



## Spirituality, social justice, and intercultural competence: Mediator effects for differentiation of self

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### ABSTRACT

The present study tested the relationships between spirituality, differentiation of self (DoS), social justice commitment, and intercultural competence among graduate trainees in the helping professions. The sample consisted of 139 graduate students at a Protestant-affiliated university. Results supported the hypotheses that DoS would mediate the relationships between spiritual well-being and both social justice commitment and intercultural competence. DoS also mediated the relationship between spiritual instability and intercultural competence, but this was not observed for the links between spiritual instability and social justice commitment. Implications are considered for training in intercultural competence and social justice, particularly with highly religious trainees.

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### 1. Introduction

All the major mental health fields and helping professions are represented by professional organizations that have articulated an ethical mandate for culturally competent practice. The increasing diversity throughout much of the world necessitates practitioners that are growing in the competency to work with diverse populations. There are currently large bodies of literature on both multicultural and intercultural competence which are overlapping constructs within the broader category of diversity competence. In the present study, we focused specifically on *intercultural competence* which has been defined as “the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways” and with sensitivity to “relevant cultural differences” (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003, p. 422).

Theorists of multicultural or intercultural competence frequently recognize that the development of such diversity competence engages a person's worldview, values, and core concerns (Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez, 2003). Cultural dynamics and differences can also be interwoven within spiritual and religious communities and traditions (e.g., Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003), and it has been suggested that intercultural training might be enhanced by “spiritual values” (Fukuyama, Siahpoush, & Sevig, 2005, p. 134). Some types of spiritual values may be more conducive to diversity training than others, and yet there has been surprisingly little empirical research on the associations between intercultural development and competence and various styles of spirituality and religion. This lack of investigation is problematic given the observation that some adherents within various spiritual and religious traditions appear to move toward compassion and diversity competence while others within those same traditions seem to be characterized by ethnocentrism and xenophobia (Griffith, 2011; Jun, 2010; Sandage, Dahl, & Harden, 2012). Questions remain unanswered about specific styles or factors within spirituality and religion that might be more or less consistent with intercultural competence.

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Spirituality and religion are constructs defined in a variety of ways. [Shults and Sandage \(2006\)](#) proposed a systems-based relational definition of spirituality as “ways of relating to the sacred” (p. 161). This relational definition of spirituality builds upon the work of [Hill and Pargament \(2003, p. 65\)](#) who defined both spirituality and religion as arising from the “search for the sacred,” with “sacred” referring to persons and objects of ultimate truth and devotion. Individuals relate to the sacred in a variety of ways, which can include avoidance, ambivalence, trust, idealization, hostility, activism, contemplation, and many others.

### 1.1. Theoretical framework

Intercultural competence was conceptualized in this study using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS; [Bennett, 1993](#)). The DMIS led to research developing and validating the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; [Hammer et al., 2003](#)) as a measure of developmental differences in intercultural sensitivity and competence. Bennett describes the intercultural development process as inclusive of six different orientations individuals use in relating to cultural differences. These interpretive orientations or worldviews are divided into two general categories that constitute a continuum from ethnocentrism to intercultural competence. The DMIS posits that ethnocentrism and intercultural competence are opposite poles on the awareness and sensitivity continuum of intercultural differentiation.

In ethnocentrism, individuals lack intercultural sensitivity and experience differences primarily based on three distinct monocultural worldviews: Denial, Polarization, and Minimization. Denial is a worldview in which only surface-level cultural differences (e.g., food preferences) are observed but deeper cultural differences (e.g., emotional expression styles) are not perceived and one's own cultural orientation is considered a single-reality of what is valid. Polarization is a worldview that involves viewing cultural differences through a lens of judgment which creates poorly differentiated “us” versus “them” polarities and includes orientation of Defense or Reversal. In Defense, one's own culture is viewed uncritically as superior to other cultures. In Reversal, a different culture may be experienced through an idealized stereotype and one's own culture is viewed through negative generalizations which activate shame.

Minimization is an orientation which focuses on cultural similarities and a particular cultural worldview is projected as universal and normative. Dominant cultural groups maintain Minimization through limited intercultural differentiation, a lack of cultural self-awareness, and ignoring realities of social privilege. For non-dominant cultural groups, Minimization is an achievement of assimilation and resilience but includes efforts to suppress awareness of cultural difference.

Intercultural competence in the DMIS is comprised of two relatively differentiated orientations (Acceptance and Adaptation) in which a person experiences her or his own cultural identity in the context of cultural differences. In Acceptance a person has the cognitive differentiation be aware of cultural differences and accept that one's worldview is one of the many possible valid worldview orientations. Adaptation is an orientation in which a person is able to perceive and produce skilled behavior that is “appropriate” to a different cultural orientation through well-differentiated cognitive frame-shifting and behavioral code-switching. Adaptation is typically developed through considerable experience relating within culturally diverse contexts.

### 1.2. Relational spirituality and differentiation

[Sandage and Harden \(2011\)](#) tested a differentiation-based model of relational spirituality and associations with intercultural competence (using the IDI) in a sample of graduate students in the helping professions. While [Bennett \(1993\)](#) had theorized that intercultural competence involves strong capacities for differentiation, the idea had not been previously tested empirically. Sandage and Harden used a measure of differentiation of self (DoS; [Skowron & Schmitt, 2003](#)) from the family systems literature which has been positively associated with numerous measures of psychosocial adjustment, problem-solving, and relational well-being among numerous ethnic groups ([Skowron, 2004](#)). Those who are high in DoS tend to have strong capacities for self-regulation of (a) emotion, and (b) closeness and autonomy in relationships. DoS is particularly relevant to diversity since it represents a self-aware capacity to manage anxiety related to difference without excessive need for cutoff or fusion in relationships. Intercultural competence was positively correlated with DoS, dispositional gratitude, and quest, the latter representing an open or seeking style of relational spirituality ([Sandage & Harden, 2011](#)). Spiritual grandiosity was negatively correlated with intercultural competence, and DoS mediated the relationship between dispositional gratitude and intercultural competence. In terms of relational spirituality, these results suggested intercultural competence is consistent with ways of relating to the sacred that involve high levels of both gratitude and openness in combination with low levels of spiritual grandiosity or entitlement.

[Fukuyama et al. \(2005\)](#) implied a reciprocal developmental process between diversity training and spirituality in suggesting “multicultural learning fosters spiritual evolvment and that spiritual evolvment strengthens the multicultural learning process” (p. 135). In the present study, we investigated measures of spirituality (spiritual well-being, spiritual instability) in relation to intercultural competence which were not investigated in [Sandage and Harden's \(2011\)](#) study. We also wanted to further test a differentiation-based model with DoS as a mediator of relational spirituality and intercultural competence. We theorized that DoS could account for the underlying dynamic noted by Fukuyama et al. above, namely that intercultural learning and spiritual development can be mutually reinforcing.

Spiritual well-being represents a way of relating with the sacred along two dimensions (a) secure closeness in relating with God, and (b) high existential well-being generated by a sense of meaning and purpose in life. The Spiritual Well-Being

Scale (SWBS; Ellison, 1983, 1994) is a widely used measure of spiritual well-being which has been positively associated with numerous measures of psychological well-being, mental health, and physical health. Ellison's theoretical formulation of spiritual well-being as a construct was initially based on the ancient Jewish concept of *Shalom* and its later translation in the Greek concept of *Teleios*. In popular understandings, *Shalom* sometimes connotes simplistic, individualistic visions of intrapsychic "peace" but actually references a holistic flourishing that integrates personal and communal well-being and justice amidst the embodied challenges of stress and relational conflict (Ellison, 1994). *Teleios* adds the implication of purposeful movement toward a goal of wholeness and completeness. The SWBS has been positively correlated with numerous measures of spiritual and religious health, including intrinsic religiosity, spiritual awareness, and spiritual maturity (Hall & Edwards, 2002). Spiritual well-being is a form of relational spirituality that is consistent with DoS and, in fact, DoS mediated the negative relationship between the dimension of religious well-being and psychological distress (Jankowski & Sandage, 2012). Those who are high in spiritual well-being are likely to relate to the sacred in ways that help them self-regulate while also seeking meaningful purpose for the benefit of both self and community. Thus, spiritual well-being is a spiritual orientation that is conducive to the openness, growth commitment, social concern, and distress tolerance which are all necessary for intercultural development.

Spiritual instability is a form of relational spirituality which has been negatively correlated with both spiritual well-being (Hall & Edwards, 2002) and DoS (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010) and involves an emotionally and relationally dysregulated style of polarized relating with the sacred consistent with traits of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Those high in spiritual instability tend to engage in polarized splitting of good and bad objects and manifest high levels of insecurity, mistrust, and fear of abandonment in their attachment with the sacred. In particular, they frequently feel negative about themselves and attacked or punished by the sacred, and these hostile introjects and projections can also generate interpersonal defensiveness and conflict. Sandage and Jankowski (2010) found the negative association between dispositional forgiveness and spiritual instability in their study was mediated by differentiation of self. That is, participants who were more differentiated tended to be more forgiving and less prone to the polarization of spiritual instability, probably due to capacities for self-regulation of negative emotion. Schnarch (1991, 1997) has advanced the theoretical notion that differentiation-based spirituality represents a relatively mature form of spirituality which enhances capacities for intimacy with oneself, others, and the sacred through high tolerance for the anxiety of difference. In contrast, Schnarch suggested dependency-based ways of relating to the sacred tend to involve greater difficulty self-regulating anxiety about differences and the perceived inadequacy of self, both of which limit capacities to relate effectively across differences. Whereas spiritual grandiosity interferes with intercultural competence by assuming spiritual superiority over others (Sandage & Harden, 2011), spiritual instability may involve the opposite problem of experiencing spiritual inferiority combined with a polarizing relational schema that could be consistent with intercultural polarization.

Spirituality may also demonstrate a strong commitment to social justice and could also demonstrate a differential association with intercultural competence. That is, social justice may represent a distinct construct to that of intercultural competence. In fact, DoS may mediate associations between spirituality and both intercultural competence and social justice commitment, while intercultural competence and social justice commitment demonstrate a lack of association. Perry and Rolland (2009) have described a "justice-seeking spirituality" (p. 384) and suggest that various spiritual and religious traditions have a stream of spirituality that fosters honest awareness of injustice combined with a hopeful commitment to activism. While social justice appears to be a value conducive to multicultural learning and multicultural competence (Fukuyama et al., 2005), it does appear that social justice may demonstrate distinct associations with spirituality. A justice-seeking spirituality could be contrasted with forms of relational spirituality which focus exclusively on gaining personal benefits from the sacred or narcissistic validation for one's group being superior compared with others. Most spiritual and religious traditions have some leaders and followers who value and commit to fostering social justice and others who are less motivated toward social justice. Those who practice spirituality with a commitment to social justice likely perceive a sacred significance to fairness and alleviating the suffering of others outside their immediate social groups, and yet, this openness and flexibility of social boundaries may not be associated with the development of intercultural competence.

Within the fields of counseling, psychology, and marriage and family therapy, there is a growing interest in the relationship between social justice and multicultural competence (e.g., Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007; Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Goodman et al., 2004; McDowell and Shelton, 2002; Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011). Social justice is even being described as the fifth force in the history of counseling paradigms following the fourth force of multicultural counseling (Singh et al., 2010). However, to our knowledge, there are no empirical studies investigating measures of social justice commitment and multicultural or intercultural competence. In the present study, we measured social justice commitment using a subscale of the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS; Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993) which focused on an active commitment and concern for social justice. Several researchers have pointed to the importance of healthy and mature forms of selfhood for sustaining a commitment to social justice, including capacities for self-awareness (Constantine et al., 2007), ongoing self-examination and self-regulation (Goodman et al., 2004), self-education on social justice (Singh et al., 2010), self-efficacy (Miller & Sendrowitz, 2011), and differentiation of self (Jordan, 2010). DoS is a systems-oriented and relational measure of selfhood that is consistent with the developmental capacities necessary to understand and navigate systemic nature of both social justice and intercultural dynamics. High levels of the interpersonal dimension of DoS in particular may be necessary to manage the often stressful process of committing to social justice and developing intercultural competence. In a sample of

graduate students in the helping professions, Sandage, Crabtree, and Schweer (in press) found DoS was positively associated with both social justice commitment and dispositional hope. Therefore, we expected the interpersonal aspect of DoS to mediate the relationship between spirituality and both social justice commitment and intercultural competence.

### 1.3. Summary of the present study

The present study investigated spirituality, social justice commitment, and intercultural competence in a sample of graduate students in the helping professions at a Protestant-affiliated university in the U.S. Based on the reviewed literature above, we hypothesized that DoS would mediate the relationships between the independent variables of (a) spiritual well-being, and (b) spiritual instability and the dependent variables of (a) intercultural competence and (b) social justice commitment; thereby constituting four hypothesized specific indirect effects.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Participants were 139 masters-level students in the helping professions (i.e., marriage and family therapy, ministry, leadership, education) from a Protestant-affiliated university in the Midwest United States. Participants were recruited from both classes and orientation sessions and offered a \$10 gift certificate to a bookstore for participating by completing questionnaires. They ranged in age from 21 to 59, and the mean age was 31.07 ( $SD = 10.41$ ). The sample was 48.9% female and 51.1% male. Participants identified as 90.6% European-American, 4.3% Asian or Asian-American, 2.2% African-American, 1.4% Native-American, and one participant did not report their ethnicity. The majority of students (80.6%) were in their first year of graduate study, while 8.6% were in their second year, 8.6% in their third year, and 2.1% in their fourth year or beyond.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence was measured using the 50-item Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer et al., 2003), which is based on the DMIS as a developmental assessment of intercultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. The IDI measures constructs from the DMIS and generates a perceived score on intercultural competence, an actual, overall developmental score on intercultural competence which corrects the perceived score using a computer algorithm based on the DMIS and validity studies, and a gap score measuring the difference between perceived and developmental scores of intercultural competence. The overall IDI score was used in the current study. Participants respond to items based on a five-point scale (1 = *disagree*, 5 = *agree*). Confirmatory factor analyses have supported the identification of subscales that measure the ethnocentric orientations of Defense, Reversal, and Minimization and the interculturally competent orientation of Acceptance/Adaptation (Hammer et al., 2003; Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003). Cronbach alpha reliabilities for the scales ranged from .80 to .85 in the psychometric studies. The IDI scales also showed no differences in correlations with the Marlowe–Crown social desirability scale, suggesting the IDI is not “transparent” to participants. Content validity was established by a panel of intercultural experts, and construct validity included predicted relationships between IDI scales and measures of worldmindedness and intercultural anxiety (Hammer et al., 2003).

#### 2.2.2. Spiritual Instability

Spiritual Instability (SI) was measured through a 9-item subscale of the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI). The SAI is a self-report based on object relations and attachment theories and theistic contemplative spirituality (Hall & Edwards, 2002; Hall, Reise, & Haviland, 2007). The SAI measures the dynamics of a person's style of relating with God rather than focusing on one's representation of God and is comprised of two dimensions: awareness and developmental quality. The developmental quality dimension, which includes SI, is designed to measure the relational qualities of one's relationship to God. The SI subscale is intended to measure traits consistent with a BPD and has been positively correlated with alienation and egocentricity subscales on the Bell Object Relations Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 2002) and also psychiatric symptoms and spiritual disappointment (Sandage, Link, & Jankowski, 2010). Those who score high on the SI scale are proposed to have difficulty maintaining spiritual and emotional regulation and integrating good and bad self-objects. Examples of SI items include “I am afraid that God will give up on me” and “There are times when I feel that God is punishing me.” Participants are asked to respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*). Hall and Edwards (2002) demonstrated construct, convergent, discriminant, and incremental validity of the measure. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the Instability subscale in this study was 0.76.

#### 2.2.3. Spiritual well-being

The SWBS is 20-item self-report measure used to assess the subjective well-being of respondents along two dimensions: religious and existential well-being (RWB and EWB; Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982). The religious well-being dimension captures a person's felt sense of relationship with God, while the existential dimension refers to the experience of meaning/purpose in life. The SWBS full scale and two scale dimensions have demonstrated good internal consistency,

with Cronbach's alphas for the RWB ranging from .82 to .94 (Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991). Construct validity of the SWBS has also been demonstrated (Ellison, 1994; Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982) with over three hundred and fifty studies, including positive correlations with intrinsic religiosity, hope, and various measures of mental and physical health. Participants responded to items on a range from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*). Higher scores reflect greater religious well-being. The SWBS full scale score had an internal consistency in this study of Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ .

#### 2.2.4. Social justice commitment

Social justice commitment was measured using three items from the Horizontal scale of the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS-H; Benson et al., 1993). The FMS-H was developed by a panel of experts to measure a mature spiritual orientation as evidenced by commitments to altruism, justice, and helping others and was initially normed among Protestant samples in the United States. Dy-Liacco and colleagues found evidence for the cross-cultural validity of the FMS-H among a largely Catholic sample of Filipinos and also found construct validity evidence of positive associations between self-report scores and observer ratings (Dy-Liacco, Piedmont, Murray-Swank, Rodgerson, & Sherman, 2009). The FMS-H has previously differentiated volunteers from non-volunteers in Protestant settings (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2008) and has correlated positively with a separate measure of social justice commitment (Fenzel, 2002). In the present study, we used three items from the FMS-H which focused on social justice commitment with language that was not explicitly "spiritual:" (a) "I am active in efforts to promote social justice." (b) "I speak out for equality for women and persons of color." (c) "I care a great deal about reducing poverty in the USA and throughout the world." Items were endorsed on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). The three items from the FMS-H had an internal consistency of Cronbach's  $\alpha = .71$ , and reliability coefficient  $\rho$  (Brown, 2006; Raykov & Shrout, 2002) was .73, 5000 bootstrap BC 95% CI (.63, .80). Reliability coefficient  $\rho$  was calculated using SEM in AMOS 7.0 (Fan, 2003; Graham, 2006), which also provided the factor loadings ( $r_s$ ; i.e., structure coefficients) for each item contributing to the latent construct of social justice commitment. Each of the factor loadings was practically significant ( $r_s > |.50|$ ): item (a),  $r_s = .87$ ; item (b),  $r_s = .57$ ; item (c),  $r_s = .64$ . The reliability and construct validation data supported use of the three items from the FMS-H as a measure of social justice commitment. Total scores were calculated by summing the three scores, following that outlined by Dy-Liacco et al. (2009).

#### 2.2.5. Differentiation of self

The Differentiation of Self Inventory – Revised (DSI-R; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003) is a 46 item self-report measure used to assess Bowen's concept of differentiation. The DSI-R has generated an internal consistency score of .92 on the full scale (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003). The various subscales have obtained internal consistencies ranging from .81 to .89 and have also demonstrated convergent and divergent validity. Two of the subscales assess the intrapersonal aspects of differentiation ("I" position, emotional reactivity). The other two subscales assess the interpersonal dimension (fusion with others, emotional cutoff). Evidence for the construct validity of DoS as measured by the DSI-R exists in support of its use as a measure of the intra- and interpersonal dimensions of self-regulation capacity (Skowron & Dendy, 2004; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003; Skowron, Holmes, & Sabatelli, 2003). Higher scores on the subscales reflect greater differentiation. The interpersonal differentiation subscales were used in the current study. Participants were asked to rate how generally true the items were about them on a scale from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 6 (*very true of me*). Sample items on the fusion with other subscale (FO) include "I try to live up to my parents' expectations" and "Sometimes I feel sick after fighting with my spouse/partner." The emotional cutoff (EC) subscale consists of items such as "When one of my relationships becomes very intense, I feel the urge to run away from it." The FO subscale had an alpha of .80. The EC subscale had an internal consistency in this study of Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ .

### 3. Results

The hypothesized relationships between variables were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) in AMOS 7.0 (Arbuckle, 2006; Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2011). Data were initially examined for outliers and normality. Multivariate outliers were not a problem ( $D^2$  values were not distinctively apart; Byrne, 2010). The variables did not exhibit problematic univariate skew (i.e., absolute values of the skewness index were  $<3.00$ ; Kline, 2011), nor did the variables exhibit problematic univariate kurtosis (i.e., absolute values of the kurtosis index were  $<10.00$ ; Kline, 2011). Multivariate normality was not violated (i.e., multivariate kurtosis critical ratio was  $<5.00$ ; Byrne, 2010). We therefore analyzed the model using Maximum Likelihood Estimation in AMOS 7.0 and the bootstrap procedure. Bootstrapping was used to examine the specific indirect effects within the model and thereby assess mediation (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). We used the recommended bias-corrected (BC) confidence intervals (CI) and 5000 bootstrap samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the variables used in the analyses. Gender and age were examined in relation to each of the variables, while race was not due to the small sample sizes in some of the groups. Participants did not differ on any of the variables by gender. The variables of SWB ( $r = .19, p = .02$ ) and FO ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) were significantly correlated with age. Analysis tested the model for fit with the data, and the model is presented with standardized regression weights from the bootstrapping procedure in Fig. 1. The model fit the data  $\chi^2 = 2.45(4), p = .65$ ; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI [.00, .10]), PCLOSE = .78.

The first hypothesized indirect effect was supported. The AMOS bootstrap procedure revealed a significant specific indirect effect between SWB and ID, with DoS as a mediator:  $\beta = .26, SE = .23, BC\ 95\% CI (.07, .88), p = .007$ . The standardized direct

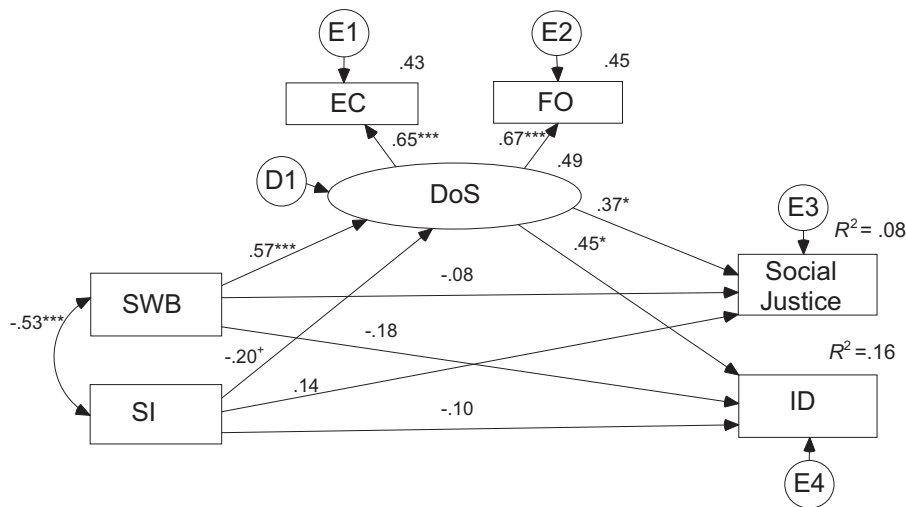


**Table 1**

Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of spirituality variables, differentiation of self, and intercultural competence and social justice commitment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. SI	–					
2. SWB	–.53***	–				
3. EC	–.32***	.47***	–			
4. FO	–.35***	.44***	.45***	–		
5. ID	–.23**	.18*	.23**	.26**	–	
6. Social justice	–.01	.10	.10	.19*	.15	–
M	1.80	106.57	4.75	3.83	92.77	18.81
SD	.55	9.82	.78	.80	14.97	4.92

Note:  $N = 139$ . SI = Spiritual Instability, SWB = spirituality well-being, EC = emotional cutoff, FO = fusion with others, DoS = differentiation of self, ID = intercultural development. Overall ID scores are based on an algorithm using theoretically weighted means of subscales from the IDI (Paige et al., 2003). Higher scores on EC and FO represent increased DoS.

\*  $p < .05$ .\*\*  $p < .01$ .\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Fig. 1.** Standardized coefficients from bootstrap test of the mediation model of the relationship between spirituality variables, differentiation of self, intercultural development and social justice commitment. Note: SWB = spiritual well-being, SI = Spiritual Instability, EC = emotional cutoff, FO = fusion with others, DoS = differentiation of self, ID = Intercultural Development.  $\chi^2 = 2.45(4)$ ,  $p = .65$ ; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00 (90% CI [.00, .10]), PCLOSE = .78. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , +  $p = .07$ .

effect between SWB and ID was non-significant BC 95% CI ( $-.67, .14$ ). The results therefore supported a mediating effect for DoS between SWB and ID. Greater spiritual well-being corresponded with increased DoS, and increased DoS corresponded with increased intercultural development.

The second hypothesized indirect effect was also supported. The AMOS bootstrap procedure revealed a significant specific indirect effect between SI and ID, with DoS as a mediator:  $\beta = -.09$ ,  $SE = .11$ , BC 95% CI ( $-.35, -.0003$ ),  $p = .05$ . The standardized direct effect between SWB and ID was non-significant BC 95% CI ( $-.32, .15$ ). The results therefore supported a relationship between SI and ID through DoS. Greater spiritual instability corresponded with decreased DoS, and decreased DoS corresponded with decreased intercultural development.

The third hypothesized indirect effect was supported. The AMOS bootstrap procedure revealed a significant specific indirect effect between SWB and social justice commitment, with DoS as a mediator:  $\beta = .21$ ,  $SE = .22$ , BC 95% CI ( $.02, .76$ ),  $p = .03$ . The standardized direct effect between SWB and social justice commitment was non-significant BC 95% CI ( $-.54, .20$ ). The results therefore supported a mediating effect for DoS on the relationship between SWB and social justice commitment. Greater spiritual well-being corresponded with increased DoS, and increased DoS corresponded with increased social justice commitment.

Last, the fourth hypothesized indirect effect was not supported. A non-significant specific indirect effect between SI and social justice commitment with DoS as the mediator was observed BC 95% CI ( $-.33, .004$ ). The direct effect between SI and social justice commitment was also non-significant BC 95% CI ( $-.13, .42$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

Results mostly supported the hypotheses of DoS as a mediator of spirituality and intercultural competence and social justice commitment. Interpersonal DoS did mediate the relationship between (a) spiritual well-being and intercultural

competence and (b) spiritual instability and intercultural competence, while the effect for DoS mediating spirituality and social justice commitment was mixed. Overall, the findings add to the results of Sandage and Harden (2011) by providing further empirical support for (a) Bennett's (1993, 2004) DMIS positing that the capacity to regulate togetherness–separateness relational impulses is positively associated with intercultural competence and (b) a differentiation-based model linking relational spirituality and intercultural development (Shults & Sandage, 2006). Broadly speaking, the effects for spirituality variables on intercultural competence also support the theory of Fukuyama et al. (2005) suggesting certain forms of spirituality may be conducive to multicultural learning.

Prior to further discussion of the results, several methodological limitations of the present study are worth noting. The sample was comprised of mostly European-American graduate students in a Protestant training context and research within other religious traditions and with larger, more ethnically diverse samples is needed. It would also be useful to investigate spirituality and intercultural competence among those who identify as spiritual but not religious. Future research might also include additional measures of spirituality, such as types and frequency of prayer. In addition, a mediating role for DoS in this cross-sectional study could lead to designing longitudinal and intervention studies on intercultural development to test the role of DoS and processes of change over time.

Spiritual well-being was positively associated with intercultural competence through DoS. Spiritual well-being, as an indicator of a healthy style of relational spirituality, is characterized by a sense of meaningful purpose and a warm, secure connection with the Divine and appears to be consistent with intercultural competence. DoS, and specifically, the capacity for interpersonal self-regulation seems to account for this relationship. This finding supports the theory that differentiation-based forms of spirituality are conducive to mature ways of relating across differences (Schnarch, 1991, 1997). These findings also add to a growing body of research showing positive effects for DoS in relation to measures of spiritual well-being, prayer, mental health, and virtue (Jankowski & Sandage, 2012; Jankowski & Vaughn, 2009; Sandage & Jankowski, 2010). In terms of Wuthnow's (1998) dialectical model of spiritual seeking and dwelling, a questing or seeking form of relational spirituality was positively associated with intercultural competence in the Sandage and Harden (2011) study, and the present study shows that a dwelling-oriented form of relational spirituality (i.e., spiritual well-being) can also be positively associated with intercultural competence. Future studies might investigate measures of both spiritual dwelling and seeking (or an integration of both; Sandage et al., 2010) in relation to intercultural competence.

In contrast, spiritual instability was negatively associated with DoS, the latter which was then positively associated with intercultural competence; and the specific indirect effect between spiritual instability and social justice commitment through DoS was not significant. Furthermore, the relationship between spiritual instability and intercultural competence through DoS approached non-significance. In fact, another test of the specific indirect effect (e.g., Monte Carlo Method for Assessing Mediation, 95% CI [−6.60, .27]; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Selig & Preacher, 2008) revealed a non-significant association. Nevertheless, there is evidence for a mediating effect for DoS and specifically a protective role for DoS in the overall model. It would seem that the capacity for interpersonal self-regulation can play a protective role in the association between increased spiritual instability and decreased intercultural competence. The protective role for DoS is further demonstrated by examining the specific indirect effects in a model with SWB removed. Significant specific indirect effects were observed between both spiritual instability and social justice through DoS ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $SE = .11$ , BC 95% CI [−.43, −.03]), and spiritual instability and intercultural competence through DoS ( $\beta = -.17$ ,  $SE = .10$ , BC 95% CI [−.43, −.05]). Taken together, the findings seem to suggest that the protective role for DoS is enhanced by inclusion of spiritual well-being in the model. The dysregulating influence of spiritual instability on reducing intercultural competence appears to lessen in the presence of spiritual well-being, that is, meaningful purpose and a warm, secure connection with God may facilitate self-regulation and thereby further lessen the influence of spiritual instability on lowered intercultural competence.

Spiritual instability appears to be a polarizing style of relational spirituality which includes struggles with self-regulation, including interpersonal conflict and forgiveness (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010). Those high in spiritual instability tend to also be high in spiritual disappointment (Sandage et al., 2010) and perceive themselves to be at risk of Divine anger and punishment. While our non-clinical sample should not be conflated with those who actually meet criteria for BPD, those high in spiritual instability have a personality style consistent with some traits of BPD (Hall & Edwards, 2002). The BPD personality style has been described as including a hostile paranoid worldview and a dichotomous cognitive style (Geiger & Crick, 2010), both of which could interfere with the psychosocial development of intercultural competence by preventing openness to individuals who are perceived to be outside the boundaries of one's own sociocultural or spiritual group (Griffith, 2011). The fact that interpersonal aspects of DoS mediated the relationship between spiritual instability and intercultural competence, and between spiritual well-being and both social justice and intercultural competence, offers some tentative empirical support to the theories suggesting a contrast between differentiated-based and polarization- or dependency-based forms of spirituality and capacities for managing the relational anxiety of difference (Schnarch, 1991, 1997; Shults & Sandage, 2006).

It should be noted that social justice commitment did not correlate with overall intercultural competence in both the bivariate analysis and the test of the mediation model (bootstrap implied correlation coefficient = .16, BC 95% CI [−.004, .25]). In addition, a model with correlated error terms between social justice and intercultural competence compared with the uncorrelated error model revealed that both models fit the data equally well ( $\Delta\chi^2 = .84$ ,  $\Delta df = 1$ ,  $p = .36$ ). In such instances, the simpler, more parsimonious model is preferred (Kline, 2011). Furthermore, the correlation between error terms was non-significant. It could be that another measure of social justice commitment would yield different results. Miller and Sendrowitz (2011) used a measure with more general language about “social justice,” whereas we chose a three-item scale in which two items explicitly mention advocacy related to particular social justice issues (i.e., women, persons of color, and poverty).

There are advantages to each approach and future studies might include both types of measures. One item on the scale we used reads “I speak out for women and persons of color.” There was good psychometric support for the three item scale, however wording these two social justice issues into one item could be questionable, particularly in light of some evidence that attitudes toward sexism and cultural differences may not always be highly correlated (Balkin, Schlosser, & Levitt, 2009). The finding that DoS significantly mediated the relationship between spiritual well-being and social justice commitment suggests that the capacity to regulate relational anxiety without emotionally cutting off or becoming emotionally fused (1) is fostered by a dwelling-oriented spirituality, and (2) enables one to advocate for the needs of others different than oneself. Last, the results from the present study support the thesis of several theorists that social justice commitment and intercultural (or multicultural) competence are sufficiently distinct constructs that merit unique emphases in training and research (e.g., Constantine et al., 2007; Fouad et al., 2006; Goodman et al., 2004; Jun, 2010).

There are several practical implications of this study for those involved in diversity training with future helping professionals. First, the further empirical support for DoS in relation to intercultural competence suggests differentiation could be a useful construct to thematize in training by drawing on literatures in intercultural relations, family systems theory, and human development. There are useful parallels that can be drawn between the “leaving and returning home” process interculturality and with respect to family of origin. In fact, the use of intergenerational genograms first developed in differentiation-based family systems theory can be integrated with reviewing and mapping a trainee’s intercultural heritage (Shellenberger et al., 2007). Second, the dynamics of relational spirituality are relevant to intercultural competence, so trainees might also be invited to examine how their spiritual and religious values and heritage relate to intercultural attitudes and practices. This could be helpful even for trainees whose style of relational spirituality could be characterized as “disinterested” and who do not consider themselves “religious” or “spiritual.” For those who consider their relational spirituality important, there is evidence that it is possible to integrate spiritual growth and intercultural development and this may be compelling to those trainees. They might benefit from approaches to intercultural training that invite them to actualize their spiritual values, practices, and relationality in the interests of both intercultural competence and spiritual maturity. Those who are high in spiritual instability may struggle with the dialectical thinking that is required for intercultural competence, and yet they may also benefit from an emphasis on dialectics if they are also helped to manage the anxiety such a process creates. Finally, the lack of correlation between intercultural competence and social justice commitment points to the necessity of a dual focus in diversity training in which both are emphasized rather than conflating the two.

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