A Developmental Model of Interreligious Competence

A Conceptual Framework

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Summary

This paper articulates a developmental model for how individuals relate to religious
difference. We begin by reviewing scholarly work on multicultural competencies and
initial research on religious diversity. To provide a framework for our model, we explore
the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity and its relationship to research
within the psychology of religion. The review closes by examining and critiquing a
preliminary model of interreligious sensitivity. From this multi-faceted review, we pro-
pose a developmental model of interreligious competence and suggest key psycho-
logical capacities that undergird the model. Two case studies ground the theory before
we explore future directions for research. Throughout, we consider the philosophical
issues of alterity that shape encounters with religious diversity. By developing this
model of interreligious competence, this article aims to provide a framework to help
psychologists and other human service professionals become more effective in their
interactions across religious difference.

Introduction

Religious pluralism, the coexistence of diverse religious groups and individuals, is an inescapable characteristic of the modern world. Many of the issues it raises are being studied at the social level; for example, pluralism plays a central role in secularization debates with some sociologists arguing that pluralism increases religious participation (e.g., Stark & Finke, 2000), while others deny this claim (e.g., Chaves & Gorski, 2001). While the sociology of religion has readily embraced religious pluralism as a central research topic (cf. Wuthnow, 2007), researchers within the psychology of religion have been surprisingly silent on the issue, despite increasing efforts at raising awareness of religious diversity within clinical settings (Richards & Bergin, 2014; Vieten et al., 2013).

Perhaps the relative paucity of research on religious diversity in psychology is, in part, because pluralism has been primarily viewed as a social phenomenon in scholarly literatures. Yet pluralism also involves personal encounters with religious difference, which may disrupt meaning systems and catalyze defenses or offer the opportunity for religious transformation, depending upon individual differences in the processing of these experiences. The psychology of religion has a rich history of studying the relationship between religiosity and prejudice at the level of individual differences (see Allport & Ross, 1967; Rowatt, Shen, LaBouff, & Gonzalez, 2013). As an example of the fruits of this line of inquiry, Doehring (2013) has illuminated the dynamic ways that religion and spirituality can both contribute to and help overcome prejudice, and she also offers practical clinical implications to help individuals overcome their prejudices or recover from discrimination. Most of the research on prejudice has focused on issues of race (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010), sexual orientation (Whitley, 2009), and gender (Balkin, Schlosser, & Levitt, 2009), which are important issues from which we would not aim to shift attention. However, many people also experience systemic and personal discrimination based on their religiosity. Beyond simply overcoming interreligious prejudice, there is also a need to better understand the dynamics of interreligious competence (IRC) or the ability to sensitively and effectively relate across religious differences. A person might overcome interreligious prejudice but still lack skills in relating effectively to persons of other religious worldviews. Below, we discuss the implications of IRC for psychology, other helping professions, and empirical research. We will suggest that IRC is an important competency for all helping professionals, including those who do not consider themselves "religious."

This paper begins by reviewing the existing work on multicultural competencies and initial movements towards IRC. As an analog for our proposed model, we will review the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

(DMIS; Bennett, 2004; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), along with its connections to research within the psychology of religion. Then we proceed to review some preliminary efforts at formulating a model of IRC. Springing from this review we articulate a more comprehensive developmental model of IRC, which we expand upon through case examples. Finally, we close by reviewing the empirical work that frames our expectations for research into IRC. Throughout the paper, we will pause to consider the theoretical depths and philosophical issues of alterity (i.e., ways of relating to otherness) that shape and mold encounters with religious difference.

Multicultural Competence and Religion

Within clinical and counseling psychology, great strides have been made in emphasizing, assessing, and investigating multicultural competence (Sue & Sue, 2012), with Pedersen (1991) declaring it the fourth force in counseling over two decades ago. The American Psychological Association (APA) has explicitly included religion as part of its definition of culture (APA, 2002) and requires accredited programs to adequately prepare students for issues of religious diversity (APA, 2010). Yet Vieten et al. (2013) were among the first to propose explicit competencies for addressing spiritual and religious diversity within a clinical setting.

Several clinical theorists have highlighted the importance of attending to religious diversity (Richards & Bergin, 2014) without fully articulating a model of IRC. For example, Zinnbauer and Pargament (2000) outlined four different approaches that counselors might take in response to religious and spiritual issues within therapeutic settings: the rejectionist, the exclusivist, the constructivist, and the pluralist. Gleaned from the professional literature, this initial framework helped raise clinicians' self-awareness, but it focused on religious and spiritual issues more broadly and did not focus on attitudes towards religious diversity specifically. To promote the skills necessary for handling religious diversity, Aten and Hernandez (2004) provided guidelines for supervisors to integrate religion and spirituality into their training programs. These guidelines are organized into eight domains, including: intervention skills, assessment approaches, theoretical orientation, and problem conceptualization, to name a few (Aten & Hernandez, 2004, pp. 154-158). Here, "individual and cultural differences" are also included as one of the eight domains that "can help supervisees competently work with religious issues and clients" (Aten & Hernandez, 2004, p. 159). In similar work, Pargament (2011) has articulated a comprehensive model for spiritually integrated psychotherapy, emphasizing

the key roles of self-awareness, authenticity, openness, and tolerance among clinicians.

While this body of work has helped train therapists to acknowledge religiosity and spirituality within a clinical setting, the guidelines have not yet been rigorously tested and integrated into a developmental model of spiritual and religious competencies that approximates models available for gender, sexual orientation, and other multicultural issues (Hathaway, 2008). Ironically, part of what is missing is a model describing the diversity of attitudes and perspectives that people bring to encounters with religious diversity. This could lead to the misimpression that people simply possess IRC or not rather than describing different developmental orientations and capacities that can shape interreligious perspectives.

Vieten and colleagues (2013) have sought to partially fill this gap by developing a set of spiritual and religious competencies that would ideally inform the training of psychologists and other helping professionals. Paralleling the multicultural competence literature, they organize their spiritual and religious competencies into three domains: attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Vieten et al., 2013, p. 133). For example, among attitudes, Vieten and colleagues (2013) suggest: "Psychologists are aware of how their own spiritual and/or religious background and beliefs may influence their clinical practice, and their attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions about the nature of psychological processes" (p. 136). This work helpfully extends existing research and meets the persisting need by providing a set of professionally honed competencies to orient training programs and licensed psychologists. As in the multicultural competence literature, the attitude dimension can be viewed as pivotal because attitudes toward diversity will influence interpretations of new information (i.e., knowledge) and motivations to develop effective behaviors (i.e., skills). There is now a vast, multi-faceted empirical literature on individual differences in the attitude dimension of multicultural competence with various assessments tools and training strategies available.

We augment the work above by articulating a developmental model within which to situate IRC. This framework extends beyond clinical settings by providing a perspective on the general dynamics that emerge when individuals experience and relate to religious difference. We describe a developmental model for understanding the various attitudes or interpretive frameworks individuals employ when responding to religious diversity and the cognitive and affective psychological capacities that guide the development of IRC. We view IRC not as a categorical factor but existing along a continuum, so a developmental model is important for teasing out both the process of growth and

the differing orientations individuals bring to the interpretation of religious differences.

Religious diversity is a reality in many social contexts. For religious individuals, pluralism often presents a particularly radical confrontation with the constructed nature of one's own meaning system. Nietzsche (1907) predicted that most people are not willing to accept the degree to which they construct cultural and religious meaning systems. Recognizing the cultural construction of belief often seems to imply the contingency and relativity of deeply held morals and values; therefore, people will often resist such self-awareness to limit existential anxiety. Since religious diversity can often force anxiety related to this recognition, it is perhaps not surprising that encounters with religious difference can lead to prejudice and even violence (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). Conversely, such encounters can also be powerfully transforming for individuals and even entire religious traditions (Wuthnow, 2007). Ricoeur (1967) described a "second naïveté" where individuals have faced the contingency of their morals and values, but nevertheless re-engage their religious traditions with full, post-critical awareness of the ambiguity of such participation. A similar description of mature faith is given by Tillich (1951), and re-emphasized by Neville (2013), who both urge the acceptance of broken symbols, which never fully capture the sacred that they point to, yet nevertheless offer a means for engaging that ineffable ultimate. From these perspectives, religious diversity is no longer a threat but an opportunity for deeper engagement and personal commitment. Yet both defensive resistance and the second naïveté are reactions to the same set of problems posed by religious alterity or otherness. The model we propose encompasses both positions as it describes the different developmental pathways people take in response to this problem of religious difference.

The Framework of Intercultural Competence

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) describes a process of growth in how people experience and respond to cultural differences. This developmental process is organized on a spectrum extending from ethnocentric mindsets, which involve less differentiated perspectives on cultural differences, to ethnorelativism, which demands higher levels of awareness and sensitivity (Bennett, 1993, 2004). These overarching categories are organized into frameworks that represent distinct constellations of experiences, perspectives, and behaviors. This model has a corresponding assessment tool, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer, 2011; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), which has been used in a wide variety of studies exploring the

relationship between individual differences and intercultural development and assessing training approaches to intercultural competence. We take this model as a starting point to build a developmental model for IRC.

In the DMIS the most rudimentary ethnocentric perspective is denial, which Bennett (2004) describes as: "one's own culture is experienced as the only real one—that is, that the patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values that constitute a culture are experienced as unquestionably real or true" (p. 63). Individuals operating from this framework cannot quite conceive of cultural difference, or they consider their own cultural perspective as the only one. This may manifest in broad generalizations in which anyone different is described as simply "immigrant" or "foreigner" (Bennett, 2004, p. 63). Due to this rigidity, when confronted with difference, individuals in denial may react with aggression or more simply disinterested avoidance of awareness of cultural differences. This mindset is dominated by low awareness, cognitive rigidity, and a near absence of empathy across difference.

Individuals with a defense mindset, on the other hand, are more aware of cultural differences than denial, but this perspective is "not sufficiently complex to generate an equally 'human' experience of the other" (Bennett, 2004, p. 65). In other words, people operating from this mindset have more awareness of cultural differences, but little flexibility to recognize the validity of those differences. The person in a defensive position is often threatened by alterity, and relies on polarized thinking and stereotypes to manage difference. Yet, this framework is not entirely negative; a defensive mindset is also very loyal to perceived insiders and acknowledges the reality of points of tension that come from cultural differences.

Polarized intercultural stances are also not always hostile; reversal is a position that instead idealizes the other and demonizes one's own culture. This idealization of difference may pass for cultural appreciation, but as Bennett (2004) notes; "the positive experience of the other culture is at an unsophisticated stereotypical level, and the criticism of one's own culture is usually an internalization of other's negative stereotypes" (p. 66). So while hostile defense against difference and myopic idealization of different cultures may seem drastically different, they share a common stereotyped and polarized perspective. This mindset may have a higher level of awareness than denial, but this awareness is still too cognitively rigid to be perceptive of subtlety and is, therefore, limited in helping to establish genuine intercultural empathy. Those operating from reversal also tend to experience intense shame, guilt, or other difficult emotions in relation to issues of diversity, which can impede effective relating across differences.

The final ethnocentric perspective is minimization: "the state in which elements of one's own cultural worldview are experienced as universal" (Bennett, 2004, p. 66). From this mindset, experienced differences are subsumed into familiar categories. An example is physical universalism, which focuses on a common biological nature and leads the individual at minimization to assume universal needs and motivations. Similarly, transcendent universalism is the assumption that we all share the same set of values. The key characteristic of this framework can be summarized by one of the items from the IDI: "I am sick and tired of hearing all the time about what makes people different; we need to recognize that we are all human beings, after all" (as cited in Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003). Cultural differences are elided by the emphasis on similarities. Within minimization, others are no longer experienced in such a polarized way, so it can sometimes be perceived as intercultural competence. But the missing pieces are self-awareness of one's own culture and constructive attunement to actual cultural differences (Bennett, 2004, p. 68). This lack of self-awareness can lead individuals to therefore project values, experiences, needs, and categories from their own culture onto others as if there was universal agreement about those issues. Evolving self-awareness is an essential skill necessary to move from ethnocentric perspectives into ethnorelativism. The lack of constructive attunement can also limit the development of skills in working to dialogue and relate across meaningful cultural differences.

The three intercultural mindsets of ethnorelativism are acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Beginning with acceptance, this is the "state in which one's own culture is experienced as just one of a number of equally complex worldviews" (Bennett, 2004, p. 68). The key difference between this mindset and minimization is that self-awareness of one's own culture prevents the obscuring of important and inescapable differences and the person has a growing openness and curiosity about cultural differences. Thus, while basic knowledge about other cultures may help lead individuals to ethnorelativism, it is not sufficient; that knowledge must be complemented with self-reflexivity and an awareness of how cultural differences shape a wide range of human interactions (Bennett, 2004, p. 69). To reach this framework requires a more differentiated perspective, a higher level of cognitive flexibility, and increasing empathy or perspective-taking (often called "frame-shifting"). In addition to these cognitive capacities, acceptance also involves the affective capacity to self-regulate since becoming aware of the contingency of one's own culture can be a disruptive and unsettling experience. With that disruption in mind, Bennett (2004) suggests that the key issue to be resolved here is value relativity;

one must "figure out how to maintain ethical commitments in the face of such relativity" (p. 69). Indeed, when faced with pluralism and diversity of cultures, relativism can be a common end point for many people.

As individuals move beyond acceptance, they can begin to enter adaptation, "the state in which the experience of another culture yields perception and behavior appropriate to that culture" (Bennett, 2004, p. 70). A high level of empathy and cognitive flexibility characterize this perspective, allowing an individual to shift cognitive, affective, and behavioral frames of reference. People operating from this mindset are able to draw on multiple perspectives when considering a complex situation, and may often shift their behavior to fit new cultural contexts (called "behavioral code-switching"). Given this fluidity, Bennett (2004) suggests that the primary problem to be resolved from adaptation is authenticity: "How is it possible to perceive and behave in culturally different ways and still 'be yourself'" (p. 71)?

If this question of authenticity is resolved, then an individual's perspective may enter integration, where "one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews" (Bennett, 2004, p. 72). This experience of integration could be constructive, in which this flexibility is experienced as a positive aspect of one's identity. But it could also be an encapsulated form of integration, which describes the possibility of separation and alienation from any one culture (Bennett, 2004, p. 72). Once a person is operating from a high level of intercultural competence, they may experience a certain kind of minority status (since most people are not operating from this framework) and might be frequently moving between various cultural contexts. This can be stressful, and healthy integration requires wise coping strategies, effective self-regulation, and a mature differentiation typically combined with finding communities of support.

There are a number of assumptions that undergird this model of intercultural development. The most foundational is the social-constructivist assumption that cognitive, experiential, and cultural dimensions of life are all constructed (see Bennett, 2004, pp. 73-74; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In other words, one's culture is not an essential, unchanging given; it is built by communities, evolves, and is relative in relation to other cultures. The recognition of this fact, especially applied to one's own culture, is the key shift between ethnocentric and ethnorelative perspectives.

As a development model, Bennett (2004) also argues for a suite of cognitive, affective, and behavioral capacities that allow individuals to be more sensitive to cultural difference. Cognitive complexity is a key component to intercultural sensitivity: "More cognitively complex individuals are able to organize their perceptions of events into more differentiated categories" (Bennett, 2004,

p. 73). This perception of subtle differences tracks the expanding awareness necessary for cultural appreciation. Beyond awareness, intercultural competence also requires cognitive flexibility in order to shift frames of reference and revise one's own worldview. Intercultural competence may also, therefore, be easier for individuals who have a high openness to experience, though openness to experience does not necessarily translate into actual relational competence across difference (Brandt, Chambers, Crawford, Wetherell, & Reyna, 2015). Since alterity can often be anxiety provoking, effective self-regulation is also a necessary capacity for ethnorelative stances. Supporting this association, two studies have found differentiation of self (DoS), which involves self-regulation and the capacity to balance autonomy and closeness in relationships (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003), to be positively associated with IDI scores (Sandage & Harden, 2011; Sandage & Jankowski, 2013). Furthermore, DoS has mediated the relationship between intercultural competence and other virtues such as gratitude (Sandage & Harden, 2011) and spiritual well-being (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010). While these affective and cognitive capacities undergird intercultural development, the experience of deepening appreciation for and empathy with difference cannot be reduced to any single skill. Instead, it is a constellation of capacities that permit individuals to have alternative experiences and encounter alterity with openness while still retaining their own cultural identity and values.

Empirical Work on Intercultural Competence and Religion

There has been a steadily growing body of research exploring the relationship between intercultural competence and several spiritual and moral variables, including moral development, quest religiosity, intrinsic religiosity, spiritual grandiosity, spiritual well-being, gratitude, and humility, to name a few. Endicott, Bock, and Narvaez (2003) made a first step in this direction when they found that post-conventional moral reasoning was associated with intercultural competence, which they suggest is due to both depending on a critical cognitive shift from rigid to flexible thinking. Drawing from work on diversity training, Fukuyama, Siahpoush, and Sevig (2005), suggested that encounters with difference often foster spiritual growth, and that this relationship is reciprocal.

Sandage and Harden (2011) found that intercultural development was positively related to quest religiosity, exemplified by individuals who value doubt and maintain a flexible position on religious convictions (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a, 1991b). Yet the IDI was not associated with Intrinsic religiosity (Sandage & Harden, 2011), which further complicates the relationship between prejudice and Intrinsic/Quest religiosity (see Hood, Hill, and Spilka, 2009, p. 412).

Sandage and Harden (2011) also found that spiritual grandiosity was negatively associated with scores on the IDI. This style of spirituality is characterized by a narcissism that engages the sacred in an attempt to secure one's own desires and reinforce one's own perspective (Hall, Reise, & Haviland, 2007), which likely inhibits cognitive frame-shifting and empathy (Sandage & Harden, 2011, p. 832). Spiritual well-being (Ellison, 1983) indicates a secure relationship with the sacred, often characterized by sense of purpose, and contrasted with spiritual instability, which involves fear of divine anger, difficulties in self-regulation (Sandage & Jankowski, 2010), and high spiritual disappointment (Sandage, Jankowski, & Link, 2010). Sandage and Jankowski (2013) found spiritual well-being to be positively correlated with intercultural development, while spiritual instability held a negative association. Both of these relationships were influenced by DoS.

Taken collectively these studies suggest that intercultural competence is associated with particular styles of spirituality. Based on a model of relational spirituality, explored more fully below (Shults & Sandage, 2006; Worthington & Sandage, 2015), this is not particularly surprising; the ways in which individuals relate to the sacred will also likely reflect their relational styles across differences (i.e., spiritual alterity). The advantage of a conceptual framework that examines IRC is that it would provide the opportunity to examine these dynamics within a single construct that tracked how individuals relate, not just to difference in general, but specifically to perceived religious differences.

Initial Gestures Towards Interreligious Competence

Given the promise of interreligious sensitivity and competence for conflict resolution and inter-religious dialogue, it is no surprise that these are some of the fields to have already begun work in this area. Abu-Nimer (2001, 2004) was the first to develop an interreligious complement to the DMIS. His field of research is conflict resolution and accordingly his model of interreligious sensitivity is adapted for this context. While limited by this context, Abu-Nimer's work nevertheless provides a helpful initial movement towards a developmental model of IRC. In this section we will explore his model and examine the limitations that must be adjusted and augmented to arrive at a comprehensive developmental model relevant for work in the psychology of religion.

Following the same categories as the DMIS, Abu-Nimer (2001) suggests that denial is exemplified by religious teachings that deny the humanity of those outside the faith. This perspective is expanded in his later work, which emphasizes physical and ideological separation as the essential features of denial (Abu-Nimer, 2004, pp. 497-498). Defense and reversal, in his model, are epitomized by an individual's belief in the superiority of their religious tradition

and the inferiority of all others. Finally, Abu-Nimer (2004) describes the religiocentric perspective of minimization as when individuals "begin from their own beliefs and see the same beliefs among others" (p. 500), or through "such classic faith statements as: 'we are all the children of God'" (pp. 697-698).

These descriptions of the religiocentric mindsets capture key elements of these orientations and thus provide a fruitful point of departure. But they are also narrowly construed and lack the more comprehensive and complex descriptions of the DMIS orientations. For example, denial may involve degrading beliefs or ideological separation, but these descriptions do not necessarily capture the cognitive rigidity, low awareness, and lack of empathy that undergird intercultural denial in the DMIS model (Bennett, 2004). Furthermore, preference for one's own religious tradition vis-à-vis other options is not necessarily defensive. Instead, descriptions of this mindset must emphasize polarization and stereotyped thinking (Bennett, 2004). More troublingly, Abu-Nimer (2004) suggests that religious conversion is often an example of reversal. But this unwarranted characterization misses the complex nature of religious conversion (see Paloutzian, Murken, Streib, & Rößler-Namini, 2013; Sandage & Moe, 2013), which does not necessarily involve the idealization dynamics of reversal. These individual problems may spring from an overemphasis on the beliefs of each phase rather than a broader consideration of attitudes, behaviors, and the undergirding psychological capacities that shape each orientation.

Furthermore, Abu-Nimer (2001) describes the shift from religiocentric to religiorelative perspectives as particularly challenging: "participants in the training workshops, regardless of their faith, had difficulty applying the developmental model in the ethnorelative stages when religion was substituted for culture" (p. 699). In other words, individuals were generally opposed to the idea of religious relativity. This problem is repeated in his later work: the "possibility of developing a religious pluralist consciousness is rejected by most of the interfaith dialogue groups, because it raises the fear of conversion and the loss of one's perceived authentic religious identity" (Abu-Nimer, 2004, p. 503). Given these concerns, Abu-Nimer suggests that acceptance might be the highest point of growth for religious individuals; anything further is interpreted as compromising their beliefs.

This difficulty may arise from not including the social-construction of religion. For Bennett (2004), this recognition of one's own culture as a contingent possibility among many was the essential transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Therefore, a developmental model of IRC would demand the same recognition of one's own religion as a socially constructed possibility among many others in order to transition into religiorelativism. This recognition, however, does not require giving up one's tradition or religious

preferences. For example, a person may be deeply committed to a Theravada Buddhist tradition and practice, but develop capacities to relate effectively and respectfully with Pentecostal Christians.

Abu-Nimer's omission of this aspect of development appears in his descriptions of the religiorelative frameworks. For example, he gives the statement "we all can see God through our different belief systems" as an example of acceptance (Abu-Nimer, 2001, p. 699). Yet this statement seems indistinguishable from minimization; it implies respect, but it does not acknowledge how different religions can shape experience and behavior in radically different ways. The use of the monotheistic term "God" also does not fit all religious frameworks. Similarly, adaptation is described as shifting into a new religious frame of reference (Abu-Nimer, 2001, p. 700; Abu-Nimer, 2004, pp. 502-503). This description is close to Bennett's model, but stronger as it seems to imply a complete, if temporary, adoption of another's meaning system. Bennett instead emphasizes the adjustment of behavior to be appropriate given the recognition and appreciation of the different context. In other words: "Adaptation is not assimilation" (Bennett, 2004, p. 71). This misunderstanding is exemplified in Abu-Nimer's (2004) description of integration as "represented in a spiritual person who has no affiliation with any religion or faith, but feels comfortable practicing many rituals and beliefs from various religions" (p. 504). In our view, integration does not require leaving one's religion, but instead is exemplified by a flexibility and depth with religious symbolism. By eliding the self-reflection of seeing one's own religion as socially constructed, Abu-Nimer's descriptions of religiorelative mindsets do not extend far beyond tolerance. Within an interfaith dialogue setting, tolerance is an admirable goal; but to understand the full spectrum of growth in response to religious difference, we must allow for depths beyond acceptance.

Despite these limitations, there have been some attempts to operationalize Abu-Nimer's theoretical framework with an Intercultural and Religious Sensitivity scale (Holm & Nokelainen, 2011; Holm, Nokelainen, & Tirri, 2009). Many of the theoretical concerns raised above are reified in this measure. For example, adopting other religious practices seems to be taken as the hallmark of adaptation: "If I lived abroad I could easily see myself practicing the religious manners of that country (such as fasting or wearing religious clothing) and it would not detract my own world view" (Holm & Nokelainen, 2011, p. 112). As noted above, adopting other religious practices is different from the fluency across difference implied within the DMIS. Furthermore, this scale was developed for and tested among a group of pre-adolescents (Holm & Noeklainen, 2011, p. 106). Given the wide array of developmental shifts in adolescence, especially with regard to cognitive capacity and religiosity (see Hood et al., 2009,

pp. 109-139), it is doubtful that this sample would provide an adequate representation of the full range of IRC.

Despite these concerns with Abu-Nimer's theoretical model and the subsequent scale, both provide a helpful starting place to develop a more comprehensive model of IRC. In the next section we will build from this critique and integrate it with the DMIS to articulate a developmental model of IRC.

Interreligious Competence

Given the suite of cognitive and affective capacities that undergird intercultural development, we suggest that an analogous developmental trajectory exists in how individuals experience and respond to religious and spiritual differences. Our operative definitions for religion and spirituality rely on a systems-based relational approach, building on the work of Hill and Pargament (2003), in which we broadly define spirituality as "ways of relating to the sacred" (Shults & Sandage, 2006, p. 161; Worthington & Sandage, 2015). Clearly, what is considered "sacred" or ultimate varies among individuals and traditions, so it is important to take a phenomenological approach to understanding the psychology of relational spirituality. Religion, therefore, within this framework is understood as a communal tradition of symbols, beliefs, and practices that encode the world with significance in relation to the sacred. Importantly, however, spirituality is also thoroughly embedded in social contexts (Hill & Pargament, 2003, p. 64), so these definitions should not be taken as reifying the false dichotomy of religion as institutional and spirituality as individual.

Given the ways religious traditions and culture often intermingle, especially in less secular settings, these facets can be difficult to parse. Indeed distinguishing religion from culture has been a longstanding and persistent question within anthropology (Geertz, 1966/2004), sociology (Weber, 1920/1993), and philosophy (Neville, 2015). Our relational approach suggests that both religion and spirituality are distinct from culture by virtue of their relation to that which is considered sacred. For example, differences in cuisine are more general cultural differences but could become religious in character if food is sanctified, that is invested with significance and meaning in relation to the sacred (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). This distinction is not solely theoretical either, as empirical work suggests that people adopt different reasoning processes when considering those things or values they perceive as sacred (Berns et al., 2012). Therefore, when people relate to religious difference this otherness may be perceived as distinct, and perhaps more foundational since it pertains to sacredness, than other cultural differences.

From this perspective, the religious other can be understood as any individual, practice, or belief perceived as representing a different way of relating to the sacred. We leave this definition of religious difference appropriately vague in order to permit the full range of what people may experience as religiously other. One of the primary advantages of studying IRC is that it relies on the participant's own interpretation, their own phenomenological experience, of the religious other. Therefore, while our understanding of spirituality and religion frames our own theoretical interpretation, it need not overly restrain our model. By focusing on attitudes towards religious alterity, a measure of IRC could be generalizable across religious traditions. Clearly, this kind of generalizability would need empirical validation.

Another advantage of relying on an individual's subjective interpretation of religious alterity is that it allows research to include "nones:" the religiously unaffiliated or atheists. Raising the issue of IRC may seem irrelevant to those who do not consider themselves religious. As the recent Pew Research Center results indicate, this is an increasing number of Americans, growing from 16% to nearly 23% over the last seven years (Pew Research Center, 2015). While this category grows in numbers, it also grows more complex. Many different beliefs and practices fall under the label "nones" (see Silver, Coleman, Hood, & Holcombe, 2014); for example, some are strict atheists while others are more Spinozistic—rejecting belief in a personal, anthropomorphic god, but nevertheless maintaining belief in an ordering principle. Studying "nones" has been a historical (Vernon, 1968) and persistent problem for psychology of religion: such as the difficulty studying the spiritual grandiosity of an atheist. The advantage of examining IRC is that regardless of one's own religious beliefs, most people eventually have the challenge of responding to other's beliefs or practices. Therefore, not only would a measure of IRC be relevant for different religious traditions, it would also be applicable to non-religious individuals.

The Developmental Model of Interreligious Competence

Within this section, we translate the DMIS into a religious context to present an initial theoretical model of IRC (see Table 1 for a summary). This formulation of the model provides a hypothetical framework, to guide and be refined through empirical testing.

As suggested above, denial is characterized by a cognitive rigidity that prevents the recognition of religious others as occupying viable systems of meaning. Combined with low awareness and a lack of empathy, the IRC attitude of denial is exemplified by an individual's use of undifferentiated, overly general categories to describe religious others. For example, use of the term "fanatic," may operate in the same way as "foreigner" within intercultural

TABLE 1   *Summary of developmental model of IRC*

Denial	This orientation has difficulty acknowledging religious differences beneath those that are apparent, and acts with a general avoidance or dismissal of religious others.
Polarization	Orientations that construe religious differences through rigid either/or categories based on superiority/inferiority. The two polarized mindsets are:
Defense	An orientation that idealizes one's own religious position with ingroup loyalty and denigrates religious others through stereotyped prejudices and often with a sense of being threatened by outgroups.
Reversal	The inverse of defense, this mindset adopts a globally critical view of one's own religious tradition, often with shame, and idealizes religious others.
Minimization	This orientation subsumes other's categories into familiar religious ideas (e.g., "All religions are saying the same thing"). This emphasis on similarity often obscures recognition of important religious differences.
Acceptance	Through increased cognitive complexity and emotional flexibility, this orientation permits frame-shifting to recognize and appreciate religious differences while remaining self-aware of one's own religious preferences and perspectives.
Adaptation	Beyond the frame-shifting of acceptance, this orientation also includes the capacity to behaviorally code-switch, i.e., act in respectful and appropriate ways across religious difference.
Integration	An orientation that involves "living out" adaptation and commitments to inter-religious relationships in healthy ways amidst the stress and marginality that if often comes with those commitments.

contexts (Sandage, Dahl, & Harden, 2012, p. 56). The undifferentiated vague understanding of religious others leads to a correspondingly stunted ability to relate across religious differences. Often this will result in withdraw or avoidance of such differences. Interreligious denial may not be openly hostile, but could simply involve a dismissal of religious differences as important features

of others' experience. Individuals operating from this mindset will likely recognize the more blatant differences between religious individuals (e.g., clothing, different holidays), but may not be aware of deeper and subtler differences (e.g., relationship dynamics, experiences of time). The key challenge for this mindset is to develop more highly differentiated conceptualizations of religious difference as a significant feature of the world.

The polarized orientations of defense and reversal have a more differentiated awareness of religious otherness, but tend to construe such differences through a judgmental lens of "us" and "them." Such polarizations are often driven by a need for superiority with a corresponding anxiety over potentially becoming inferior (Sandage et al., 2012). This anxiety can therefore lead to the exclusion, discrimination, and microaggressions typical of defensive behaviors. Another key marker of the defense orientation is the use of derogatory stereotypes, such as mockery of Latter-day Saints' temple garments as "magic underwear." As noted above, preference for one's own religious tradition over other options is not necessarily defensive. Instead, the key markers of IRC are the degrees of differentiation and complexity in understanding (a) one's own religiosity, and (b) other religious perspectives. Those operating from interreligious defense are aware of religious difference, in contrast to denial, but have trouble actually understanding how anyone could hold a different religious perspective. This difficulty in frame-shifting can lead to a tendency to globally denigrate other religious perspectives and to fear the religiosity of others.

Reversal, like defense, is a polarized orientation that splits the world into "us" and "them," but its overdetermined criticism is directed back on one's own religious tradition, values, and practices. In other words, this stereotyped framework idealizes religious others and denigrates one's own religious location. For example, an atheist who sees nothing but the ills of the evangelical community she was raised within would be just as typical of reversal as an evangelical who completely disparages his atheistic childhood. As we argued above, however, these examples are not reversal simply because they involve conversions; religious conversion is too complex for simple categorization within IRC (Paloutzian, et al., 2013; Sandage & Moe, 2013). Instead, reversal is apparent from the inferiority and idealization dynamics of the examples given. Just as in defense, these stereotyped dynamics are driven by psychological insecurity and a lack of cognitive complexity, which inhibits the ability to understand the inherent ambiguities of any religious position. For both polarized orientations, the primary challenge is to develop sufficient capacity to frame-shift with a nuance that permits recognizing the validity of different religious positions.

In contrast to denial and the polarized orientations of defense and reversal, the interreligious orientation of minimization may seem laudable. Indeed, the strength of minimization comes from its tendency to seek out common ground amidst differences, instead of dividing the world into "us" and "them." But, this tendency may operate by eliding meaningful differences to focus solely on similarities. Often this occurs by subsuming other religious categories into one's own. For example, an American Protestant learning from a Chinese friend about the Confucian ideal of *ren*, or humaneness, may construe this virtue as the equivalent of the Christian ideal of universal love. But, this association, if considered complete, would fail to recognize the ways *ren* is shaped by a complementary emphasis on ritual, *li*, and other Confucian ideals, such as filial piety. This overemphasis on commonalities can obscure differences and impede relating effectively across these religious differences. Importantly, education about other religious traditions may not be sufficient to resolve this tendency, because the avoidance of difference may stem from a deeper anxiety about the threat posed by such difference to validity of one's own position.

This mindset is more cognitively flexible than denial or defense/reversal, but still lacks a complex awareness of significant religious differences and the way these differences may shape others' experience. Therefore, while minimization represents rudimentary movements towards frame-shifting, it requires a more differentiated perspective to recognize the genuine and nuanced differences of other frames of reference. Furthermore, effective self-regulation may be a key capacity to develop at this stage in order to manage anxiety provoked by alterity. As in the DMIS, minimization of differences can represent a privileged stance for dominant groups (e.g., Christians in the United States), and the use of minimization among non-dominant groups (i.e., religious minorities) can indicate a strategy for assimilation.

In early formulations of the DMIS, Bennett (2004) suggested that minimization is an ethnocentric orientation. But subsequent empirical work suggests that it may be more of a transitional orientation, which "is more effective at recognizing and responding to cultural commonalities but is challenged when complex cultural differences need to be adapted to through deeper understanding of the values and behavior patterns of the other cultural community" (Hammer, 2011, p. 476). Whether minimization is religiocentric or transitional is less important than characterizing its essential features, which include a lack of cognitive complexity that leads individuals to subsume other religious frames of reference into one's own categories. These features are what distinguish minimization from clearly religiorelative perspectives.

As noted above, the transition from religiocentric mindsets into religiorelative orientations requires a self-awareness that recognizes one's own frame

of reference as socially constructed. Such self-awareness not only requires a cognitively differentiated perspective, but also demands a high degree of emotional security, capable of managing the anxiety that can follow from the ambiguity inherent in relativism. These cognitive and psychological capacities are the key markers of the transition into the religiorelative orientations of IRC.

Thus, in contrast to Abu-Nimer's model (2001, 2004), by keeping social-construction and self-reflection in sight, we preserve the possibility of acceptance, adaptation, and integration as viable and potentially deep attitudes towards religious difference. Acceptance would therefore involve cognitive complexity and flexibility manifesting as an open and respectful curiosity about other religious practices and beliefs. Beyond the acceptance based on similarities indicative of minimization, within this mindset genuine differences are also recognized and appreciated, not simply subsumed within familiar categories. This acceptance of difference is nurtured by a nuanced self-awareness that permits a humble recognition of both the strengths and the less admirable dimensions of one's own religious tradition or religious framework (Sandage et al., 2012, p. 58). This self-knowledge would not lead to the polarization of reversal, which seeks to jettison one's own tradition, but instead adds complexity to one's perspective on all religious and spiritual traditions. From the mindset of acceptance, empathy for the religious other would extend beyond a tolerant recognition of similarities and also embrace the meaningful differences between various types of spirituality and religiosity.

Adaptation might be a rare ideal, but theoretically, as Sandage and colleagues (2012) have suggested, it "would parallel intercultural capacities for competent cognitive frame-shifting and behavioral code-shifting across spiritual and religious orientations" (p. 59). For example, imagine a nurse confronted with a patient whose family wishes to have a Santeria priest sacrifice a chicken for purification and luck in the hospital. An adaptive response would not have to accommodate all features of this request, but would recognize its legitimacy and engage skills in negotiating potential alternatives by demonstrating openness and understanding of the religious dynamics involved. Therefore, adaptation extends the cognitive flexibility, complexity, and self-awareness of acceptance by adding the dynamic capacities to not only frame-shift, i.e., adopt others' perspectives, but also to code-switch, i.e., communicate effectively across the recognized difference. This constellation of capacities permits competent relating to religious difference.

Beyond adaptation, there is the possibility of an integrative perspective for IRC. Thomas Merton's (1970) dialogues with DT Suzuki late in life serves as an example of this mindset: "There is a real possibility of contact on a deep level

between this contemplative and monastic tradition in the West and the various contemplative traditions in the East" (p. 73). Here Merton is not eliding differences to suggest a universal religion; instead he is engaging potential points of contact amidst radical difference. Within his actions he is able to integrate insights and practices from Zen Buddhism, as shared with him by DT Suzuki, with his own Cistercian contemplative practices. This demonstrates great flexibility of spiritual identity, able to encounter a similar ground through different religious symbol-systems. Howard Thurman's (1971) work also points to the integrative mindset, as he explores the myriad obstacles to finding community amidst difference; beyond these challenges he suggests the possibility of contact that occurs through the hard work of self-knowledge and security, alongside a deep commitment to something, like social justice, that extends beyond the individual.

The mindset of integration is distinct from minimization, which also emphasizes commonalities, because here the attention to shared experiences is undergirded by a mature cognitive complexity and strong capacities for frame-shifting and code-switching. This foundation may permit an acknowledgement of similarity that does not obscure the real differences of religious others. While many of the cognitive capacities of integration are shared with adaptation, integration points to the distinct possibility of not just behavioral code-switching, but actually bridging across difference and finding what Thurman (1971) would call common ground. Yet this interreligious perspective is also not without its difficulties. In the DMIS, Bennett (2004) describes the possibility of encapsulated marginality, where the movement between cultures can lead to experiences of alienation. A similar dynamic could emerge within the interreligious perspective of Integration, where fluidity between religious symbol systems could lead to a liminal and marginalized experience. Whether constructive or encapsulated, this interreligious mindset remains somewhat tentative; Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) suggested that the low prevalence of individuals in the status of integration made it difficult to empirically examine or justify.

Translating the DMIS into a specifically interreligious focus provides the opportunity to consider the various responses to religious difference. Given the cognitive and affective suite of capacities undergirding the development of intercultural competence, we suggest the same cognitive and affective maturity will manifest in the development of IRC, moving from an undifferentiated rigid perspective on religious outsiders to a curious and humble engagement with difference. As articulated above, these cognitive and affective capacities include: (a) DoS (differentiation of self), which includes the ability to self-regulate in response to anxiety and negotiate relationships with closeness and

autonomy (Sandage & Harden, 2011; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003) and is positively associated with humility (Paine, Jankowski, & Sandage, 2016); (b) cognitive flexibility, which permits considering multiple and sometimes contradictory thoughts (Bennett, 2004); and (c) cognitive complexity or the ability to handle differentiated and nuanced categories (Bennett, 2004). Building any one of these capacities may not be sufficient to facilitate IRC. Instead, this developmental model of IRC points to a dynamic interaction between a constellation of cognitive and affective capacities, including but not limited to these, which leads to more effective relating across religious difference.

As a developmental model, it is important to note that movement through these various perspectives is not a necessary or "given" trajectory. In other words, this is not an age-related model nor does it describe a step-wise progression. Many individuals will remain within a single perspective throughout their lifespan and others may move easily and directly from denial to acceptance, for example, given the right encounters and guidance. Instead, the developmental model of IRC articulates a continuum of perspectives and behaviors that individuals may engage in response to religious difference. Growth through this continuum may be nurtured by training that develops the capacities outlined above, along with exposure to religious differences, which may foster a humanized nuance and empathy across otherness. However, these all represent empirical questions that can eventually be tested once a conceptual framework has been articulated and corresponding measures developed, as was the case with the DMIS and IDI. To ground this abstract articulation of the developmental model of IRC, we now present two case studies that provide examples of individuals operating from different interreligious orientations.

Case Examples

Dr. Torres is an agnostic social psychologist at a large southern research university. He runs a lab and teaches multiple classes, including intro to social psychology, a large lecture style class. After a recent paper assignment, he finds his two TAs huddled over a laptop laughing in the graduate student lounge. When he asks what they are laughing about, Tiffany, one of the TAs looks up: "Oh man, have you read through the papers yet? We were just reading through Trevor's argument about how people's sinful nature is the source of their depression." Marlon, the other TA, chimes in: "Yea, he's a junior, I can't believe he still thinks that stuff, it's ridiculous. I was telling Tiffany to just give him an F to teach him a lesson." Tiffany laughs a little uneasily: "I dunno, it's a little silly, but all religions talk about sinfulness, so maybe it's not such a big deal, as long as he's not proselytizing." Marlon scoffs, "No way, I mean what's next—

suggesting that demons cause schizophrenia?!" At this point Dr. Torres intervenes: "It's interesting that this topic is so loaded for us. Maybe we should step back and think about what's so troubling about it. I may not agree with Trevor, but I want our students to feel able to stand by their convictions while also making sound arguments. In a truly open spirit of inquiry, we shouldn't dismiss his ideas just because they are religiously loaded: If our ideals are that research is empirically based, coherent, integrated with other streams of research, and helpful to the field, then none of these preclude Trevor standing by his beliefs. Would you send me his paper? Perhaps I can meet with him and understand his thought a little better."

In this example, Dr. Torres represents an adaptive stance towards religious difference. As an agnostic and as a representative for a secular institution, Trevor's overtly Christian beliefs could be threatening or deemed inappropriate. Instead Dr. Torres is equipped with the flexibility to acknowledge the potential value within them and drawn to seek further understanding. Marlon, on the other hand, is operating out of a defensive stance: He rejects Trevor's belief as backward and unacceptable. This stereotyped response prevents him from seeing the situation with more nuance and self-awareness and being able to move towards an effective response. Tiffany's response is more indicative of minimization. She seeks to acknowledge the validity of Trevor's beliefs, but does so by arguing that they are part of a more universalistic perspective. The lack of complexity and the potential ignoring of difference prevent her attitude from moving into a religiorelative approach.

Dr. Miller is a lapsed Catholic psychologist with 12 years of clinical practice. He is having lunch at a conference with Dr. Harris, a Pentecostal who has been a practicing psychologist for 22 years. As they share recent cases, Dr. Miller begins to tell Dr. Harris about a client who is struggling with anxiety as she is trying to get a divorce from her husband. The client has already obtained a civil divorce, but she is an orthodox Jew, so she needs a *get* from her husband in order for the marriage to be dissolved under Jewish law. Dr. Miller shrugs, "The thing that bugs me is how she fixates on this *get*. I mean, she could just leave; she has the civil divorce. Instead, she thinks all her anxiety will go away once she gets that *get* thing. But I keep trying to suggest to her that the real source of her anxiety has to do with the insecure attachment issues we've been talking about all along." Dr. Harris leans back, "Dr. Miller, I think you might want to take her concern more seriously. I don't know much about Jewish law, but I imagine that just leaving would mean leaving her whole community. Maybe they'd even see her as an adulteress. That's gotta be a pretty tense place to be in, it's like being in limbo in the eyes of your whole religious community and maybe even your God. If that wouldn't cause anxiety, I don't know what would!"

In this case, Dr. Miller is operating out of a combination of defense and a certain use of minimization. He dismisses the relevance of the *get* to his client but is also annoyed by it as an inferior concern in the world (i.e., compared to his own set of values and ideals), and this embrace of the superiority of one's own religious framework is typical of the defense mindset. But he also invokes attachment theory not as a complementary or alternative explanatory framework alongside his client's particular religious worldview but as a reductionistic form of the psychology of religion that "explains away" his client's religious concerns. Dr. Harris on the other hand represents the more religio-relative stance of acceptance. She acknowledges her ignorance about Jewish law, indicating the important role differences can play in experience. Yet she is also able to empathize with the client's situation and remain curious and open about how that experience could indeed cause anxiety.

Future Directions

Future work on IRC will need to move from further refinement of a theoretical model toward developing a valid empirical measure. Measuring IRC would have both practical and theoretical benefits. Practically, such a measure would augment Vieten et al.'s (2013) work by providing a means for assessing the attitude dimension of IRC, which could be used in research on training and also for providing specific, individualized feedback on strengths and necessary IRC growth goals for helping professionals. Such a measure would help address the APA's ethical mandate to attend to religious diversity along with gender, race, and other aspects of multicultural diversity (APA, 2010). Given that religious differences are not always readily apparent, yet are also particularly influential in shaping hopes and expectations, it is important to examine these interreligious dynamics specifically. Such work is also consistent with emerging models of spiritually integrative treatment such as Pargament's work (2011). If we are to make space for religion and spirituality within clinical encounters, then practitioners should also attend to the dynamics that will likely emerge across religious differences.

These practical implications extend beyond a clinical setting. Within schools, workplaces, and any community setting we will encounter religious diversity. The secular strategy has been to keep spiritual matters private, and thus separate from the discourse and institutions of the public sphere (Taylor, 2007). But this strategy attempts to suggest we can have a culturally neutral engagement, which has been shown time and again to implicitly favor the dominant culture at the expense of other perspectives (e.g., Said, 1979). In other

words, even the scientific secular position is not a value neutral stance. Since value-laden attitudes and biases are already present and shaping encounters, it is therefore useful to have a framework for understanding how we relate to each other across these differences. Awareness of and attunement to religious differences may help unearth tensions and promote empathy.

Moving beyond the practical importance, a measure of IRC would address important research needs. As discussed above, the Quest dimension of spirituality (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a, 1991b) likely captures some of the attitude of individuals open to new religious beliefs, practices, and experiences. At the other end of the spectrum, Religious Fundamentalism (RF) and Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) portray more fixed responses to the problem of pluralism. For example, Kirkpatrick (2004) suggests: "Fundamentalism is largely about establishing and defending a particular set of beliefs and practices that define an in-group; those failing to accept and live by these particular standards are assigned to the out-group" (as cited by Rowatt et al., 2013, p. 459). These strict group boundaries are likely a means of mitigating ambiguity. This association is supported by other studies that have found RF and RWA to be associated with cognitive rigidity (Hunsberger, Alisat, Pancer, & Pratt, 1996; Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 1994), need for closure and preference for order (Brandt & Reyna, 2010), and preference for consistency (Hill, Cohen, Terrell, & Nagoshi, 2010). As Rowatt and colleagues (2013) suggest, these studies indicate a cognitively rigid way of thinking that may mediate the relationship between RF, RWA, and prejudice. A developmental framework of IRC provides a means to bring Quest and RF within a shared spectrum focused on individual reactions to religious difference.

Existing research on intercultural competence and religiosity has already found many relationships, as noted above. Both spiritual grandiosity and spiritual instability were negatively correlated with scores on the IDI (Sandage & Harden, 2011; Sandage & Jankowski, 2010), while spiritual well-being was found to be positively associated with IDI scores (Sandage & Jankowski, 2013). We would predict similar relationships to hold between IRC and different styles of spirituality, especially since DoS mediated many of the noted associations. Beyond these spiritual styles, it is likely that IRC would also relate to other measures of religiosity and spirituality. For example spiritual intelligence was developed as a construct by Emmons (2000) to highlight the different capacities that facilitate individual spirituality. Especially since spiritual intelligence is grounded in a cognitive-motivational perspective that focuses on knowledge, ability, and learning (Emmons, 2000), future research could explore whether high spiritual intelligence translates into high capacity to relate effectively across religious differences. Similar research projects could assess the

relationship between IRC and general measures of religiosity and spirituality, such as the Faith Maturity Scale (Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993) or the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (Piedmont, 1999).

The developmental trajectory we are suggesting may seem to track with individual differences on the liberal-conservative spectrum. Research suggests that variance in the personality dimensions Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness closely corresponds with the liberal-conservative ideological spectrum (see Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008). Liberals tend to be more open to novel experiences, and thus more curious and open-minded, while conservatives tend to score higher on conscientiousness, and are correspondingly more concerned with order and convention. This research has been pursued for nearly half a century (Wilson, 1973) and is more recently corroborated by work in moral foundation theory (Haidt, 2012). These associations may suggest that individuals on the liberal end of the spectrum, with high Openness to Experience, may be more comfortable with religious difference; but that comfort does not necessarily imply competence in relating effectively across religious differences. Indeed, research suggests that liberals may deliberately discriminate against those they perceive as conservatives (Inbar & Lammers, 2012). That study is elaborated in recent research by Brandt and colleagues (2015), which suggests that Openness to Experience does not necessarily promote tolerance towards individuals with different worldviews. Competence, therefore, may relate to personality differences along the political spectrum, but is more focused on the capacity to come alongside others from all along the ideological spectrum, effectively recognize differences, and to self-regulate anxiety that may arise in response to these differences. Therefore, if a conservative viewpoint remains grounded in tradition but nevertheless extends empathy and humanity to others, it would be registered as highly competent.

Furthermore, as suggested above, research is beginning into the complexity beneath the label "nones" (e.g., Silver et al., 2014), but more is needed to understand their increasing numbers in the United States (Park & Paloutzian, 2013). Studying IRC could provide a helpful bridge to integrate this research with studies among religious individuals.

These are just a few of the potential fruits of a measure examining IRC. The challenge will be to distinguish the ways in which the dynamics of IRC diverge from those within intercultural competence. Values and meaning systems can be particularly important to individuals and thus a transition into religiorelativism could be perceived as disruptive and counter to deeply held convictions. This was the reaction Abu-Nimer (2004) found among his participants in peace-building workshops. But pluralism is not going away; if anything it will become an increasingly apparent reality. Therefore individuals can choose to

withdraw into echo-chambers of their own belief or learn to engage across difference and trust with an open curiosity and humble self-reflection that such relationships will ultimately deepen their spirituality. Regardless of individual choice, as psychologists of religion, this is a dynamic we should turn ourselves to exploring.

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