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# Publication Frequency among Faculty in Explicitly Christian Doctoral Programs

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Explicitly Christian doctoral programs in professional psychology have proliferated in recent years as part of the larger trend toward professional school training. The current study is an investigation of publication rates among faculty in these programs. Based on an analysis of publication data from 1996 to 2001, faculty in explicitly Christian programs are publishing in psychology journals at rates similar to faculty in other professional schools and programs. No differences were observed between faculty in PhD and PsyD programs. Implications for students selecting doctoral programs are discussed.

Just over three decades ago a conference held in Vail, Colorado established the legitimacy of a practitioner-model training paradigm in professional psychology. In the intervening years many new professional psychology training programs have been established as the Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) degree has become ubiquitous despite some controversy about the degree (Kenkel, DeLeon, Albino, & Porter, 2003; Peterson, 2003). In 1976, the National Council of Schools and Programs in Professional Psychology (NCSPP) was established (see Peterson, 1997; Peterson, Peterson, Abrams, & Stricker, 1997), and has now grown to include over 70 doctoral-granting programs. More than 50 of these programs have full membership status in NCSPP, which means they are accredited by the American Psychological Association's Committee on Accreditation (NCSPP, n.d.).

Another trend, more subtle and smaller in scale, has shadowed the changes in professional psychology training. Explicitly Christian training programs (ECTPs), where faculty are expected to hold Christian beliefs and train students to integrate these beliefs with the practice of psychology, have also multiplied in the past three decades. These programs exist in religious colleges, seminaries, and universities and focus on the integration of faith, theological studies, and clinical psychology in the preparation of psychologists. ECTPs prepare psychologists to serve the global religious community—and the Christian community in particular (Johnson, Campbell, & Dykstra, 1997; Jones, Watson, & Wolfram, 1992; McMinn, Meek, Canning, & Pozzi, 2001).

Fuller Theological Seminary—training students in a scientist-practitioner model—awarded the first PhDs with a Christian emphasis in clinical psychology in 1969. Since that time several other ECTPs have been established: a PsyD program at Fuller, PsyD and PhD programs at Rosemead School of Professional Psychology at Biola University, PsyD programs at Wheaton College, George Fox University, Asuka Pacific University, Regent University, and a PhD program at Seattle Pacific University. Each of these programs has a mission statement emphasizing faith and practice in the process of training Christian psychologists. Most ECTPs articulate a practitioner-scholar model of training, and all are member or associate member programs of NCSPP.

ECTPs interest us for various reasons. One of us (Mark R. McMinn) teaches in an explicitly Christian PsyD program, one (W. Brad Johnson) is a graduate of an explicitly Christian PhD program, and one (Jeremy S. Haskell) is a current student in an ECTP. Perhaps because of our various associations with ECTPs, we often hear questions about the quality of training that takes place in religious training programs. Rather than continuing to respond with personal anecdotes and general impressions, we have attempted to explore some dimensions of ECTPs with empirical research (e.g., Johnson & McMinn, 2003).

## Faculty Scholarship

Faculty scholarly productivity is often considered one salient component of post-secondary institutional quality. The finest undergraduate psychology departments in the country not only have a track record of placing graduates in PhD programs, they also have extremely productive faculty—as measured by the number of research publications in psychology (Hartley & Robinson,

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1996). Similarly, doctoral programs in psychology are often assessed, at least in part, on the basis of faculty scholarly productivity (Ilardi, Rodriguez-Hanley, Roberts, & Seigel, 2000; Maher, 1999).

Within the field of clinical psychology, there exists a significant range in rate of publication among doctoral program faculty, based largely on the articulated mission or model of the program: (a) clinical-scientist programs place primary emphasis on research training, (b) scientist-practitioner programs emphasize the integration of science and practice, and (c) practitioner-scholar model programs prepare students to engage primarily in the practice of clinical psychology. Not surprisingly, Cherry, Messenger, and Jacoby (2000) found that faculty productivity (percentage of faculty recently publishing peer-reviewed journal articles) varied directly as a result of program type (clinical-scientist = 90%, scientist-practitioner = 79%, practitioner-scholar = 42%).

Criticism has been levied at professionally-oriented doctoral programs for generating large numbers of graduates from programs with faculty who are among the lowest in terms of "faculty quality" rankings (Maher, 1999). Faculty quality rankings utilized by Maher and others are based on ratings by faculty peers in clinical doctoral programs across the country. Of course, these ratings are affected by both quantity and quality of faculty publication.

Johnson and McMinn (2003) recently assessed both the internal and external outcomes reported by six of the ECTPs, housed in 4 separate institutions. Each was accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). They found that 83% of ECTP faculty reported at least one recent journal article publication, which compares favorably to the practitioner-scholar faculty (42%) and similarly to the scientist-practitioner faculty (79%) reported by Cherry et al. (2000). These results also indicate that the proportion of ECTP faculty who publish is similar to that observed among members of APA's Division 12, The Society of Clinical Psychology (81%; Norcross, Karg, & Prochaska, 1997).

Surprisingly, Johnson and McMinn found no discernable differences between explicitly Christian PhD and PsyD programs. Not only were there no differences in rates of publication between faculty in these degree programs, explicitly Christian PhD programs (6%) were no more likely than their PsyD counterparts (5%) to place graduates in academic positions following

graduation. Although this may not be problematic for highly-informed students who select doctoral programs based on the religiously-informed mission statement of the program, it could be a significant obstacle for less-informed students who select a PhD program over a PsyD program assuming that the former will lead them into an academic career.

The purpose of this study was to assess the rates and venues of publication among faculty in ECTPs. Moreover, we were interested in using a method other than self-report to determine if faculty in explicitly Christian PhD programs publish at higher rates than faculty in explicitly Christian PsyD programs.

## Method

We conducted a study of peer-reviewed journal article production among faculty in a sample of APA-accredited NCSPP programs. At the time data were collected there were six APA-accredited ECTPs in clinical psychology, housed in four separate institutions (2 schools had both PhD and PsyD programs and 2 schools had only PsyD programs). Each of these ECTPs' Internet sites was accessed to generate a list of the core faculty. We allowed programs to define their own criteria for core faculty, based on those they listed on their web site. For most programs, core faculty status requires at least half-time employment by the program. Seventy-two core faculty members were identified from ECTPs. A list of member schools of the NCSPP was obtained from the NCSPP web site, and ten schools were randomly selected. Because most of the ten schools selected were PsyD programs, three additional PhD programs were randomly selected and added to the list of comparison programs. As with the four ECTPs, each of the thirteen comparison program's web sites was located and a list of core faculty obtained. In all, 274 core faculty members were identified from comparison schools, resulting in a total of 346 faculty members (72 from ECTPs, 274 from comparison programs).

In order to avoid problems inherent in self-report of publication frequency (Johnson & McMinn, 2003) and to objectively compare rates of publication among faculty in the distinct program types, we utilized the PsycINFO journal article database to determine rate of faculty journal article publication between 1996 and 2001. The data were collected early in 2002, so this represented the most current 6-year window

available at the time of data collection. Each faculty member's name was then entered into an author search using PsycINFO, with a range from 1996 to 2001. This provided a measure of publication rates in all journals indexed by PsycINFO. A similar process was then employed using the PsycARTICLES publication database to determine how many of these core faculty members had either authored or co-authored a journal article in an APA journal during the same year range. The PsycARTICLES database consists of journals published by the APA (including some divisional journals). In each case we collected the number of articles authored or co-authored and the number of articles for which the faculty member was first author. For APA journal authorship, each published article was categorized as empirical, theoretical, clinical methods, literature review or commentary. Finally, publications in elite APA journals—defined as those with a greater than 80% rejection rate in the 2000 Summary of Journal Operations (APA, 2001)—were tallied and used for subsequent analyses.

## Results

### *Publication Rates for Explicitly Christian and Comparison Schools*

Of the 72 faculty from ECTPs, 48 (67%) were identified as authors or co-authors of journal articles between 1996 and 2001. Among those who had published, 21 (29%) had published one article, 13 (18%) had published two articles, 12 (17%) had published between 3 and 10 articles, and 2 (3%) had published 11 or more articles. Fourteen faculty (19%) from ECTPs had published in APA journals, ranging from 1 to 7 APA publications. Of the 274 faculty from comparison programs, 129 (47%) were identified as authors or co-authors during the same period. Among those who had published, 38 (14%) had published one article, 28 (10%) had published two articles, 48 (18%) had published between 3 and 10 articles, and 15 (5%) had published 11 or more articles. Fifty (18%) published in APA journals, ranging from 1 to 11 APA publications. Consistent with Johnson and McMinn's (2003) report based on APA self-studies, a higher proportion of faculty in ECTPs published between the years of 1996 and 2001 than faculty in the comparison programs included in this study,  $\chi^2(1) = 8.8, p < .01$ . There were no differences in rates of publication in APA journals,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.1$ , NS. These results provide objective support for

Johnson and McMinn's (2003) finding that the proportion of faculty in ECTPs who publish compares favorably with the publication rate of faculty in non-sectarian programs employing a similar training model.

### *Publication Rates for PsyD and PhD Programs*

We then divided the core faculty into two samples based on degree offered: those affiliated with programs offering only the PsyD degree and those affiliated with programs offering the PhD degree (some of these programs also offered the PsyD degree). Several 2 x 2 analyses of variance were computed, using degree offered as one independent variable and explicitly Christian vs. comparison program type as the second independent variable. Dependent variables included numbers of overall publications, first-authored publications, APA journal publications, first-authored APA journal publications, publications in elite APA journals, first-authored publications in elite APA journals, empirical publications, theoretical publications, literature reviews, descriptions of clinical methods, and commentaries. A conservative alpha of 0.01 was used to control for the inflation of Type I error with multiple hypothesis tests. No significant main effects or interaction effects were observed. Means and standard deviations for these analyses are reported in Table 1.

It is notable that faculty at programs offering the PhD degree do not publish significantly more than faculty at programs offering only the PsyD degree. This was not only true among ECTPs, as we suspected based on Johnson and McMinn's (2003) findings, but also for comparison schools who were also members of NCSPP. These findings should be viewed cautiously because the ECTPs PhD programs share core faculty with PsyD programs housed at the same institutions.

## Discussion

Rapid growth in the number of ECTPs warrants empirical study of how these programs compare with similar non-sectarian programs. With regard to proportion of faculty who are publishing—something considered during accreditation evaluations by the APA (APA, 1997), as well as during attempts to rank programs on the basis of quality (Maher, 1999)—it appears that ECTPs are doing as well as, or better than, their NCSPP counterparts. When consid-



**Table 1**  
*Publication rates by program type*

	Explicitly Christian Programs				Comparison Programs			
	PhD		PsyD Only		PhD		PsyD Only	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Overall publications	2.0	2.6	1.7	3.1	2.6	4.6	1.6	3.4
First-authored publications	0.8	1.1	0.7	1.2	1.0	1.9	0.8	1.8
APA journal publications	0.2	0.5	0.5	1.3	0.6	1.5	0.3	1.3
First-authored APA journal	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.7
Elite APA journal publications	0.1	0.4	0.4	1.3	0.3	1.1	0.1	0.7
First-authored elite publications	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.6	0.1	0.3
Empirical publications	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.9	0.4	1.1	0.3	1.1
Theoretical publications	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.7	0.1	0.3
Literature reviews	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Clinical methods	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1
Commentaries	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2

*Note.* The data reported here are the number of publications per faculty member between 1996 and 2001. The total sample size was 376 (72 faculty members at ECTPs and 274 faculty members at comparison schools). Columns labeled “PhD” reflect publication rates for faculty members who teach in schools or programs that offer the PhD degree. Some of these programs also offer the PsyD degree. Columns labeled “PsyD Only” reflect publication rates for faculty members who teach in schools or programs offering only the PsyD degree.

ering the number of publications per faculty member, no differences are observed between ECTP faculty and comparison faculty. These findings indicate that ECTPs are hiring faculty engaged in scholarly publication in mainstream outlets in psychology.

A potentially troubling finding has to do with the distinctions between PsyD and PhD training. Cherry et al. (2000) sampled a diverse range of APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical psychology. Among the 134 programs they studied, they found robust differences between the training model employed and faculty publication rate. It seems reasonable that programs training students for academic careers—typified by the PhD degree—would recruit and support faculty with interests in scientific research leading to publication. Similarly, programs designed to train practitioners—typified by the PsyD degree—would be expected to recruit and support faculty with greater interests in professional work. Indeed, this is what Cherry et al. found.

By limiting our sample to a narrower range of doctoral programs in clinical psychology—those belonging to NCSPP—we would not expect to find the robust differences that Cherry et al. found. Furthermore, the theoretical assumptions of inferential tests do not allow us to assert with confidence that no differences are present, because null hypotheses can only be disproved and never proved. Nonetheless, the lack of any significant differences in publication rates between faculty in PhD and PsyD programs is somewhat surprising. It is possible that because the only ECTP PhD programs also offer PsyD degrees (and this is also true for some of the comparison schools), that there is less differentiation among faculty than would be the case if only a PhD were offered. Because faculty in these programs typically have responsibilities in both programs, it may be difficult to clearly differentiate faculty who serve as models of research-oriented practice and those who serve as primary PsyD models.

These findings have advising implications. It is common, at least in explicitly Christian undergraduate institutions, for students to come to their advisors for help with graduate school decisions about ECTPs. In our experience, they are likely to seek guidance in two areas. The first has to do with overall quality of training. Christian undergraduates may find the mission statements of ECTPs appealing but they want to be

certain that the quality of their training will be similar to that obtained elsewhere. The second has to do with which doctoral degree to pursue. They may be considering the relative merits of PhD and PsyD training in relation to their career objectives.

With regard to the first issue—the overall quality of training at ECTPs—there is much more research to do before any definitive answer can be offered. However, we do know that graduates of ECTPs find their faculty to be encouraging and supportive (Meek & McMinn, 1999), ECTPs have similar admissions selectivity as non-sectarian programs (Johnson & McMinn, 2003), graduates of ECTPs are reasonably satisfied with their training experience (Fallow & Johnson, 2000), and—based on the present study—that faculty are quite productive. Indeed, the proportion of ECTP faculty publishing is higher than the proportion of faculty in similar but non-religious professional psychology programs. Preliminary evidence seems to indicate that students can be advised toward ECTPs without compromising the quality of training they will receive. However, it should also be noted that the quality of the entire professional school movement has been debated (see Kenkel et al., 2003; Peterson, 2003), which hints at the possibility that we are not comparing ECTPs with the “gold standard” of doctoral education.

With regard to the second question—which degree to pursue—advising undergraduates is more complex. Many advisors may reflexively answer that PhD programs are the best path for those wanting an academic career whereas a PsyD program is an excellent choice for aspiring clinicians. We question this advice for students considering ECTPs because faculty of programs offering both the PhD and PsyD degrees do not publish more than those teaching in programs offering only the PsyD, and graduates of PhD programs are no more likely to go into academic careers than those graduating from PsyD programs (Johnson & McMinn, 2003). Although scholarly productivity is not the only indicator that a training faculty is research-oriented, sustained and significant research production by faculty is a primary factor contributing to national program rankings (Hartley & Robinson, 1996; Ilardi et al., 2000; Maher, 1999). Additionally, it is difficult to imagine that doctoral students can be well-prepared for careers as productive scholars if they have not directly observed the behaviors of productive models. To the extent

that explicitly Christian PhD programs are seen as a pathway to academic careers, the outcome data we have collected here and elsewhere (Johnson & McMinn, 2003) cause us to question these assumptions.

If the student is intent on an academic career, it is probably not wise to suggest an ECTP even if that program offers a PhD degree. With no observed difference in faculty publication rates in explicitly Christian PhD and PsyD programs, we question whether students in explicitly Christian PhD programs are receiving the intensive research mentoring that prepares them for academic careers. We raise similar concerns for most of the NCSPP programs included in our comparison group, though a few of these schools have assembled faculties consisting of highly productive research scholars. Students wanting academic careers are best advised to attend a research university.

For research-minded students who still choose an explicitly religious school for ideological reasons, they are well-advised to identify a productive faculty member in advance and to pursue a research mentoring relationship with that person (Johnson & Huwe, 2003). They should also keep in mind that psychologists with PsyD degrees are not considered for employment by some academic departments, even if they have excellent training and important publications. For this reason, there may still be advantages to the PhD degree for students wanting an explicitly religious training environment en route to an academic career.

Another way to evaluate the distinctive nature and mission of PhD versus PsyD programs is to focus on the scholarly behavior of program graduates. Although ECTP PhD graduates are not more likely than their PsyD counterparts to enter academic jobs (Johnson & McMinn, 2003), it appears that they are nonetheless more frequent researchers and writers (Morris, Sorenson, Gooden, & Pike, 2004). We recommend this as an area for further research.

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