001$ , spirituality,  $F(2,312)=88.0$ ,  $p<.001$ , and forgiveness,  $F(2,312)=25.8$ ,  $p<.001$ . Two of the assumptions for ANOVAs (the scales having normally distributed data, and homogeneity across samples) were not met. Thus, nonparametric tests (Wilcoxon/Kruskal-Wallis, and Welch ANOVA) were used in addition to the ANOVAs. Significant differences from the parametric ANOVAs were also significant when using nonparametric measures. A priori contrasts indicated spiritual directors and APA psychologists differed significantly, in the anticipated direction, on the expected scales: maturity,  $t(313)=6.6$ ,  $p<.001$ , detachment,  $t(313)=10.5$ ,  $p<.001$ , suffering,

$t(313)=6.3$ ,  $p<.001$ , regulated sexual fulfillment,  $t(312)=6.9$ ,  $p<.001$ , spirituality,  $t(312)=11.3$ ,  $p<.001$ , and forgiveness,  $t(312)=6.8$ ,  $p<.001$ . We expected no difference between CAPS psychologists and spiritual directors on these themes, and found only one. Spiritual directors scored lower than CAPS psychologists on the regulated sexual fulfillment theme,  $t(312)=3.0$ ,  $p<.005$ .

Spiritual directors were expected to differ from cognitive-behavioral psychologists, but not from psychodynamic psychologists, on the self-awareness/growth theme and the suffering scale. Group comparisons yielded a significant difference on the self-awareness/growth theme  $F(2,311)=30.2$ ,  $p<.001$ , but no significant difference on the suffering scale  $F(2,311)=3.6$ ,  $p=.028$ . A priori contrast results on the self-awareness/growth theme indicated that spiritual directors scored significantly higher than cognitive-behavioral psychologists in the expected direction,  $t(311)=7.0$ ,  $p<.001$ . Contrary to our expectations, a priori contrasts revealed a significant difference between spiritual directors and psychodynamic psychologists on the self-awareness/growth theme,  $t(311)=4.3$ ,  $p<.001$ , with spiritual directors scoring higher.

Considering results from Jensen and Bergin (1988), we expected spiritual directors to differ from psychodynamic psychologists, but not from cognitive-behavioral psychologists on the forgiveness scale. A one-way ANOVA was computed using orientation as the independent variable and the forgiveness theme as the dependent variable. Results of group comparisons indicated a significant main effect,  $F(2, 310)=9.5$ ,  $p<.001$ . A priori contrasts yielded the converse of what was hypothesized, displaying a significant difference between spiritual directors and cognitive-behavioral psychologists,  $t(310)=4.3$ ,  $p<.001$ , with spiritual directors scoring higher, and no significant difference between spiritual directors and psychodynamic psychologists,  $t(310)=2.2$ ,  $p=.024$ .

## DISCUSSION

The main goal of this project was to gain an understanding of how the mental health and spiritual values of spiritual directors and psychologists (CAPS and APA) are similar and different from each other, with an eye toward the potential influence a growing interest in spiritual direction may have on the field of psychology. The similarities and differences are summarized in Figure 1.

Cushman (1990, 1995) and others (e.g., Baumeister, 1987; Kreeft, 1986; Lewis, 1955; Lyon, 1994) have discussed the significant intellectual and cultural changes that have unfolded since the end of the medieval era, distinctly shaping our contemporary society. Changes relevant to this study include a movement from "a religious to a scientific frame of reference..., a communal to individual subject," and the development of "...popular culture's emphasis on consuming" (Cushman, 1990, p. 600). Understanding the differences and similarities between the surveyed groups from a historical perspective should serve to contextualize the potential impact spiritual directors' views may have on the field of psychology.

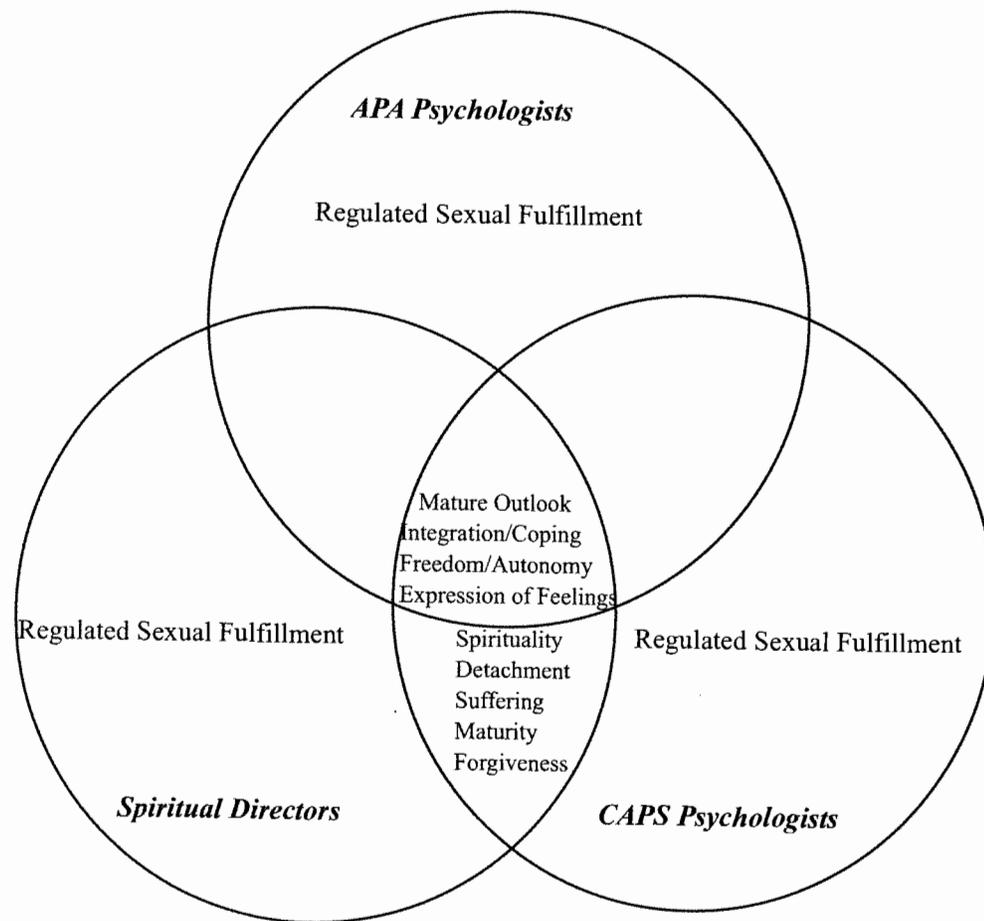


Figure 1. Areas of overlap in endorsing mental health and spiritual values among the three respondent groups.

### Similarity and Differences among Respondent Groups

As illustrated in Figure 1, the three groups overlap on four of the value themes from the Jensen and Bergin survey, indicating similar levels of endorsement by the groups. Closer examination of the overlap within these value themes points toward some of the defining aspects of the contemporary American ideal: an individual who is aware of and able to express his or her feelings, and is independent and able to make wise choices in integrating work and leisure. Further, this value cluster is relatively neutral from a religious perspective, placing emphasis on individual development without distinct reference to God or distinctly religious values.

We found distinct differences among groups on those values more distinctly connected with religion. We expected spiritual directors would differ from APA psychologists, but not from CAPS psychologists on the maturity, detachment and suffering scales from the John of the Cross measure, and the regulated sexual fulfillment, spirituality/religiosity, and

forgiveness themes from the Jensen and Bergin instrument. As expected, there were significant differences between spiritual directors and APA psychologists, with spiritual directors scoring higher on themes pertaining to traditional morality (regulated sexual fulfillment, spirituality/religiosity and forgiveness), and also on the detachment, suffering and maturity scales from the John of the Cross measure. Spiritual directors and Christian psychologists differed significantly only on the regulated sexual fulfillment theme, with Christian psychologists scoring higher.

Prior to the Enlightenment, the Church was the primary institution in medieval Europe that shaped societal values and sustained tradition. Its predominant paradigm was the lens through which the nature and purpose of human life was viewed (Baumeister, 1987; Cushman, 1990; 1995; Lyon, 1994). The fundamental perspective that governed the interpretation of life was the belief in the existence of God who created the world and called human beings to love and serve God and one's neighbor (Cushman, 1995; Kreeft, 1986; Lyon, 1994). The ultimate good and ultimate joy for humankind was to be pursued through seeking to please God, and to do so by living in ways that conformed to God's desire and will (Kreeft, 1986; Lewis, 1955; Pieper, 1966). Conforming to the will of God included certain behavioral prescriptions and proscriptions, involving topics such as forgiveness, sexuality, spiritual disciplines, and so on. According to Lewis (1955), for the premodern, or "the wise men of old, the cardinal problem of human life was how to conform the soul to objective reality, and the solution was wisdom, self-discipline and virtue" (p. 88). Suffering was viewed as a consequence of the fall of humankind, and was seen as a "mystery to be understood and a moral challenge to be lived" (Kreeft, 1986, p. 169). These views held by the medieval Church are the views John of the Cross sought to uphold and inspire others to pursue. To some extent, they are shared by Christian psychologists and spiritual directors today, in distinction from the sample of APA psychologists.

In the early modern era, changes such as the fragmentation of the Church, evolving capitalism, and new forms of individualism created a unique and powerful forum for philosophers such as Descartes and Locke to present their far-reaching ideas (Cushman 1995). Traditional views of the nature and purpose of life were questioned and challenged. Cushman (1995) points out that Descartes' philosophical writings substantially contributed to the following significant developments: "the removal of God out of the material world, the development of an objective stance toward the world and oneself, the universalizing of doubt ...and the valorization of rationality" (p. 375). These influential ideas made room for later thinkers such as Locke to take them further, even into intellectual circles in which reason and scientific empiricism gradually gained prominence over the traditional views on life and selfhood held by the Church. The individual became the primary arbiter of truth (Cushman, 1995), and the pursuit of meaning and fulfillment became increasingly connected to the search for pleasure and happiness rather than to the acquisition of virtue. These changes were accelerated in the 20th Century with the emergence of consumerism following World War II, major industrial and technological advancements, increasing wealth of the average American, and the growing influence of the advertising industry (Cushman, 1990, 1995; Fromm, 1976; Kreeft, 1986; Lyon, 1994).

As the religious meta-narratives and the sense of tradition and community in contemporary culture have waned, the life-style solution endorsed in a consumerist society has become a significant means by which selfhood is defined (Fromm, 1976). In light of these developments, "the project of self becomes translated into the possession of desired goods

and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life" (Giddens, 1991, p. 198). Here we see a gap between the values of the apparent endorsers of a premodern view (e. g. , spiritual directors) and the contemporary culture of which modern psychology is a part. Thus, the relevance and potential value of spirituality and related virtues appear to have less prominence among mainstream psychologists than among Christians involved in caring for the soul (whether they are psychologists or spiritual directors).

Interestingly, the regulated sexual fulfillment theme is the only theme within traditional morality on which spiritual directors and CAPS psychologists significantly differ, as CAPS psychologists emerged with more conservative views on regulated sexual fulfillment. One substantial difference between these two groups is that spiritual directors tend to be from mainline denominations, whereas CAPS psychologists tend to have stronger ties with evangelical groups. There may be greater homogeneity and conservatism among members of evangelical denominations regarding sexual behavior than among main-line denominations. These differences in values regarding sexual fulfillment create potential tensions when spiritual directors and Christian psychologists collaborate in caring for theistic clients. Thus, it may be an important area for constructive dialog as these sorts of collaborative relationships develop, rather than assuming that the spiritual director and Christian psychologist share similar views about appropriate expression of sexuality.

### Theoretical Orientation of Psychologists

We expected that spiritual directors would differ from cognitive-behavioral psychologists, but not from psychodynamic psychologists, on the self-awareness/growth theme and the suffering scale. Significant differences were not observed on the suffering scale, and our hypothesis on the self-awareness/growth scale was only partially supported as spiritual directors not only reported greater endorsement than cognitive-behavioral psychologists, but also greater endorsement than psychodynamic psychologists. Clearly, spiritual directors value self-knowledge.

The self-awareness theme is comprised of items pertaining to self-discovery via introspection and self-exploration, and an awareness of inner potential and the ability to grow. Self-knowledge has primarily a horizontal focus for the psychologist, designed to improve intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning. But for the spiritual director, greater self-knowledge also facilitates a deeper capacity to be known by God and move closer to God through prayer, confession, humility, and charity (Allen, 1994; Barry & Connolly, 1982; Jones, 1989; Stewart, 1991; Watson, 1998).

In examining the results of the suffering scale, the anticipated differences were not found. It should be recalled, however, that CAPS psychologists and spiritual directors endorsed the value of suffering more than did APA psychologists. The presence of CAPS psychologists in both the cognitive-behavioral and psychodynamic groups may have been sufficiently strong to mitigate differences between theoretical groups.

Finally, we expected that spiritual directors would differ from psychodynamic psychologists, but not from cognitive-behavioral psychologists, on the forgiveness scale. This was not supported, as spiritual directors differed from cognitive-behavioral psychologists but not from psychodynamic psychologists on the forgiveness theme. This is inconsistent with Jensen and Bergin's (1988) finding that cognitive-behavioral psychologists were more

endorsing of forgiveness than psychodynamic psychologists. Again, it should be recalled that forgiveness was more highly endorsed by CAPS psychologists and spiritual directors than by APA psychologists, and the high proportion of Christian respondents to this survey is likely to affect the outcome and generalizability of the findings pertaining to the theoretical orientation of psychologists. More research will be necessary to explain the discrepancies between our findings and those of Jensen and Bergin (1988).

### CONCLUSION

How might these findings affect the field of psychology, particularly those psychologists interested in spiritual direction? First, most psychologists have viewpoints in common with spiritual directors. There is agreement between APA, CAPS psychologists, and spiritual directors on many of the mental health themes from Jensen and Bergin's (1988) research. When a spiritual director and a psychologist are considering collaborating in the care of a particular client, though the two may have religious differences, they are likely to share some basic values pertaining to expression of feelings, human freedom, and effective coping.

Second, Christian psychologists share many values with spiritual directors, including values about spirituality derived from St. John of the Cross. Given the value congruence, Christian psychologists might find it helpful and rewarding to dialogue and collaborate with spiritual directors as they pursue a richer understanding of healing and growth in those they serve. As Cushman (1990, 1950) and Baumeister (1987) challenge contemporary psychologists to gain an historical understanding of the self, and as psychologists such as Csikszentmihalyi (1999) and Wachtel (1983) point out the pitfalls of consumerism and the pursuit of wealth, Christian psychologists can discover grounded and life-giving wisdom in the classics of Christian spirituality.

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