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Guest Editor Page: Teaching Integration

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# GUEST EDITOR PAGE: TEACHING INTEGRATION

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Over the last 40 years, numerous models describing the relationship between psychology and theology have arisen, from those espousing little or no interaction between the two fields (e.g., Adams, 1970) to those espousing a mutually informative integration between the two fields (e.g., Carter & Narramore, 1979). The level of sophistication characterizing the integration paradigm continues to grow (e.g., Hall & Porter, 2004; McMinn, & Cambell, 2007), yet one wonders whether the knowledge of how graduate students actually learn integration and the pedagogical strategies to teach integration have likewise risen in quality. This special edition of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* on teaching integration attempts to address these two questions.

### *How Students Learn Integration*

Compared to other areas, little research on how graduate psychology and counseling students learn integration has been done over the last 40 years. Randall Sorenson's studies with clinical psychology doctoral students (Sorenson, 1994, 1997; Sorenson, Derflinger, Bufford, McMinn, 2004; Staton, Sorenson, & Vande Kemp, 1998) represent the lone theory-driven, systematic, empirically-based research program found in the literature. His findings demonstrated the importance of relational attachment processes in how students learn integration. Unfortunately, his untimely death in 2005 left open the question of whether other researchers would attempt to build on his work.

This special edition's first three articles confirm that investigations of how students learn integration will continue and meaningfully add to Sorenson's theory. In the first article, Ripley and colleagues from 4 universities performed a survey to investigate

whether Sorenson's emphasis on the importance of relational attachment in learning integration held true for graduate students not only in clinical psychology but also in other academic disciplines. Further, their analysis explored the role of environmental factors and whether gender and ethnic differences emerged in what students found as important to integration. The second article focused on Hall and colleagues' utilization of grounded theory techniques to perform a content analysis of qualitative data gathered in Ripley's survey. Their findings expand on Sorenson's ideas in regards to how students conceptualize integration and include pedagogical implications. Finally, Sites and colleagues explored the following question. If students were to nominate specific professors as most helpful in learning integration, what would these professors have in common? Her phenomenological inquiry on 8 professors from a variety of academic disciplines increase our understanding of the integrative process for these faculty members, in addition to finding support for characteristics that Sorenson identified as helpful.

### *Pedagogical Strategies to Teach Integration*

In 1995, the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* published a special edition on teaching integration in psychology courses at the undergraduate level (volume 23, issue 4). This important work highlighted some of the key integration issues in various psychology subjects, along with research on what undergraduate professors were doing in teaching integration. It is fitting that a little over 10 years later, another special edition has emerged, this time with a focus on graduate counseling and clinical psychology student needs.

The remaining four articles address applied aspects of teaching integration with these students, each focusing on a unique venue for such integration to occur. Across programs, all students encounter classroom experiences intended to promote integration learning. McMinn and colleagues

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offer 10 pedagogical strategies for promoting integration learning in this traditional environment. Yet, some students also enroll in programs that incorporate online learning and emerging technologies. These nontraditional integration environments contain both challenges and enhancements to the integration learning experience. Accordingly, Dominguez and colleagues engage in a "question and answer" dialogue that clarifies misconceptions and informs *JPT* readers of the enormous potential found in distance and hybrid learning environments. Outside of coursework, internship is the key place where graduate students finally get to test their developing skills with real clients. The role of clinical supervision therefore becomes paramount in the further shaping of the student's integration skills. Siang-Yang Tan explores various models for using supervision as an integration-training relationship. Finally, some courses in graduate clinical and counseling programs create more challenges than others in the development of integration-focused material. In the seventh article, Paul Poelstra tackles two commonly difficult subjects, research and statistics. His holistic recommendations highlight some of the key findings from the research in this issue's first three research articles.

The breadth of topics covered in this special issue attest to the many opportunities for further research and dialogue in the area of integration learning. Much can be gleaned from these authors' contributions, and many questions can emerge from their work. It is my hope that this special edition spurs

researchers and instructors alike in the quest for further knowledge in the area of teaching integration.

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