



## Preparing School Psychologists for Working with Diverse Students: Does Program Accreditation Matter?

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which differences exist between accredited and non-accredited school psychology training programs on specific characteristics of training theorized to prepare graduates for working with racially, ethnically, and/or linguistically diverse students. Training directors from each of the 237 school psychology programs nationwide were solicited to complete a brief survey on program training characteristics. Independent-samples t tests and chi-square tests of independence were used to determine the existence of significant differences in training characteristics between the two program types. No significant differences emerged between accredited and non-accredited programs on any of the training characteristics theorized as important for working with diverse student populations. The results of this study can be used to draw inferences regarding the influence of accreditation bodies on the current presence of specific school psychology training program characteristics within training programs nationwide.

*Keywords:* culturally and linguistically diverse, multicultural, training, program evaluation, school psychology

The composition of U.S. schools is growing increasingly diverse. Approximately 44% of school-aged students currently come from racially, ethnically, and/or linguistically diverse (RELD) backgrounds (Planty et al., 2009). Unfortunately, as a group, students who are RELD have significantly poorer educational outcomes than their White peers in regards to academic achievement scores, high school drop out rates, and pursuit of postsecondary education (Planty et al., 2008; Planty et al., 2009; Thompson, Gorin, Obeidat, & Chen, 2006).

There are well documented gaps between RELD students and their White peers in both reading and mathematics achievement as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a nationally administered academic assessment governed by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) (Planty et al., 2008; Planty et al., 2009). Reading achievement scores on the NAEP have increased in the past decade and

a half nationwide and the achievement gap between Black and White students has decreased amongst students in the fourth grade. However, in eighth and twelfth grades the achievement gap between these students' has remained unchanged and the reading achievement gap between Hispanic and White students' has remained unchanged at all grade levels. Mathematics scores on the NAEP follow a similar trend. For example, the gap between White and Black students' NAEP mathematics scores has decreased in the last decade and a half, but the gap between White and Hispanic students on the same mathematics measure has not changed since 1990 (Planty et al., 2009).

Researchers interested in minimizing achievement gaps have focused their attention on both the factors associated with K-12 academic success and effects on future outcomes, including post-secondary educational pursuit and career choice (Planty et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2006). Overall, studies indicate that children who

are RELD differ from their non-RELD counterparts on subsequent academic and career outcomes, including high school drop-out rates, pursuit of post-secondary education, and job selection. For example, children who are identified as Black or Hispanic are more likely to drop out of high school than those who are identified as White. Students who drop out of high school are limited in career choice to jobs that do not require a high school diploma and likely offer lower salaries by comparison to those that require a high school diploma or postsecondary education. In the last fifty years the job market has changed considerably with an increase in jobs requiring some postsecondary school, such as office jobs, and a decrease in those requiring a high school diploma or less, such as factory jobs (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003). This change in the job market affects the training requirements for individuals seeking employment.

Unfortunately, differences between students identified as RELD and those identified as White also exist in the rates of postsecondary school pursuit and graduation (Planty et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2006). Even when examining exclusively students who graduated from high school, more self-identified White students go on to college than those students who are identified as Black, Hispanic, or Native American. Thompson, Gorin, Obeidat, and Chen (2006) reported that nationwide, although 14% of children were identified as African American in 1997, only 8% of students who graduated from college five years later were African American. Similar trends were found for other minority groups. For example, students identified as Hispanic represented 11% of the high school population that same year, however, five years later, only 7% of students identified as Hispanic graduated from college. Additionally, the total enrollment of all RELD students in graduate or professional schools is approximately one third that of their White counterparts (Planty et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2006). These outcomes, which are associated with academic achievement, may affect the ability of RELD students to contribute to society and further their economic status through the attainment of a stable career.

### **Predictors of Academic Success**

The U.S. Department of Education has identified factors associated with early academic success that may predict the subsequent discrepancies in higher education and career attainment previously discussed (Planty et al., 2008; Planty et al., 2009). These variables include parental level of education, socioeconomic status (SES), and primary language spoken in the household. Of these, parental level of education and SES are closely linked. Thus, the effects of ethnicity, SES, school factors, and parental education level are often difficult to disentangle. In general, higher parental education levels and SES are associated with greater academic achievement in children than the achievement of children with low-SES and

poorly educated parents (Davis-Kean, 2005). During 2002-2004, when examining SES alone, the household median income for those identified as Black was lower than that of any other racial or ethnic group (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Lee, 2004). Schools located in high poverty areas enroll a higher percent of RELD students than those who are White. Only 4% of children who are White attend schools in high poverty areas compared to 32% of Blacks, 34% of Hispanics, 10% of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 24% of American Indian/Alaska Natives (Planty et al., 2008). Further, controlling for SES, parents of children who are identified as White are more likely to have obtained a bachelor's degree than those who are identified as Black or Hispanic (Planty et al., 2008; Planty et al., 2009).

Aside from its unique negative effect on academic outcomes, poverty is also associated with other school-related problems such as high teacher-turnover rates. Scafidi, Sjoquist, and Stinebrickner (2007) found that teacher retention rates were lower if the schools in which they were employed had lower test scores, were located in lower income areas, or had a higher proportion of RELD students. Low SES school districts, which often contain a high percent of RELD students, are less likely to employ and retain experienced teachers as compared to more affluent districts. As a result, greater frequencies of RELD students are taught by inexperienced teachers who may not be as well prepared for classroom instruction as more senior teachers (Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007). Consequently, White students are more likely to reap the benefits of teacher stability than their RELD peers.

The negative effect of inexperienced teachers is often further compounded by the effect of students' English fluency on their academic success. In 2006, 18% of Hispanic children and 17% of Asian children learned English as a second language and had difficulty speaking it. Only 1% of children identified as White exhibited a similar English-language difficulty, and this percent consisted only of those children who were identified as more than one race. Not surprisingly, English language fluency is not unrelated to poverty. Limited English fluency was found more often in children who came from lower SES backgrounds than those of higher SES backgrounds (Planty et al., 2008). This is particularly problematic because there is a large gap in the academic achievement between English language learners (ELLs) and those students who speak English proficiently. Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, and Sapru (2003) analyzed national data and reported that approximately three-fourths of third grade ELLs performed below grade level in English reading and over half of those students performed below grade level in mathematics, which places them at risk for learning problems. Therefore, across all of these indicators, SES, school environment, and English fluency, students who

are White tend to hold the advantage over children who are RELD.

### **Working with RELD Students**

As a whole, the extant literature documents a discrepancy in educational achievement and associated factors between RELD students and their White peers (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003; Planty et al., 2008; Planty et al., 2009). It is assumed that closing these gaps will result in an increase in the socio-economic and occupational opportunities for RELD students. This assumption has lead researchers to suggest that to address the potential academic barriers for RELD students, educators should begin with an increased understanding of their underlying needs, and further, that those who interact with RELD students in educational settings or who design curricula and interventions for these students may find it useful to understand the diverse issues faced by individuals from distinct racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups to provide the most effective support. Such practices, labeled by some as “culturally competent” practices and policies are hypothesized to offer some promise in this direction (Rogers, 2006; Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, & Wiese, 1992; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998).

There are a variety of professionals who, both directly and indirectly, affect students’ education. Among these are school psychologists. School psychologists play numerous roles within schools and their multidimensional training allows them to impact the education of children in a unique manner. A school psychologist is the only person on a school campus whose roles include conducting psycho-educational evaluations, consulting with parents, teachers, and administrators to solve problems, and making empirically-based educational accountability decisions (NASP, 2006; NASP, 2007). The manner in which school psychologists interact with students affect the results of evaluations and clinical impressions, which ultimately influence educational decisions made about the student, such as, the need for academic or behavioral interventions or eligibility for special education placement. Unfortunately, students who are RELD are disproportionately represented in special education programs compared to their White peers with more students who are RELD at risk for being identified as having a Specific Learning Disability, Mental Retardation, Serious Emotional Disturbance, Multiple Disabilities, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairment, Deaf-Blindness, and Developmental Delay (U. S. Department of Education, 2006). Decisions made by school psychologists greatly impact students’ futures and may influence their ability to meet their academic potential, graduate from high school, pursue and attend higher education, or find stable careers. In order to successfully meet the demands of these roles with RELD students, some researchers suggest that school psychologists should display *multicultural competence*,

defined as a psychologist’s knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity to differences in cultures (Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, & Wiese, 1992). Two key areas of importance for school psychologists to demonstrate appropriate skills in working with RELD clientele include assessment and consultation of students who are RELD (Rogers et al., 1999; Behring, Cabello, Kushida, & Murguia, 2000; Ochoa, Riccio, Jimenez, Garcia de Alba, & Sines, 2004; Rogers, 1998).

**Assessing RELD students.** Assessing RELD students can be challenging. One difficulty in evaluating a RELD student occurs when the student is also an ELL. Assessment instruments are often developed and validated on samples of students whose primary language is English. When these tools are used to measure abilities, attitudes, and behaviors of non-native English speakers, the validity of the score interpretations and uses are questionable (Hambleton & Li, 2005). To address potential intrusion of unintended sources of variance that can diminish the validity of score interpretations, examiners should select appropriate measures, if available, or alter the test administration procedure. Ochoa, Riccio, Jimenez, Garcia de Alba, and Sines (2004) found that approximately half of school psychologists surveyed had some experience assessing ELL students. Although nearly one third of the practitioners were bilingual, most reported using interpreters to administer the test. Of these interpreters, one quarter were not trained in test administration. The use of interpreters for evaluating ELLs can be effective or problematic given the training of the interpreter. Hambleton and Li (2005) discuss a better approach to assessing ELLs. They suggest school psychologists first determine if a translation or adaptation of the test is appropriate, then, ensure the translation is of high quality and that the construct remains the same in the new language. When a test is translated, psychometric properties need to be evaluated to determine if the new measure similarly gathers information about the specific problem (Hambleton & Li, 2005).

Language diversity is not the only source of construct-irrelevant variance in the assessment of RELD students, cultural bias may also exist. Reynolds and Carson (2005) define cultural bias as, “a constant or systematic error, presumed to be due to group membership or some nominal variable, occurring in the estimation of a score on a psychological or education test or performance criterion” (p. 796). They argue that two types of cultural bias exist: access-skill difficulties and target-skill measurement. Access-skill difficulties are those created due to lack of content exposure, examiner intimidation, and prior experiences of discrimination that have caused poor self-efficacy in the examinee. Target-skill measurement is a result of fundamental differences on the skill assessed, lack of prediction power, and the under representation of RELD students in normative

samples for standardized tests. Although these conditions may exist, there are statistical methods to correct for cultural bias such as item response theory and analysis of variance (Reynolds & Carson, 2005). Given the likelihood of encountering RELD students in school settings for whom cultural bias may be an issue, school psychologists should be educated and trained in appropriate methods to account for the variance.

Given issues of cultural bias and linguistic diversity, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has redefined expectations for how school psychologists should approach these situations. In NASP's, *School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice III* (2006), "diversity awareness and sensitive service delivery" is listed as a foundational competency. Although previous versions of the text required, at most, an acknowledgement of racial, ethnic, language, and cultural differences amongst students, the third edition requires school psychologists to use their knowledge of these differences within their practices. NASP (2006) states further that, "the use of inappropriate or unsystematic methods for assessing English language learners reflects inadequate competence in this domain." Similarly, standard 9.02(c) of the APA Ethics Code (2002) states, "psychologists use assessment methods that are appropriate to an individual's language preference and competence, unless the use of an alternative language is relevant to the assessment issue." However, the NASP and APA recommendations are only effective if practitioners are properly educated about issues in psychometrics as they pertain to test selection and interpretation of scores. The degree to which current training programs that produce school psychologists incorporate such education into their curriculum has not been investigated in two decades (Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, & Wiese, 1992).

**Consultation with RELD students.** Consultation is an indirect service provided by the school psychologist to another professional such as a teacher or administrator, for the purpose of assisting that professional in dealing with the educational problems of a single student or a group of students (Gutkin & Curtis, 2009). This type of service delivery allows school psychologists to work with larger groups of students, further asserting their influence in educational decision-making. Unfortunately, when consulting with parents, consultants who are RELD show a greater tendency to make modifications to their practices in order to accommodate for the diverse culture of clients than White consultants (Behring, Cabello, Kushida, & Murguia, 2000). However, RELD clients view consultants who verbally express racial sensitivity as having more multicultural competence than those who ignore racial themes, which suggests that school psychologists would benefit from appropriate training in working with RELD clientele (Rogers, 1998). The presence of training in this area, or the degree to which it

is emphasized in training programs has not been investigated nationwide in two decades (Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, & Wiese, 1992; Rogers, 2006; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998).

### **Characteristics of Multicultural Training**

To meet the increasing need for school psychologists who have the experience and training appropriate to deal with the diverse student body and their unique needs, training programs have adopted characteristic elements that are assumed to produce practitioners that are better equipped to work with RELD clientele. Some of these include assessment, consultation, and service provision with RELD clientele in practicum and internship experiences, conducting research on RELD topics, and coursework devoted to training graduate students in working with RELD clientele (Lopez & Rogers, 2001; Lopez & Rogers, 2002). Additionally, in 2002 the American Psychological Association (APA) presented five guidelines for psychologists regarding education, training, research, practice, and organizational change. These guidelines include recognizing personal bias, acknowledging the importance of multicultural competence, actively using multicultural constructs in psychological education, conducting research that is culture-centered, and applying ideas of cultural responsiveness to practice. Furthermore, recognizing the individual differences in students' abilities and disabilities, cultural, ethnic, experiential, socioeconomic, linguistic backgrounds, and gender are one part of the training standards outlined in the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Training and Accrediting Standards (NASP, 2000; NASP, 2007).

Although training school psychology graduate students in working with RELD clientele is widely recommended, the extent to which it exists and the nature of its implementation varies by program. According to research, characteristics of training programs considered exemplary in training graduate students to work with RELD clientele are similar in nature to those requirements by APA and NASP and include offering or requiring a specific course in training students to work with RELD clientele, providing practicum and internship experiences with RELD clientele, fostering opportunities for students to conduct research, theses, or dissertations on RELD topics, implementing a variety of recruitment strategies targeting potential graduate students who are from RELD backgrounds, creating a supportive environment for RELD students, and adopting a systematic method for assessing multicultural competencies of students progressing through their respective school psychology training program (Rogers, 2006; Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998).

Nationwide, programs have been surveyed on a number of characteristics targeted at training graduate students in working with RELD clientele. Brown and Minke (1986) reported that offering a cross-cultural

psychology course significantly discriminated between program types, with more doctorate programs offering a separate course than non-doctoral programs. Programs that offered a specific cross-cultural psychology course were also more likely to be APA accredited. Other aspects of training thought to be important in this area include devoting time in assessment and consultation courses to instruction on working with RELD clientele. Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, and Wiese (1992) and Rogers (2006) reported that training programs that integrated RELD themes into their assessment courses were also more likely to do so in other courses such as in a consultation course and a roles and functions course. Students in these programs were also more likely to work with RELD clientele in internship. Exposure to RELD students in practicum and internship is another characteristic of training thought to be important in preparing graduate students for working with RELD clientele. Rogers et al. (1992) reported that the availability of these experiences tended to occur more at larger universities, programs with a large RELD student enrollment, and programs that conferred master's degrees. They also reported that universities that publish research on RELD topics were more likely to be APA accredited, offer doctoral degrees, and enroll a large number of RELD students. Lastly, no recent studies have investigated the current nationwide presence of RELD student recruitment strategies, degree of support given to RELD students, or the existence of a multicultural competence comprehensive exit evaluation in school psychology training programs despite its hypothesized importance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Researchers have identified key characteristics of school psychology training hypothesized to better prepare graduate students in working with RELD clientele, however, it is unclear whether the increased emphasis on these training characteristics in the APA accreditation and NASP approval guidelines has had an effect on the training practices of accredited and non-accredited programs nationwide. The obvious question, then, is whether a difference exists in the training characteristics provided by programs that are accredited or approved by either APA or NASP relative to non-accredited and/or approved programs. Further, there is some question as to whether the variability across programs is not only in the presence of specific training characteristics assumed to produce better equipped school psychologists in terms of working with RELD clientele, but also in terms of the

mechanisms for training. Lastly, a study investigating the status of these training characteristics nationwide has not been published in two decades.

The purpose of the present study was to assess the degree to which differences exist between APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology training programs and training programs that are not accredited by either of these organizations through a nationwide survey of information specifically related to the incorporation of elements thought to be indicative of exemplary<sup>1</sup> training for working with RELD students. Information was collected regarding whether programs offered a course pertaining to RELD topics, the degree to which they infused RELD themes in specific required coursework, the percent of FTE (full time equivalent) faculty and students in the program, the percent of time students spent working with RELD<sup>2</sup> clientele in practicum and internship experiences, the number of RELD students who graduated from the program in the last five years, and the number of faculty and student publications and presentations given in the same time period that focused on RELD topics (Brown & Minke, 1986; Rogers et al., 1992; Rogers, 2006; Rogers et al., 1998). Four specific questions were addressed:

- 1) Do APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs versus non-accredited and/or approved programs differ in terms of their required coursework (i.e., presence of a course on RELD topics and percent of time spent in required courses devoted to instruction on working with RELD clientele)?
- 2) Do APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs versus non-accredited and/or approved programs differ in terms of the presence of RELD FTE faculty and students?
- 3) Do APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and non-accredited and/or approved programs differ in terms of the opportunity for students to work with RELD clients within practicum and internship experiences?
- 4) Do APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs versus non-accredited and/or approved programs differ in terms of the amount of research produced related to RELD topics?
- 5) Do APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs versus non-accredited and/or approved programs differ in terms of the number of RELD students who have graduated from the program in the last five years?

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1 Exemplary refers exclusively to the quality of the multicultural training component of the program, not to its overall quality, merit or ranking.

2 The use of the term RELD in this study specifically includes individuals who identify with a minority race, ethnicity, and those whose native language is not English. This definition also includes individuals who identify with more than one racial or ethnic group and those who have more than one native language.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participating programs consisted of those who responded to a survey sent by mail addressed to the training director of each of the 237 school psychology programs identified through a comprehensive search of all existing programs nationwide conducted by Miller (2008). Although the survey was addressed to the training director of each program, directions included specifications to seek the person most knowledgeable of the specific training characteristics in question to complete it. The total number of surveys returned was 79. However, of these, two were missing information on accreditation and/or approval status, and therefore, not used in the analysis. The remaining sample consisted of 77 respondents, a 32.49% response rate. Out of the 77 respondents, 81% were ( $n = 62$ ) APA accredited and/or NASP approved and 19% ( $n = 15$ ) were neither APA accredited nor NASP approved. The group of programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved was comprised of 3% ( $n = 2$ ) APA accredited only, 76% ( $n = 47$ ) NASP approved only, and 21% ( $n = 13$ ) both APA accredited and NASP approved.

### **Instrumentation**

A Multicultural Competence Training Survey was adapted from Rogers et al. (1992) for the purpose of gathering information for this study. It included thirteen multipart questions designed to gather information on the variables of interest. One survey item was omitted due to its irrelevance to the present study. The survey can be found in the appendix.

**Required coursework.** Required coursework was operationally defined as the coursework required of students for program completion. Two variables were analyzed which included: a) the presence of a required RELD topics course, and b) the percent of time devoted to instruction on working with RELD clientele in specified required coursework, each measured by an item on the multicultural competence training survey. Requiring a RELD topics course and incorporating such instruction into assessment, consultation, intervention, and roles and functions courses is presumed to represent a key element of school psychology programs that exemplify high quality training in working with RELD clientele (Brown & Minke, 1986; Rogers et al., 1992; Rogers, 2006; Rogers et al., 1998).

**RELD faculty and students.** The presence of RELD FTE faculty and students was operationally defined as the percent of RELD FTE faculty members and graduate students enrolled in each program. Both the percent of RELD FTE faculty members and the percent of RELD graduate student enrollment were analyzed. Survey respondents were asked to provide: (a) the total number of faculty employed in their program, (b) the racial and ethnic breakdown of their faculty along with the corresponding percent of employment for each faculty

member (i.e., full time, part-time), (c) the total number of students enrolled in their program, and (d) the racial and ethnic breakdown of the students in their program. The percent of RELD FTE faculty members for each program was then calculated from this information by dividing the number of RELD FTE faculty members by the total number of FTE faculty and multiplying the quotient by 100; the same procedure was used to calculate the percent of RELD graduate students for each program. Large percentages of RELD FTE faculty and students are one element thought to be important in training school psychologists in working with RELD clientele. Specifically, Ponterotto, Lewis, and Bullington (1990) suggest that programs whose RELD FTE faculty represent 30% of total FTE faculty members offer more supportive environments for RELD graduate students (as cited in Rogers et al., 1998).

### **RELD clientele in practicum and internship.**

The opportunity to work with RELD clientele in practicum and internship experiences was also measured. This variable was operationally defined as the percent of time that students work with RELD clients in practicum and internship experiences. Experiences serving RELD clientele in both practicum and internship were analyzed separately. Experience working with RELD clientele is another training characteristic thought to be important in preparing school psychologists for working with RELD clientele. The underlying logic is that the more experience graduate students are afforded, the better equipped they are thought to be in working with these students within their post-graduate careers (Rogers et al., 1992; Rogers, 2006; Rogers et al., 1998).

**Outcomes.** Outcomes of programs in terms of contributions to the school psychology research community on RELD topics and the number of RELD students who complete school psychology training programs- entering practice, composed the final construct of interest. Outcomes of programs were operationally defined as the research products generated (published articles and conference presentations combined) that were related to RELD topics and the amount of RELD students who graduate from programs in the last five years. Research opportunities and research generated related to RELD topics are assumed to be important outcomes of school psychology training programs, and may be indicative of competence in this domain (Rogers et al., 1992; Rogers, 2006; Rogers et al., 1998). Although the number of RELD students who graduate from a program has not been previously studied, the presence and percent of RELD students within a program have been linked to RELD graduate student support in school psychology programs (Rogers, 2006; Rogers et al., 1998).

### **Procedures**

Paper copies of the Multicultural Competence Training Survey were mailed to participants in a packet containing a cover letter describing the study, the survey,

an information letter for inquiring results, and a self-addressed envelope for return. Prior to mailing the survey packet, school psychology programs were notified first by email and then contacted by phone one week later to answer any questions about the materials. A monetary incentive was included in the form of a random drawing to win a \$300 travel grant for a graduate student enrolled in the winning program. All participants were informed of the drawing. In order for participants to have been included in the drawing, surveys needed to be received within six weeks of initial contact. This methodology was adapted from Brown and Minke (1986) and Rogers et al. (1992) based on its prior successful return rate.

### **Analysis**

Data were analyzed both descriptively and inferentially. First, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables based on the entire sample and then disaggregated by accreditation and/or approval status. Two accreditation and/or approval status categories were created consisting of: (a) APA accredited and/or NASP approved and (b) no accreditation and/or approval. Inferential statistics were analyzed using *chi-square* tests of independence for categorical variables. *Chi-square* is an appropriate statistical test for determining whether differences between the responses on the survey are significantly different than expected frequencies based on the condition of independence between the two variables (Green & Salkind, 2008). Categorical variables in the present study included the presence of a RELD topics course and the percent of time devoted to instruction on working with RELD clientele in specified courses.

Independent-samples *t* tests were conducted on continuous variables to determine if statistically significant differences in training characteristics between APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs and non-accredited and/or approved school psychology programs exist. The independent-samples *t* test is an appropriate test for determining whether population mean differences between APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs and those not APA accredited and/or NASP approved exist for each variable (Green & Salkind, 2008). Continuous variables included the percent of RELD FTE faculty and RELD students in the program, the percent of time students spent working with RELD clientele in practicum and internship, the number of RELD students who graduated from the program in the last five years, and the number of journal articles and presentations produced that focused on RELD topics in the same time period. The type I error rate for each test was determined using the Holm's sequential method to maintain an experiment-wise error rate of .05.

### **Results**

Despite following similar procedures as previous studies examining a similar construct, a low response rate was achieved (32.49%,  $n = 77$ ) (Brown & Minke, 1986;

Rogers et al., 1992). Results reported herein may not be representative of the population of school psychology training programs nationwide as a result. Descriptive statistics on all variables for the entire sample, disaggregated by accreditation and/or approval status, are presented in tables 1-4. Reference to specific values from these tables will be made in the reporting of the inferential statistics. Missing data were evaluated separately for each analysis.

In addition, the distributions of both groups, APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and those without accreditation and/or approval, were positively skewed. The distribution of the percent of RELD FTE faculty in programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved indicated that the majority of FTE faculty members were identified as White, although at least one program indicated that 100% of their FTE faculty was RELD. A similar pattern resulted for FTE faculty of non-accredited and/or approved programs, albeit with a smaller maximum percent of RELD FTE faculty. However, the average proportion of RELD FTE faculty members in APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs was 16.18%, which is lower than the proportion hypothesized to be necessary to create a supportive environment for RELD graduate students, suggested by Ponterotto et al. (1990) (as cited in Rogers et al., 1998). Further, those programs that were not accredited and/or approved also employed a small percent of RELD FTE faculty on average, reaching 14.86%. In comparison, Rogers et al. (1992) reported that 13.5% of FTE faculty of school psychology programs nationwide were RELD, which may suggest an increase in the past two decades. The percent of RELD graduate students was also similarly skewed for both APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and those not accredited and/or approved, both enrolling mostly White students in their programs. On average, 20.83% of graduate students enrolled in programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved, and 22.95% of those enrolled in programs without accreditation and/or approval were RELD. These proportions are roughly five percentage points higher than those reported by Rogers et al. (1992). Nevertheless, these increases may simply reflect the growing diversity of the U.S. population.

Although not statistically significant, programs that were not accredited and/or approved offered their graduate students more opportunities to work with RELD clientele in practicum and internship experience than those programs with APA accreditation and/or NASP approval. On average, 40% of time in practicum experiences was spent working with RELD clientele for those students enrolled in programs without accreditation and/or approval compared to 28.86% for those enrolled in APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs. Regarding internship, 35.73% and 31.20% of time was devoted to working with RELD clientele in programs that

were not accredited and/or approved and those with APA accreditation and/or NASP approval, respectively. Opportunities afforded to graduate students to work with RELD clientele in practicum and internship experiences

may be influenced by other factors as well, such as the location of the program and the racial, ethnic, and linguistic composition of the practicum and internship sites available.

Table 1  
Prevalence (%) of the Presence of a Multicultural Issues Course Disaggregated by Accreditation and/or Approval Status

Course Presence	Accredited (n = 60) n(%)	Not accredited (n = 13) n(%)	$\chi^2(1)$	p
Course present	41(68.33)	11(84.61)	1.38	0.24
Course not present	19(31.66)	2(15.38)		

Note. Accredited includes programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved.

Table 2  
Prevalence (%) of the Percent of Time Devoted to Multicultural Issues in Coursework Disaggregated by Accreditation and/or Approval Status

Time Spent in Courses	Accredited		Not accredited		$\chi^2(1)$	p
	n	%	n	%		
Assessment						
0%	0	0.00	0	0.00	1.48	0.69
1-5%	9	14.10	2	15.40		
6-15%	24	37.50	4	30.80		
16-25%	19	29.70	6	46.20		
25+%	10	15.60	1	7.70		
Consultation						
0%	1	1.60	0	0.00	0.79	0.94
1-5%	12	18.80	2	15.40		
6-15%	31	48.40	6	46.20		
16-25%	13	20.30	4	30.80		
25+%	5	7.80	1	7.70		
Intervention						
0%	0	0.00	0	0.00	3.07	0.38
1-5%	12	18.80	3	23.10		
6-15%	28	43.80	5	38.50		
16-25%	17	26.60	2	15.40		
25+%	5	7.80	3	23.10		
Roles and Functions						
0%	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.78	0.85
1-5%	14	21.90	2	15.40		
6-15%	23	35.90	3	23.10		
16-25%	21	32.80	5	38.50		
25+%	4	6.20	1	7.70		

Note. Accredited includes programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved.



Table 3

*Differences in the Percent of Racially, Ethnically, and/or Linguistically Diverse Full-Time Equivalent Faculty Employed and Racially, Ethnically, and/or Linguistically Diverse Students Enrolled in Programs, and the Percent of Time Students Spent Working with Diverse Clientele in Practicum and Internship Experiences Between School Psychology Training Programs Disaggregated by Accreditation and/or Approval Status*

Variable	Accredited			Not accredited			df	t	p
	M (SD)	Range	Skew	M (SD)	Range	Skew			
Faculty	16.18 (25.78)	0- 100	1.68	14.86 (21.41)	0-66.67 8.82-	1.44	73	0.17	0.87
Students	20.83 (20.86)	0-83.33	1.52	22.95 (14.96)	66.67 5-	2.28	74	-0.35	0.73
Practicum	28.86 (25.16)	0- 100	1.29	40.00 (29.65)	95 5-	0.93	75	-1.41	0.16
Internship	31.20 (23.28)	1- 100	0.92	35.73 (27.84)	5- 90	1.58	70	-0.58	0.57

Note. Accredited includes programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved.

Table 4

*Differences in the Number of Racially, Ethnically, and/or Linguistically Diverse Students who Graduated and Number of Research Products Produced in the Last Five Years Between School Psychology Training Programs Disaggregated by Accreditation and/or Approval Status*

Variable	Accredited			Not accredited			df	t	p
	M (SD)	Range	Skew	M (SD)	Range	Skew			
Graduates	7.18 (8.46)	0- 40	2.33	5.36 (3.44)	2- 14	1.60	64	0.70	0.49
Research	6.90 (10.62)	0- 58	3.18	13.77 (11.27)	2- 40	1.26	73	-2.10	0.39

Note. Accredited includes programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved.

In addition, the distributions of both groups, APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and those without accreditation and/or approval, were positively skewed. The distribution of the percent of RELD FTE faculty in programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved indicated that the majority of FTE faculty members were identified as White, although at least one program indicated that 100% of their FTE faculty was RELD. A similar pattern resulted for FTE faculty of non-accredited and/or approved programs, albeit with a smaller maximum percent of RELD FTE faculty. However, the average proportion of RELD FTE faculty members in APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs was 16.18%, which is lower than the proportion hypothesized to be necessary to create a supportive environment for RELD graduate students, suggested by Ponterotto et al. (1990) (as cited in Rogers et al., 1998). Further, those programs that were not accredited and/or approved also employed a small percent

of RELD FTE faculty on average, reaching 14.86%. In comparison, Rogers et al. (1992) reported that 13.5% of FTE faculty of school psychology programs nationwide were RELD, which may suggest an increase in the past two decades. The percent of RELD graduate students was also similarly skewed for both APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and those not accredited and/or approved, both enrolling mostly White students in their programs. On average, 20.83% of graduate students enrolled in programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved, and 22.95% of those enrolled in programs without accreditation and/or approval were RELD. These proportions are roughly five percentage points higher than those reported by Rogers et al. (1992). Nevertheless, these increases may simply reflect the growing diversity of the U.S. population.

Although not statistically significant, programs that were not accredited and/or approved offered their graduate students more opportunities to work with RELD

clientele in practicum and internship experience than those programs with APA accreditation and/or NASP approval. On average, 40% of time in practicum experiences was spent working with RELD clientele for those students enrolled in programs without accreditation and/or approval compared to 28.86% for those enrolled in APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs. Regarding internship, 35.73% and 31.20% of time was devoted to working with RELD clientele in programs that were not accredited and/or approved and those with APA accreditation and/or NASP approval, respectively. Opportunities afforded to graduate students to work with RELD clientele in practicum and internship experiences may be influenced by other factors as well, such as the location of the program and the racial, ethnic, and linguistic composition of the practicum and internship sites available.

Another pattern noted was the amount of research produced that focused on RELD topics. Again, although not significant, programs not-accredited and/or approved produced more research on RELD topics than those programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved. Programs that were not accredited and/or approved produced, on average, 13.77 journal articles and presentations focused on RELD topics, whereas programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved produced on average, only 6.90 research products focused on RELD topics in the last five years. This particular pattern may suggest that the efforts from APA and NASP to influence school psychology training programs to conduct research related to RELD topics has not been successful, however, this pattern may also be a result of the small sample size of this study. The second outcome variable, number of RELD students who had graduated the program in the last five years, indicated that on average, 7.18 RELD students graduated from APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and 5.36 RELD students graduated from non-accredited and/or approved programs in the specified time period.

A *chi-square* test was conducted to analyze whether school psychology programs that were APA accredited and/or NASP approved were more likely to offer a RELD topics course than those school psychology programs with no accreditation and/or approval. The results of the test were not significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.38, p = 0.24$ . The proportion of APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs that offered a RELD topics course ( $P = .68$ ) was similar to the proportion of non-accredited and/or approved programs ( $P = .85$ ). This suggests that APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs and those with no accreditation and/or approval offer a RELD topics course in similar proportions. Table 1 lists the frequencies and statistics for each accreditation and/or approval status group for this variable. Rogers et al. (1998) reported that

80% of exemplary school psychology training programs required a separate course on RELD topics.

Secondly, the degree to which APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs incorporate instruction on working with RELD clientele in coursework was also analyzed using a chi-square test. Four courses were analyzed separately: assessment, consultation, intervention, and roles and functions. The results of the test were not significant for any of the courses: assessment,  $\chi^2(3, n = 75) = 1.48, p = 0.69$ , consultation,  $\chi^2(4, n = 75) = 0.79, p = 0.94$ , intervention,  $\chi^2(3, n = 75) = 3.07, p = 0.38$ , or roles and functions,  $\chi^2(3, n = 73) = 0.78, p = 0.85$ . This indicates that APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs incorporate instruction on working with RELD clientele within coursework in statistically similar proportions as school psychology programs that are not APA accredited and/or NASP approved. Frequencies and statistics for each course are listed in table 2.

The remaining continuous variables were analyzed using independent-samples *t* tests to determine whether or not significant differences between training characteristics exist among APA accredited and/or NASP approved school psychology programs and those that are not-accredited and/or approved. Results of the analysis indicate no significant differences on any of the variables. The results may be attributed, however, to the skewness of the two groups. Both APA accredited and/or NASP approved programs and those that are not accredited and/or approved have distributions that are positively skewed for the percent of RELD FTE faculty, percent of RELD graduate students, percent of time spent in practicum and internship working with RELD clientele, number of RELD students who graduated the program in the last five years, and the total number of publications and presentations produced that focus on RELD topics.

### Discussion

In recent years, efforts from both APA and NASP to influence the training of school psychologists to include specific characteristics to prepare graduate students for working with RELD clientele have increased (NASP, 2006; NASP 2007; APA, 2002). These training characteristics have been hypothesized to produce school psychologists who are better able to meet the needs of RELD students, which in turn, is assumed to ultimately generate better educational experiences and outcomes for RELD students. Research examining these training characteristics within school psychology graduate programs has been conducted using survey and interview methodology. School psychology programs that are thought to be exemplary in terms of their commitment to preparing graduate students for working with RELD clientele have specific common characteristics such as offering a RELD topics course, incorporating instruction on working with RELD clientele in required coursework,

having a presence of RELD FTE faculty and RELD students in the program, offering opportunities for students to work with RELD clientele in practicum and internship experiences, and supporting research both from faculty and students that directly relates to RELD topics (Rogers et al., 1992; Rogers, 2006; Rogers et al., 1998).

The present study examined the current state of these specific training characteristics within school psychology programs, updating research conducted two decades ago for the purpose of determining whether differences exist in training between programs accredited by APA and/or approved by NASP and those that are not accredited in terms of preparing graduate students for working with RELD clientele (Rogers et al., 1992). The results suggest that despite efforts from APA and NASP, no significant differences exist regarding training characteristics between these two types of programs. As a result, questions arise as to why differences were not found and what accreditation and/or approval bodies can do in the future to influence programs to incorporate these characteristics into their training. APA accreditation and NASP approval have implications for graduates of school psychology training programs. However, active accreditation and/or approval status is costly and time-consuming and it does not yield any direct benefits to school psychology training programs or the institutions in which they reside (APA, 2007; NASP, n.d.). For example, some competitive pre-doctoral and specialist-level internship programs as well as some academic job postings require that graduates come from APA accredited and/or NASP approved training programs (Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers, 2012). Students who graduate from training programs that are not accredited are excluded from consideration of those positions as a result. Therefore, training programs may be not accredited because their accreditation status was denied or revoked, or simply because they do not find accreditation status desirable (e.g., as a result of associated costs or other reasons).

One possible explanation as to why differences were not found between the two program types may be due to the re-authorization of the APA Ethics Code (2002) and NASP's, School Psychology: A Blueprint for Training and Practice III (2006). These documents call for an increase of responsibility on the part of practitioners in working with RELD clients, and although they are not legal documents, sanctions may be brought forth on programs and individuals for any digressions. So, it is possible that all programs, regardless of their accreditation and/or approval status, have similar proportions of these training characteristics within their programs in an effort to prepare their students for practicing within the confines of what is considered ethical. This explanation is supported by the positively skewed distribution of both program types, which indicates that the majority of programs surveyed in this

study reported the presence of training characteristics targeted at preparing graduate students for working with RELD clientele.

Although the majority of programs surveyed include these training characteristics, some programs reported little or no presence of these elements. A second question posed from these findings is what steps can APA and NASP take to make a greater impact on training within programs in the future? One strategy might include offering incentives for programs that incorporate these characteristics in their training, such as longer periods of accreditation and/or approval between evaluations for continuance than programs that do not incorporate these characteristics into their training. Conversely, APA and NASP may choose to impose sanctions on programs that do not attempt to include these characteristics into their training, such as providing them with a preliminary accreditation and/or approval status or none at all, and more frequent evaluations until they meet certain criteria.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, results of this study must be interpreted with caution for a few reasons. First, the respondents of the survey only represent 32.49% of school psychology programs nationwide, and may not reflect the true nature of current training. Second, using survey methodology assumes that respondents answer survey questions accurately and no attempt was made to check the information gathered from the survey against other sources of information such as course syllabi or student reports. Additional sources of information may have provided different results. Notwithstanding, important information was gathered regarding existing training in school psychology programs, namely, there appear to be no statistically significant differences in the training characteristics hypothesized to be important in preparing graduate students for working with RELD clientele in programs with APA accreditation and/or NASP approval and those with no accreditation and/or approval. Additionally, current efforts by APA and NASP to encourage school psychology programs to incorporate specific training characteristics into programs may need to be improved to impact training nationwide. Future research is needed that investigates these training characteristics in more depth.

This study offers one step in the direction towards the overarching goal of understanding the influence of specific training characteristics on preparing school psychologists for meeting the needs of all students. Research examining these and other characteristics of training operate on the assumption that if educators are appropriately prepared, they can increase the educational outcomes- and others by association (i.e., post-secondary school attainment, career stability), for students who are RELD. Detailed information about school psychology training programs, such as if coursework includes

instruction on empirically-based practices for working with RELD students, and the impact of this type of training on practice, however, is still yet unknown. More research is needed that ties all of these factors together and tests each of these assumptions.

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Appendix

**Multicultural Competence Training Survey**

Please provide an estimate for the following questions.

1. What percent of time in the following courses has been devoted specifically to minority issues? (Please indicate your response to whatever course that best fits under each content area, regardless of course title.)

	0%	1-5%	6-15%	16-25%	25%+
Assessment	___	___	___	___	___
Consultation	___	___	___	___	___
Intervention	___	___	___	___	___
Roles and Functions	___	___	___	___	___

2. Please estimate on average the percent of time graduate students spend working with clients who are culturally and linguistically diverse in practicum and internship:

Student Time (%): \_\_\_(practicum) \_\_\_(internship)

3. During the last five years, approximately how many articles focusing on minority issues were published by faculty members or graduate students from your program? (Please list an approximate number.)

\_\_\_\_\_

4. During the last five years, approximately how many conference presentations focusing on minority issues were given by faculty members or graduate students from your program? (Please list an approximate number.)

\_\_\_\_\_

Please specify the following information as it relates to your training program.

5. What degrees in the area of School Psychology does your university offer? (Please check all that apply.)

\_\_\_ MA/MS      \_\_\_ other non-doctoral  
 \_\_\_ EdS      \_\_\_ EdD      \_\_\_ PsyD      \_\_\_ PhD

6. Is your school psychology program: (Please check all that apply.)

\_\_\_ APA approved (or provisionally approved)  
 \_\_\_ NASP/NCATE approved (or provisionally approved)

7. Do your students take a specific course(s) about multicultural issues in psychology?

No\_\_\_ Yes\_\_\_

If **yes**, please list the course(s), indicate if the course(s) is required or optional, and indicate if the course is offered inside or outside the department in which the school psychology program is housed.

Titles	Check one		Check one	
	Required	Optional	Inside dept.	Outside dept.
_____	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___
_____	___	___	___	___

8. How many full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty positions does your school psychology program have?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Regarding the faculty in your school psychology program, how many are (Please fill in.):

*Preparing School Psychologists for Working with Diverse Students: Does Program Accreditation Matter?*

	Men	% Time Employed	Women	% Time Employed
African-American	___	___	___	___
Native American	___	___	___	___
Asian American	___	___	___	___
Hispanic	___	___	___	___
Caucasian	___	___	___	___
Multicultural	___	___	___	___
Other	___	___	___	___
(Please specify.)	___	___	___	___

10. How many graduate students are currently enrolled in your program?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. How many of your graduate students are (Please fill in.):

	Men	Women
African-American	___	___
Native American	___	___
Asian American	___	___
Hispanic	___	___
Caucasian	___	___
Multicultural	___	___
Other	___	___
(Please specify.)	___	___

12. How many racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority students have graduated from your program in the last five years?

\_\_\_\_\_

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