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The number of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States has been increasing exponentially in recent years (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; Leong & Blustein, 2000). Due to the growing percentages of minority populations, greater attention has been placed on the unique health care needs of these individuals, including access to and quality of mental health services (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005; Gilin & Young, 2009). Although counseling as a profession emphasizes diversity training in preparation standards (CACREP, 2009) and cultural competence in ethical standards (ACA, 2005), few counselor preparation programs have employed effective methods to train counselors how to therapeutically connect with people from culturally diverse backgrounds (Alexander et al., 2005; Coleman, 2006). One way for counselors to challenge their existing worldviews and assumptions and to develop cultural competency is through engaging in international immersion in which participants are provided an opportunity to participate and interact directly with people from diverse backgrounds (Canfield, Low, & Hovestadt, 2009; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). Although both national and international immersion experiences have been accepted as effective pedagogical tools, to date researchers have not examined the sustained impact of immersion experiences on counselor development (Lindsey, 2005; Majewski & Turner, 2007; Rochelle, Turpin & Elias, 2000). To this end, the purpose of this research study was to assess the impact of international immersion on counselor development and to

assess whether changes attributed to participation in immersion experiences were sustained over time.

Data from the current study was analyzed using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methodology. CQR is an iterative process that emphasizes the use of a research team to analyze the data and reach consensus throughout a multi-step coding process (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). The data for each case (N=10) was initially coded into domains and core ideas and then analyzed across all ten cases, generating categories to further organize the data. The current study generated eight categories that were labeled as 'general' findings, 17 categories that were labeled as 'typical' findings, and 45 categories that were labeled 'variant' findings. Implications from the current study and suggestions for future research are provided.

INTERNATIONAL IMMERSION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

OF CRITICAL FACTORS, SUSTAINED IMPACT,

AND COUNSELOR DEVELOPMENT

by

Sejal Mehta

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"Be the change you wish to see in the world"

~Mahatma Gandhi

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Tell me and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand. (Confucius, 450 B.C., as cited in Chickering, 1977)

The number of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States has been increasing exponentially in recent years (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; Leong & Blustein, 2000). In fact, the current trajectory is that the U.S. will become "majority-minority" by 2050, meaning that the majority of the population will be comprised of ethnic and racial minorities. Currently, racial and ethnic minorities account for one-third of the total U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008). Due to the growing percentages of minority populations, greater attention has been placed on the unique health care needs of these individuals (Alexander, Kruczek, & Ponterotto, 2005; Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998; Gilin & Young, 2009).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2001a, 2005) asserts that the increasing population growth of racial and ethnic communities presents a challenge to the health care delivery service industry in this country. Racial and ethnic minorities experience disproportionately higher rates of disease, fewer treatment options, and reduced access to care compared to the general population in the United States. Further, reports from the Institute of Medicine (2001, 2002), the DHHS (2001a, 2005), the Surgeon General (DHHS, 2001a), and the President's New Freedom Commission on

Mental Health (DHHS, 2003) all emphasize that there is an urgent need to overcome these disparities and expand our knowledge about effectively caring for individuals from ethnic minority groups (Atdijan & Vega, 2005).

Health care is a cultural construct with beliefs about the nature of disease, the human body and one's emotional, mental and spiritual health centering on cultural issues (Institute of Medicine, 2001). It is imperative for health professionals to understand, value, and incorporate the cultural differences of America's diverse population and examine one's own health-related values and beliefs (Atdijan & Vega, 2005). Through this commitment to increasing knowledge and awareness, health care organizations, practitioners, and educators can support a system of care that responds appropriately to, and directly serves the unique needs of populations whose cultures may be different from the prevailing culture (DHHS, 2001b).

As one aspect of these inequalities in health care, several researchers continue to report disparities in both access to and quality of mental health services for minority populations (Atdijan & Vega, 2005; Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, & Ananheh-Firempong, 2003; Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, & Park, 2005; DHHS, 2001a). Examples of these disparities include underutilization of psychological services, low retention (early termination, often after the first session), and higher rates of missed appointments. Taken together, these disparities constitute fundamental issues in providing effective mental health services for persons in minority groups (Atdijan & Vega, 2005; Sue & Sue, 1999). Culturally bound values held by nonminority individuals can be projected onto people from diverse backgrounds which can, in turn, seriously hinder and impede the helping

process (Sue et al., 1982). This is especially relevant given the changing demographics of minorities coupled with the fact that the majority of individuals in the helping profession are White (Betancourt et al., 2003, 2005; Richardson & Molinaro, 1996). Given that cultural issues are central to the delivery of health services treatment and preventive interventions, counselor development must include a growing understanding of the impact of culture when providing mental health services (Ishii, Gilbride, & Stenstrud, 2009).

Counselor Development, Worldview, and the Working Alliance

The processes of understanding one's own culture and increasing one's knowledge about other cultures is especially critical for mental health professionals as they have a significant role in supporting individuals and their families in dealing with a wide array of mental health and developmental issues commonly entangled with their values and beliefs or other aspects of their cultural identity (Betancourt et al., 2005). In order to recognize the complex diversity of our pluralistic society, it is essential for counselors to increase their awareness of their worldview, or frameworks in which they perceive their relationship to the world (Alexander et al., 2005; Coleman, 2006; Sue, 1981). This framework influences the working alliance, defined as a collaborative relationship that occurs between the counselor and client that is comprised of tasks, goals, and emotional bond (Bordin, 1979, 1994). The attention to the therapeutic working alliance is especially important given that researchers have suggested that the working alliance is one of the most important predictors of positive client outcomes (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Kim, Ng, & Ahn, 2005; Miville, Carlozzi, Gushue, Schara, & Ueda, 2006;

Wampold, 2001). Additionally, cross-cultural researchers have suggested that strong working alliances are most predictive of sustainable retention for minority clients in counseling (Burkard, Juarez-Huffaker, & Ajmere, 2003). Accordingly, it is vital to determine ways in which counseling trainees develop the cultural competence necessary to effectively counsel in a pluralistic society.

There are many therapeutic skills that counselors use to establish a strong working alliance. Among the most fundamental of these skills are:

- the demonstration of empathy (i.e., the ability to place one's self in another's shoes, "as if one was the person") (Rogers, 1959, p. 210);

- counselor self-awareness (i.e., the awareness of one's feelings, values, biases and assumptions (Sue, 1981; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992); counselor self-efficacy (i.e., the belief that one possesses the necessary skills needed to help their clients. (Bandura, 1977; Friedlander, Keller, Peca-Baker, & Olk, 1986)

Empathy

Empathy, originating from the Greek word *empatheia,* means understanding others by entering their world (Chung & Bemak, 2002). A more counseling-based definition of empathy is the ability to enter a client's world (Rogers, 1961); to feel with the client rather than feel for the client (i.e., emotional empathy) (Capuzzi & Gross, 1999); and to think with the client rather than for or about the client (i.e., cognitive empathy) (Brammer, Abrego, & Shostrum, 1993). Empathy is referred to as one of the core components of mental health counseling (McLeod, 1999), has received extensive

research attention (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Feller & Cottone, 2003; Rogers, 1961, 1957), and continues to be a primary training goal in most counseling graduate programs (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). The need to effectively enhance trainee empathy only grows with the increasing diversity of our society (Miville et al., 2006).

In the United States, however, the notion and definitions of empathy are largely based on Western-European values, rarely taking cross-cultural considerations into account (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Due to definitions and paradigms of empathy being predominately Western, counselors also need to develop cultural empathy. Ridley and Lingle (1996) provided a comprehensive definition of cultural empathy as "a way of relating interpersonally as well as understanding and communicating across cultures" (p. 32). This definition takes into account the counselor's learned ability to not only understand the experience of culturally diverse clients but also the ability to communicate this understanding effectively, while conveying care and concern (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). In order for counselors to work effectively with clients from diverse backgrounds in a culturally empathic manner, they must not only obtain basic skills in empathy, but also be able to view each client as a unique and individual being, therefore demonstrating cultural sensitivity (Chung & Bemak, 2002).

Self-awareness

One of the first major tasks in achieving cultural empathy is for counselors to differentiate their personal views and biases from those of their clients. This differentiation supports counselor self-awareness, awareness of personal cultural influences, and the impact of one's personal perspectives on others. Given that one of the

major obstacles in working with clients from diverse backgrounds is the tendency for

counselors to impose their values and beliefs on clients, increasing counselor self-

awareness is especially important (Burkard et al., 2003; Ridley, 1995). It is essential for

counselors to work through their personal anxiety and discomfort about working with

people who are different from them, for it is only in this "working through" that

counselors can genuinely and unconditionally serve diverse clients. Differences in values,

attitudes, cultures, ethnicities, social practices, religious beliefs, and sexuality, among

others, contribute to differing worldviews among people and characterize diversity.

Through a commitment to self-awareness, counselors can see clients through a culturally

sensitive lens and experience the authentic world of the client. By avoiding the

imposition of personal biases, counselors begin to demonstrate culturally sensitive

empathy (Chung & Bemak, 2002).

Self-efficacy

In addition to developing cultural empathy and self-awareness, it also is critical

for counselor trainees to develop self-efficacy, defined as the degree to which individuals

consider themselves capable of performing a particular activity (Bandura, 1977, 1982,

1992). Based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-efficacy theory posits that beliefs

about one's ability to perform certain activities or tasks is directly related to one's

behaviors, thoughts and feelings in certain situations (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986). More

specifically, counselor self-efficacy (CSE) is defined as one's beliefs about her or his

capabilities to effectively counsel clients (Friedlander et al., 1986; Larson & Daniels,

1998). The construct of CSE was further clarified by researchers Lent, Hill, and Hoffman

(2003) as including three broad domains: perceived ability to perform basic helping skills, manage session tasks, and negotiate challenging counseling situations and presenting issues. CSE theory emphasizes both the knowledge and ability to perform effectively in counseling situations. Researchers have found that CSE is correlated with positive client outcomes, less anxiety, and more positive self-evaluations (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Given the positive effects of increased self-efficacy for counselors, fostering self-efficacy needs to be a primary objective of counselor preparation programs (Bischoff, 1997; Larson & Daniels, 1998). Theoretically, self-efficacy increases through four primary sources: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion and reductions in emotional arousal (Bandura, 1977). Further, researchers suggest that mastery experiences, experiences in which individuals have direct interactions with a task, are the most influential in the cultivation of CSE (Aponte, 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998), thereby providing an argument for experiential learning.

In summary, cultivating counselor trainees' ability to be empathic, self-aware and self-efficacious must be a primary objective for counselor training programs. Effective pedagogy for counselor training must enhance these core skills and, based on social learning theory, must include opportunities for learners to actively engage with their environment (Canfield, Low, & Hovestadt, 2009; Hays, 2008). Given the importance of empathy, self- awareness, and self-efficacy on the working alliance and counseling outcomes coupled with the urgent need for culturally sensitive helping professionals to work with an increasingly diverse society, research on effective pragmatic pedagogy for counselor trainees is warranted. Further, such research should be firmly grounded in

existing research and theory. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

provides the theoretical backdrop for this study.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Bennett (1986, 1993) posited the Developmental Model of Intercultural

Sensitivity (DMIS) that suggests a developmental progression of worldview orientations

toward different cultures. The DMIS framework consists of three ethnocentric

orientations (*Denial, Defense, and Minimization*) in which one's own culture is

experienced as central to reality, and three ethnorelative orientations (*Acceptance,*

Adaptation, Integration) in which one's culture is experienced in the context of other

cultures (Bennett, 1986).

Denial of cultural differences is the state in which one views their own culture as

the only one, where cultural difference is not acknowledged or experienced and one's

culture is seen as the default condition. This stage is typical of monocultural

socialization. *Defense* is the state in which people view the world as 'us' and 'them,'

where one's culture is superior, other cultures are inferior, and differences are largely

stereotypical. *Minimization* of cultural differences is the state in which one's worldview

is experienced as universal, over-representing similarities between cultures and masking

deep cultural differences as well as institutional privileges. *Acceptance* is the state in

which one's culture is experienced within the context of other equally complex

worldviews, constructing a meta-level consciousness in which one can accept the

relativity of values through understanding differences. *Adaptation* is the state in which

one's worldview is expanded to include relevant constructs from other worldviews. This

shift is not simply cognitive, but rather is a change in the organization of lived experience, with the deepening of shifting frames forming the foundation for biculturalism. Lastly, *Integration* is the state in which one's experience of self is expanded to include movement in and out of different cultural worldviews, forgoing an absolute cultural identification, enabling the person to experience difference as an essential and joyful aspect of life.

The underlying assumption of the DMIS model is that one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases as one's experiences of cultural differences become more complex. Typically, individuals who have received primarily monocultural socialization only have access to their own cultural worldview, so they are unable to construe or experience differences between their own perceptions and those that are culturally different. On the other hand, more complex experiences and interactions with other cultures are correlated with greater opportunities to challenge one's perceptions and conceptualizations (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Bennett (1986) emphasized that the acquisition of knowledge about other cultures is insufficient in and of itself. Rather, learning is an active process in which participants create knowledge from meaning, primarily constructed through experiences.

In summary of the DMIS, ethnocentric orientations are seen as avoiding cultural differences through denial, defensiveness, or minimization, and ethnorelative orientations are seen as valuing cultural differences through acceptance, adaptation, and integration (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003). Within this model, the developmental key to cultural sensitivity is attaining the ability to construe and experience cultural differences

in more complex ways, emphasizing exposure to diversity and continuous reflection as a means of challenging existing worldviews.

Cultural Immersion

The need to develop new and effective ways to increase counselor trainee's cultural competence clearly has been established (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Hays, 2008; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2002). While scholarship on effective pedagogy for cultural competence has increased over the last three decades, there is a dearth of research on pragmatic methods that are most efficacious (Alexander et al., 2005; Canfield et al., 2009; Parham, 2001; Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995). Parham (2001) suggested that training for cultural competence cannot be limited to the single classroom or textbook experience. Instead, effective pedagogy needs to be supported with experiential opportunities. In diversity training, experiential opportunities that incorporate affective and reflective components of learning have been identified as important tools to bridge counseling theory and practice and provide transformative learning experiences (Canfield et al., 2009; Clark, 1993; Coleman, 2006; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Mezirow, 2000), defined as the process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).

Although Counseling as a profession emphasizes diversity training in preparation standards (CACREP, 2009) and cultural competence in ethical standards (ACA, 2005), many counselor preparation programs have not employed effective methods to train

counselors how to connect with people from culturally diverse backgrounds (Alexander et al., 2005; Coleman, 2006). Several researchers have supported the notion that experiential approaches are more effective than didactic instruction when learning about different cultural values, beliefs, and practices (Alexander et al., 2005; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Ishii et al., 2009; Lindsey, 2005). Often, changes that occur through experiences involve questioning assumptions, rethinking premises, and critical reflective thinking (Askeland & Bradley, 2007). Through these experiences, students engage in a process that can be transformative. Further, traditional academic approaches focus primarily on intellectual development and do not effectively enable students to experience cultural dissonance, defined as an uncomfortable sense of discord, disharmony, confusion, or conflict experienced by people in the midst of change in their cultural environment (Allan, 2002). Cultural dissonance is considered an essential experience for increasing cultural awareness and sensitivity (Allan, 2002). In comparison to traditional educational approaches, experiential approaches focus more on the whole person, offering an integrated approach to growth and learning (Kolb, 1988). From this perspective, education is viewed as a holistic endeavor, encompassing changing and growing of selves, relationships, and worldviews.

One way for learners to challenge their existing worldviews and assumptions is through engaging in cultural immersion, which provides participants an opportunity to experience various cultures by participating and interacting directly with people from diverse backgrounds (Canfield et al., 2009; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). It is widely accepted across various disciplines that immersion experiences support student

development of awareness and respect for non-mainstream individuals and communities,

thereby increasing cultural empathy for others (Gilin & Young, 2009; Goodman & West-

Olatunji, 2007; Majewski & Turner, 2007; Pedersen & Leong, 1997). Immersion

experiences in which participants experience cultural dissonance while directly

interacting with people from diverse backgrounds may be one of the most effective

methods for increasing counselor trainees' cultural competence and core counseling skills

(Canfield et al., 2009, Gilin & Young, 2009; Goodman & West-Olatunji, 2007; Majewski

& Turner, 2007; Pedersen & Leong, 1997; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). Specifically,

researchers suggest that opportunities in which participants experience being 'other' for

an extended period of time are effective in providing transformational learning

opportunities (Gilin & Young, 2009). These transformational opportunities may enable

learners to move from ethnocentric to ethnorelative development through immersion

coupled with reflection (Askeland & Bradley, 2007; Bennett, 1986; Clark, 1993).

According to Pedersen (2010), international immersion experiences effectively

provide opportunities for students to connect with different cultures and rehearse adaptive

functioning skills. The most common form of international immersion is undergraduate

study abroad programs, in which students live in another country for an extended period

of time. There is an abundance of literature on undergraduate study abroad programs that

demonstrate positive effects on cultural learning (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, &

Hubbard, 2006; Johns & Thompson, 2010; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Pedersen,

2009, 2010). For example, the International Education of Students (IES) (Dwyer &

Peters, 2004) conducted a large-scale research project with study abroad alumni from

1950 to 1999, receiving more than 3,400 returned surveys for a response rate of 23%. The respondents were asked questions about their personal, academic, intercultural and professional developmental in relation to their international experiences. A large majority of respondents reported that their study abroad experience had occasioned sustainable change in their lives. Over 90% of respondents stated the experience served as a catalyst for increased maturity, increased self-confidence, increased tolerance of ambiguity, and that the experience had lasting impacts on their worldviews. Further, 98% stated that the international experience helped them to better understand their own cultural values and biases, with 94% stating that the experience continues to influence their interaction with people from diverse backgrounds, implying that the intercultural benefits were not fleeting (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). There are clear limitations of this research project, however, because of the low response rate (23%) and the likelihood that respondents may have differed systematically from non-respondents.

Critique of Methodology

International educational exchange has a long history but the research literature has not been systematic and few investigations have employed strong methodological designs (Lindsey, 2005). The scholarship that has emerged has overwhelmingly been focused on short term and immediate outcomes of study abroad experiences (Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Eun-Jon, 2009). Further, to date this research suffers from a number of methodological flaws, including small sample sizes, primary use of participant journals for data collection, lack of clear methodology, measurement issues, lack of a guiding theory, and an overall scarcity of documented research.

Although both national and international immersion experiences have been

accepted as effective pedagogical tools in education, the critical components of long-term

gains and what makes these experiences effective have not been explored, particularly

for graduate students (Majewski & Turner, 2007; Pedersen, 2009). Other than the IES

study which, as noted above, suffered from methodological limitations, to date

researchers have not examined the types of sustained changes that result from immersion

experiences (Lindsey, 2005; Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000). As the frequency of

participation in immersion experiences increases, it is imperative to document and

evaluate both short and long-term outcomes, coupled with critical factors that lead to

sustained change among participants including greater empathy for cultural differences,

increased self-awareness of one's own biases and assumptions, and increased self-

efficacy for working with clients from diverse backgrounds (Tomlinson-Clarke, 1999).

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Given the dearth of existing literature on the sustained effects of international

immersion and the exploratory nature of the proposed study, qualitative research

methodology will be used in the current study. Qualitative methods offer a unique way to

understand and analyze phenomena as they naturally occur, without being constricted by

previously defined constructs. Researchers can remain open to discovering relationships,

concepts, and ideas about the topic, which makes qualitative approaches particularly

meaningful when researching unexplored topics (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold,

1992). The primary focus of qualitative research is to understand a phenomenon from an

individual's perspective, exploring and understanding what meaning has been attributed

to the experience. This process differs from quantitative methods according to the following five assumptions:

1. Qualitative research uses an interpretive approach focused on personal experiences rather than generalizations of individual experiences (Creswell, 2003; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008).

2. Qualitative research emphasizes the naturalistic approach, using the researcher as the primary data collection instrument rather than quantitative assessments (Creswell, 2003; Denzin et al., 2008).

3. Qualitative research explores the process of lived experiences and emerges as data is acquired (Creswell, 2003).

4. Qualitative research includes a multitude of empirical tools to collect data (i.e., interviews, focus groups, journals, and observations) (Creswell, 2003).

5. Qualitative research uses a verification process to establish trustworthiness of findings rather than traditional methods of reliability and validity (Creswell, 2003).

This study was well suited for a qualitative approach given the exploratory nature of the study. Consensual qualitative research (CQR) methodology, known for its usefulness in providing rich and descriptive data, will be employed as the primary data collection method. Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) noted that CQR is a relevant and useful method when developing an unexplored topic, such as the sustained impact of international immersion experiences among counselors and counselor trainees.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of counselors and counselor trainees who have participated in international immersion experiences and explore what meaning was made from participation in such programs. Of specific interest was to further understand the sustained impact of the experience on participant's developmental progression of cultural competence (using the DMIS framework), ability to demonstrate cultural empathy, self-awareness and self-efficacy. The critical components of the experience were explored in an attempt to better understand what factors, if any, occasion growth and sustained change attributable to engaging in an international immersion experience.

Statement of the Problem

As a result of the changing demographics in the United States, race and culture are integral to all aspects of life. It is especially important that counselors possess skills of cultural competence when working with people in minority groups, as the core of the profession is helping people through struggles that often manifest themselves in some aspect of their cultural identity. Greater attention has been placed on the unique health care needs of these individuals, including access to and quality of mental health services (Alexander et al., 2005; Atkinson et al., 1998; Gilin & Young, 2009). Given that cultural issues are central to mental health services, it is critical for counselors to understand the impact of culture when providing mental health services (Ishii et al., 2009).

Based on these facts, there is clearly an ongoing need to develop new and effective ways to increase counselor trainee's cultural competence (Arthur & Achenbach,

2002; D'Andrea et al., 1991; Hays, 2008; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Sue & Sue, 2002).

Although Counseling as a profession emphasizes diversity training in preparation

standards (CACREP, 2009) and cultural competence in ethical standards (ACA, 2005),

few counselor preparation programs have employed effective methods to train counselors

how to therapeutically connect with people from culturally diverse backgrounds

(Alexander et al., 2005; Coleman, 2006; Sue, 1981).

One way for counselors to challenge their existing worldviews and assumptions

and to develop cultural competency is through engaging in cultural immersion in which

participants are provided an opportunity to experience various cultures by participating

and interacting directly with people from diverse backgrounds (Canfield et al., 2009;

Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). Experiencing cultural dissonance through direct

interactions may be one of the most effective methods for increasing counselor trainees'

cultural competence and core counseling skills (Allan, 2002), but clear empirical support

is lacking. Although both national and international immersion experiences have been

accepted as effective pedagogical tools, to date researchers have not examined the

sustained impact of immersion experiences on counselor development (Lindsey, 2005;

Majewski & Turner, 2007; Roschelle et al., 2000).

Research Questions

1. What are the most salient aspects of the immersion experience for
   participants?

2. What insights, growths, and changes, if any, occur as a result of participation
   in immersion experiences? To what extent are changes sustained over time?

3. Based on the DMIS typology, what developmental progression, if any, do participants report in level of cultural sensitivity that they attribute to participation in an immersion experience?

4. Do participants attribute any differences in cultural self-efficacy to their participation in immersion experience?

5. Do participants report that their emotional and/or cognitive empathy changed as a result of their experience?

6. What changes, if any, in self-awareness occurred through the immersion experience and to what extent do participants report that these changes were maintained over time?

7. What meaning is made from participant's international immersion experience?

8. Do participants feel any sustained personal transformation that they directly attribute to the immersion experience?

Need for the Study

Existing literature on international immersion is scarce and lacks methodological rigor (Lindsey, 2005). Studies have primarily focused on pre-post assessments, administered just prior to and immediately post experience, failing to document sustained change in participants. Moreover, participant journals have been used as the primary way to understand the phenomenon and meaning that participants make of experiences. While unstructured journaling provides useful information, researchers who rely on such data are working without a guiding theoretical principle or model for their research. Further, the lack of follow-up data has created a gap in the literature regarding whether changes

experienced by participants are sustained over time. To that end, research is needed to assess the effect of international immersion on counselor trainees' cultural competence, cultural empathy, self-efficacy and self-awareness. Additionally, there is a need to investigate whether changes attributed to participation in immersion experiences are sustained over time.

Because this study examined the long-term impact of immersion experiences, information from this study may enhance the understanding of the impact of such experiences. Further, counselor educators may benefit from information about how to best tailor immersion experiences to maximize benefits. As this line of research continues, counselor educators may be able to identify more effective educational opportunities to help counseling students develop cultural competence, a process that will benefit students and the profession. Finally, to the extent that information gained from this study informs counselor development, consumers will benefit from more culturally competent services.

Definition of Terms

Counselor Self-Awareness is defined as the awareness of one's feelings, values, biases and assumptions (Sue, 1981).

Counselor Self-Efficacy (CSE) is defined as one's beliefs about her or his capabilities to effectively counsel clients (Friedlander et al.,1986; Larson & Daniels, 1998), encompassing three broad domains: perceived ability to perform basic helping skills; manage session tasks; and negotiate challenging counseling situations and presenting issues (Lent et al., 2003).

Counselor Trainee is a student who is enrolled or was enrolled in a Counselor Education program in the United States during the time of their participation in an international immersion experience.

Cultural Competence is defined for the purpose of this study as a counselor's ability to demonstrate cultural empathy, self-awareness, self-efficacy, knowledge, and skills when working with clients from diverse backgrounds. *Cultural Sensitivity* and *Intercultural sensitivity* are used interchangeably with cultural competence in the multicultural literature and will be used synonymously in this study.

Cultural Dissonance is defined as an uncomfortable sense of discord, disharmony, confusion, or conflict experienced by people in the midst of change in their cultural environment (Allan, 2002).

Cultural Empathy is defined as way of relating interpersonally as well as understanding and communicating across cultures (Ridley & Lingle, 1996).

Cultural Identity is defined as a person's sense of belonging to certain groups based on customs, practices, languages, values and world views.

Cultural Immersion is defined for the purpose of this study as direct, prolonged, in vivo contact with a culture different from that of the counselor trainee (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997).

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is a developmental model describing a progression of worldview orientations towards different cultures. The DMIS framework consists of three ethnocentric orientations (Denial, Defense, Minimization) in which one's own culture is experienced as central to reality and three ethnorelative

orientations (Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration) in which one's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Bennett, 1986).

Empathy is defined as the ability to enter a client's world (Rogers, 1961), to feel with the client rather than feel for the client (i.e., emotional empathy) (Capuzzi & Gross, 1999), and to think with the client rather than for or about the client (i.e., cognitive empathy) (Brammer et al., 1993).

Experiential Education is defined as a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values (Association for Experiential Education, 2010).

International Immersion is defined as cultural immersion experience that includes direct, prolonged, in vivo contact in a different country and a culture different from that of the counselor trainee (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997).

Minority/Diverse populations include marginalized populations across multiple domains (i.e. sex, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc.). Because the current research is focused on cultural competence in the context of racial and ethnic minority groups, the definition of minorities will be limited to people from non-White backgrounds.

Self-Awareness is defined as the becoming critically aware of one's feelings, values, biases and assumptions (Sue, 1981; Sue et al., 1992).

White is a descriptive term that refers to European immigrants. This phrase will be used to describe White Americans and Caucasians.

Working Alliance is defined as a collaborative relationship that occurs between the counselor and client that is comprised of tasks, common goals and an emotional bond (Bordin, 1979, 1994).

Brief Overview

This research study is composed of five chapters. The purpose of the first chapter was to highlight the increased need for effective experiential training for counselor trainees when working with clients from diverse backgrounds, providing a brief overview of participation in international immersion experiences as one example of effective learning. In the second chapter, the researcher examines relevant literature on these topics. The third chapter explains the methodology of the study, including information on participants and procedures (including an overview of the Consensual Qualitative Research methodology used to collect and analyze the data). Results will be presented in the fourth chapter. The fifth and final chapter will include a discussion of the results, implications for the field of counseling, limitations to the current study, and future directions for research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Counselor educators and supervisors strive to prepare students to be effective counselors. More specifically, counseling faculty recognize that it is necessary for counselors to form a strong working alliance with clients, demonstrate empathy, self-awareness, and cultural sensitivity; accordingly, developing these skills are recognized goals in counselor preparation programs (ACA, 2005; CACREP, 2009; Collins & Arthur, 2010; Ishii et al., 2009; Pedersen, Crethar, & Carlson, 2008; Sue, 2001; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). Researchers emphasize that experiential pedagogical approaches enhance the effectiveness of counselor training beyond traditional pedagogical approaches (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Smaby, 1998). In particular, one type of experiential approach, international immersion programs, has been shown to impact counselor trainees in ways that cannot be done in traditional academic settings (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). Unfortunately, however, little is known about the lasting impact of these changes.

To this end, this study explores the impact of international immersion experiences and to what extent the experience may provide sustainable changes for counselor trainees. The following review includes literature divided into the following

sections: (a) the current state of mental health care in the United States and need for increased attention to cultural issues, (b) the core components of counselor development, (c) a review of the dominant model for conceptualizing cultural competence for counselors (i.e., the Tripartite Model) and limitations of this model, (d) the increased need and utilization of experiential approaches to effectively develop cultural competence in counselor trainees, (e) and what is currently known about the impact of participation in an international immersion experience as it relates to counselor development.

Health Care in the United States

Global economics, foreign and domestic policies, and technological advances have all contributed to the rapidly increasing change in the demographic makeup of the United States. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2001a, 2005) has continued to emphasize that the increasing population growth of racial and ethnic communities presents a challenge to the health care delivery service industry in this country. Brach and Fraserirector (2000) conducted a meta-analysis, including studies on cultural competency and health disparity that have been published within the last 10 years. The findings of the meta-analysis indicated that there is strong evidence of health disparities, revealing a consistent gap between majority and minority populations in terms of outcomes of healthcare. For example, Black women are more likely to die from breast cancer than White women, despite having a lower incidence of the disease. Another example of health disparities is lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality for minorities when compared to their White counterparts (Atdjian & Vega, 2005). Other examples of negative health consequences include missed opportunities for screening due

to lack of familiarity of prevalence of conditions among different groups, lack of knowledge about traditional remedies that may lead to harmful drug interactions, and diagnostic errors resulting from miscommunication. Moreover, researchers have found that people from racial/ethnic minority groups experience disproportionately higher rates of disease, have fewer treatment options, and have reduced access to care when compared to people in the majority group in the United States (Atdjian & Vega, 2005; Brach & Fraserirector, 2000).

In addition to inequalities in primary health care, the DHHS (2001a) reports disparities in both access to and quality of mental health services for minority populations, including underutilization of mental health services, low retention rates, and higher rates of missed appointments. Cultural issues in healthcare not only affect those who seek help, but also those who provide services. Each group of providers embodies a culture of shared beliefs, norms, values, and styles of communication. Perceptions of mental health, social support, diagnosis, assessment and interventions may be perceived in culturally different ways and this may lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication between service recipient and provider. While mental health professionals of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are able to provide culturally competent care, the majority of professionals believe they are inadequately trained (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999) to work with diverse populations. In addition, ethnic minorities are under-represented as both mental health professionals and minority research participants. Taken together, these disparities and lack of minority representativeness constitute fundamental issues in providing effective mental health

services for persons in minority groups (Atdijan & Vega, 2005; Sue & Sue, 1999).

Although the mental health profession has made considerable advances around diversity

issues, there remains a great need to increase counselor effectiveness when working with

clients from diverse backgrounds.

Mental Health: Past to Present

Multiculturalism is central to the field of counseling today (Chung & Bemak,

2002; Heppner et al., 2009; Kim, 2007; Sue et al., 1992). However, the origins of

multiculturalism and historical forces that led to its creation reveal the continuing

struggle between monoculturalism and multiculturalism. The roots of modern

psychological modalities can be traced back to the work of Sigmund Freud in Vienna in

the 1880s. Coining the term "psychoanalysis," Freud developed a method known for its

emphasis on the dynamics of relationships between different parts of the psyche and

external world. Freud had several followers including Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson and

Carl Jung, who were integral in the development of the first force of psychotherapy,

psychodynamics (Adler, 1927; Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1913; Jung, 1967). A separate

strand of psychological therapies developed by leaders such as Ivan Pavlov, John Watson

and B.F. Skinner who, rather than focusing on hidden aspects of the psyche that could not

be examined, focused on what could be observed and conditioned, coining the term

behaviorism, commonly referred to as the second force of psychotherapy (Pavlov, 1927;

Skinner, 1953; Watson, 1913). From behaviorism, several strands of theories were

developed including cognitive, cognitive-behavioral and rational emotive theories. The

third force of psychotherapy, known as the humanistic branch, was pioneered by Carl

Rogers, a U.S. based psychologist (Rogers, 1959). Rogers approach focused on the experience of the person, rejecting the adoption of elaborate untestable psychodynamic traditions or emphasis on the internal world of clients, rather focusing on philosophies of existentialism and adopting holistic approaches to the human existence (Nugent, 1994).

In summary, although the historical, empirical and theoretical frameworks aforementioned have provided a solid foundation for the mental health profession to build upon and develop further, each operated initially from a monocultural perspective, failing to account for cultural contexts that may also be impacting the client. The need for mental health professionals to view clients within cultural frameworks is of increased importance given the increases in minority populations in the United States (Atjidan & Vega, 2005).

Multiculturalism, defined as a "philosophical and practical orientation to the study, understanding, and valuing of multiple worldviews related to major biological, cultural, ethnic and other sociodemographic groupings" (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996, p. 8) is commonly referred to as the "fourth force" in psychotherapy, alongside traditional psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic approaches (Alexander, 2001). The past few decades have witnessed a paradigmatic shift, a multicultural movement that has revolutionized the field of counseling and permanently changed the way in which counselors approach clients from diverse backgrounds (Alexander, 2001; Sue et al., 1992).

Although counseling dates back to the early 1900s, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that issues of race and culture became salient topics in the practice of counseling. The civil rights movement served as a major catalyst for marginalized groups to demand

culturally appropriate services; based on attacks against psychotherapy being a 'white-middle class activity', educators and psychologists began suggesting making mental health services relevant to people from diverse backgrounds (Sue et al., 1996; Vontress, 1971). Although the growth of multicultural counseling and psychology began in the 1960s, multiculturalism was not fully established until the 1980s, and has continued to expand in the 1990s through today, reaching across national borders and various disciplines (Heppner et al., 2009). While the process of expanding multiculturalism is nonlinear, this chronological perspective highlights the developmental process of growing and diversifying to encompass a broad range of marginalized groups. Although the counseling profession has made significant strides over the past 40 years, researchers indicate that minority clients are still not being adequately served, evidenced by poor client perceptions and expectations, lack of client persistence and low service utilization for minority clients (Heppner et al., 2009; Kim, 2007).

Currently, the mental health field is growing at an above average rate, with the counseling profession representing one of the fastest growing fields in the mental health field, expecting to have grown 18% from 2008 to 2018 (U.S. Department of Labor Bureau Statistics, 2010). Because they represent one of the key providers in the delivery of mental health services, it is of high importance that counselors are well prepared to work effectively with clients and provide quality services. In addition to being effective at assessment and intervention, it is imperative that counselors increase their understanding of the cultural complexity of human beings and the rapidly changing

environments in which they live, demonstrating their ability to effectively work with clients from various backgrounds.

Barriers to Counseling Culturally Diverse Clients

The emphasis on multiculturalism stems from the notion that historically marginalized clients have not been adequately served by counselors, who typically are working from the stance of being economically and socially privileged. Although the counseling profession has made significant strides in expanding understanding the role of culture in counseling, several barriers still exist today. Examples of potential barriers for minority clients have been discussed in the literature, including *socio-cultural barriers* such as cultural stigmas and negative perceptions (Anglin, Alberti, Link, & Phelan, 2008; Wang, Berglund, & Kessler, 2000); and *structural barriers,* such as limited knowledge, resources, access to care and language differences (Anglin et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001), impacting utilization of services by minority clients.

Socio-cultural barriers. The socio-cultural context is characterized by inter/intra personal relationships between individuals and their social systems. Several socio-cultural barriers exist that impede minority clients from utilizing mental health services. In order to provide culturally responsive services, it is imperative for mental health providers to understand clients within this context and the interactions between how individuals perceive their mental health status, give meaning to health and illness and the treatment they seek.

One of the most pervasive barriers to treatment is the negative stigma that may be associated with mental health issues, including perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that deter individuals with needs from help-seeking. Stigmas can be seen as both external stigmas, such as negative beliefs and attitudes about mental illness from the general population that lead to discrimination and stereotyping, and internal stigmas, such as devaluation, shame, secrecy and social withdrawal, triggered by internalizing negative stereotypes onto oneself (Corrigan, 2004; Ritsher & Phelan, 2004).

Such stigmas appear to directly impact help-seeking. For example, Vogel, Wade, and Hackler (2007) found a direct relationship between internalized stigmas and help seeking attitudes, subsequently impacting help seeking behaviors among individuals with depression. Although stigmas affect all persons with mental health issues, marginalized populations seem to be at greater risk for internalizing stigmas and avoiding treatment. In fact, Corrigan (2004) found that stigma is the most commonly cited reason minority individuals do not seek mental health services. Additionally, Cooper-Patrick and colleagues (1997) conducted focus group interviews in which they found African American participants were more likely to raise concerns regarding mental illness stigmas than their White counterparts.

Another barrier that impedes the quality of care for minorities is negative perceptions about mental health services. Often, counselors are not well perceived by clients from diverse backgrounds (Kim, 2007). For example, researchers have found that minority clients did not believe they could approach a counselor with their problems (Atkinson et al., 1998; Lin, Bermudez, & Tucker, 2003). Utilizing a nationally

representative sample, Diala and colleagues (2000) found that African American and White Americans with negative attitudes toward treatment were five times less likely to seek mental health services than individuals with more positive attitudes, indicating the impact of attitudes on service utilization. Richardson (2001) found that minority parents were more likely to expect providers to lack knowledge of effective treatment methods, find providers untrustworthy and disrespectful, and expect providers to give poor care. Results indicated that parents also lacked appropriate knowledge about what mental health professionals do and how interventions may be helpful. In sum, several socio-cultural factors serve as barriers that impede minority clients from seeking mental health services.

Structural barriers. In addition to socio-cultural barriers, several structural barriers such as lack of knowledge, difference in languages, lack of financial resources and/or transportation, and underutilization of services have negative implications on minority client services and mental health. In *Mental Health: A report from the Surgeon General* (DHHS, 2000) it is stated that "the mental health field is plagued by disparities in the availability of and access to its services. These disparities are viewed readily though the lenses of racial and cultural diversity, age, and gender" (p. vi), highlighting the need for structural and systemic change in the mental health field.

There are a number of structural barriers, including lack of knowledge, language, and limited resources. One noteworthy structural barrier is the lack of understanding by minority clients that mental health problems are preventable and treatable (DHHS, 2003). Language is another salient issue for immigrant minorities, with barriers of limited

privacy when using a translator and miscommunication when not using a translator.

Limited financial resources also serve as a structural barrier. Solway, Estes, Goldberg,

and Berry (2010) found that ethnic minorities who are poor or have limited income or

lack adequate financial resources experience significant trouble accessing services.

Although publicly funded services that treat persons with serious mental illness do not

typically turn people away, limits are placed according to illness severity and service

availability, creating a gap for those needing services and those who are eligible for

services. In addition, lack of transportation further confounds the ability to access

services, highlighting how access barriers to mental health services are multifaceted.

Another barrier related to the lack of adequate services for minority clients is

evidenced by the underutilization of services. Wang et al. (2000) found that a

discrepancy still persists between need for treatment and actual utilization, especially for

minority populations, suggesting that low utilization may serve as an index for culturally

insensitive services (Anglin et al., 2008). Atdijan and Vega (2005) stated that inadequate

detection of psychiatric conditions coupled with under referrals of patients for mental

health services constitutes fundamental deficits for minority patients. In one study on

ethnic minority client utilization, Sue and colleagues (1996) found that client persistence

and utilization of services varied by client ethnicity, hypothesized client acculturation and

number of available ethnic minority staff, suggesting that ethnic minority clients may

terminate services due to a lack of ethnically similar providers (Wong, Beutler, & Zane,

2007). For the few clients who do gain access to care, early dropout (often after the first

session) and high rates of missed appointments are a persistent problem (Sue et al., 1992).

There is clearly a well-documented need to increase effectiveness when working with minority clients based on the research highlighting the multitude of barriers that prevent minority clients from receiving adequate services. Because counselors represent one of the key providers in the delivery of mental health services, it is of high importance that counselors are well prepared to work effectively with clients and provide quality services. In response to the need for culturally sensitive practice, several professional and regulatory bodies have been charged with the responsibility of setting policies and trainings, espousing the need for cultural sensitivity in mental health service provision for all populations.

Professional Standards in Multicultural Counseling

The development of mechanisms in the field of counseling to formally recognize the need for training in multiculturalism has had a significant impact on the profession. As a professional group, counselors have acknowledged the risk posed to clients when practitioners are not equipped to understand and respect the different cultural contexts that are presented in the counseling relationship. As a result, organizations such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP), and the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) have published standards and guidelines stressing the importance of formal diversity training.

ACA Ethical Standards. The American Counseling Association (ACA) is the single largest professional counseling association in the world, dedicated to professional and educational growth and advancement in the counseling profession (ACA, 2005). Founded in 1952, ACA has been instrumental in setting professional and ethical standards, advocating for the profession and clients served in local, national and international forums. The *ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2005) highlighting ethical responsibilities, principles that define ethical behavior, and professional courses of action that promote optimal service for clients and adhere to the values of the counseling profession, serves as the ethical guide for counselors to follow. The *ACA Code of Ethics* was revised in 2005 after undergoing three years of revisions, with the intention of better reflecting contemporary society. A specific charge was given to the Ethics Code Revision Taskforce by the ACA Governing Council to include special considerations of cultural and social justice issues faced by counselors. In response to the charge, social and cultural issues were threaded throughout the Code, including an updated Preamble addressing cultural context as well as specific references in the majority of introductory statements regarding the ethical responsibility for counselors to consider cultural context as it related to each specific content area. An example of this is in Section G (Research and Publications), where the section introduction ends with the following statement: "Counselors minimize bias and respect diversity in designing and implementing research programs" (ACA, 2005, p. 16). A few more examples of how cultural sensitivity is infused throughout the Code include:

Standard B.1.a.: "counselors maintain awareness and sensitivity regarding cultural

meanings of confidentiality and privacy" (p. 7)

Standard E.5.c.: "counselors need to recognize the historical and social prejudices

in the misdiagnosis and pathologizing of certain individuals and groups and the

role of mental health professionals perpetuating these prejudices through

diagnosis and treatment" (p. 12).

In sum, the strong emphasis on social and cultural diversity issues throughout the *ACA*

Code of Ethics reflects the importance and support of ACA to continue increasing

attention on the impact of cultural contexts in the counseling profession (ACA, 1995,

2005).

CACREP Standards. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related

Educational Programs (CACREP) is the accrediting body dedicated to promote

professional excellence in counselor preparation, establishing criteria for the accreditation

of counselor preparation programs. CACREP establishes preparation Standards that

encourage continuous improvement of counseling programs to meet the changing needs

of society, striving to advance the counseling profession through quality training. The

Standards are written to serve as a benchmark for developing students' professional

counselor identities, ensuring that students master knowledge and skills that are requisite

to effective practice. The Standards are revised every seven years, with the most recent

iteration continuing to include social and cultural foundations as a core area of counselor

preparation (CACREP, 2009). Curricular areas in the area of clinical mental health and

diversity foundations read as follows:

2. SOCIAL AND CULTRUAL DIVERSITY—studies that provide an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society, including all of the following:

>a. multicultural and pluralistic trends, including characteristics and concerns within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally;
>b. attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences, including specific experiential learning activities designed to foster students' understanding of self and culturally diverse clients;
>c. theories of multicultural counseling, identity development and social justice;
>d. individual, couple, family, group and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies;
>e. counselors' roles in developing cultural self awareness, promoting cultural social justice, advocacy, and conflict resolution, and other culturally supported behaviors that promote wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind or body; and
>f. counselors' roles in eliminating biases, prejudices , and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination. (CACREP, 2009, pp. 90-91)

In addition to requiring programs to teach diversity issues, CACREP requires that students have fundamental knowledge and skills in working with people from diverse backgrounds. Requiring diversity issues in counselor training for accreditation shows clear support for the importance of multiculturalism (CACREP, 2009).

NBCC Standards. While ACA focuses on the ethical responsibilities of counselors and CACREP Standards focus on the accreditation of counseling programs, the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) is charged with identifying individuals who have met certain coursework and fieldwork requirements, delineating minimal competence that is necessary for counselors to obtain the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential, the only national credential that exists in mental health. One of the eight core areas that counselors are tested on to become certified is the CACREP

core area of social and cultural diversity. NBCC's inclusion of coursework related to cultural issues as a necessary component of competence reiterates the support of professional organizations for considering the cultural context when working with clients.

The emphasis of cultural and diversity issues in the *ACA Code of Ethics*, CACREP Standards, and standards for national certification all point to primacy within the counseling profession. It seems clear then, that counselors must demonstrate adequate skills, awareness and knowledge as well as the ability to form strong therapeutic relationships and working alliances with clients from diverse backgrounds. For this to occur, it is necessary to understand the cultural complexity of all human beings and the rapidly changing environments in which they live, demonstrating their ability to effectively work with clients from various backgrounds. As the counseling profession continues to develop and expand the notion of multiculturalism around the world, it is important to consider the intersection of culture and counselor development.

Counselor Development: Utilizing a Culturally Inclusive Framework

Changes in globalization, urbanization, and modernization have impacted the counseling profession. Counseling professionals today work with clients from a variety of different backgrounds in an increasingly pluralistic social context, increasing the need to espouse culturally competent practice (Coleman, 2004). In order to be effective in understanding and assessing clients from diverse backgrounds, there is an increased need to view a client's cultural context in all therapeutic relationships. A culture-centered approach to counseling recognizes culture as central not marginal, as fundamental not exotic, and as an integral part of the counseling process. Viewing a client's cultural

context as central to counseling is especially important given that counselors are vulnerable to the experience of cultural encapsulation, defined by Wrenn (1962) as the process of working with clients from an ethnocentric perspective, in which counselors do not effectively understand the world view or culture of origin of the client, or integrate this knowledge into the counseling process (Miville et al., 2006; Pedersen et al., 2008; Sue et al., 1992; Wrenn, 1962). Rapid global changes occurring in economics, health, family, social structures, education and technology increases vulnerability towards encapsulation as individuals may not adapt to these mass changes. Therefore, given the changes in the global world as well as counselors increasing exposure to clients from diverse backgrounds, it is necessary to further understand cultural encapsulation. Although encapsulation often is inadvertent and unintentional, it nonetheless increases the risk for demonstrating insensitivity to the client's cultural context and inadvertently causing harm to the client (Sue et al., 1992; Wrenn, 1962).

Cultural encapsulation is grounded in five primary features. First, a culturally encapsulated person defines reality and truth through one set of cultural assumptions, using personal value systems and beliefs as the solitary reference point from which to interpret and judge others thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Commonly, this is referred to as ethnocentrism. That is, ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own standards as superior, ranking all other perspectives as "less than" in comparison (Pedersen et al., 2008). Secondly, because a culturally encapsulated person assumes her or his perspective is superior, he or she may resist adaptation and reject alternatives, seeking comfort in personal convictions or maintaining an emotional homeostasis, failing to attend to any

information that may contradict this homeostasis or cause dissonance. Third, when confronted with any evidence contrary to the encapsulated assumptions, the individual may ignore or invalidate the evidence, tending to be surprised or unbelieving of information presented (Pedersen et al., 2008). Wrenn (1962) provided the example of the 'truth' of the shape of the world, describing how at one point the 'truth' was the world was flat and the considerable resistance and denial occasioned by the new evidence. In this case, assumptions are not dependable on reasonable proof or rationality; they are believed to be true, regardless of contrary evidence. Fourth, rather than seeking to understand alternative viewpoints of how someone is being impacted by the system in which they live, an encapsulated presumption is made that everyone is born with the same opportunities and realities, and thus offering only minimal accommodations. Therefore, simple and quick remedies are offered, failing to recognize how a person's distress may be because of larger macro-systemic issues such as oppression. The fifth and final feature overlaps the previous features; an encapsulated individual judges everything from her or his own vantage point self-referenced criteria, disregarding the cultural context of others (Pedersen et al., 2008, Wrenn, 1962). A common theme in all five features of cultural encapsulation is the underlying emotion of fear of the unknown. This fear is perpetuated even more today than in the past as individuals are faced with their lack of experiences coupled with the increasing multitude of varying cultures, people, worldviews, traditions, beliefs and religions present today, heightening the risk for cultural encapsulation (Albee, 1994; Pedersen et al., 2008; Wrenn, 1985).

Counselor education training programs are at risk for perpetuating cultural encapsulation for trainees by focusing on external skills and techniques and failing to combat vulnerabilities toward encapsulation by focusing on trainees' internal processes (Pedersen, 2000; Pedersen et al., 2008). Researchers indicate that it may not be sufficient to only develop external skills or techniques for counselors. Instead, the focus of development should be on internal processes, such as genuine acceptance of people from all backgrounds, belief in oneself and in her/his ability to work with a variety of clients, and being aware of personal strengths and limitations (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Pedersen et al., 2008; Strupp & Anderson, 1997). By focusing on developing counselors internal processes, counselors may be more equipped to successfully meet the current challenges of the mental health profession (Coleman, 2004; Larson et al., 1998). Ahn and Wampold (2001) found in a meta-analysis of component studies in psychotherapy that the person of the counselor accounts for more variability in outcome than specific treatment modalities. To this end, effective practice with clients involves more than acquiring techniques and interventions; it requires developing of the 'person' of the counselor, focusing on the necessary internal skills needed to work with clients from a culturally inclusive framework and build effective relationships with clients from all backgrounds (Collins & Arthur, 2010; Reupert, 2006; Strupp & Anderson, 1997).

Therapeutic relationships, or relationships between the counselor and the client, are considered to be the cornerstone of counseling (Ahn & Wampold, 2001; Coleman, 2004; Reupert, 2006). Research on the effectiveness of therapy indicates that there is considerable evidence that therapeutic relationships, in general, and the working alliance,

more specifically, are more significant predictors of positive outcomes in therapy than specific interventions (Ahn & Wampold, 2001; Andrews, 2001; Coleman, 2004; Horvath, 2000; Prochaska & Norcross, 1999; Roysircar, Hubbell, & Gard, 2003). Among the fundamental skills needed to establish a therapeutic relationship are the development of a strong working alliance, the capacity to empathize with a client's situation, as well as the ability for counselors to be self aware and self-efficacious (Andrews, 2001; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Rogers, 1959; Urbani et al., 2002; Wampold, 2001; Watson, 2001).

A working alliance, as defined by Bordin (1979), is a collaborative relationship that occurs between the counselor and the client, comprised of three components: tasks, goals, and an emotional bond. Goal agreement involves the parties having a shared understanding of common goals; task agreement entails that parties have a shared understanding of and confidence in the activities that will be used to accomplish the goals; and an emotional bond consists of a trusting emotional attachment that will ensue between parties during their work together (Bordin, 1979).

Although several conceptualizations of the working alliance exist, Bordin's conceptualization is seen to be the most robust conceptualization as he presented a pan-theoretical model of the working alliance, providing a widely applicable framework to understand the change process and interactions between two people (Rogers, 2009). Bordin (1979) asserted that the variability in treatment techniques was less important than establishing general effectiveness of the components common to all forms of psychotherapy. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that poorly developed alliances are correlated with client noncompliance, poor client outcomes and premature

termination of counseling (Burkard et al., 2003; Coleman, 2004; Collins & Arthur, 2010). Therefore, establishing a strong working alliance between counselors and clients should be at the forefront of counselor training.

One of the primary conditions to forming a strong working alliance with clients is by being able to form an emotional bond, in which mutual trust and respect are present. In addition to client's feeling like there is mutual trust and respect in the relationship, clients want to feel like their counselor understands, or empathizes with their struggles (Greenberg, Watson, Elliot, & Bohart, 2001). Carl Rogers's seminal writings (1951, 1957) on the importance of empathy in counseling relationships have significantly impacted the profession. The word 'empathy' was derived from the Greek word *empatheia,* or active appreciation of another person's feeling experience (Wispe, 1987). After more than 60 years of research, evidence has consistently demonstrated that empathy is "an essential component of successful therapy in every therapeutic modality" (Watson, 2001, p. 445).

There are several definitions and conceptualizations of empathy in the literature, leading to some confusion of whether empathy is a cognitive or affective process; a personality trait, a way of being, an observable skill; or a combination of all of the above. From a cognitive perspective, empathy is considered to be an intellectual understanding of others, including their thoughts, feelings and intentions; perspective-taking and the ability to adopt alternative viewpoints (Gladstein, 1983; Rogers, 1957). From an affective perspective, qualities of empathy refer to the emotional experiencing of another's emotions or being congruent with another's emotional state (Miville et al., 2006).

Affective empathy may present as concern, vicariously feeling the same emotion as another person, or having intuitive hunches about what the client may be feeling (Duan & Hill, 1996; Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972, Rogers, 1957).

Rogers (1957, 1959) suggests that empathy is sensing and understanding both the clients affective and cognitive states to clearly see the client's world, defining empathy as the ability to "sense the clients world as if it were your own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality" (Rogers, 1957, p. 99). For the purpose of this study, empathy is defined as the ability to enter a client's world (Rogers, 1961), to feel with the client rather than feel for the client (i.e., emotional empathy) (Capuzzi & Gross, 1999), and to think with the client rather than for or about the client (i.e., cognitive empathy) (Brammer et al., 1993). Therefore, empathy is viewed as a multifaceted process that includes the counselors ability to cognitively understand values, goals and worldviews of others as well as emotionally connect to others, viewing cognitions and affective as equally important and necessary conditions of empathy. Despite the lack of a common definition, many professionals continue to regard empathy as a core component of effective counseling (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Greenberg et al., 2001; McLeod, 1999).

Pope and Kline (1999) found that expert counselors stated that empathy was in the top five important personal characteristics of effective counselors. Further, developing empathy continues to be a primary goal in most counselor education training programs (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). In another study, Greenberg and colleagues (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of 47 studies, encompassing 190 tests for over 3,000 clients on the relationship between empathy and psychotherapy outcomes. Study dates ranged from

1961 to 2000, with the majority of studies (68%) being carried out before 1980. The authors suggested that the overall relation between therapist empathy and outcome is best summarized by the weighted, unbiased correlation of *r* of .32, a medium effect size suggesting that empathy as a whole accounted for almost 10% of outcome variance, accounting for more variance than any specific intervention (Greenberg et al., 2001). The authors suggest that empathy may lead to positive outcomes based on four factors: (a) empathy as a relationship condition, viewing empathy as a positive relationship in which the client feels understood and safe; (b) empathy as a corrective emotional experience, viewing empathy as something that can reduce isolation, assist clients in learning they are worthy of respect, of being heard and that they make sense; (c) empathy as cognitive affective processing, viewing empathy as an avenue to promote exploration and meaning-making; and (d) empathy and client as active self healers, viewing empathy as promoting client involvement and openness, providing a workspace for clients to engage in self healing. Given the evidence that empathy positively impacts counseling outcomes, focusing on developing counselor trainee's ability to empathize seems warranted. Furthermore, in light of the increasingly diverse social world of today which increases vulnerability towards cultural encapsulation, it is surprising that cultural considerations for empathy have received little theoretical or empirical attention (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Miville et al., 2006).

Definitions of empathy are largely based on Western-European values, rarely taking cross-cultural considerations into account (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Due to the interactive process of counseling and the foundation of empathy hinging upon the

counselors ability to symbolically place themselves in the clients' world, it is clear that differing worldviews and perspectives impact the counselor's ability to be empathic. Along this line, Sue, Yau, and Mao (1995) found that demonstrating and communicating an understanding of the client's worldview and acknowledging differences between the counselor and the client increased counselor credibility. Furthermore, results for Asian students indicated that when counselors considered the students' cultural values, such as family or societal influences, and were less focused on individualistic Western values, the students viewed the counselors as being more empathic. Therefore, Western-based empathy models and trainings may be lacking the complexity and mechanisms that are crucial to demonstrate culturally sensitive empathy (Chung & Bemak, 2002).

Cultural empathy may differ from traditional empathy in the focus on being aware of one's personal cultural identity as well as accepting the values and beliefs of the client; being able to understand, accept and feel the clients situation while simultaneously maintaining a separate sense of cultural self (Ridley, 1995). Ridley and Lingle (1996) provided a comprehensive definition of cultural empathy as "a way of relating interpersonally as well as understanding and communicating across cultures" (p. 32). This definition takes into account the counselor's learned ability to not only understand the experience of culturally diverse clients but also the ability to communicate this understanding effectively, while conveying care and concern (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). Cultural empathy requires that counselors first develop fundamental skills in empathy and cultural sensitivity, serving as prerequisites before moving on to advanced skills that allow them to decode cultural messages. In order for counselors to work effectively with

clients from diverse backgrounds in a culturally empathic manner, they must not only obtain basic skills in empathy, but also be able to view each client as a unique and individual being, therefore demonstrating cultural sensitivity (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Ridley (1995) identified several guidelines for communicating cultural empathy, with overarching themes suggesting that it is imperative to communicate genuine interest in learning more about the client's cultural context, admitting to lack of awareness of cultural experiences, and collaborating on goals and expectations, to ensure cultural appropriateness. Counselors who are culturally encapsulated are at heightened risk for not demonstrating cultural empathy, increasing the likelihood of premature termination or ineffective counseling (Chung & Bemak, 2002).

In order for counselors to be effective with clients from diverse backgrounds and be able to empathize and form strong working alliances, they must be aware of and able to not only understand the client's worldview, but also their own. By having awareness of personal worldviews and client worldviews, the counselor is better able to understand possible misinterpretations that can arise in any therapeutic situation, especially when clients are from different cultural backgrounds. One common tendency for counselors is to impose their worldviews on their clients, either consciously or sub-consciously. Researchers have shown that conflict between individuals in different cultural groups often is due to differences in worldviews, highlighting the need for counselors to be able to understand the worldviews of their clients and demonstrate cultural empathy (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995; Chung & Bemak, 2002). Therefore, one of the core tasks in achieving cultural empathy and strong working alliances is for counselors to be able to

separate their cultural values from their clients, a process that can only occur after the counselor has first examined themselves, their cultural beliefs and the impact of their beliefs on their values, behaviors, traditions, and so forth (Chung & Bemak, 2002).

The emphasis on self awareness as a critical component of psychotherapy dates back to the work of Sigmund Freud and his assertions that it is a necessity for analysts to participate in their own psychoanalysis to increase their awareness of counter transference issues, therefore potentially reducing the impact to which an analysts issues hinder therapeutic outcomes with clients (1917, 1966). Since the work of Freud, mental health professionals have supported the notion that it is important for counselors to be aware of their own values, biases, beliefs and assumptions (Oden, Miner-Holden, & Balkin, 2009; Pedersen & Leong, 1997; Rogers, 1957; Sue & Sue, 2002). There are multiple indications that self-awareness is highly valued in the counseling profession as evidenced by the permeation of the construct of self awareness in multiple realms of the counseling profession including multiculturalism, group, career, supervision and school counseling (Hansen, 2009). Furthermore, in their most recent standards, CACREP (2009) stated that the presence of self awareness is a fundamental prerequisite for counselor fitness, clearly recognizing the importance of self awareness in counseling.

Researchers have indicated that one way for counselors to build an alliance with clients is through the use of self; using self disclosure, understanding, and empathy (Andrews, 2001; Oke, 1994).   A common critical error for counselor trainees, however, is the failure to understand their self in relation to others. This may be partially attributed to the lack of emphasis on self awareness in counselor preparation programs (Burnett,

Hamel, & Long, 2004). Few programs do focus on raising counselors' awareness of self, with the goal of becoming more aware of their values and biases (Kondrat, 1999); however, these programs have been criticized for being deficit based, narrow, culturally biased or ill-formed, with certain attributes of self more accepted than others (Cook, 1999, Reupert, 2006). Furthermore, while a seemingly inevitable, essential component of therapy, the cultivation of counselor self awareness has received little empirical attention (Reupert, 2006). Given the impact of self awareness on working alliances and therapeutic outcomes, and tendency for counselors to not understand their self in relations to other, it is essential to increase empirical and pedagogical attention on cultivating self awareness in culturally appropriate ways (Burnett et al., 2004; Reupert, 2006).

Increased attention on counselor self awareness is especially important when working with clients from diverse backgrounds as one frequently cited issue for counselors is the tendency to impose their cultural worldviews on their clients (Chung & Bemak, 2002; Reupert, 2006). Worldviews can be described as the way individuals perceive their relationship to the world; or learned cultural ways of perceiving one's environment (Sue, 1981). One's culture influences one's worldviews, including one's attitudes, values, beliefs, opinions, as well as how one thinks, conceptualizes events, makes decisions, behaves and interprets events. Counselors may impose their worldviews on clients consciously or subconsciously, highlighting the need for counselors to be aware of their worldviews. Cultural encapsulation exacerbates the need for counselor awareness, as encapsulated counselors expect that clients will embrace their cultural values, failing to understand and appreciate different worldviews and perspectives

(Chung & Bemak, 2002; Ridley, 1995; Wrenn, 1962). Therefore, in order to adequately demonstrate cultural empathy and understand the racial and cultural stressors that may be impacting minority clients, counselors need to first examine their personal cultural beliefs and the impact their beliefs have on their worldviews, engaging in a thorough process of self awareness. Through this examination, counselors are able to separate their cultural self and personal cultural biases from those of their clients, enabling them to experience the authentic world of the client and form a strong working alliance (Andrews, 2001; Chung & Bemak, 2002).

In addition to empathy and self- awareness, another core component in developing a working alliance with clients is the counselor's self efficacy, defined by Bandura (1977) as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 193). Since the concept of self efficacy was first introduced by Bandura, there has been considerable support for the proposition that self-efficacy has a significant influence on human actions, thoughts and affective arousal (Bandura, 1992). Self efficacy has been found to relate to task performance and persistence in the face of challenges. This, in particular, highlights the criticality of self efficacy among those in the counseling profession, as becoming a counselor is an intellectually and emotionally challenging task (Larson & Daniels, 1998; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003).

Given the importance of self-efficacy in counseling, a specific term, counselor self-efficacy (CSE), has been identified in the literature. CSE is defined as one's beliefs about her or his capabilities to effectively counsel clients (Friedlander et al., 1986; Larson

& Daniels, 1998). The construct of CSE was further clarified by researchers Lent et al. (2003) to include three broad domains: perceived ability to perform basic helping skills, manage session tasks, and negotiate challenging counseling situations and presenting issues. CSE theory emphasizes both the knowledge and ability to perform effectively in counseling situations.

Researchers have indicated that low self-efficacy is associated with increased anxiety and decreased ability to form working alliances with clients, resulting in poor treatment outcomes (Constantine, 2001; Orlinsky, Grawe, & Parks, 1994). On the other hand, researchers have demonstrated a high correlation between high self efficacy and positive counselor and client outcomes (Larson & Daniels, 1998; Orlinsky et al., 1994). For example, self-efficacy and competence are directly correlated in that higher levels of self-efficacy are related to higher performance attainment (Bandura, 1992). In a meta-analysis of the literature on CSE, Larson and Daniels (1998) found that higher self efficacy was related to perseverance in the face of challenging counselor tasks. Given the positive effects of increased self-efficacy for counselors, fostering self-efficacy needs to be a primary objective of counselor preparation programs (Bischoff, 1997; Larson & Daniels, 1998).

Bandura posited that there are four sources of knowledge inform self-efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences, or direct involvement with a task; vicarious learning, or observing/ modeling someone else doing a task; social persuasion, or encouragement/discouragement from another person; and affective arousal, or judgments one makes based on somatic arousal related to performing a task (Bandura, 1977, 1992,

1993). Mastery experiences are considered to be the most persuasive sources increasing self knowledge and include direct involvement with a task in order to increase personal capability; repeated successes not only serve to increase self-efficacy, they also buffer individual from impact of occasional failures (Aponte, 2009; Larson & Daniels, 1998). Several methods of mastery experiences interventions have been examined in the CSE literature, including role plays (Larson et al., 1998), practicum (Johnson, Baker, Kopala, Kiselica, & Thompson, 1989), and practice based on theoretically driven instruction (Urbani et al., 2002). These studies all support the hypothesis that mastery experiences cultivate counseling self-efficacy.

Given the relationship between higher self efficacy and the tendency to persist in the face of the demanding counseling tasks coupled with challenges of working with clients from diverse backgrounds, it is essential to understand the impact of cross-cultural relationships on CSE. The term multicultural counseling self-efficacy (MCSE) refers to counselors' confidence in their abilities to perform a set of multicultural counseling skills and behaviors successfully (Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Researchers have indicated that many counseling graduates feel ineffective and unprepared to work with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001; Ponterotto, 1997). Given that counselors may have low MCSE, counselor preparation programs need to consider how to focus on counselor development from a culturally inclusive framework, increasing mastery experiences wherein trainees are not only able to increase their self-efficacy, but also their self awareness and cultural empathy related to working with people from diverse backgrounds (Constantine & Ladany, 2000).

In sum, cultivating counselor trainees' ability to be empathic, self-aware, and self-efficacious must be a primary objective for counselor training programs. Given the importance of empathy, self- awareness, and self-efficacy on the working alliance and counseling outcomes coupled with the urgent need for culturally sensitive helping professionals to work with an increasingly diverse society, research on effective pragmatic pedagogy for counselor trainees is warranted. Further, such research should be firmly grounded in existing research and theory.

Multiculturalism: From Theory to Practice

The development of a counselor is a process that consists of dynamic interactions between multiple layers of complexity; including one's personal belief in her/his ability to work with clients from all backgrounds, understanding the cultural context of clients as demonstrated by cultural empathy, as well as self awareness of the cultural complexity of oneself. As counseling professionals have become more aware of the complexity and interactions of culture on counseling relationships, there has been an increased acceptance and movement towards using a multicultural framework when working with clients. One example of this acceptance and momentum towards multiculturalism in the counseling profession, is evidenced by the development of several models, including but not limited to, the Counselor Wisdom Paradigm (Hanna, Bemak, & Chung, 1999), the Worldview and Change Model (Trevino, 1996), the Model of Multicultural Understanding (Locke, 1992) and the Model of Cultural Competence (Cross, 1988), each making recommendations of what constitutes a culturally competent counselor. Although several models were pioneered by recognized experts in the field of multiculturalism, the

central model in the field remains the Tripartite Model, developed by Sue and colleagues

in 1982 (Mollen, Ridley, & Hill, 2003).

Tripartite Model

One of the most influential documents in the counseling literature, the Cross-

Cultural Counseling Competencies position paper, was first introduced by Derald Wing

Sue and colleagues in 1982. In this paper, the authors first presented the Tripartite Model,

a model that continues to be widely used throughout the field of counseling. The

Tripartite Model defines cross-cultural counseling as any "counseling relationship

involving two or more participants who differ in their cultural background, values and

lifestyle" (Sue et al., 1982, p. 47). Within this definition, Sue et al. (1982) outlined three

dimensions that characterize culturally competent counselors: Awareness, Knowledge,

and Skills. Under the dimension of *awareness,* Sue et al. (1982) stated that a culturally

competent counselor would be aware of her or his own values and biases and how they

may affect minority clients, examining her or his own way of interpreting 'normalcy.'

The second component of the model, *knowledge*, asserts that a culturally competent

counselor would be able to understand the worldviews of clients from diverse

backgrounds without imposing negative judgments (Sue et al., 1982). The last component

of the model, *skills*, posits that counselors should have a specific skill set related to

sending and receiving both verbal and non-verbal messages and interventions accurately

and appropriately with all clients (Sue et al., 1982).

The Tripartite Model was disseminated widely in the 1980s, culminating with a

revision in 1992 (Sue et al., 1992). The 1992 Multicultural Competencies have been

adopted by the American Counseling Association (ACA) as well as several divisions within ACA (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004; D'Andrea et al., 1991). Although differences between clients and counselors include cultural dimensions related to gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, and physical/mental ability, MCC is most commonly cited when focusing on cultural, racial, and ethnic differences.

   Limitations of the Tripartite Model. The Tripartite Model developed by Sue et al. (1982) has been refined on three occasions (1992, 1996, 2001), but past refinements have failed to address some of the major limitations of the model (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, & Jones, 1996; Sue, 2001; Sue et al., 1992). Criticisms of the model are based on the lack of supporting literature to ground the three-dimensional model, difficulty measuring the factor structure of the model, and relevance for practical application (Constantine, 2001; Constantine, Gloria, & Ladany, 2002; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). Constantine et al. (2002) examined the extent to which three common multicultural measures: MAKSS (D'Andrea et al., 1991); MCI (Sodowsky et al., 1994); and MCKAS (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002) supported the model's three factor structure consisting of awareness, knowledge, and skills. Following the tripartite conceptualization of multicultural counseling competence (MCC), a principal components factor analysis was conducted to determine if three factors were underlying the selected measures. Results indicated that the confirmatory factor analysis did not fully support the three factor structure, with only two of the factors meeting the Kaiser-Guttman criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Constantine et al. (2002) conducted a subsequent exploratory factor analysis, with results indicating that the three measures

were supported by a two factor structure, accounting for 63% of the variance.

Implications of this study suggest that there is a strong need to empirically test existing

theoretical models of MCC, particularly the predominant Tripartite Model (Constantine

et al., 2002).

Additionally, Ladany, Constantine, Miller, Erikson, & Muse-Burke (2000) stated

that current multicultural instruments may be actually measuring a form of multicultural

self-efficacy, as measures tend to measure respondents beliefs about providing MCC

services, rather than their actual abilities. Therefore, the accuracy of information provided

from existing multicultural assessments is limited and not reliable in clinical or practice

settings. In summary, the Tripartite Model has not withstood rigorous empirical

examination. There is clearly a strong need for research that utilizes different

conceptualizations and theoretical underpinnings when assessing multicultural counseling

competence. One model, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity,

developed by Milton Bennett (1986), will be described as an alternative way to

conceptualize the progression of developing cultural sensitivity.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The development of cultural sensitivity is a process that warrants ongoing

attention in the counseling profession. In particular, the counseling profession needs

ongoing research that investigates how counselor trainees develop cultural sensitivity,

focusing on experiences that both improve and impede their abilities to be culturally

sensitive (Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001). That is, a model that guides this inquiry should

both illustrate developmental approaches to increase culturally sensitive processes as well

as processes that impede development (Bennett, 1986). Also, this model should be able to describe the subjective experiences of developing cultural sensitivity as well as the objective behaviors. Furthermore, this developmental model should ideally be organized on the key concept that needs to be internalized for development to occur. Cultural sensitivity is predicated on the internalization that cultures differ in fundamental ways, creating differing worldviews, values and beliefs. One model, Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), is organized on the key concept of difference, has empirical support, and will be used as a conceptual framework for the current study.

The DMIS is derived from concepts that prevail in the intercultural communication field, serving as an expansion on previous attempts in the field to conceptualize assumptions and delineate stages of cultural development (Mumford-Fowler, 1994; Paige & Martin, 1983; Tesoriero, 2006). The model aims to empower students to move through a process of personal growth, moving from a position of ethnocentricism, characterized by an absolutist perspective in which one's culture is the single standard against other cultures are gauged, to ethnorelativism, characterized by a more contextual view that accommodates for difference, accepting and respecting other cultural perspectives. The developmental process occurs as students shift from a limited worldview, or culturally encapsulated perspective, to an appreciation for ambiguity of meaning and appropriate engagement with those from diverse backgrounds (Bennett, 1993; Tesoriero, 2006). One of the strengths of the DMIS is that the model does not solely focus on the observable behaviors of students, but rather emphasizes the

importance of the student's experience. The model emphasizes that as one's experiences of cultural differences become more complex, one's potential cultural competence increases. Bennett further articulates that experience is not simply being in close proximity of cultural differences, rather the DMIS views cultural sensitivity from a constructivist perspective, stating that experience is a function of how one construes an event (i.e. cultural difference), with increased perceptual and conceptual events equating more complex constructions of the event, yielding richer experiences. The emphasis on the complexity of understanding cultural differences allows the focus to be on the student's ability to critically think and make meaning, enriching the student's understanding of the complex struggles and perplexities of increasing cultural sensitivity (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003).

Bennett's DMIS views students' behaviors and beliefs as developmental and fluid, capable of change and transformation, rather than as inherent traits that are indicative of intolerance or resolute impediments. Behaviors and beliefs are impacted by worldviews, with individuals only having access to their own cultural worldviews. Individuals who have been largely socialized in a monocultural society are unable to understand or experience the differences between their own perception and those from different cultural contexts, further perpetuating their cultural encapsulation (Hammer et al., 2003). The DMIS assumes that understanding cultural differences can be an active part of one's worldview, increasing understanding of one's own culture as well as cultural competence when working with people from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the

DMIS is not seen as a descriptive model of changes in attitudes and behavior. Rather, it is viewed as a model of changes in worldview where observable behaviors are indicative of the underlying worldviews.

The use of the DMIS in the current study does not aim to adopt the assumptions of a true developmental model or assume a linear progression of development. Rather, the DMIS provides a framework for conceptualizing student experiences, demonstrating how individuals can change and transform their ability to be culturally sensitive as their cross-cultural experiences become more sophisticated. The DMIS is divided into six stages, with each stage representing orientations towards experiencing cultural difference. The six stages will be described according to how they are sub-grouped into either being part of ethnocentric or ethnorelative orientations, with increases in cultural sensitivity assuming movement towards increased ability to construe and understand cultural differences.

Ethnocentric stages. As rapid globalization continues and boundaries that once divided different cultural groups fade, ethnocentrism, or judging other cultures using one's own culture as the standard, continues to fuel cultural insensitivity (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). The three stages in the DMIS model that characterize the ethnocentric stage are *denial, defense,* and *minimization.*

Denial. A denial that differences are present between different groups constitutes the ultimate ethnocentric position, where one's worldview is unchallenged and central to all reality. Other cultures are either not differentiated at all, or tend to be differentiated in very vague ways. As a result, cultural differences are not experienced at all, or are

associated as being extremely foreign. Individuals with a Denial worldview are

disinterested in cultural differences when brought to their attention. In extreme cases of

Denial, differences in cultural backgrounds may be attributed to sub-human status where

denial is evident is the form of extreme prejudice against certain groups. Bennett suggests

that Denial of cultural differences is the default condition of typical, monocultural

primary socialization (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003).

  Defense. The next stage, Defense, is a state which involves recognizing

differences and perceiving them as threatening, therefore engaging in defense strategies.

Because differences must be recognized in order to perceive them as threatening, this

stage is seen as a progression from denying that there are differences. One of the most

common Defense strategies is negative stereotyping, or denigration of differences,

wherein entire groups are assumed to possess undesirable characteristics. Denigration can

be attached to any aspect of assumed differences, such as race, religion, age, gender, or

sexual orientation. People in this stage are likely to denigrate multiple groups, with the

central factor not being ignorance, but rather ethnocentrism. Another common Defense

strategy is cultural superiority, or assumption that one's culture is the pinnacle of all

cultures, automatically assigning lower status to people from different cultural

backgrounds. While superiority may allow for more differences to be 'tolerated' than the

denigration strategy, ethnocentrism is still supported by the belief that others need to

'overcome' being different and assimilate into the superior culture. Another strategy

against difference can be termed "reversal." This strategy involves assuming superiority

of another culture and denigrating one's own culture. While this is still a form of

ethnocentrism, it may appear to be a more enlightened state, wherein those who present using this strategy appear to be more culturally sensitive than their counterparts. All three strategies in the Defense stage are characterized, however, by viewing one singular culture as central to their worldviews and realities.

Minimization. In the last stage of ethnocentric orientations, the Minimization stage, cultural differences are minimized under the weight of either cultural similarities or universalism. Minimization is viewed as development beyond denial and defense as cultural differences are overtly acknowledged and not negatively evaluated. The threat associated with cultural differences may be subordinated to the overwhelming similarity of people's biological nature (physical universalism), using the similarity of physical processes to generalize to other characteristics of a person such as their needs and motivations; differences are viewed as straightforward permutations of certain underlying rules. In the second and perhaps more common form of minimization, transcendent universalism, all humans are viewed as products of some single transcendent principle, law or imperative. One example of this view is any religion that states that all people are creations of some supernatural entity, suggesting that all people are "God's children" even when all of the "children" do not subscribe to the same belief system, indicating a form a religious universalism. Other examples include the Marxist notion that suggests all people are subject to the same historical, political and economic forces, believing that they all impact people in the same way, failing to account for any kind of systemic oppression or institutional privilege. Although this stage is the most interculturally

sensitive of the three ethnocentric stages, it still is characterized by monocultural

socialization, failing to accept and understand the cultural context of others.

Ethnorelative stages. When individuals are able to accept there are cultural

differences, they are able to progress from ethnocentricism to ethnorelative orientations,

meaning that one's culture is experienced as just one of equally important and complex

worldviews. Characteristic of the shift from ethnocentric to ethnorelative is the subjective

construal of difference as a 'thing' to difference as a 'process'; from an ethnorelative

perspective, people do not "have" behavior patterns, rather they behave. This re-construal

of perspective enables individuals to avoid objectifying culture and, in turn, encourages

individuals to view people as co-creators of their reality, an essential component of an

ethnorelative perspective. The three stages in the DMIS model that characterize the

ethnorelative stages are *acceptance, adaptation* and *integration.*

Acceptance. As one progresses into an ethnorelative orientation of the world, they

are able to acknowledge and respect cultural differences. The Acceptance stage is

characterized by viewing difference as fundamental, necessary, and preferable in human

affairs. By discriminating differences among cultures, including an increased awareness

of one's own culture, people are able to experience others as different, but equally

human. Acceptance occurs on multiple levels, including acceptance of behavioral

differences, such as communication, language and nonverbal behaviors and acceptance of

underlying cultural values, resulting in acceptance of differing worldviews and realities.

Adaptation. As cultural differences are accepted, individuals are able to adapt her

or his behavior and thinking in culturally appropriate ways. The most common form of

Adaptation is empathy, the ability to temporarily construe events "as if" one were the other person. This temporary shift in worldview is more than simply a cognitive shift. Rather, it is change in an individual's lived experiences, therefore impacting affect and behavior as well. Another form of Adaptation is cultural pluralism, meaning the ability to shift into two or more complete cultural worldviews, commonly referred to as "biculturalism" or "multiculturalism." Bennett (1986) stated that cultural pluralism can be referred to as the "habitualization of a particular empathic shift" (p. 185). This stage of development is characterized by that ability to act ethnorelatively, or outside of one's native cultural worldview.

Integration. The Integration stage of development constitutes the last stage in the DMIS. Integration of difference is described as the stage that involves the application of ethnorelativism to one's identity. Individuals who have integrated difference can interpret differences as processes, adapt to those differences as well as construe self in various cultural ways. One skill that is characteristic of the Integration stage is the ability to evaluate phenomena relative to cultural context, described as contextual evaluation. These skills allow individuals to reinstitute judgments that were suspended in the previous stage of Acceptance. Judgments of good or bad are no longer viewed as ethnocentric, however, but rather as simple statements related to the appropriateness of behavior from various cultural frames of reference while keeping one's cultural context in mind. As the culmination of the DMIS, Integration suggests that individuals conceptualize cultural differences as an "essential and joyful" aspect of all of life (Bennett, 1986, p. 186).

In sum, the more ethnocentric orientations in the DMIS can be seen as ways to avoid cultural differences by either denying the existence of difference, raising defenses or minimizing the importance of them; while the more ethnorelative orientations are ways of seeking cultural differences by accepting the importance of difference, adapting perspectives or integrating the concept of difference into one's identity (Bennett, 1986, Hammer et al., 2003). As counselors are able to cross the threshold from ethnocentricism to ethnorelativism, they are able to move towards being culturally competent professionals. Given the emphasis on monocultural socialization in the United States, it is of high importance to assess the effectiveness of pedagogical methods in shifting counselor orientations from ethnocentric to ethnorelative.   Therefore, counselor training programs need to assess the effectiveness of current training models in multiculturalism, highlighting how to teach counseling trainees to be able to adapt and integrate the cultural differences of their clients while demonstrating cultural empathy, self-awareness and self-efficacy (Canfield et al., 2009; Hays, 2008).

Need for Effective Pedagogy in Multicultural Counseling

It seems clear, then, that there is wide acceptance that multiculturalism is a core component of the counseling profession and counselor preparation (ACA, 2005; Burnett et al., 2004; CACREP, 2009; Chung & Bemak, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Sue et al., 1982, 1992). The increased attention at both professional and scholarly levels has led to greater awareness for counselors to acquire knowledge, self awareness and skills that are culturally competent. Although there has been an increase in literature on the need for culturally competent practices,

there is a relative paucity of literature on how to teach counselor trainees to be culturally

competent (Kim & Lyons, 2003). Traditional pedagogical methods in the counseling

profession have traditionally originated from a European- Western perspective, operating

primarily within monocultural and monolingual frameworks, reflecting ineffectiveness

when working with people from diverse backgrounds (Sue et al., 1992). Given that

counselors are primarily from the mainstream culture in the United States, pedagogy on

multiculturalism needs to focus on avoiding 'cultural encapsulation' or the tendency to

view all clients under the same frameworks and theories (Sue et al., 1992, Wrenn, 1962).

The lack of literature on effective pedagogy is compounded with research indicating that

many counseling graduates feel ineffective and unprepared to work with clients from

culturally diverse backgrounds (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001;

Ponterotto, 1997). In fact, insufficient training and preparation may be a primary reason

why counselor trainees feel ill equipped to work with clients from diverse backgrounds

(Constantine, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Sue et al., 1992). In sum, it is

imperative to re-examine existing pedagogical methods for counselor trainees.

It seems clear that many counselors feel the training they received as students did

not adequately prepare them to be responsive to the needs of culturally diverse clients

(Constantine, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Pompa, 2002). Holcomb-McCoy

and Myers (1999) surveyed a stratified sample of 500 members of ACA, stratifying to

include representation of both ethnicity and time since graduation. The response rate was

30% for the survey ($n = 150$), and was representative of all geographic regions, CACREP

and non-CACREP programs, ethnic minorities and recent graduates. Results indicated

that counselors perceived themselves to be culturally competent, although most respondents reported that the training they received in multicultural counseling competence was less than adequate. The inconsistency in perceived competence and lack of adequate training suggests that participants may be acquiring competence outside of the classroom (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). The implications of this study highlight the need to develop effective pedagogical methods to promote cultural competence.

Researchers have indicated that pedagogical methods for multicultural training remain primarily within the cognitive domain, rarely extending into the affective domain, although the MCC competencies outlined the need for individuals to engage in both cognitive and affective processes (Sue at al., 1992). Additionally, by primarily focusing on the cognitive/knowledge domains of cultural competence, educators fail to adhere to a key aspect in competency development, self-awareness (Sue et al., 1992). Previously, researchers suggested that knowledge alone does not lead to behavior or attitude change among counselor trainees, therefore reinforcing culturally insensitive practices (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004). According to Collins and Pieterse (2007), training must include a new level of infusion, "pushing beyond the classroom walls" (p. 17) and directly applying multicultural considerations to trainees' daily lives, highlighting the need to bridge classroom knowledge and real world settings. By engaging students through blending theories and practice in real world settings, the likelihood of creating lasting learning outcomes may be increased (Coleman, 2006; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Pompa, 2002).

To this end, researchers have highlighted the need to extend multicultural training beyond the traditional classroom setting (Arredondo & Toporek, 2004; Coleman, 2006; Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003). For example, Heppner and O'Brien (1994) investigated student perceptions of the most helpful and most hindering aspects of their multicultural training. Results indicated that the most helpful events were experiential components, whereas the most hindering was the students' feeling of inability to integrate all of the knowledge gained. Similarly, Coleman (2006) utilized the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) and the Multicultural Environment Inventory- Revised (MEI-R) to measure student perceptions of critical incidents in their multicultural training and their perceptions of their multicultural environment. Results indicated that students perceived their environments to be moderate to high in terms of addressing multicultural issues, with integration of multiculturalism into coursework and practicum scoring considerably lower than other subscales related to climate, comfort, honesty and research. Additionally, students identified three main influential components of their training: (a) experiences with colleagues from diverse backgrounds during multicultural training, (b) didactic and experiential course components, and (c) experiences with people from culturally diverse backgrounds in personal lives (Coleman, 2006). These findings are consistent with previous research, indicating that students valued direct interactions with people from diverse backgrounds (Coleman, 2006; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000).

Traditional pedagogical methods clearly are limited in their ability to teach students both cognitive and affective process of demonstrating cultural competence

(Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Sue et al., 1992). In response to well documented disparities in service utilization for minorities, student responses stating that the multicultural training they received was less than adequate (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999), and professional standards requiring training to develop culturally competent counselors, it is clearly a high priority to develop effective pedagogical methods for multicultural training. The use of experiential education is one pedagogical tool that has been supported in effectively connecting multicultural theory to practice, offering an avenue for students to challenge personal beliefs and behavior patterns, in both cognitive and affective domains, progressing from ethnocentric to ethnorelative perspectives (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Bennett, 1986; Coleman, 2006; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003).

Experiential education for multicultural competence. In recent years, attention has been given to pedagogy in counselor education programs, specifically on best teaching methods to effectively develop trainees' MCC (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Smaby, 1998). One method that has been widely accepted as a training method is experiential education. Experiential education, for the purpose of this study, is defined as a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values (Association for Experiential Education, 2010).

Experiential education dates back into the early 1900s for its utility in education and back to as early as the 1960s to being used as a tool in preparing individuals to be

more culturally aware when traveling overseas (Fowler, 1994). John Dewey's seminal

book on experiential learning (1938) is viewed as a seminal piece in the field of

education (Ord, 2009). Commonly referred to as the philosophical father of experiential

education, Dewey rejected the authoritarian, traditional education's desire to deliver

knowledge, and stated that education should also value the students' experiences (Ord,

2009). Dewey's educational theories were presented in several forms of literature,

including: *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897), *The School and Society* (1902), *The Child and

the Curriculum* (1902), *Democracy and Education* (1916), and *Experience and Education*

(1938). Throughout these writings, Dewey highlights several recurrent themes, with his

continued assertion that education and learning are social and interactive processes,

stating that students thrive in an environment where they are allowed to experience and

interact with the curriculum, and all students should have the opportunity to take part in

their own learning. Dewey (1897) asserted that education must be conceived of as a

continuing reconstruction of experience, stating that the educative process and growth are

synonymous, each one equally involving the transformation of experience and one's

reconceptualization of self in relation to the world (Ord, 2009). Dewey (1933) considered

reflection to be central to all learning, enabling "us to act in a deliberate and intentional

fashion . . . [to] convert action that is merely blind and impulsive into intelligent action"

(p. 212). Learning experiences are to build upon what students already know, what they

need to know, and methods upon which they come to know. Dewey (1933) stated that in

order for any educational endeavor to be of value, it must involve reflective thought.

Benjamin Bloom, another educational scholar known for his classification of intellectual behavior, emphasized the idea that educators need to be developing higher order thinking skills in students (Bloom, 1956). Bloom's taxonomy divided learning into three components: affective, cognitive, and psychomotor. The taxonomy describes how learning progresses from basic levels to advanced levels across each component, stating that effective pedagogy develops the learner on all three levels, providing a more holistic view of education. The affective domain describes the way people emotionally react to certain stimuli or situations, with growth equating increased awareness and changes in attitudes, emotions and feelings. Skills in the affective domain progress from the student beginning by passively paying attention, to being able to respond and actively participate in learning, progressing on to valuing, organizing and characterizing her/his affect and the impact it has on her/his behaviors. The cognitive domain describes the knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking of a particular topic. Skills in the cognitive domain progress from basic knowledge and memorization to comprehension, progressing into applying and analyzing the information to synthesizing and evaluating the information, proposing alternative solutions and thinking critically about the validity of the information presented (Bloom, 1956). The psychomotor domain includes physical movement, coordination and the use of fine motor skills. Development in the psychomotor skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, and technique in execution.

 Bloom believed that students are to be active in their learning processes in order to obtain higher order thinking and feeling (Bloom, 1956). Consistent with Dewey,

Bloom also emphasized that desired learning outcomes are to encourage critical and creative thinking among students. Dewey's notion of critical thinking can be traced back to his idea of reflective thinking, which is evident in the idea that individuals and society cannot live in mutually exclusive areas but rather that we learn from both our social and personal worlds (Dewey, 1938). Learning is a dynamic, two way process in which the environment influences the individual and, in turn, the individual influences the environment. Dewey and Bloom's philosophies provide further support for engaging in experiential education. By providing an experience in which the learner is actively experiencing in their social and personal worlds, the learning is reinforced as the learner thinks, feels, and physically does something, thereby encouraging critical and creative thinking (Bloom, 1956; Dewey, 1938). Therefore, by engaging in experiential education, we can maximize learning from each other as well as our individual life experiences.

Another prominent theorist, David Kolb, developed Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Kolb (1984) defined learning as the process in which knowledge is created through transformation of experience. Kolb based his theory on the integration of theories by Dewey (1938), Lewin (1951), and Piaget (1962, 1972). Kolb developed a model for learning with the foundation being the notion of experience being translated into concepts that can be used to enable learners to make new choices (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988). Kolb's four-stage learning cycle shows how an experience is translated into a concept by reflections, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988; Kolb, 1984; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). This theory has been used across several educational domains, as evidenced by over

1,800 research studies that have either been influenced by or directly used the theory in the last 30 years (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Researchers report that learning occurs more readily when students experience (see, smell, taste, hear and feel) stimuli and actively participate in the education process (Allen & Young, 1997).

Experiential education approaches recognize the importance of hands-on exposure for more complex educational concepts such as critical thinking (Bloom, 1956) and engaging in reflective process (King & Kitchener, 1994). Experiential education may be particularly relevant in fields such as counseling, where the goal is not only to learn new knowledge, but also reflect on one's self awareness, develop intra/interpersonally, and challenge limited worldview perspectives that may negatively impact ability to work with clients from all backgrounds. More specifically, in a profession such as counseling that is interactive and experiential by nature, experiential education in which the learner has direct exposure and contact with their environment may facilitate learning in a way that cannot be achieved in a traditional classroom.

There is general recognition by counselor educators of the utility of experiential learning in diversity training (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Kim & Lyons, 2003, Sue et al., 1992). Pedersen (2000) noted that experiential activities are powerful tools to stimulate multicultural awareness and can be used to help individuals confront and overcome ethnic bias. Likewise, Arthur and Achenbach (2002) state that experiential learning can be used to raise awareness about cultural issues, challenging students' personal schemas and helping them develop cultural empathy. By going beyond cognitive learning and encouraging students to engage in affective learning through experiences

that bring feelings, values and attitudes to the surface, students are able to challenge their

ethnocentric beliefs and re-structure their personal schemas. Given that experiential

learning may tap into powerful feelings for students, Arthur and Achenbach (2002) stated

that it is important for educators to be responsible when selecting exercises/activities and

to be prepared for debriefing and process experience. Furthermore, research conducted by

McLaren and Torres (1999) found empirical support for various experiential activities

that can be incorporated into a curriculum. McLaren and Torres (1999) interviewed and

led focus groups for leading experts in the field of multicultural counseling, with results

indicating that experiential activities were more valuable than intellectual activities when

challenging students' beliefs and having them examine existing biases and stereotypes. In

addition, Tomlinson-Clarke and Ota Wang (1999) stated that discussions of race and

racism often result in the 'conspiracy of silence about racism.' Students' experiences of

powerful emotional feelings about power and privilege often contribute to their inability

to process these experiences in a classroom setting. Based on this assertion, experiential

learning may aid in reducing feelings of guilt and defensiveness while facilitating

discussions that challenge the deeply embedded cultural assumptions among counselor

trainees (Tomlinson-Clarke, 1999). In sum, when students are provided the opportunity to

interact with the world through hands-on experiences and then reflecting on the

experience, they are provided an opportunity to be agents of change, ready to meet the

challenges of an increasingly complex and diverse society.

When providing students with hands on experiences, it is essential to also provide

opportunities for students to reflect on the experience (Kolb, 1984). In accordance with,

and expanding upon the work of Dewey, Bloom, and Kolb, Jack Mezirow (1978a) stated

that in order for learning to be effective, learners must engage in a process of thorough

critical reflection and rational discourse. Mezirow equated effective learning with

transformation, with learning leading to transformation and vice versa. Transformation,

central to the goal of counseling pedagogy, enables individuals to increase their

awareness of how and why currently held assumptions, emotions and beliefs may limit

their ability to develop new knowledge or schemas (Mezirow, 1978a, 1991).

Transformative learning occurs as learners reflect and make sense of their cultural

experiences, challenging learners to implement new beliefs, attitudes and emotions to

create new schemas (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). In line with the DMIS model, Mezirow

asserted that experiential encounters are central to the process of transformation, viewing

learners as having specific attitudes, beliefs and cognitive schemas that are transformed

when they encounter new experiences (Mezirow, 1978b; 1991; 1995). Paulo Freire, a

liberatory educator and philosopher, considered awareness to exist within ourselves,

rather than in external forms (2000). Therefore, to construct new schemas or knowledge,

individuals must encounter situations that challenge their existing paradigms, or

encounter what he termed 'disorienting dilemmas.' Cultural immersion, defined as

"direct, prolonged, in vivo contact with a culture different from that of the counselor

trainee" (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997, p. 232), is one example of facilitating an

environment in which students may encounter a disorienting dilemma, as participants

may be placed in situations that do not align with their existing cultural schemas. Cultural

immersion is intended to enhance the understanding of course content while moving

beyond the narrow scope of acquisition of knowledge; involving students in ways that allow them to gain a greater breadth and depth of experience through experiential involvement and immersion in the social, political, cultural and environmental realities of their communities, providing a critical experience for counselor trainees that cannot be achieved solely by didactic instruction (Burnett et al., 2004). Experiences that expose students to diverse cultures encourage students to be active participants in their learning and exploration of their self-awareness, biases and worldviews (Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997).

It is clearly a challenge across helping professions to teach students how to be culturally sensitive to the experiences of marginalized populations. Often, students gravitate towards the cognitive aspects of diversity and neglect the affective responses to dealing with unfamiliar environments, therefore limiting their ability to empathize with diverse clients (Boyle, Nackerud, & Kilpatrick, 1999). Counseling as a profession continues to espouse cross-cultural competence as necessary and meaningful for effective, ethical practice. Apart from the rather nebulous notions of cultural competence training that are typically offered in a single, didactic course, counselor education has lacked a clear model of developing graduates and practitioners with a multicultural perspective that is reflected in their work (Tesoriero, 2006). One way cultural competence is fostered is through experiences in which students directly engage in a learning process where they examine, expand and question their cultural assumptions, acquiring affective, behavioral, and cognitive shifts that foster critical consciousness (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; Weaver, 2005). Although most counselor education

programs discuss the importance of diversity in helping professions, few programs provide opportunities for students to have direct in-vivo contact with people from diverse backgrounds. Cultural immersion programs can provide participants with the experience of being 'other,' illustrating the struggles for minority clients and highlighting the influences of culture on behavior and the need for helping professionals to be culturally sensitive.

<center>**Immersion Experiences**</center>

Among experiential learning interventions, cultural immersion has gained increased attention from educators and researchers as it can provide students with direct experiences of being with people from diverse backgrounds. The value of immersion experiences is grounded in experiential educational theories (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984), Bennett's Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986), and Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis. Allport's contact hypothesis emphasizes that experiencing diversity through experiential methods that involve the person is more effective than didactic methods of learning that emphasize reading and talking This hypothesis is grounded strongly in the need for divergent groups to be in direct contact with one another, not just existing in the similar spaces in order to be an effective means to reduce tensions and misunderstandings. Allport (1954) conducted a study of Blacks and Whites living in close proximity in Chicago, Illinois, with data suggesting that not only did living in close proximity to one another not eradicate racial tension, it actually heightened it. These findings suggest that simply living in proximity is not enough and that people need to directly interact with one another to reduce biases. Allport and

colleagues identified conditions that must be present for positive changes in increased understanding between diverse groups. The condition that is most relevant to the current study is: Contact must be of sufficient frequency, duration, and closeness to permit the development of meaningful relationships (Allport, 1954). In a meta-analysis of the contact hypothesis research literature, Pettigrew (1997) concluded that "Allport's formulation receives considerable support across a variety of societies, situations and groups . . ." (p. 173). Given that the contact hypothesis is "among the most researched psychological principles for reducing interracial prejudice" (Wittig & Grant-Thompson, 1998, p. 798), it is surprising that it has not received more attention in the field of multicultural counseling training. Existing research and theory suggest that cross-cultural contact may have a positive influence on the reduction of negative attitudes towards members from diverse backgrounds, therefore providing a vehicle towards the development of cultural competence (Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001). If indeed Allport's hypothesis is correct, then cultural immersion experiences may have noteworthy impacts on reducing bias and increasing cultural competence (Paige et al., 2009).

Impact of Immersion Experiences

Several researchers examining the development of cultural competence have indicated that contact and exposure with people from diverse backgrounds develops higher degrees of cultural empathy, increased awareness, self-efficacy and competence than solely relying on didactic instruction (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Ridley et al., 1994; Rundstrom, 2005; Sodowsky et al., 1994). Through

engaging in cultural immersion, which provides participants an opportunity to directly interact with people from diverse backgrounds, learners can challenge their existing worldviews and assumptions, progressing along the continuum of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; Canfield et al., 2009; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). It is widely accepted across various disciplines that immersion experiences have many benefits for participants (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Bennett, 1986; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Paige et al., 2009; Ridley et al., 1994; Sodowsky et al., 1994). Participants may experience positive intrapersonal, changes within the person and interpersonal, changes between people. Intrapersonal and interpersonal development can be viewed as mutually recursive processes; as individuals learn more about themselves, they can apply their awareness to their interactions with others, and as they learn more about their interactions with others, they are likely to learn more about themselves.

The impact of immersion experiences on intrapersonal development may include increases in self-awareness, self-efficacy, and critical consciousness (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Ridley et al., 1994; Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; Sodowsky et al., 1994). In fact, one of the most frequently cited benefits for participants on international immersion experiences is increased self awareness (Gilin & Young, 2009; Gaines-Hanks & Grayman, 2009, Lindsey, 2005). International immersion provides a unique forum within which participants can examine themselves, information about their world, and their personal responsibilities in the world. For example, Lindsey

(2005) studied social work students who participated in an international immersion experience in Scotland. Enhanced self-awareness seemed to be a central theme for all participants, with participants stating that the most significant learning that occurred was learning about themselves. One student wrote "I have a new sense of clarity now, about myself, my needs and about other people as well. I feel stronger and more confident than I ever have in my life" (Lindsey, 2005, p. 237). This quote highlights changes in self-awareness and self-efficacy, or belief in oneself.

Increases in self-efficacy are associated with involvement in mastery experiences, or direct involvement with the challenging task (Bandura, 1982). Immersion experiences enable participants to have direct involvement with people from diverse backgrounds, engaging in cross cultural learning that increases participants' skills, self efficacy and ability to critically think and conceptualize the cultural contexts of others. Cordero and Rodriguez (2009) facilitated a 12-day international immersion experience for social work graduate students in Puerto Rico. Results from qualitative journals indicated that participants reported increased self-awareness, cross cultural knowledge, and commitment to social justice. Student reflections illustrated critical reflection on their attitudes and abilities about working with people from diverse backgrounds. One student stated "the trip has helped me understand how to be more effective when working with Puerto Ricans in the U.S. It's important for me to keep in mind the effect of devaluing Latino values . . ." (p. 144). Participants also reported to increased critical consciousness, both cognitively and affectively, viewing themselves and the world with a fresh

perspective as a result of the immersion. One example of increased critical consciousness is illustrated by a student describing her or his new perspective of the Puerto Rican flag:

> The flag stands as a banner of their cultural identity and a symbol of resistance to any notion that Puerto Rico is not its own nation. Prior to the trip, I saw the flag and saw that the person sporting it was Puerto Rican, but now I think something different. I wonder what part of the island they are from. I see Puerto Ricans with more comprehensive eyes. (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 144)

Cordero and Rodriguez (2009) stated that the transformative learning process of international immersion moved students beyond a desire to serve ethnic minorities, rather the immersion deepened the students' commitments to social action; since the immersion, students developed an educational video about human rights, participated in lobbying efforts and continue to work in community settings that advocate for the rights of Latina (o)s.

Another example of interpersonal changes for participants of international immersion was illustrated in qualitative journals entries from graduate students in counseling, psychology, and education who participated in an immersion experience to South Africa (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). Pre-trip reflections from students were primarily focused on perceived cultural differences, reinforcing stereotypes and generalizations. Through on-going direct cross cultural contact, however, participants' assumptions and stereotypes were challenged, with participants viewing cultural differences as less rigid, seeing parallels between the United States and South Africa. One student stated, "I was able to parallel progress the U.S. has made and post Civil-right and the progress South Africa has made post-Apartheid" (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke,

2010, p. 172). Reflections also shifted in focus, with latter reflections focusing on integrating worldview and self: "I have a broader worldview and realize the depth of and spectrum of experience out there" and "I really saw the culture and lifestyle and began to understand the needs of people in a community" (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010, p. 172). In sum, international immersion experiences seem to have a clear impact on participants interpersonal development, including changes in their self-awareness, self-efficacy and critical consciousness (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Ridley et al., 1994; Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009).

In addition to intrapersonal development, immersion experiences also seem to impact interpersonal development, including increases in empathy and cultural competence, or progression into the ethnorelative stages of the DMIS model (Bennett, 1993; Boyle et al., 1999; Lindsey, 2005). When discussing the impact of being in an environment when not of the dominant culture, students often stated that they had an enhanced appreciation for the struggles immigrants may face when resettling (Lindsey, 2005). One student reported

> A significant experience occurred during my trip to Paris. It was very interesting to be in a city where English was not the native language . . . I got to experience what it must be like for individuals who immigrate to another country. It was an uncomfortable feeling, and we were taken advantage of on a couple of occasions because we were foreign. (Lindsey, 2005, p. 241)

In addition to increasing empathy towards people from diverse backgrounds, international immersion may increase cultural competence for participants, including

increased knowledge and self awareness. One student stated "If I had to choose one thing that this [international] course has made me more aware of . . . it would have to be my own understanding of anti-discriminatory practice . . ." (Lindsey, 2005, p. 241). Similarly, Boyle et al. (1999) facilitated an international immersion experience in Veracruz, Mexico for social work students, practitioners and faculty members in 1995 for three and a half weeks and in 1996 for ten days. Participants stayed with host families, participated in language school, and engaged in a variety of activities with local social work professionals. The researchers collected both qualitative and quantitative data in 1995 and 1996 to assess if the program increased cultural competence, as measured by participant journal entries and pre/post assessments using the Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale (MCAS) (Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994). Quantitative results indicated a positive shifts on the total score of the MCAS, with a mean total score for positive change of over 35, with a total score variance between 6 and 76 in 1995; and a mean total score for positive change of 18.5, with a total score variance between 1 and 36 in 1996. Journal entries from both years supported quantitative findings, suggesting that the objective of increasing cultural competence was indeed met (Boyle et al., 1999). Unfortunately, however, no follow-up data was collected to determine if the gains were sustained over time.

Similarly, Gilin and Young (2009) examined the impact of international immersion for 16 master's students in social work. Qualitative analysis of participant's reflection papers indicate that participants increased their awareness between social work policies and practices, discovered new ideas about social work, deepened their levels of

empathy for people from backgrounds different their own and expanded and solidified their professional identity. Student reflections consistently illustrated how they had been impacted by their experience. One student stated, ". . . from these experiences I have realized that you cannot truly learn about other cultures until you have actually experienced them." Another student stated, "I really found this trip to be an eye opener. I say this because we often hold onto our misconceptions without even knowing it….often times we are told to put aside our myths when working with the unknown. How much more real does this resonate with me than ever before" (Gilin & Young, 2009, p. 43). Similarly, Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke (2010) stated that a majority of participants from counseling, psychology, and education disciplines reported increases in cultural competence as a result of their participation in the immersion experience. One student stated, "My greatest challenge is just listening, withholding opinions about their culture and systems, and staying focused with a willingness and openness to learn" (p. 172). In sum, literature on international immersion experiences clearly highlights the changes in interpersonal and intrapersonal development for participants across helping profession disciplines. Despite evidence suggesting positive developmental shifts for participants, further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of international immersion on counselor development.

        In addition to intrapersonal and interpersonal changes, immersion in international populations may provide transformative learning experiences that influence participants (Burnett et al., 2004). The depth of the exposure in international immersion experiences provides an opportunity for engagement and connection with diverse populations that

cannot be fostered in a classroom setting. The majority of existing literature on the impact of immersion experiences tends to focus on the outcomes for study abroad programs, with very few researchers examining the sustainability of change (Lindsey, 2005; Paige et al., 2009).

The few studies that have been conducted demonstrate compelling evidence, however, that international experiences provide participants with potentially life-changing experiences. For example, The Institute for International Education of Students (IES) conducted one of the largest studies of its kind, surveying alumni from international study abroad programs from 1950-1999. Over 3,400 respondents participated in the survey that assessed the long term impact of the international experience on the participants' personal and professional lives. Over 95% of respondents stated that the international experience served as a catalyst for increased maturity, self-confidence and impacted their worldview. Ninety-eight percent of respondents stated the experience helped them better understand their cultural biases and values. Perhaps most importantly, however, almost all of the survey respondents (94%) stated that the international experience continues to influence their interactions with people from diverse backgrounds, illustrating the sustainable impact of participation. One respondent stated, "It has been nearly ten years since I was a student in Vienna, but not a single day goes by where its impact is not felt in my life" (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Additionally, nearly 90% of respondents indicated that the experience has influenced all of their subsequent academic experiences. Few other experiences have been shown to be as transformative

across personal and professional domains as international experiences (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

In another large scale survey, Paige et al. (2009) conducted a mixed methods study with over 6,300 respondents who had participated in an undergraduate study abroad program between the years of 1960 and 2005. Both quantitative and qualitative results indicated that students rated their study abroad experiences as having the greatest impact during the undergraduate years (84%), followed by friendships (74%) and coursework (66%). Qualitative narratives reiterated how impactful study abroad experiences were across several domains including global engagement, academic and vocational areas (Paige et al., 2009). A few salient examples of the impact of international programs include "I can't imagine my life without having had international experiences. They've completely influenced my way of not just looking at my own life, but my own society and the world . . . it makes the world feel a lot smaller" (Paige et al., 2009, p. 539). Another participant stated, "By this experience of traveling, living abroad and studying abroad, I came to realize that I was a human being; that I was not an inferior being that I had been my entire life [that I was Black and inferior]" (Paige et al., 2009, p. 540). Furthermore, this participant attributes his career in international affairs, which included working in 28 countries, raising $350 million for African development, and receiving the James Madison Award, the highest award given by Princeton University for public service, to his study abroad experience, stating in an interview that "without study abroad, I would have never gotten here in my life and career" (as cited in Paige et al., 2009, p. 540).

In addition to the aforementioned benefits to the individual participant, international experiences may have positive impacts on the larger society as ongoing participation in social action initiatives is repeatedly cited as a benefit of international endeavors (Paige et al., 2009). Researchers suggest that the majority of participants experience an increased drive toward civic engagement and social action with disenfranchised communities as a result of their international experiences (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman, 2009). In a large scale survey conducted by Paige et al. (2009), over half of the respondents state that their study abroad experience had a large to average influence on their current involvement in global engagement activities. Although more research is needed on the sustained impact of international experiences, research thus far as illustrated that international immersion may facilitate participant development in ways that rarely are possible within the realm of traditional academic classrooms.

In sum, then, researchers (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Paige et al., 2009) have examined long-term effects of immersion experiences and found them to be impactful, but these long-term studies are not specific to counselors and counselor trainees. Other researchers (Alexander et al., 2005; Burnett et al., 2004; Canfield et al., 2009; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010) have examined immersion experiences with counseling students, consistently finding gains from these experiences. To date, however, researchers who have looked at the impact of immersion experiences on counseling students have considered only the immediate and relatively short-term personal and professional impacts. What is now needed is a more systematic effect of sustained impacts of immersion experiences on counselor development over time. Also, it is

important to systematically examine the factors of the immersion experiences that have long-term impact so that immersion experience coordinators can intentionally build these factors into the immersion experience.

Critical Factors of Immersion

The benefit of immersion experiences have been illustrated across disciplines, including counseling, social work, nursing and undergraduate programs. Literature specific to the sustained impact of immersion on counselor trainees is limited, however, and warrants further attention. As research on the impact of immersion continues, it is essential to explore the critical factors that enhance or impede the experience for counselor trainees. Factors that have been discussed in the immersion literature include course related factors such as the duration of immersion, frequency of cross cultural interactions, language barriers and pre-trip planning as well as process related factors, such as having facilitator support, emphasis on reflective processes and attending to group dynamics.

Several course related components have been cited in the research related to successful immersion experiences (Allen & Young, 1997; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke (2010) state that the frequency of contact and length of immersion in a different culture is critically related to the outcomes of the experience. In line with Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, participants need to have frequent interaction with people in immersed communities in order to experience the daily demands of living within the sociocultural context of another cultural group. In addition, experiences need to be long enough for participants to

adjust to potential culture shock of being immersed and adapt to the sociocultural context

of immersion location (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). In addition to frequency of

contact and duration of immersion, having structured pre-trip meetings to get organized

in which participants can discuss expectations, learn about the socio-political history of

the immersion country, and begin establishing group cohesion have been agreed upon as

necessary by both participants and group facilitators (Allen & Young, 1997; Cordero &

Rodriguez, 2009). Additionally, if immersion is in a country where the primary language

is different than that of the participants, participating in language training before and/or

during immersion has been viewed as being beneficial (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009).

Another component that has been associated with successful immersion experiences is

providing a variety of experiences for participants to interact with the host culture.

Programs can be diversified by allowing participants to have both formal interactions

(e.g., planned visits to agencies, universities, and historical sites), as well as informal

interactions (meeting local people in coffee shops/restaurants, going on independent

excursions and other recreation activities). According to Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke

(2010), providing a multitude of learning experiences that expose participants to the

richness of the culture, including language, traditions, and cultural nuances, is essential.

In addition to the course related components of immersion experiences that may

impact outcomes, there are several process related components that may enhance learning

and positive outcomes for participants. For one, an important factor in facilitating

learning in the immersion experience may be related to be quality of support that

facilitators provide to help participants process their experiences. Active encouragement

and endorsement of honest self-appraisal and reflection from the participants is necessary

if contact and exposure are going to increase awareness of self and of others (Singelis &

Brown, 1995; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010). As one of the goals of immersion

experiences is to place participants in disorienting situations in which they are immersed

in unknown cultural situations, it seems clear that participants will be faced with

challenges as they discover their internalized biases and assumptions. In order for

learning to occur, participants need to be able to process their feelings thoroughly and

safely, while being encouraged to integrate their new knowledge and make sense of what

it means (DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005). Furthermore, Allen and Young (1997) state that

facilitators should have sufficient cross-cultural and international experience so they are

able to discuss and process key experiences. Additionally, group facilitators need to feel

comfortable taking a multifunctional role, being active in problem solving and

troubleshooting in addition to debriefings and processing the experiences. Facilitators

should be able to set an example of being flexible and adventurous, modeling for

participants how to handle unanticipated challenges that occur in immersion experiences

(Allen & Young, 1997; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005).

In addition to facilitators providing quality support, Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke

(2010) stated that debriefing is an essential to support participants in the reflection and

growth process. Ample time must be allotted for processing of thoughts, feelings and

behaviors. Time for process is especially important as one of the most critical aspects of

fostering critical thinking and creating new knowledge seems to be through engaging in

reflective practice (Bloom, 1956; Boyle et al., 1999; Dewey, 1938; Mezirow, 2000;

Taylor & Whittier, 1995). Creation of new knowledge is facilitated by interrogating one's

experiences and understanding them related to: emerging themes and patterns; one's

feelings, thoughts, actions, interpretations, and explanations; the assumptions underlying

one's interpretations and views and where they originate from; biases, worldviews and

perceptions; explanations of one's assumptions, cultural positions and language

(Tesoriero, 2006). Through reflecting on experiences, participants are able to make

meaning of their experiences, which in turn creates increased knowledge. When

knowledge is created through processes of reflection as noted above, coupled with

understanding the consequences of personal biases and limited worldviews, participants

are presented with an opportunity to change their attitudes and behaviors and commit to

action. By engaging in this action oriented perspective, guided by participants' values,

rights, and social justice ideals, personal growth and professional development are

fostered. Through reflection, new knowledge and growth are intimately intertwined and

become the center of the participants' experience (Tesoriero, 2006). In order for

participants to engage in honest reflective processes, group facilitators as well as group

members need to be supportive and open to engaging with one another (Boyle et al.,

1999). Boyle et al. (1999) stated that group members were an important source of support

for each other as they encountered the ongoing stress of intense engagement with another

culture. Given the stress that may be associated with international immersion

experiences, it is essential for facilitators to attend to both course related and process

related factors that may enhance the effectiveness of the immersion experience. Further

research is warranted to assess what the critical factors are that impact participants on immersion experiences.

Summary

Rapidly changing demographic shifts in the United States have heightened the need for counselors to be well prepared in working with clients from diverse backgrounds (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008). Researchers emphasize that experiential pedagogical approaches enhance the effectiveness of multicultural counselor training beyond traditional pedagogical approaches (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Smaby, 1998). In particular, one type of experiential approach, international immersion programs, has been shown to impact counselor trainees in ways that cannot be done in traditional academic settings (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Diaz-Lazaro & Cohen, 2001; Kim & Lyons, 2003; Ridley et al., 1994; Sodowsky et al., 1994).

The research literature on international immersion has not been systematic, however, and few investigators have employed strong methodological designs (Lindsey, 2005). Although both national and international immersion experiences have been accepted as effective pedagogical tools in counseling, the critical components of long-term gains and what makes these experiences effective have not been explored, particularly for counseling graduate students (Majewski & Turner, 2007; Pedersen, 2009). As the frequency of participation in immersion experiences increases, it is necessary to document and evaluate both short and long-term outcomes, coupled with

critical factors that lead to sustained change among participants including greater

empathy for cultural differences, increased self-awareness of one's own biases and

assumptions, and increased self-efficacy for working with clients from diverse

backgrounds (Tomlinson-Clarke, 1999). To this end, this study explored the impact of

international immersion experiences and to what extent the experience provided

sustainable changes for counselor development.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the specific steps the researcher took to conduct this study. The procedures associated with the current study, research questions, data collection methods, interview questions, instrumentation and modifications from the pilot study will be delineated in this chapter.

Research Questions

The research questions that were introduced in the first chapter are listed below. Given the exploratory nature of the study and philosophical nature of qualitative methodology in which researchers seek to understand the participants' perspectives of an experience, the researcher did not approach the research questions with hypotheses or directionality of responses.

1. What are the most salient aspects of the immersion experience for participants?

2. What insights, growths, and changes occur as a result of participation in immersion experiences? To what extent are these changes sustained over time?

3. Based on the DMIS typology, what developmental progression, if any, do participants report in level of cultural sensitivity that they attribute to participation in an immersion experience?

4. Do participants attribute any differences in cultural self-efficacy to their participation in immersion experience?

5. Do participants report that their emotional and/or cognitive empathy changed as a result of their experience?

6. What changes, if any, in self-awareness occurred through the immersion experience and to what extent do participants report that these changes were maintained over time?

7. What meaning is made from participant's international immersion experience?

8. Do participants feel any sustained impact that they directly attribute to the immersion experience?

Participants

Hill et al. (1997) asserted that obtaining a strong sample is critical to the success of CQR. That is, given the emphasis of words and experiences in the CQR methodology, it is imperative for participants to have had some depth of experience that can be described and articulated. Therefore, purposive sampling was used in the current study to obtain a sample of participants who have participated in an international immersion experience. Hill et al. (1997) recommended that participants be randomly selected, but also acknowledged the challenges to random sampling in qualitative research. Hill et al. (1997) suggested including at least 8-15 participants in a sample to determine if findings are representative of multiple perspectives and to account for unexpected variability that may make the data hard to analyze and group together.

To begin the participant recruitment process, the researcher contacted faculty members who had facilitated an international immersion trip for counselor trainees within the last five years. The researcher asked the faculty members to email the recruitment letter to potential participants based on specific selection criterion. Selection criterion included: (a) All potential participants participated in a counseling related international immersion experience within the last 6 months to five years, (b) participants were enrolled in a CACREP accredited Counselor Education program in the United States when they participated in the international immersion experience, and (c) participants were immersed in an international culture for a minimum of 10 days. The sample was comprised of 10 participants; 9 females and one 1 male; all participants identified as being European-American. All but one of the participants had completed a course in multicultural counseling prior to the immersion experience. The sample of immersion participants was selected for this study based on meeting selection criterion and with the intent to include participants from varying immersion locations to yield a heterogeneous sample to look for themes across different trips. Four participants had immersed in South Africa and Botswana for 21 days, three participants have immersed in Bolivia for 12 days and three participants had immersed in Guatemala for 12 days.

Procedures

All participants were contacted via email to participate in the proposed study. Initially, the researcher asked faculty members to contact all potential participants via email with a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) that explained the purpose of the study and any potential risks associated with participation. Potential participants were asked to

contact the primary researcher if they had any questions/concerns or were willing to participate in the research study. Participants who agreed to participate received an electronic copy of the research packet including: a copy of the informed consent, demographic questionnaire and interview questions. Participants were asked to complete the informed consent and demographic questionnaire and email these back to the researcher. Once the researcher received the informed consent, the interviewer was provided with the contact information of the participant so she could schedule a phone interview.

There was some consideration of whether to send the interview questions ahead of time. Hill et al. (1997) suggested that allowing participants to have interview questions ahead of time may give them the opportunity to reflect on experiences and better prepare their answers. Hill et al. (1997) cautioned, however, that researchers need to think about whether giving participants questions ahead of time is desirable as time to prepare responses may occasion more socially desirable responses. Given the extended amount of time elapsed (12- 60 months) since the immersion experience as well as the reflective aspect of the interview questions, providing the questions ahead of time seemed appropriate for the current study.

Given that participants were geographically dispersed throughout the United States, all interviews were conducted over the telephone. Researchers have previously suggested that telephone interviews tend to elicit fewer socially desirable responses compared to face-to-face interviews (Hill et al., 1997; Wiseman, 1972). Because the data being collected in this study were about self-reported levels of cultural competence,

empathy, self awareness and self-efficacy, the potential for socially desirable responses needed to be considered. Therefore, based on logistics (i.e., distance) and the nature of the topic (i.e., prone to socially desirable responses), telephone interviews and prior exposure to interview questions seemed to be the most effective approaches to collect this data.

In order to increase the rigor and credibility of findings, the primary interviewer for all participants was a counseling professional who had not previously participated in an international immersion experience. By utilizing an outside interviewer, the interview process may have been more objective and unbiased. Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. Participants were asked interview questions in a semi-structured manner with follow-up, probing and/or clarification questions asked as needed. The researcher had the option to contact participants if specific follow-up data, clarification of responses is needed on any question. Only one participant was emailed after the completion of the interview due to a few interview questions not having been asked. The participant emailed responses back to the questions that were included in the transcript. To protect anonymity, each participant was assigned a research code number (1-10) to which they were referred after initial demographic information was collected and organized. Each of these precautions was taken to increase the rigor of the current study.

Interview Questions

Interview questions were developed based on existing literature, research questions and recommendations from the researcher's dissertation committee members. Participants received a copy of interview questions in the participant information packet

to assist in fully informing participants about the study and ethical considerations.

Participants were asked to complete the informed consent and fill in an electronic

demographic form. After the researcher received the informed consent and demographic

form, the researcher sent an email to the interviewer and participant, requesting that they

schedule and record their phone interview using the following interview questions as a

guide:

1. Please describe your experience (s) of participating in an international

   immersion outreach. Where did you go? What types of activities did you

   participate in? As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to

   mind?

2. Was the experience what you expected? Do you feel like you were immersed

   in the culture? *Potential probe:* Why or why not?

3. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience? What was a

   key negative moment of your experience? On a scale of 1-10, how critical

   were each of these moments to your overall experience? (1 is not very critical,

   10 is very critical). What makes it a (insert number)?

4. Do you feel like your self-efficacy to counsel people from other cultures was

   affected? *Potential probe:* In what ways was your self-efficacy affected?

   Positive or negative changes? How has time impacted the changes?

5. What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to

   empathize with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What triggered

any changes in your ability to empathize? How has time impacted the changes?

6. What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills? Least effective? How has time impacted the changes?

7. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion? *Potential probe:* If so, how? How has time impacted the changes?

8. Do you think this immersion experience has changed you? *Potential probe:* Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large? Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed? Have any of the changes sustained over time? If so, how?

9. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience? *Potential probe:* Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously? If so, what?

10. What types of reflective processes (process groups, reflection journals, debriefing) did you participate in? *Potential probe*: How did participation in (insert what participant says) impact your experience? How did group dynamics impact you?

11. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience? How has it impacted your work as a counselor?

12. If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change? How do you think this would have affected your experience?

13. Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

Consensual Qualitative Research

Qualitative methods seek to explore, investigate and further understand the essence of participants' experiences. Given the subjective nature of qualitative methods, it is important to specify the methods and typology that underlies the research process. Although there are various qualitative methods, many of them vaguely describe the steps needed to conduct the analysis, increasing the difficulty for methodologists to replicate previous studies. A relatively new methodology, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), has been used in a number of studies and has been described by researchers as a method that fulfills the need for scientific inquiry (Hill et al., 1997). Similar to many qualitative methods, CQR highlights the use of multiple researchers, reaching consensus as a team, and the systematic way of examining the representativeness of results across cases.

CQR shares many commonalities with other qualitative methods. Similar to other qualitative researchers, CQR researchers generally seek to (a) gather data from natural

settings, (b) describe a phenomenon rather than manipulate it, (c) examine both the process of the experience and the outcome, (d) use inductive analysis to build theories from the bottom up, drawing conclusions from the data instead of specific predetermined hypotheses, and (e) increase understanding of a phenomena from the participant's perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hill et al., 1997).

Hill et al. (1997) reported that CQR was directly influenced by several qualitative theories and approaches, including grounded theory, defined as a "conceptual network of related constructs about a phenomenon" (Hill et al., 1997, p. 520); comparative process analysis, a method designed to analyze implicit meanings from therapy sessions; the phenomenological approach, a method that emphasizes the belief that data is only understood in the context in which it emerges; and feminist theories, which emphasize open dialogue and collaboration. CQR places considerable emphasis on participants' being an expert of their experiences, emphasizing that the role of researchers is to learn from the experts to further understand the phenomenon of interest.

Several key components are central to the CQR process. CQR is based on the underlying assumption that multiple perspectives are more effective than singular perspectives when trying to understand complex issues and minimize researcher bias. Therefore, the process of reaching consensus, a process that relies on mutual respect, equal involvement, and shared power is integral to the process (Hill et al., 1997). To obtain multiple perspectives, the CQR process relies on a research team, which in this case included four members and one external auditor. Hill et al. (1997) suggested that team members need to be willing to compromise, be able to challenge one another as well

as resolve inevitable differences, and stay open to hearing multiple perspectives from one another. Furthermore, team members need to stay flexible and resist the tendency to need closure, as the CQR process requires continual processing of the data to ensure accuracy. Because CQR relies heavily on the research team and reaching consensus, group dynamics were considered throughout the process, from selecting team members, to creating a safe atmosphere, and attending to power struggles (Hill et al., 1997).

Additionally, all team members received training on the CQR method using the Hill et al. (1997) handbook and became familiar with the step by step process of CQR. Additionally, prior to collecting data, all team members participated in bracketing, which is an exercise for team members to record their expectations (beliefs that researchers possess based on exposure to literature and developing research questions) and biases (personal issues that may impede one's ability to be objective) in an attempt to reduce avoidable subjectivity (Hill et al., 1997). In addition to reducing undue subjectivity, recording expectations and biases can alert individuals and team members about potential problems as well as serve as a record to assess learning at the completion of the study, with new learning indicating that researchers were open to exploring the data and not just their own biases. As suggested by Hill et al. (1997), an abbreviated form of the research teams' expectations and biases is presented in the appendices (See Appendix D for bracketing summary). In addition to bracketing, Hill et al. (1997, 2005) stated that having at least one external auditor, someone who can provide alternate perspectives that are not influenced by groupthink throughout the research process, is imperative. In summary, Hill et al. (1997) emphasized the use of consensus, bracketing, and an external auditor to

assist CQR researchers in maintaining objectivity throughout the research process, and all of these strategies were employed in the current study.

Hill et al. (1997) described three main steps to analyze data with CQR : (a) develop domains to cluster the data, (b) construct core ideas to summarize the main ideas expressed by participants, and (c) conduct a cross analysis of data to identify categories that were consistent across participants. This process was done by the research team discussing each domain, core idea and consistent theme until consensus was reached. After completion of the domains and core ideas, an external auditor reviewed the results to ensure that raw data was categorized correctly and that the core ideas were a relevant reflection of data and used participants' words (Hill et al., 2005).

Previously, Hill et al. (1997) recommended beginning with a list of domains, or topic areas, from the literature before analyzing data to use as a conceptual framework, and this was done in the current study. The preliminary list included 14 domains which were derived from the topic areas of the interview questions. As recommended by Hill et al. (2005), the team met after coding the first transcript into specific domains. Team members were encouraged to extrapolate on preliminary domains, adding and subtracting domains as they best saw fit for the data. After team members independently coded the data, the research team met to discuss the domains, ultimately reaching consensus about the best possible domains for the data. The number of domains (14) did not change initially, although the initial list was amended to increase consistency of coding between team members. After the first three transcripts were coded into domains, the research team met again and synthesized the list of 14 domains down to seven domains. This was

done through conversation and dialogue with team members discussing why certain blocks of text had multiple domains. Hill et al. (2005) recommended that if several domains are consistently being group grouped together when coding data, the team should reassess if the given domain is the best way to code the data. The primary researcher and one member of the research team (dissertation chair) independently coded the remaining transcripts with the revised domains. Both team members met via Skype (an online telephone service), and went through each transcript and discussing the text that had been assigned divergent codes by the two members. Each code was discussed until consensus was reached and the primary researcher recorded the consensus code on a clean version of the transcript. The meetings were approximately three hours in length and occurred three times over the course of one week. After all the remaining transcripts had been coded and the first three transcripts were amended to include the revised domains, a final version of transcripts with the consensus codes were sent to the research team to look over and internally audit the transcripts. The team scheduled a six hour meeting in order to go through each transcript and discuss the domain codes. After the team reached consensus on all ten cases, the team moved to the next step of the process, constructing core ideas (Hill et al., 1997).

This next step in the CQR process, constructing core ideas, involved summarizing the content of each domain, abstracting the essence of participants' words in more concise terms in a way that could be clearly comparable across cases (Hill et al., 2005). Efforts were made such that the core ideas remained as representative of the data as possible, making few inferences and avoiding interpreting implicit meanings. The

primary researcher abstracted half of the cases into core ideas (random selection of odd numbered cases). Copies of each abstraction were provided to the team for discussion and consensus building. After consensus was reached with the core ideas, the team began brainstorming ways in which to cross analyze the data, or complete the last step in the CQR process.

As recommended by Hill et al. (1997) and Hill et al. (2005), team members looked at domains and core ideas across all cases, conducting a cross analysis. The team began brainstorming ways to cluster the data into categories, looking at the core ideas across five of the cases. The process of coming up with categories is creative and discovery oriented, with categories being derived from the data rather than preconceived ideas or theories (Hill et al., 1997). The final step of the CQR process was to label categories according to the frequency of occurrence in order to describe variations and representativeness of the sample. A "general" label reflected findings that were true for all or all but one of the cases, a "typical" label included more than half of the cases to be represented and a "variant" label included at least two cases to be representative of a category in the sample. Findings that emerged from single cases were placed into a miscellaneous category and not reported in data analysis (Hill et al., 1997, 2005).

One of the main aspects of qualitative studies is to reach a point in data collection at which new cases do not change the results of the data analysis, commonly known as saturation. Hill et al. (1997) suggested the use of the term *stability of finding*, by which results generally explain the phenomenon of interest and are representative of the sample. Hill et al. (2005) asserted that although there are several ways to check for the stability of

findings, the one that is seen to be most important is to collect an adequate sample as well as present evidence of trustworthiness in data analysis through quotes, examples, and thorough documentation of procedures). In order to maximize trustworthiness of findings, the current study followed the suggestions previously described.

Evaluating qualitative research for its quality and trustworthiness is imperative given the subjective nature of the data (Hill et al., 1997). Hill et al. (1997) developed six criteria for evaluating qualitative research, with the first three criteria (trustworthiness of the method, coherence of the results, and representativeness to the sample) viewed as required and the last three criteria (testimonial validity, applicability of results, and replication across samples) viewed as recommended. For the purpose of the current study, five out of six of the criteria recommended were utilized to evaluate the quality of research. Only replication across samples was not used in the current study due to lack of feasibility.

The first and most critical criterion, trustworthiness of methods, was attained by careful monitoring of both the data collection and data analysis process. CQR researchers need to monitor the adequacy of interview questions and interview process, ensuring that questions are being asked without implicit bias and that interviewers understood the depth of the experience. In accordance with recommendations from Hill et al. (2005), the interview consisted of 13 scripted questions, allowing for consistency across participants as well as adequate space and time for extensive probing. In addition to spontaneous probes, potential probes were listed under each interview question to foster thorough exploration and understanding of individuals' experiences. The researcher sought

feedback from the research team during the initial training meeting and from the

participant in the pilot study to maintain minimal bias and leading questions in the

interview. Additionally, the research team reviewed the initial transcript and provided

minimal feedback to the interviewer to make sure the follow-up probes were sufficient.

In addition to monitoring trustworthiness of data collection methods, the

researcher was very attentive to the composition of the sample, the consensus process and

the research team (e.g., balance between members and appropriate disagreement),

including appropriate use of an external auditor and utilization of feedback, as well as

consistency of rules across all cases (Hill et al., 1997). The researcher was intentional of

not selecting all of the participants from the same immersion experience. The selection

process was done by the order in which participants volunteered for the study, with the

intention that no more than four participants would come from any given immersion

experience. The sample that was used in the current study was a heterogeneous sample of

ten participants who participated in an international immersion experiences within the

last six month to five years; the sample size falls within the range of 8-12 participants that

Hill et al. (2005) recommended. A heterogeneous sample was collected to explore

similarities and differences between participant experiences and critical factors that may

enable or block participants from experiencing sustainable transformation. Participants

differed in many aspects; known differences included: gender, age, geographic location

of residence, geographic location of immersion and level of formal educational training.

Demographic questions were utilized to help describe the sample of participants.

Trustworthiness of the research team and reaching consensus was attended to by creating

an open, safe atmosphere for all team members to voice their opinions, ideas and concerns.

The second criterion, coherence of results, highlights the importance of results and conclusions being logical, accounting for all data and answering research questions. In the current study, the researcher provided examples from the data in the write-up while attempting to avoid unnecessary jargon. Another method, triangulation, or use of multiple sources for data collection and analyses, also served to maintain coherence (Patton, 2002). Such use of the research team and reaching consensus is the cornerstone of CQR, allowing for multiple perspectives and reducing researcher bias (Hill et al., 1997; Patton, 2002).

The third and last required criterion, representativeness of the results to the sample, was maintained by the research team labeling each finding as general, typical, or variant. The primary researcher labeled all of the findings independently, with one member of the research team serving as the internal auditor, checking to ensure accuracy of the labels. Additionally, the researcher provided evidence of trustworthiness by providing extensive quotes, extended examples and thorough documentation of procedures. This should allow readers to confirm representativeness of findings with the raw data as recommended by Hill et al. (2005).

Hill et al. (1997) recommended researchers use three additional criteria as deemed appropriate and necessary. The fourth criterion, testimonial validity, or gathering input from participants, was done throughout the proposed study. Each participant was given the opportunity to review their raw transcript and provide feedback on data that has

been transcribed. All ten transcripts were sent out, although only three participants responded. All three participants stated that the transcripts were accurate representations of their interview. Applicability of results, or usefulness of findings, is another evaluative criterion. Results from the current study provided suggestions and implications for educators interested in mentoring students on international immersion experiences, providing insight into long term effects and critical impact factors, areas that had not previously been researched. Although the final criterion for evaluating the rigor of CQR methodology, replication of the results across samples, was not met in the current study, it is believed that this study provided a foundation study to inform future research on immersion experiences.

Coding the Data

The data collected from the participants in the current study was analyzed using the CQR method, including use of a research team and external auditor.

The Research Team

The research team was composed of the student researcher, an Indian-American female who has participated in three immersion experiences as a graduate student in Counselor Education. In addition, the researcher has been embedded in the literature of international immersion for over two years. The researcher's dissertation chair, a full time faculty member of the Counseling and Educational Development department, also was a member of the research team. The other two team members, a first year male doctoral student and a second year female Master's student, were asked to be a part of the research team based on recommendations that they would each contribute to the team by voicing

their opinions, their familiarity with qualitative methodologies, coupled with their

relatively objective perspectives, as neither student had participated in a counseling

related immersion experience or was well-read in the immersion literature. The external

auditor had completed her doctoral degree in Counselor Education and used the CQR

methodology in her doctoral dissertation, signifying her familiarity with the role of an

external auditor as well as the CQR methodology.

Bracketing

The research team met prior to data collection to complete the bracketing

exercise. Team members dialogued about expectations and biases, including any types of

immersion experiences or international travels they had participated in. Each team

member shared their biases and assumptions with the team, with team members asking

questions or clarifications as needed. For example, the primary researcher shared about

her predilections of immersion experiences and how she had been very positively

impacted. In this way, the team became familiar with the research team's assumptions

that were kept in mind during the data coding process. In addition to the research team

recording and dialoging about biases, an external auditor was used to maintain objectivity

in the current study.

Coding Process

Initially, domains were derived from the general interview topics covered by the

interview questions. Research team members were given a copy of one transcript and

were encouraged to read the transcript and electronically code the preliminary domains

while also refining them as needed until the domains accommodated all of the data in the

transcripts. Research team members received additional transcripts and coded each one using the most recent revision of stable domains. The domain list started with 14 domains and ended with seven domains, highlighting how domains were derived from the themes that emerged in the data. After team members were finished coding the data, each team member would send a copy of their coded transcript to the primary researcher who would combine all four coded transcripts into one master copy, enabling all of the coding to be present for each block of text. Research team meetings were scheduled for two-hour blocks, during which team members all looked at the master copy of the transcript, viewing the codes from each person. Members engaged in an open discussion about which domain best fit each passage, offering opinions and discussing until consensus was reached. Considerable dialogue occurred between team members after the first transcript was coded to clarify what each domain meant and how team members were deciding how to work with the data that seemed to overlap into several domains. After all of the transcripts were coded and consensus was reached, the primary researcher went through half of the cases, randomly selecting all of the odd numbered transcripts (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) and began constructing core ideas by condensing transcript passages down to their essence while remaining as close to the original language as possible. The core ideas from all five cases were discussed with the research team and were refined until consensus was reached within the team. The consensus version for each transcript (raw data with domains and core ideas) was sent to the external auditor, who made suggestions as needed to ensure that domains are coded appropriately and core ideas are comprehensive, yet concise. The external auditor provided a chart of the responses, helping the team to

see how to categorize the data and highlight some of the key points. The team considered

the auditor's comments but no changes were recommended from the auditor and,

therefore, no changes were discussed with the team. The team brainstormed possible

categories across cases, finding ways to include all of the data and make sense of the

results. After all of the data was categorized, each category was assigned a label based on

the representativeness of that category in the sample.

Limitations

In any given research study, there are inherent limitations. One potential

limitation in this study is researcher bias. The researcher was a participant in several

international immersion experiences and believes in the power of sustained

transformation that is attributable to immersion experiences. In an attempt to reduce

researcher bias, a counseling professional who has never been on an immersion

experience conducted the interviews. In addition to using an outside interviewer to collect

the data, the research team participated in a bracketing exercise prior to analyzing the

data in which each member provided an honest assessment of how personal values and

beliefs about the topic may affect their ability to maintain objectivity. Additionally, due

to the potential inflation of socially desirable responses, phone interviewing was used in

an attempt to reduce socially desirable responses (Hill et al., 1997, 2005).

The current study was focused on obtaining a greater understanding of the

sustained impact of an international immersion experience. As a result, a limitation of the

study was the small sample size and purposive, convenient sampling that was used to

target specific participants who had all participated in an international immersion

experience. In addition, although Hill et al. (1997) suggested that the CQR methodology addresses representativeness of findings in a sample by labeling methods (general, typical or variant) and that results may generalize to similar samples, the nature of qualitative research is such that findings are not inherently generalizable. The experiences described in the current study may or may not generalize to other participant experiences; however, the relative heterogeneity of the sample may increase the representativeness of findings, attempting to capture a variety of participant experiences. Additionally, the underlying question of being able to attribute any changes or transformations to the immersion experience had several threats to internal validity, specifically conclusion validity, as listed below.

1. Maturation: Participants cultural competence, self-efficacy, empathy and self-awareness may change over time, not as a result of the immersion.

2. History: Other major events may have occurred in the participant's local and/or global community that influenced their cultural competence, self-efficacy, empathy and self-awareness.

3. Selection bias: Participants self-selected into two groups (i.e., immersion experience and current research study), and may differ from those not self-selecting in this way.

Other limitations included the use of an in-depth interview, which may have yielded responses that were impacted by the emotional state of the participant, reactivity, and recall error (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, although the interview questions were provided to participants in advance to fully inform them about the study to allow them to

provide richer, more thoughtful responses, having a priori knowledge of the questions may have influenced the participants toward socially desirable responses. In addition, since participants reported about an experience that was not recent, the recall of the experiences may not have been completely accurate. Lastly, although the use of research team members who had not had a professional immersion experience provided valuable objectivity, their limited perspectives about the immersion experience may have affected the depth to which the experience was processed.

Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was twofold. First, the researcher wanted to consult about the interview questions with an individual who had extensive knowledge and personal experience with international immersion, resembling potential participants in the target population, soliciting feedback on the interview process, clarity of questions and other logistical aspects of the study. The individual consultant was identified by the student researcher's personal knowledge of the consultant's background in immersion. Secondly, the researcher conducted a focus group with the research team, soliciting feedback on potential biases or leading interview questions from persons who had a more objective perspective.

Participants

The pilot study consultant was a second year doctoral student at the same university as the student researcher. The consultant identified as a White female who has participated in one national and two international immersion experiences while working towards her Master's degree in Counselor Education at a large Southeastern university.

The student researcher participated in two of the same immersion experiences as the consultant. The individual identified as being substantially impacted, both personally and professionally, by her immersion experiences. In addition to the individual consultant, the research team, consisting of two graduate students and one faculty member, was utilized during the pilot process of the study.

Initial Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed, expanded upon, and clarified through a three step process. The first step included developing a list of questions that were based on the literature of international immersion and the research questions for this study. The questions were developed in a way that participant responses would confirm, challenge, or expand upon existing data regarding the impact of immersion and/or offer new information regarding the critical factors and sustainable impact of immersion, two areas that have not been previously explored. After initial interview questions were developed, the student researcher and dissertation chair went through each research question and corresponding interview questions, checking for congruence and clarity. One key element that was given attention at that point was to ensure that questions were not positively or negatively skewed in their language, but were rather balanced in asking participants about both positive and negative aspects of the immersion, as well as critical incidents that supported and hindered the participants' experience.

Procedures

The pilot study consisted of meeting with the individual consultant and the research team. The researcher and individual consultant scheduled a two hour meeting to

discuss the interview questions. The consultant was asked to sign the Informed Consent prior to receiving interview questions. The consultant was asked to review the questions ahead of time, taking notes as needed and reflecting on her own experiences of participating in immersion. During the consultation, the individual was asked to reflect on the interview questions and her responses. The consultant was asked to offer suggestions regarding her thoughts and feelings about the actual questions, order of questions, depth of questions, potential probes for each question and any other information that she felt should be considered in the larger study. The consultant helped edit the questions for clarity and helped develop potential probes to consider adding to help participant recall the experience. In addition, the consultant disclosed that since she has been on multiple immersion experiences, it was her tendency to reflect on parts of each experience rather than focusing on one experience. The student researcher took thorough notes of the dialogue with the consultant and requested the consultant's notes that she had made on the interview questions. The student researcher color-coded all suggestions into original interview question guide with track changes and comment boxes so that research team members could see what had been changed from the original questions.

The next step of the pilot study involved meeting with the research team to consult about the questions. The researcher emailed the interview questions as modified by the initial consultation process to the research team 24 hours in advance of the meeting to allow research team members to review the questions in advance. During this meeting, the researcher introduced the study to the research team, discussed her

background with immersion experiences, highlighting potential biases with which she was undertaking this study, and provided an overview of the study and methodological procedures. Research team members were then allowed to ask initial questions. Each interview question was read one at a time, with the research team engaging in a focused discussion of each question on potentially biased wording, need for clarification, and the overall length and wording of the questions.

Modifications

Based on both phases of the pilot study and the dissertation proposal seminar, several modifications to the interview questions were made. For one, several interview questions were modified to directly reflect the research questions using more succinct terms instead of using longer, more ambiguous terms. For example, the original question, "Do you feel like your belief in your capabilities to counsel people from diverse backgrounds was affected" was modified to ask "Do you feel like your self-efficacy to counsel people from other cultures was affected" in order to directly ask participants about changes in their self-efficacy. Also, interview questions were modified to stay as open-ended as possible while still keeping participant focused on specific topics, by changing prompts from asking for specific examples to asking "If so, how?" Furthermore, questions were streamlined to follow a more logical progression, starting with describing the immersion experience, then discussing changes related to counselor development and finishing with impact of reflective processes and group dynamics. Final edits included checking questions for consistent language and adding a

prompt at the beginning of the interview for participants to focus on their most salient

immersion experience.

During the proposal seminar, several faculty members questioned the inclusion of

the interview question on the DMIS. Faculty shared that the question seemed to not flow

with the rest of the interview and discussed how answering that question may impact the

whole interview process, as the question was asking participants to essentially verbalize

their stage of cultural sensitivity both before and after the immersion. Discussion on this

questions resulted in removal of the interview question, concluding that research team

members could stay attentive to implicit developmental shifts in cultural sensitivity.

Faculty also offered a few suggestions on how to make the demographic questionnaire

more helpful, asking specific questions of international experience, different languages

spoken and country of origin. In summary, this chapter has highlighted the qualitative

methodology and procedures of the current study. The next chapter, Chapter IV, will

provide a summary of the results from the current study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to explore the impact of international immersion on counselor trainees' cultural competence, cultural empathy, self-efficacy and self-awareness and investigate if and how the changes attributed to participation in immersion experiences are sustained over time. In this chapter, the results of the study are presented. Demographic data describing the sample and results from the qualitative interview are presented.

Description of the Sample

Participants were recruited by contacting Counselor Educators who have facilitated an international immersion trip for counselor trainees within the last five years. The sample of immersion participants was selected based on meeting selection criteria to include participants from different immersion locations to yield a heterogeneous sample. This allowed for consideration of themes that emerged across different experiences. Each faculty contact was given an electronic copy of the recruitment email to send to potential participants who explained the purpose of the study and potential risks associated with participation.

A total of 10 participants were interviewed via telephone for this study. All participants had attended or were currently attending a CACREP-accredited Counselor Education program. Participants ranged in ages from 23 to 34 years of age, with an

average age of 27.9 years ($SD = 3.41$) at the time of interview. All participants identified

as Caucasian ($n = 10$), with 9 out 10 participants identifying as females and one

participant identifying as a male. Five participants were currently enrolled in or had

completed a doctoral degree at the time of the study and five participants had completed a

master's degree. Four participants immersed in South Africa and Botswana during

May/June of 2008, three participants immersed in Bolivia in May 2010, and three

participants immersed in Guatemala, two in May, 2008 and one in May 2010. All of the

participants had previous international travel prior to the immersion. In all cases,

however, the immersion experiences were in international places that the participants had

not previously visited. At the time of the interview, all participants lived in the United

States and were geographically dispersed throughout the country.

Summary of Findings

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methodology was used to analyze the

interview responses from participants. CQR is grounded in the premise that multiple

perspectives are more effective than singular perspectives when trying to understand the

essence of any given phenomenon (Hill et al., 2005). For this reason, a research team of

four members was created to analyze the data. Table 1 is a visual representation of the

domains, core ideas, categories and labels for the 10 cases that came out of research team

conversations and meetings. For this study, a label of *general* was assigned when the

category was evident in 9-10 cases, a label of *typical* was assigned when the category was

evident in 6-8 cases, a label of *variant* was assigned when the category was evident in 2-5

cases.

Table 1. *Domains, Core Ideas, Categories, and Labels*

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
Factors that were effective in increasing cultural knowledge for participants	Cultural Knowledge	"Constantly observing what was around" (3)	Observations	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	General
		"interactions with the people that you feel immersed and learned the most" (7)	Interactions	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	General
		"just being a part of their culture helped me realize that the American way is not necessarily the 'right' way" (8)	Being immersed in another culture	1,2,4,5,6,8,9	Typical
		"pre-trip planning was helpful in preparing us for what we were going to experience" (6)	Pre-trip planning	2,4,6	Variant
Factors that were ineffective in increasing cultural knowledge	Ineffective	"stay in a hotel like tourists do, it doesn't give you the day to day feeling that the locals experience." (5)	Feeling distant from culture	3,4,5,6,7	Variant
		"preferred to have less information about the culture before we got to experience it for ourselves" (9)	Pre-trip planning	3,9	Variant
		"to see where people come from, what is their reality . . . there is nothing quite like being there in person."(5)	Cognitive understanding from seeing 'other'	1,3,4,5,6,8,9,10	Typical

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
Factors that were ineffective in increasing cultural knowledge (cont'd)		"out of my comfort zone, so now I can better understand what it is like for others" (8)	Emotional response from being 'other'	2,3,5,8,9,10	Typical
		"helped in terms of realizing how we are all similar, all linked and all different" (6)	Experiencing human connection across cultures	1,6,7,9,10	Variant
Impact of immersion on participants	Personal and professional impact	" helped me understand who I am as a person and different notions about my family" (9)	Self awareness	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 9,10	General
		"communicate through basic human interactions really helped my self- efficacy" (1)	Counselor self efficacy	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 9,10	General
		"my knowledge of the world is greater and my worldview is more wholesome" (8)	Worldview	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 9,10	General
		"grateful and thankful for the opportunity to witness something different" (7)	Gratitude	1,3,4,6,7,8,9,10	Typical
		"made me want to do more of the same thing and go to places that are less fortunate" (10)	Pay it forward	1,3,5,6,9,10	Typical
		"helped to bring out that which was already in me and see that" (3)	Affirmation	1,3,4,6,8,9,10	Typical

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
Impact of immersion on participants (cont'd)		"travel outside of the U.S, volunteer at places where English is second language ,working with minority populations" (9)	Interest in leadership/social action	2,3,6,9,10	Variant
Magnitude and type of change participants experienced	Sustained change	"wouldn't characterize them as large, they haven't pervaded my life as much as I hoped they had" (7)	Small	4,5	Variant
		"medium change as it heightened what I was already feeling" (8)	Medium	2,7,8	Variant
		"Big changes. reaffirmed my belief that humans are always evolving and there is always a possibility to uncover more of yourself" (10)	Large	1,3,6,9,10	Variant
		"changes were within me" (2)	Internal	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, 9,10	General
		"my family noticed I had a different energy about me" (9)	External	2,6,9	Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent			Label
				D	R	I	
Impact of time since immersion experience	Impact of time on sustained change **D=DECREASED OVER TIME** **R= RETAINED OVER TIME** **I=INCREASED OVER TIME**	"I think time has dulled some of the lessons, but I wouldn't say it erased them" (5) " My openness to work with people from different culture is still very much with me " (10) "increased with having other travel experiences and experiences within my city, increased my gratefulness and the respect I have for other cultures " (7)	**Empathy**		1,2,3,4, 5,8,10	6,7,9	
			Self Aware	5	1,3,6,10	2,4,7,9	
			Worldview	5	1,3,10	6,7,8,9	
			Self efficacy	4,5,7,10	1	3,6,9	
			Knowledge/ Skills		1,3	2,6,9	
Factors that impact sustained change	Sustained change	"goes into every class that I have taught" (1)	Continued use of immersion experience in personal/ professional life	1,3,6,7,9,10			Typical
		"I applied to a PhD program, so that was pretty life changing" (3)	Change in daily lifestyle	1,3,6,7,8,9,10			Typical
		" sure that I will do more trips abroad and work with other counselors" (6)	Desire to do more immersion	1,3,6,7,9			Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
Factors that impact sustained change (cont'd)		"since that experience I have done much more international travel" (9)	Frequency of international travel	2,6,7,9	Variant
		"so easy to get back into daily routine" (7)	Slipping back into daily lifestyle/ stagnation	4,5,7	Variant
What were the most salient aspects of the immersion experience?	Positive critical incidents	"working with the professionals and learning from them was incredible" (6)	Relationships with community	2,3,6,7,9,10	Typical
		"positive highlight to see the ability to be counselors by using instincts, relationship building. . . . skills you have as a human being" (1)	Human Connection	1,9,10	Variant
		"if I don't get my alone time then I feel negatively" (8)	Free time/ independent exploration	4,8,10	Variant
		"was like getting all this great therapy every night" (10)	Sharing/processing with peers	6,10	Variant
	Negative critical incidents	"key negative experience during the trip were some of the power interactions " (1)	Group dynamics (power, connections, negative attitudes)	1,2,3,4,6,7	Typical
		"tough to have to take a step back and that our leadership had not wanted us to be so immersed " (9)	Structure of immersion course	8,9	Variant
		"was terribly sick -that was the	Health issues	5,10	Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
How were participants' expectations met or not met?	Expectations—Positive	worst part of the trip " (5) "Had no idea what to expect" (4)	Unsure what to expect	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	Typical
		"amazed over and over even when there was a language barrier, it is not words you need, it is actions." (7)	Unexpected-Connections with local community	1,3,6,7	Variant
		"resiliency and positive receiving from the culture surprised me" (1)	Unexpected-Strength	1,6,7	Variant
	Expectations—Negative	"not have as many interpersonal problems with those I traveled with" (2)	Unexpected-Interpersonal issues with group members	2,3,5	Variant
		"didn't do as much of the service learning component as I would have liked" (5)	Unexpected- Lack of focus on counseling	5, 8,9,10	Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent		Label
				+ **Pos.**	- **Neg.**	
In what ways did relationships within the group impact participants' experiences?	Within group interactions	+ "everyone had a voice and they were able to speak when things were not going well for them. It allowed us a freedom of expression and increased our vulnerability." (10) - "dynamics in the group that do not allow us to talk to each other and really get at the issues and what was going on" (6)	Group Dynamics	3,4,10	1,2,5,6,7,9	General
		+ "teachers from my college who facilitated the trip, I got to know one of them well and she continues to be a mentor to me." (8) - "was really disappointed in the leaders of the trip" (2)	Leadership	8	1,2,9	Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent		Label
				<u>Help</u>	<u>Hinder</u>	
How did relationships between immersion group and local community group impact experience?	Between group interactions	"felt connected to the community on a very different level than I am used to in America" (10)	Connection	1,2,3,6,7,9,10	4,5,8	General
		"we all had that bond, we were all counselors" (6)	Universalism	1,6,7,8,9,10		Typical
		"you don't really need to talk, it was the dancing and singing that was the therapy" (7)	Language	3,10	4,5,7	Variant
		"being American is something I take for granted" (9)	Awareness of privilege/power	6,7,8,9		Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
In what ways did participants process and reflect on experiences while immersed? How did the process and reflection impact participants?	Process/reflection	"journaling allowed me to own my experience" (7)	Journaling	1,2,3,4,5,6,9,10	Typical
		"talk about what happened that day, any emotions that came up for us, challenges that were there" (10)	Large group process	1,2,3,6,7,10	Typical
		"lot of conversation with my roommates about the trip" (6)	Small group informal processing	1,2,5,6,7	Variant
		"Getting online and talking family and friends and keeping them updated made me more proud of my experience" (8)	Blogging/ Email	8,9	Variant
		"essential to have that space to get out whatever you were feeling," (3)	Effective in getting deeper in experience: Interpersonal	3,4,5,6,7,9,10	Typical
		"helped me to say personal things that were coming up for me on the trip, it helped to have a safe place to get them out" (3)	Effective in getting deeper in experience: Intrapersonal	3,7,10	Variant
		"Didn't feel like it was a place where I felt like I could speak openly or could trust in the group" (2)	Ineffective in getting deeper in experience: Interpersonal	1,2,6	Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
What was the impact of structural requirements of the immersion?	Structure of the immersion	"Going to purely Spanish speaking country was a big part of the appeal of going on the trip" (5)	Location in non-English speaking country	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	General
		"only way something could have been changed was if the group was smaller" (1)	Size of group: Too large	1,4,5,9,10	Variant
		"nice to have some alone time as I am an individual processor" (8)	Need for autonomy	4,5,8,9,10	Variant
	Depth of immersion	"amazing to make that connection- felt like that the purpose of the trip had been met" (10)	Increased depth- Contact with community	1,3,4	Variant
		"always felt a weird disconnect, we were immersed in the center and neighborhood during the day and at night go across town and be a world away." (6)	Decreased depth – Removal from community (lodging)	3,5,6	Variant
		"Would have been nice to do a few more sessions at the language school or be put to better use at the orphanages" (5)	Desire for more counseling interactions	3,5,7,8	Variant

	Domain	Core Idea	Category	Respondent	Label
Personal characteristics/prior experiences that helped/hindered participants' experience	Personal characteristics	"I let go of the need to control, the need to know, and just experience and reflect" (3)	Openness/ Adaptability	1,3,6,9,10	Variant
		"had a negative attitude and [she/he] had the potential to be kind of a divisive factor in the group." (3)	Attitude/ Outlook	2,3,4,9,10	Variant
		"If I had extra time I wasn't about sitting in my room- wanted to be out and about by myself" (9)	Need for autonomy/ resistance to structure	2,8,9	Variant
		"don't know if I was necessarily in a good place in my own life" (2)	Feeling settled/ unsettled in other aspects of life	2,3	Variant
		"we come in and do whatever is needed and the fluidness of just meeting needs and the reciprocity of them meeting our needs" (9)	Comfort with the unknown	3,9	Variant

Categories that were represented by only one case were not included in the table nor were they assigned any labels.

In general, participants revealed their cultural knowledge was expanded through observations and interactions with people within the local community. More than half of the participants stated that being immersed somewhere that was markedly different than anywhere they had been before impacted their cultural knowledge, and a few participants stated that pre-trip planning also was helpful in increasing knowledge. Conversely, a few participants stated that pre-trip planning was ineffective in increasing cultural knowledge as it colored their perspective before the experience. Activities that distanced participants from the culture such as doing tourist activities or staying in westernized hotels also were viewed as ineffective factors in increasing knowledge.

All ten of the participants stated that the immersion experience increased their self awareness, counselor self-efficacy, and worldview. More than half of the participants experienced increased gratitude, felt an affirmation of where they were in their lives or careers, and the desire to pay forward the lessons they learned while immersed. Further, half of the participants stated a desire to be more involved in leadership roles or social action initiatives as a result of their participation. Participants typically stated that they increased their ability to empathize with others. Changes in empathy primarily occurred as participants saw and cognitively understood firsthand the struggles of people from another culture. Additionally, six participants experienced being 'other', which served to increase their affective understanding of what it is like to be treated as an outsider. Half of the participants stated that their empathy increased from feeling a human connection

across cultures. All of the participants stated that the connections between themselves and the local community impacted their experience. Other factors that impacted participants' experiences were feeling and seeing universal similarities across cultures, experiencing differences in languages, and having an awareness of power and privilege.

Participants typically stated that the immersion experience was a significant experience in their lives. In general, participants stated that the changes they experienced were primarily internal changes within themselves. Five of the participants characterized the changes within themselves as large changes, three stated they were medium changes, and two participants stated the changes were small. In regards to sustained change, most participants stated that the changes in empathy had been retained over time, with a few participants stating that time had magnified the changes. All but one of the participants described that changes in self awareness and worldview were retained or increased over time, with one participant stating that changes decreased.

Participants primarily stated that time had either decreased or increased their self efficacy, knowledge and skills when working with diverse populations, with only two participants stating that time had no impact. Participants discussed several factors that had impacted sustained change post immersion. Typically, participants who felt that the changes were sustained continued to use the immersion experience in their personal and professional lives and reported changes in their daily lifestyles, whereas slipping back into one's daily lifestyle was negatively associated with sustained change. Other factors impacting sustained change included the frequency of international travel and the desire to participate in more immersion experiences.

Participants typically stated that the most salient positive critical incidents were the relationships and connections they formed with the community. Other positive critical incidents included feeling and experiencing a universal human connection, having free time and autonomy to independently explore, and sharing with other group members. Over half of the participants stated that salient negative critical incidents included issues related to group dynamics (including power relationships), not feeling connected, and negative attitudes of other group members. Other negative critical incidents included the structure or course requirements of the course and experiencing health issues while traveling. Participants typically seemed unsure of what to expect from the immersion experience, reporting a mix of both met and unmet expectations. Participants' expectations were met regarding the degree of difference they anticipated between their home culture and host culture. Seven participants reported that they were positively surprised by the connections they formed, and the strength and resiliency within the host culture. Participants reported that expectations were not always met related to the amount of focus on counseling issues and experiences and being negatively surprised by interpersonal conflicts with group members.

Participants typically processed the immersion experience through journaling and large group process, although several participants also used more informal types of processing with smaller groups and emailing/blogging with their support network back home. More than half of the participants stated that the journaling was effective in getting deeper into their experience, while only a few participants stated that large group processes were effective. Participants also discussed the need for post immersion

reflection, stating a need for some time to process and "unpack" the experience by sharing with friends and family, reading journal entries, debriefing with immersion group after returning back home and giving presentations on their experience for their local communities.

Although a few participants discussed having positive group experiences in which they felt connected and safe, half of the participants stated that group dynamics negatively impacted their experience. Other factors that occurred within the immersion group that negatively impacted the experience were leadership styles, power roles, feelings of disconnection, and lack of safety.

Although no questions were asked per se that assessed personal characteristics that impacted participants' experiences, this emerged as a clear domain in the analysis. Important categories that emerged included being open and adaptable, outlook and attitude, resisting imposed structure, and having a need for autonomy, feelings of being settled or unsettled in life before the immersion, and one's level of comfort with the unknown.

Overall, participants seemed to feel that their immersion experience was of significant impact to their personal and professional lives. Feelings of connection or disconnection seemed to permeate all aspects of the immersion, including expectations, critical incidents, the ability to process and reflect in a group context, and the overall impact of the immersion. Interestingly, this study did not generate many "general" responses, suggesting the uniqueness of each individual's experience.

Domains, Core Ideas, and Categories

Seven domains emerged through the research teams individual transcript assessment and consensus discussions. These seven domains included factors that impacted participants from various immersion experiences: (a) cultural knowledge, (b) empathy, (c) personal and professional impact, (d) process/reflection, (e) relationships, (f) personal characteristics, and (g) structure. Each of the domains will be discussed below, including categories and core ideas that surfaced within each domain.

Cultural Knowledge

Within the first domain, participants discussed four effective factors and two ineffective factors toward increasing their cultural knowledge. The four factors that were reported to positively impact cultural knowledge were observations, interactions, immersion in another culture, and pre-trip planning. The two factors that were not effective in enhancing cultural knowledge for participants were pre-trip planning and feeling distant from the culture.

Observations. All of the participants stated that observing historic landmarks, cultural norms, patterns of behavior and ways of life in the country in which they were immersed increased their cultural knowledge. Participants generally discussed taking part in cultural immersion activities such as visiting local landmarks, museums, libraries and shopping areas. In talking about increasing cultural knowledge through observations, Participant 1 stated:

> Definitely just the immersion of being in their sites, working within the context of their culture, their beliefs, their systems, be it, you know, food, dress, the way things were handled, from the arrangement of rooms to the order to which people

were supposed to eat and things like that. Being open and willing to accept that this is their style and I am the guest and to be part of that.

Other observations that participants shared were witnessing the poverty and ways of life of the people in the immersion country. Additionally, participants were exposed to educational settings, from primary schools to public and private universities, children's orphanages, and community agencies that were providing social services and outreach. "It was definitely eye opening. I have been to other countries before, never to Guatemala, but other countries. And I would say that I just never seen poverty in such great depth" stated Participant 4. Similar to Participant 4, Participant 3 discussed wanting to observe all of the culture and surrounding community in an effort to learn more about the country in which she was immersed as illustrated by her statement "I was constantly just observing what was around me—the different sights, sounds, smells, tastes. Bringing all my senses to the experience helped me to more fully take in and appreciate the culture of Bolivia."

Interactions. In addition to the importance of observing cultural norms and patterns, all ten participants also stated that interacting with the local community was beneficial in increasing cultural knowledge. Participant 7 stated "I think it is through the interactions with the people that you feel immersed and learn the most and [see] the cultural nuances of each individual." A few of the participants discussed the benefits of having a personal host or member of the community with whom they interacted with throughout their immersion. Participant 3 discusses her experiences with having a host couple in Bolivia:

> We had two guides down there . . . that was what was really impactful for me, forming a relationship with them. They were with us pretty much the whole time we were awake during the day, so we got to be pretty close to them. [XX and YY] were able to share an insider's perspective of some of the social and cultural issues the country is facing. And so it was nice to have someone within the culture who was there really exclusively for us. You are definitely still an outsider, but you don't feel as much like a tourist, you are there with a purpose and have someone on the inside who is advocating for you during the trip. That was important.

Participant 10 reiterated the importance of having hosts, as she stated "having the two hosts with us that was like having first hand eye witness experiences about everything. I would say the hosts were very, very significant."

Several other participants shared how having either formal dialogue with professionals or casual conversations with locals in the restaurants and shopping areas contributed to their cultural knowledge. Participant 6 stated "working in partnerships with other counselors in South Africa really helped me understand the similarities and the differences in terms of counseling." Participant 9 shared about taking advantage of all of the opportunities to interact with the locals, stating "we really took every opportunity we could to interact with the locals. Every day we ate at the restaurants and the group I was with would converse as much as we could at the restaurants."

Being immersed in another culture. Typically, participants stated that just being immersed in a culture that was different than theirs was impactful in increasing their cultural knowledge. Participant 8 stated:

> I think just being a part of their culture and getting a feel for what their daily life was like. It helped me realize that the American way is not necessarily the 'right' way, that our government, or even our social programs, all of these things that are so American, we might think that our way is the best way or the most beneficial

way, but in Guatemala they had some services that were doing really well. It taught me to see that there is not one way, to be open to how the other cultures do it and different ways things can be done.

Participant 5 shared how the differences between the U.S and country of immersion was impactful, stating "The overall experience of being in a different country surrounded by people who spoke totally different than me and have different cultural norms and expectations than me, different geographies, you know that was a completely different experience."

Pre-trip planning. Three participants stated that having planning and preparation before immersing was helpful in developing their cultural knowledge. Participant 2 stated "one of the things that were done really well was trying to prepare us beforehand by doing lectures, discussions, videos, and reading books; we really tried to get a sense of the culture before we left." Participants 4 and 6 shared similar feelings; Participant 4 stated "I think the pre-trip planning of what we did before was helpful in helping us preparing us for what we were going to experience" and Participant 6 stated "we had some good training about the culture before we left."

On the other hand, two participants stated that the planning and preparation were ineffective in increasing their cultural knowledge. Participant 9 stated "What I would have preferred to have less of was giving us too much information about the culture before we got to experience it for ourselves." Participant 3 shared that although she felt that the training ahead of time was necessary, what impacted her cultural knowledge was the experience itself, not the preparation. She stated "we needed the exposure and

knowledge in order to set the stage for our experience, but the experience itself is what

helped develop my cultural knowledge and skills."

Distancing from the culture. Half of the participants stated that situations in

which they were removed from the local community were less effective in impacting

their cultural knowledge. More specifically, situations such as participating in tourist

activities or staying in hotels across town were viewed negatively. Participant 3 stated:

> We were staying at a relatively nice hotel, and we living in a nicer place than your
> average person that lives there. You know, we were not living with or staying
> with local family. It was definitely an immersion experience, but I think there are
> different levels of that. We were with our group the whole time and staying at a
> hotel. We were immersed, but not to the greatest degree probably possible.

Along the same line, Participant 5 stated "when you stay in a hotel like tourists do, it

doesn't give you the day to day feeling that the locals experience." Participant 6 shared:

"At the end of the day we would drive across town and stay in these pretty nice hotels in

the city. I always felt there was a weird disconnect, it was feeling like we were immersed

in the center and neighborhood during the day and at night go across town and be a world

away."

Empathy

In the second domain, participants discussed three factors that impacted their

ability to empathize with others. The three factors that impacted empathy for participants

were increased cognitive understanding from seeing 'other', affective experience of being

'other' and experiencing human connections across cultures.

Seeing 'other.' Participants typically stated that seeing different cultures and ways of living, thereby increasing their cognitive understanding of other people's struggles, positively impacted their ability to empathize. Participant 9 stated,

> I felt empathy towards the people there and being able to experience something completely different from my everyday life. Doing that and being in an area where English is not the dominant language, I developed a whole new understanding for immigrants living in the U.S.

Participant 5 shared how seeing the reality of people impacted her ability to empathize, stating "to see where people come from, what is their reality . . . you read about that in a book, or a magazine, or see pictures, but there is nothing quite like being there in person."

Being 'other.' In addition to participants increasing empathy through cognitive understanding, participants typically described increasing empathy by feeling like an outsider or a minority in the community in which they were immersed. Participant 5 shared how the feeling of being 'other' helped increase her ability to understand the experiences that people from culturally diverse backgrounds in the U.S. may be experiencing. She stated:

> In Bolivia, most of the people had a darker complexity, were shorter and had darker hair, so I looked very different from them. That was a clear giveaway that I was somebody different. Just being able to have that experience on my side is something that I could pull out of my back pocket anytime I am working with someone who has a cultural background different than I do or relates to a different group than I do. Being able to realize what they are experiencing, with their feet in the room sitting across from you, was what I was experiencing while I was there in Bolivia.

Participant 8 shared "I could feel what it was like to be out of my comfort zone, outside of my element, so now I can better understand what it is like for others having recently arrived in the U.S. and have a greater understanding of what it is like to walk in their shoes."

Universal connections. Several participants discussed feeling connected across borders and barriers while immersed, increasing their ability to see similarities and empathize with people from backgrounds that were very different than the participants. Participant 6 shared "I think that helped in terms of realizing how we are all similar, all linked and all different." Similarly, Participant 1 shared how seeing connections across language and cultures was key to his ability to empathize and see similarities between people. He stated "using those human skills to build relationships such as listening, being empathic, you know, gaining perspectives, helping people realize what they want and what they need and helping them get there" was one of his takeaways from the immersion experience.

Personal/Professional Impact

Several categories emerged under the third domain, personal and professional impact. Given the interconnectedness of participants being personally and professionally impacted, the two topic areas were not separated and rather were combined to encompass the main areas of impact related to both personal and professional development (i.e., as a counselor). Categories that were included in this domain were self-awareness, counselor self-efficacy, worldview, gratitude, paying it forward, affirmation, and leadership/social action. Additionally, how participants' expectations were met or unmet, the critical

incidents of the immersion that impacted participants and the extent to which changes

were sustained over time also were included in this domain.

Self-awareness. All of the 10 participants stated that their self-awareness had

been impacted as a result of the immersion experience. Self-awareness was generally

impacted from being in a place that was out of the participants' comfort zone,

encouraging participants to readjust and accommodate for the differences they were

experiencing. Participant 5 stated

> I think you learn a little more about yourself when you are put in a situation you
> have not been put in before. Being in a country that I hadn't been in, and speaking
> a language I didn't speak, and there is a reality totally different than mine, I think
> that totally had an impact.

Participant 6 shared similar thoughts of increased self-awareness from being outside of

her comfort zone. She stated " being outside of what's comfortable I think always has a

way of teaching you more about yourself in a way that I think you can only learn when

you step out of what's comfortable to you." Participant 10 shared increasing her

awareness of values and priorities, stating "I have become more aware of my relationship

with material objects and how much I do have. And in terms of a comfortable life, it

made me realize that my family is very important to me." Another example of how the

immersion impacted self-awareness was illustrated by Participant 9, stating an increased

understanding of herself and familial culture, "it has helped me understand who I am as a

person and different notions about my family. It forced me to take a look at my own

personal situation and how we have different ideas and customs in my own family."

Counselor self-efficacy and skills. All of the participants stated that, in general, their counseling self efficacy and counseling skills were impacted as a result of their immersion experience. The participants suggested that their self-efficacy and skills were most impacted by experiencing connections with people around the world, and overcoming language and other cultural barriers. Participant 1 stated:

> Getting back to that human relationship is so vital and important. And the fact that we were half a world away, talking to people that didn't speak our language and had never experienced the things that we experience and vice versa, but we were still able to communicate through those basic human interactions; seeing that and putting it into use really helped my self- efficacy as far as what I believe I can do to help anybody from any culture.

Participant 10 shared similar feelings of extending across cultural boundaries and being positively impacted by the experience. "It was kind of like a test, it showed me that I can reach out and find common ground with someone who speaks a different language, who lives in a completely different part of the world and community than I do." Some participants also discussed how nonverbal communication impacted self-efficacy and has translated to daily interactions with clients where English is their second language. Participant 9 stated:

> Meeting people where they are coming from and really embracing that and recognizing how important nonverbal communication is; now I don't get nearly as nervous as I would have when working with someone where English is their second language. I am much more confident in my ability to be patient and use other means to connect . . .
>
> It has impacted my work in a profound manner . . . now I feel that I have the capacity to work with people from different cultures and I have the openness and desire to learn and understand that may not have developed otherwise [without participating in the immersion].

Participant 3 shared her experience of being surprised with her ability to step into a leadership role and help the group communicate in Spanish with the local community and how that experience can translate into other areas of her life in which her self-efficacy or confidence may be low. She stated:

> I was kind of put into a position where I needed to speak Spanish in order to help the group. And I did, and quite honestly I was surprised I could get along as well as I could. So, that was pretty huge for me. And I can translate that to other experiences of my life, where I may be more critical or doubting myself in situations where I don't need to be critical or doubt myself. I just need to put myself out there and trust that I can handle it.

Worldview. In addition to all 10 participants stating that the immersion impacted their self awareness and self efficacy, all of the participants also discussed how their worldview was impacted as a result of the immersion experience. Participants shared being struck by the depths of poverty that they witnessed, seeing the reality of people around the world, and coming to value multiple perspectives. Participant 8 shared "I feel like my knowledge of the world is greater and that my worldview is more wholesome as I experienced what life was like outside of the U.S." Similarly, Participant 3 stated "something that has really stuck with me is that when you are in another culture and you are immersed in another experience, you know your lens expands the lens in which you see the world expands." Participant 5 discussed how the moment she knew the moment she arrived at the airport, she was in a place that was very different than where she came from. She stated:

> I learned a lot about my reality, my background and how different that is from large chunks from the rest of the world and that is kind of an eye opener. We get

so accustomed to middle class suburbia, where we are I am a grad student and that is my reality. And if we want to use Maslow's hierarchy, there were people there who were on the street and were worried about where there shelter was going to be for the night and where they were going for their next meal. You felt for them and you felt for their kids and you realize that is their reality and that is something that has never been my reality.

. . . just opening your eyes to someone else's reality that is so different than your own, I think that automatically impacts your worldview. Just knowing that there are people out there that are living so differently than me.

Participant 8 shared that the immersion experience impacted her worldview by helping her recognize that there are multiple ways to do things effectively. She stated:

It helped me realize that the American way is not necessarily the 'right' way, that our government, or even our social programs, so all of these things that are so American, we might think that our way is the best way or the most beneficial way but in Guatemala they had some services that were doing really well. It taught me to see that there is not one way, to be open to how the other cultures do it and different ways things can be done.

Gratitude. Typically, participants expressed feeling an increased sense of gratitude. Participants described feeling gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the experience, for the connections they made while immersed, and an appreciation for broadening their perspectives and awareness. Participant 7 shared that she felt "grateful and thankful for the opportunity to witness something different . . . thankful for the opportunity to see that and conviction that I can live my life differently if I choose to." Participant 10 revealed feeling "an appreciation for every moment that I was there, I think they all added up to make the experience what it was." Similarly, Participant 3 shared "I feel a little nostalgic and really grateful for the opportunity. I think that it kind of helped to formulate my direction after graduate school which is kind of why I did it."

Participant 1 discussed feeling grateful and stated that this opportunity is not one that can be obtained without traveling abroad. When asked about his feelings about the trip, he stated:

> The two things that pop initially are being grateful; grateful for the chance to get to do something like this, it was an experience you can't get sitting at home or even going out in your local communities because it was so varied and so different being across the world. And then positive, it was a positive experience.

Pay it forward. Another way in which participants described being impacted by the immersion was feeling the desire to pay the lessons they learned while abroad forward to others. Participants described wanting to lead immersion trips in the future for other counselors and teach their communities about the lessons learned. Participant 1 described his desire to involve his students in immersion activities. He stated "I think the thing that I hadn't thought about before this experience is that I would like to bring my students to participate in more immersion experiences in the future." Participant 6 shared similar feelings, stating "I hope someday that I can take students abroad as well. I think it's incredibly valuable, especially for the 80% to 90% of counselors in this country whom are white middle class women." Participant 10 shared "It made me want to do more of the same thing and continue traveling to places that are less fortunate." When discussing the impact of the immersion experience, Participant 9 stated that she went back to her community to do a presentation on Guatemala given the proximity of her community and a nearby Guatemalan community. She shared "I came back to my community and did a presentation on the Guatemalan culture. There is a community nearby that has a Guatemalan population, so I came back and shared my experience."

Affirmation. Typically, participants described feelings of affirmation within themselves and of the career path they are on. Participants shared that the immersion experience helped to affirm and increase awareness of positive qualities within themselves. Participant 10 shared:

> I think it strengthened and reaffirmed me being myself. It didn't change me necessarily; it made me aware of parts of myself that I hadn't previously had the opportunity or experiences that the trip provided me with. It influenced me in a way to continue going forward with a career path that I have chosen.

Similarly, Participant 3 shared "it was a really important experience that did not change me, but helped to bring out that which was already in me and see that." Participant 3 also shared feeling like the immersion was an affirmation of her career path, stating "I felt like I was exactly where I was supposed to be in that moment and it was an affirmation of the path I have chosen and an affirmation of the direction I want to move in." Participant 8 shared how the experience has helped her recognize her interests in working with diverse people and how it has affirmed the part of her that naturally works well with differences. She stated "it has adjusted my worldview and helped me realize how much I like working with other cultures or appreciate what other people do. It has heightened that part of my personality."

Leadership/social action. Five participants discussed feeling an increased desire to engage in leadership roles, such as entering doctoral programs to become an educator and facilitate immersion experiences as well as continue advocating for marginalized populations through social action initiatives. Participant 3 shared her experience of how being in a leadership role while immersed due to her fluency with the dominant language

impacted her decision to pursue a doctoral degree upon returning back to the U.S. She

stated:

> I don't know that I would have applied to the PhD program at least at this time, had it not been for the trip. And so because I was able to see myself in that position, and recognize that's something I really love and I did feel the increase in self efficacy, it pushed me to take steps once I got back and recognize how I can make this a part of my life.

Participant 3 also shared about her involvement in social justice initiatives. She shared

raising money for a project in Bolivia by seeking support from the church community in

which she grew up in. "I raised money to buy alpacas and llamas for people living in an

Altiplano in Bolivia. I have since gone back [to the church] and have done a presentation

for them on my trip." Participant 9 shared ways in which she was impacted by the

immersion, stating:

> I travel outside of the U.S. a lot more, I volunteer at places where English is frequently a second language and reach out to minority populations. And just as an individual, I do my part to stay active and aware of things and to always be looking to learn more and further my education and my ability as a counselor by finding the areas that aren't well understood; bringing that into action and making an effort to be immersed again and to share that experience with others so they, too, can see the possibilities.

Similar to other participants, Participant 10 shared a desire to engage more with people

who were less fortunate than herself, suggesting that this desire was formulated through

her experiences from the immersion. She stated "In thinking about my career before and

now my future career, [I realized that] I wasn't aware that I wanted to dedicate more time

to people that were less fortunate than me, even outside of America. Reaching out to other cultures is now important."

Expectations. Participants typically shared that they were unsure what they expected from the immersion experience, but typically stated that the experience was difference than what they expected. Participants seemed to feel that some of the unexpected situations were positive and some were negative. One area that participants had an expectation going into the immersion was around expecting to be immersed in a culture with a large degree of difference than their home culture. Four participants commented on this when asked about their expectations, all stating that this expectation was met. Some participants shared being positively surprised by the connections and openness they experienced with the local community. Participant 7 shared "I was just amazed over and over again at how welcoming and hospitable and welcoming they were. And even when there was a language barrier, it is not words you need, it is actions." Participant 9 shared how the experience was more impactful than she had anticipated, stating that she intentionally went into the experience without preconceived ideas and notions about the culture. She stated:

> It was much more impactful than I had expected. A lot of people in our group had bought the Guatemala travel guides and had read into. I chose not to. I chose to just go and take everything in as it happened. I was glad that I did that as it made it a much more shocking experience to learn all of these different aspects of the culture while being completely immersed in it. And not being impacted by someone else's perception of the country. So, I was glad for that, it was a really phenomenal experience. Something I would do over again, for sure.

Some participants discussed having mixed expectations, that some aspects of the trip were what they hoped for and other aspects were disappointing. Participant 10 shared:

> Yes and no. Yes because I wanted to be challenged in that way and wanted to turn my own experience kind of upside down and see the world from a completely different perspective, and I felt that. But in terms of being a course in my graduate career, I desired more one on one time with members of the local community in a lot of settings.

Similar to Participant 10, several participants discussed feeling disappointed with the amount of counseling related work they did while immersed or the depth of which they felt like they were exposed and able to connect with the community and the people. Participant 5 shared that her expectations were met in terms of doing something very different than she had ever done before. However, she expected to have more interactions with the community. She shared "we didn't do as much of the service learning component as I would have liked. I definitely appreciated the experience of the site seeing . . . but I think it would have been nice to do a few more sessions at the language school or be put to better use at the orphanages." Other examples of negative unexpected situations occurred when participants were surprised with the interpersonal issues they experienced with other group members. Participant 2 stated "I thought I wouldn't have had as many interpersonal problems while I was down there, so in that regard it did not meet my expectations." Participant 1 reiterated the surprise in interactions, stating "I guess I would say that there were some aspects of the interaction amongst us, the people that were on the trip, that surprised me."

Critical incidents. Participants were asked to describe the most positive and most negative incidents from their immersion experience. Six participants shared that the most positive critical moments from the immersion were their connections and relationships with other group members and community members. Participant 10 shared two positive highlights, one being the supportive group process and the other being the connection with a local member of the community. She stated:

> We [classmates] had already formed that bond of being in the trenches, so being able to share with others emotionally and intellectually of what I had gone through that day enhanced my own awareness of the experience. . . . it was different than everyone just going to their room and journaling about it, it was the interaction. And that is why I am in this field so it makes sense that it was such a critical thing for me on the trip. Another key highlight was that we took a trip one day to a small town and we broke up for a few hours. Three of my classmates and I just wandered down a small street and ended up having a conversation with a local vendor. It was an exciting interaction and learning that if you challenge yourself you can reach a connection and you can communicate…it was amazing to make that connection so that was a really special moment for me. In that moment I felt like I was doing to set out to do and the purpose of the trip had been met in that moment.

Participant 6 shared "working with the professionals and learning from them was incredible." Similarly, Participant 7 discussed how much the connection with the people in South Africa meant to her, stating "that part to me, even three years later, and the power of the strength and the resilience of the people. We got to sing and dance with the paraprofessionals and professionals, and I snuck out and got to hang out with the kids a little bit." Participant 3 reiterated that connections were the most salient for her, stating "I think for me probably what will stay with me was the relationships I formed with our host family down there, that type of connection."

Other participants shared how having free time was a highlight of the trip, as they could explore independently and travel off the beaten path. Participant 8 shared how having down time was critical for her to feel charged and ready for the next day, stating "I just know myself and if I don't get my alone time then I feel negatively." Participant 9 shared a story in which she was reminded of how small acts of kindness go a long way and how critical that was for her. She stated:

> So I decided to do that so this gentleman put me on his horse, and he would lead the horse as he only has one of them. And he has to hike up this awful steep path. And when we got to the top, we had all of these bag lunches provided to us. So I gave him my lunch because he did all the work; I didn't think it was fair that I ate my lunch when I just sat on the horse. And he was so grateful, he just couldn't believe it. He was so appreciative and it was such a small gesture that I hadn't thought that much of when I did it, but that was really powerful to see that one small thing went such a long way and was so meaningful. I think the overall meaning in that one small experience was what the whole purpose of the cultural immersion was for. It's not about the language or a big gesture but something small, making a human connection is what it is all about.

On the other hand, six participants shared that the most negative critical moment of the trip was due to group dynamics, including issues with the leaders or other group members. Participant 1 shared being disappointed with the leadership. He stated:

> I think the key negative experience during the trip were some of the power interactions, when I say power I am talking about the people that went on the trip. There were people that really talked the talk of being multicultural, diverse, aware people as counselors, but yet they did not walk the walk.

Participant 4 shared feeling excluded from the group and stated "I was traveling with the group that was so big . . . we couldn't do all things as a big group, so people were splitting off into little groups . . . that was not something I enjoyed as much, the feeling of

not being included with all of the groups." Participant 2's feelings of being an outside

member of the immersion group colored her whole experience, making for a very critical

incident, challenging the very reason she went on the immersion to begin with, to feel

connected. She stated:

> I felt isolated from the group a lot; I was homesick a lot when I was down there. I did not have the best relationship with some of the group members. . . . I was also really disappointed in the leaders of the trip. I was disappointed in what it seemed like, the pleasure they got out of the dichotomy of those included and those excluded, and I was excluded.

Other salient critical moments were related to the structure that was imposed

during the immersion by the facilitators. Participant 9 shared feeling frustrated when told

to not spend free time interacting with the community and stated "It was tough to have to

take a step back and that our leadership had not wanted us to be so immersed and to be

spending so much time around all of the people." Another negative incident that was

discussed was when participants' health was compromised and they fell sick on the

immersion. Participant 5 shared that being sick impacted her whole experience due to

decreased energy levels and fear that eating certain foods would make her sick again. She

stated "about three-fourths of us got terribly sick. That was the worst part of the trip. The

actual illness was terrible, but then the recovery . . . I felt like I was a waste for part of

trip . . . it really put a damper on the range of experiences." Other negative critical

incidents included negative attitudes of group members and engaging in physically

demanding service learning projects.

Sustained change. Participants were all asked how time has impacted the changes in their empathy, self awareness, worldviews, self-efficacy and cultural knowledge and skills and if the changes seem to have sustained over time. In general, participants stated that the changes that they experienced as a result of their immersion had sustained over time. Participant 1 shared "I would say that it has definitely changed parts of me . . . the professional areas have been changed significantly. But I would say personally I have changed as well in how I view the world and how I view our friends and neighbors across the pond and around the world." Participant 2 shared "I definitely think it has changed me . . . I would say the immersion experience really was a turning point in my life that prompted self-growth and personal and professional development." Participant 5 shared about feeling that the changes may be less distinct due to time, but that the changes cannot be erased. She stated:

> I don't think you can go back to being the same person you were before because the knowledge that I gained over there and the things I saw and experienced and noticed in myself and in my classmates . . . you can't just erase it even if time maybe makes it less distinct, it just doesn't get erased.

Participant 8 revealed how the immersion experience has been integrated into who she is as a person, suggesting that the change has sustained over time. She stated:

> It has come to be a part of who I am as a person and as a counselor. Who I am as a person is very similar to who I am as a counselor. So having that experience within a group has developed me, my worldview, my understanding of other cultures and how I work with them, and has made me aware and more appreciative of them.

One participant (Participant 10) expressed a variation of feeling like the immersion experience promoted sustained change. Rather, she stated that the experience brought to light things that were lying dormant in her when she said, "I don't think it changed me, I think it uncovered parts of me that I had not met yet."

Magnitude of change. All of the participants were asked whether the changes they experienced were felt and understood to be small, medium or large changes within themselves and whether the changes were more internal or external. Out of the 10 participants, two participants shared that the changes were small, three stated the changes were medium and five stated that the changes experienced were large. All 10 participants stated that the changes were felt internally, with three stating that the changes were also external and noticeable by people close to them.

Participant 5 shared that the changes experienced were smaller changes and stated "I don't think it was a big as it could've been, maybe if I had spent more time there, or the time while I was there being more immersed [in the culture]." Participant 8 felt that the changes experienced were medium changes and stated "it was probably a medium change as it heightened what I was already feeling." Participant 7 felt that changes for her were medium changes. She stated:

> I think the fact that I wouldn't characterize them as large, they haven't pervaded my life as much as I hoped they had. And that is about me, how easily I fall back into my old way of doing things and my old way of seeing the world, but I do think I recognize it in small ways and see it in different aspects, but I wish it had been even more pervasive.

Five participants felt like the changes they experienced from their immersion experience were large changes. Participant 3 shared how recognizing herself as a leader and feeling a sense of community was a large change. She stated "I would say large changes . . . recognizing myself in a leadership role, that was huge, a sense of community and feeling connected to people, that was huge and also the thinking bigger." Participant 9 shared how the immersion experience has opened up new possibilities for her and how it has been integrated into her daily life. She stated:

> I just have a whole new perspective of the world and the possibilities out there that I want to experience. Because of how much of it has had an impact and how much the cultural immersion has played a role in my life. I immediately felt this need to do more and experience more and get to know other and truly understand different cultures and ways of life. It is something that I have focused on and have gotten involved in local organizations back home when I am not able to travel. And I have done a significant amount of travel since the trip.

Participant 10 discussed how the immersion experience reaffirmed her priorities and why she was in the profession of counseling, stating that the changes experienced were large changes. She stated:

> Big changes. Because it just reaffirmed my belief that humans are always evolving and there is always a possibility to uncover more of yourself through experience, that is my personal perspective, so I feel like it was a big change for me, an important change for me to realize because it is down to a core belief that I have and that is also why I wanted to go into counseling.

Participants varied in their responses to the degree that the changes they experienced had sustained over time. Some participants stated that the time that elapsed

since the immersion had decreased the impact, some stated that the impact had been retained and others stated that time had increased the impact of the changes.

Students attributed not utilizing the skills learned and slipping back into daily lifestyles as the main factors that contributed to feeling decreased impacts from the immersion. Participant 4 stated, "those skills are obviously fading because I am not using them as much, but I do hope that they will come back when I get back in school, kind of like riding a bike." Participant 5 stated, "I think that everything that I experienced while I was over there was more salient right after it happened. It's so easy to get back into our day to day routine and what is normal for us when we get home." Similarly, Participant 7 stated "I think that as I got back into the U.S. culture it was easy to forget some of the lessons learned . . . I think time has dulled some of the lessons, but I wouldn't say it erased them."

Other students felt that the changes they experienced while immersed had retained and that the time that elapsed did not impact the changes. Participant 3 shared "I would say that what I took from my experience in Bolivia has had a sustained impact on my clinical practice with Latino clients." Participant 10 also felt that the changes retained over time and stated "My openness to work with people from different culture is still very much with me. And just being aware of my community and my surroundings [is still with me]." Participant 1 stated that although different experiences have come to the forefront of his mind, the immersion experience is still with him due to frequent use of the experience in his profession. When discussing the impact of time on the changes he experienced, Participant 1 stated:

I would still say the experience and opportunities I had there are definitely still with me. And I would because of the profession I am in, as a professor, I use the experiences and draw upon the stories in the class, for discussion, for assignments, so that helps to keep them fresh because I am still using it on a regular basis.

Other participants shared that the passing of time since their immersion had increased the initial changes they experienced while immersed. Participant 3 shared "time has allowed me to re-adjust to life in the U.S., but with a new awareness of what I value and a renewed desire to live sustainably, focusing more on being loyal to myself and what I value." When Participant 8 was asked how time had impacted the changes in self awareness, she responded stating "I think it has increased with having other travel experiences and experiences within my city. It has increased my gratefulness and the respect I have for other cultures and for being a part of things that outside the norm." Participant 7 shared:

I think similar to the empathy, I think that time has enhanced it. The trip was a strong tipping point for me to see that it [cultural knowledge] was important and was the trigger for finding out more to see it more evidently and in everything that I do, so the time has helped.

Participant 8 shared that the passing of time has enabled her to incorporate the immersion experience into her life and who she is as a person. She stated:

Time has definitely played a factor as far as that experience of being on study abroad trip as it has made me a part of who me I. I may not experience it in such direct ways but I think it has developed my personality and my counseling work and has made me more empathic towards different cultures and other ways of life. I don't always tell people that I was in Guatemala but it has definitely shaped how I view the world and I how I view people and their backgrounds and their systems.

Participant 9 echoed similar sentiments and stated "I think time has only enhanced my awareness and my ability to work with different populations because I have made it a priority to keep in on the forefront of my mind. It has only grown and gotten stronger."

Factors that Impacted Sustained Change

Participants shared several factors that impacted the ability for the changes experienced while immersed to sustain over time. Factors that impacted sustained change included the continued use of immersion or change in daily lifestyle, the desire to participate in more immersion experiences and the continued frequency of international travel.

Continued use of immersion experience. Typically, participants shared that the continued use of the immersion experience once returning back home impacted the amount to which changes sustained over time. Participant 1 discussed how the immersion experience has been integrated into his professional roles as a counselor educator. He stated "It [immersion experience] goes into every class that I have taught, it has made its way into supervision sessions in some way, shape or form. . . . from a professional standpoint, and it is a strong piece of everything I do." Participant 9 shared "there is no way to have the feelings and thoughts become stagnant because I have incorporated them in both my personal and professional development."

Change in daily lifestyle. Typically, participants shared that changes in their daily lifestyle, career paths or relationships could be attributed to the sustained impact of the immersion. In regards to changes in lifestyle, Participant 10 stated "I really try to support local business and purchase local food and support the community versus

supporting a large corporation. So that is definitely a lifestyle change." Participant 3

shared:

> I applied to a PhD program, so that was pretty life changing. And I know my
> relationships have probably changed . . . It was pretty rough for my relationships
> initially because I was so unsettled coming back. Figuring out that I probably
> couldn't move to Bolivia, but what was it about being in Bolivia that I loved so
> much and how can I make it more a part of my life? And I think that
> [incorporation of Bolivian lifestyle] has changed.

Participant 9 shared how the immersion experience impacted her and her openness to

meet people from other cultures, including her current partner who is an immigrant in the

U.S. She stated: "Being aware of it [the feeling of being 'other'] on a daily basis, it helps

to be married to an immigrant. It is something I am constantly aware of; what it means to

be an immigrant in this country or to have English as a second language."

On the other hand, three participants reported the lack of changes in their daily

lifestyle negatively impacted the sustainability of the immersion experience. In

discussing the changes experienced during the immersion, Participant 7 stated "they

haven't pervaded my life as much as I hoped they had. And that is me, how easily I fall

back into my old way of doing things and my old way of seeing the world, but I do think

I recognize it in small ways and see it in different aspects, but I wish it had been even

more pervasive."

Desire to do more immersion. Half of the participants stated that they had a

desire to participate in or facilitate future immersion experiences. Participant 6 stated "I

do not know that I ever really thought about doing work abroad but now that I have taken

that trip and I am still involved in work with XXX, I am sure that I will do more trips

abroad and work with other counselors." Participant 1 stated "I would like to bring my students to participate in more immersion experiences. And even if it's not at the international level like we did, but just getting out into the community to do things."

Frequency of international travel. Four participants shared that the amount that they traveled internationally has increased since the immersion and that the frequency in travel contributed to the sustained change from the immersion. Participant 9 stated "I would say that since that experience I have done much more international travel. It has inspired me, has made it [immersion experience] a part of life and has maintained my ability to effectively counsel people from other cultures." Participant 7 shared that since the immersion trip she traveled internationally to provide aid in Haiti after the recent devastating earthquake. She stated "I think having been on an immersion made me more willing to look at opportunities in the future. Like having gone to Haiti recently, I think the immersion experience made me more confident in trying new experiences again."

In summary, the impact of sustained change varied among participants. Participants reported variations on how elapsed time impacted the ability for changes to sustain, the overall magnitude of the changes and what factors contributed to changes from the immersion sustaining over time.

Relationships

Several categories emerged under the domain relationships. The categories were divided into two categories: within group interactions; which focused on relationships between immersion group members and group leaders and between group interactions;

which focused on relationships between immersion group members and local community members.

Within group interactions. The categories that emerged within this domain include group dynamics and leadership. Each of the categories were categorized as either positive interactions or negative interactions, illustrating the degree of variation in interactions for participants.

Group dynamics. Generally, group dynamics were a considerable component of the immersion experience for participants, with three participants reporting positive interactions and six participants reporting negative interactions. Participants suggested that positive group interactions occurred when participants felt that they were supported in processing their experiences. Participant 10 stated:

> I am almost speechless because it was almost like getting all this great therapy every night. It was intense and it was difficult at times. Not only were we discussing our adjustment to being in this culture and our relationships with the locals, but there were also issues going on in our group. Personality differences with some of the class members that just made it difficult at times. That was another challenge to overcome. And seeing how it was discussed and actually talked about each night in that setting was helpful. I have been on trips before and there are personality differences that are never talked about in that way. So the group was made stronger, I felt like because everyone had a voice and they were able to speak when things were not going well for them. It allowed us a freedom of expression and increased our vulnerability.

Participant 3 shared that although there were issues at times within the group, there was a sense of safety in processing what was going on. She stated:

> We talked about what was going on in the group in our group process, [such as] people not following simple directions that would keep them healthy and safe. There were a lot of good things in regard to group dynamics that were brought out

in those processing sessions, I think we were able to be honest with each other . . . It [the group] was definitely positive, if there were concerns brought up, they were brought up out of love, care, and concern not from an angry place or anything like that.

Although there were a few participants who reported positive group interactions, the majority of the participants reported having negative interactions with other group members.

Participant 6 stated:

We would all get together and talk about what happened during the day, but I think that there were dynamics in the group that do not allow us to talk to each other and really get at the issues and what was going on. I think people maybe did not feel safe and people did not really say what they were feeling and what they really meant some of the time . . . there was definitely some tension in the group.

Participant 5 shared how the group interactions did not meet her expectations, stating "I knew a lot of group members before we went, so I kind of expected things to go one way and they didn't go as smoothly with group dynamics for me as I would have thought it would." Participant 2 shared how feeling excluded from the group colored her whole experience and left her feeling very isolated and homesick. She stated:

I thought that maybe I wouldn't have had as many interpersonal problems with those I had traveled with, so in that regard, it did not meet my expectations . . . I felt isolated from the group a lot, I was homesick a lot when I was down there. I did not have the best relationship with some of the group members . . . as a whole, the group dynamics never sat well with me.

Leadership. Four participants discussed how the interactions with the group facilitators or leaders of the immersion impacted their experience; one participant shared

having a positive experience and three students shared having negative experiences. Participant 8 shared how having a positive relationship with the facilitator was impactful. When discussing positive experiences from the immersion, she stated "the teachers from my college who facilitated the trip, I got to know one of them well and she continues to be a mentor to me. That was nice to have such a positive experience with someone I respect."

Participants who shared having negative interactions with group facilitators discussed feeling unfair power dynamics and feeling isolated. Participant 1 stated "there was almost an air of superiority at times and it came through that way . . . there were different levels of people on the trip as far as education and things like that and those kind of differences were kind of seen."

Participant 2 shared feeling excluded from the group and that the leaders helped perpetuate the feelings of being an outsider. She stated:

> I would say that I was really disappointed in the leaders of the trip. And I think that I was disappointed in the it seems like, the pleasure they got out of the dichotomy of those included and those excluded . . . I kind of left not really having much respect for some of the people that had organized the trip.

Overall, within group interactions appeared to impact immersion participants considerably, with the overall emphasis being on negative interactions.

Between group interactions. Interactions between immersion group members and local community members seemed to have a sizeable impact on participants. Categories that emerged under this domain included connections, universalism, language

and awareness of privilege/power. Each category was seen to be either helpful or hindering, highlighting the variation in responses among participants.

Connection. In general, all 10 of the participants shared how the level of connection they felt with the local community impacted their experience. Seven participants discussed how they were satisfied with feeling connected to the local culture and three participants discussed a desire to be more connected than they were. Participant 10 shared how positive connections impacted her, stating:

> I felt connected to the community on a very different level than I am used to in America. So feeling of connection outside of my culture, a deeper, a more human, a more organic level, being part of this world today, not just necessarily part of one country or one nationality.

Participant 6 shared how the connections she had with the local community impacted her counselor development. She stated:

> I think I do because being able to connect with people who are, you know, almost half way across the world and build relationships in a short amount of time and also it was really wonderful to spend time with counselors because we all had that bond, we were all counselors, even though they were working in South Africa and Botswana and we came from the U.S.

When discussing the most salient parts of the immersion, Participant 6 reiterated how important the connections were, and stated "just being able to be with them" was salient for her. Participant 3 shared similar feelings, stating:

> What will stay with me was the relationships I formed with our host family down there, that type of connection. I still keep in contact with them, and I still think about the social issues the country is facing, problems that don't have easy

solutions and are really complicated. The relationships I have formed were probably the highlight of my experience.

Although the majority of participants felt connected to the culture in which they immersed, three participants shared feeling disconnected. Participant 5 shared how feeling more connected to the culture is something she would change from her immersion experience. When discussing what she would have liked more of from the experience, she stated:

Having a little more interaction with the locals, maybe in a host family kind of setting. We got to interact with our local contacts and that was great, but other than them and our van driver and maybe some other staff at the hotel, that was our most consistent contact that we had with local folks. If I could change anything, it would be to have more consistent interaction with local folks, whether it was with a host family or more regular service learning sessions, maybe each day. Whether the same group or different groups, having that contact every single day, would have helped with making the experience more meaningful.

Participant 9 shared that although she did not feel disconnected; she wanted to have more interactions with the local agencies. She stated "We were there for educational purposes so we spent a lot of time sightseeing and things like that, so I would love to go back [to Guatemala] and just volunteer all of my time [at the agencies]."

Universalism. Typically, participants discussed feeling universal connections with the global communities in which they were immersed. Participant 1 stated "The fact that we were half a world away, talking to people that didn't speak our language and had never experienced the things that we experience and vice versa, but we were still able to communicate through those basic human interactions." Participant 6 stated:

I think also that the relationships we built, with the people in South Africa was just amazing. Again just the way that we found similarities with people who live so far away . . . It was important and a learning experience and I think just to know that while there are many things that separate us there also things that really can connect us . . . I just realized that wherever you are; me coming from where I am, they are coming from where they are, we are all counselors and we all have that bond and we are able to relate to each other that way and also see that a lot of the human issues are all the same.

Language. All of the students were immersed in a country in which English was not the primary language. For some participants, working with language barriers was rewarding and for others it was hindering. Participant 3 shared how being put into a leadership position due to her facility with Spanish was a powerful experience for her as she was able to help her peers and also connect with the host guides on a different level than those around her. She stated:

I think I was in a little bit different place that the students because I did speak Spanish so I was able to talk with X and Y. They would ask me what I thought about the social issues and we would talk about these issues, so I think my experience was different because I knew the language. I think for me, that is probably why I had such a rich experience, or at least part of it.

Participant 7 discussed overcoming language barriers and connecting through song and dance. She stated:

That was a big piece I came with, you don't really need to talk, it was the dancing and singing that was the therapy and not just talk and dialogue like traditional therapy in the U.S., it was more about movement and feeling. And just the interaction, that was the therapy. It was a really amazing experience.

Other participants that felt the language barrier was hindering to feeling connected with the local community. Participant 4 stated "I do wish language hadn't been

such a barrier, I know language is always a barrier, but I think it was limiting at times,

although not sure if it was avoidable. It made it tricky at times to interact with the people

we were interacting with." Participant 5 shared "I am not sure if immersed is the right

word since we have that language barrier, it is hard to be immersed."

Awareness of privilege. Several participants shared how they were faced with

their own privilege when they were immersed in another country. Awareness of privilege

was recognized around the opportunity to travel abroad, walk around safely in

neighborhoods without security, and witness first hand experiences of the depth of

poverty in immersed country compared to home country. Participant 4 stated:

> Gratitude for what I have comes to mind, how lucky I was to even participate in the program . . . we can walk around in our city and it is safe and we know if it's not that we have police there, but there, they had military on almost every corner to keep things safe. To see that every day, that would be tough, it would make me feel unsafe to have to see that; even though I know they are there for my safety.

Participant 9 stated "I think being American is something I take for granted. You don't

see people begging on the streets as much or I don't get approached by that [as much]."

In summary, relationships within group interactions and between group

interactions seemed to have sizeable impact on immersion participants. Reponses were

varied in each category as being positive/negative or helpful/ hindering to the overall

experience.

Process and Reflection

All ten of the participants discussed engaging in some type of process/ reflection

activity while immersed internationally. However, the frequency, structure and

effectiveness of process/reflection activities varied considerably among participants,

ranging from mandatory nightly process groups combined with journal writing to no

formal process groups and non- mandated journaling.

Typically, participants participated in journaling and large group process. Some

participants discussed taking part in smaller, informal process discussions and some

shared that they processed through emailing and blogging with their support system back

home. Although several participants reported negative group dynamics, participants

typically felt that interpersonal processing and reflecting was an effective method to

obtain a deeper and richer experience while immersed. Participant 10 stated:

> I would say every night, the group of students, we had processing time. Without
> that time, I know that the trip would not have been what it was for me. Basically,
> we had an hour every night to sit around and talk about what happened that day,
> any emotions that came up for us, challenges that were there, and the opportunity
> to share with the group where we were. Our host also joined that time which made
> it that much richer. It was a key highlight.

Participant 3 shared similar feelings, stating that the group provided a space to process

and be honest with one another. She stated:

> We had a nightly process group, so every evening we would come together as a
> group and reflect as a group about our day, what was coming up for us, being in a
> different culture, what we loved, what were we struggling with, what were we
> thinking about and those kind of things. And X and Y [cultural hosts] participated
> in those groups. It created a space where we could be really honest with ourselves
> and we could be really honest with each other. I think it is essential to have that
> kind of space whenever you are in an immersion experience. It was essential to
> have that space to get out whatever you were feeling, whether it was joy or deep
> sadness, or frustration or whatever else, it not only helped us reflect on our
> experience but what was going on between us a group members. If there was
> tension or conflict or someone needed support, it allowed a space for that.

Participant 7 shared a different experience of the group process, stating that the group

was uncomfortable on many levels, but through that discomfort she felt like she was

pushed to process on a deeper level than she would have without the group. She stated:

> I think there was discomfort, but I think it is through discomfort that change
> happens, so it wasn't so uncomfortable that it ruined anything, maybe in some
> ways it has ignited more change if anything and more personal reflection . . . It
> helped me to look at myself and see myself as someone that impacts the group but
> also the group dynamics pushed me and forced me to look at myself in a deeper
> way than if I would have gone of the trip by myself or with just 1 other person.
> The group enhanced it, by causing discomfort and exciting change.

Although Participant 7 was able to work through power balances and discomfort, other

participants describe feeling judged and unable to process. For example, Participant 2

stated:

> I always left feeling really bad about myself or bad other group members, it just
> sort of felt that there was a lot of discourse in that process, a lot of finger pointing
> or blaming and I just didn't feel like it was a place where I felt like I could speak
> openly. I didn't feel like I could trust in the group to be able to process my
> experience . . . I think that not always is everyone ready to process and with the
> same amount of disclosure, I think that being sort of forced to participate in those
> groups, I mean you were forced to share, I could see just sitting there, but you had
> to share and I didn't always feel comfortable with that.

In addition to large group processing, typically, participants discussed processing

and reflecting on their experience through journaling. Three participants felt that

journaling was effective in getting deeper in their experience, whereas three participants

felt it was ineffective. Participants that felt journaling was helpful while immersed shared

how the writing helped create a time and space for participants to process their inner

thoughts and feelings that they did not want to share with the group. Participant 10

shared: "It allowed me to think about things when there wasn't an opportunity to share with the group or I didn't want to share with the group. It was outlet or expression for more of my private thoughts that I was having." Participant 7 shared how journaling allowed her to personalize her experiences, stating:

> I think it would be easy to just go to the Apartheid Museum and see it, but journaling allowed me to own it, experience it, and allowed it [the experience] to touch me versus just experiencing it and letting it out of my mind. I find that when I journal I tend to think about things a little more and it is helpful for me. I am more of a verbal processor and although I wasn't speaking it, just writing it out lets me see things that I am recognizing about myself and take the time to process it.

Participant 3 shared how journaling enabled her to feel more connected to the culture and language as she switched from writing in English to writing in Spanish during the immersion experience. She stated:

> In the beginning part of the trip I was writing in English. At some point I switched and started writing in Spanish, so it was good for as far as practicing the language and stuff. But it's also good to write in the language that you are surrounded by. It helped me to say personal things that were coming up for me on the trip, it helped to have a safe place to get them out . . . I feel like I was pretty open and honest in the group, but if there were more personal things I didn't want to say to the group, it allowed me a space to reflect on those things, and get them out and be honest with myself.

Participant 2 had a different experience with journaling, as she felt that since the journals were mandated and were going to be used for research, they were not a safe place to write about her inner thoughts and feelings. She stated:

> I didn't really put everything into the journals because I knew at some point we needed to type them up when we came home and turn them in. I knew this project

was going to be published in the end and I found it very invasive that they required us to provide our journals after the experience. So the journal that I was required to keep and the journal I privately kept were two entirely different things.

Several participants discussed engaging in informal processing within smaller groups, with their roommates, or with their support network back home. Participants stated that it was safer and easier to share more intimate feelings in smaller rather than larger groups. Participant 6 shared:

I definitely had a lot of conversation with my roommates about the trip and was really lucky because I did not know her before rooming with her on the trip, but she was wonderful. And we talked a lot and processed a lot together just the two of us. So many of the experiences were new, new people new places and so being able to reflect and talk and discuss it was really important to make sense of it and also for an emotional release jus to be able to kind of unpack, so that the next day you can go and be fresh and ready for what the next day had in store for you…I think many of us had a lot of emotional days, so it was wonderful to have people to connect with and just be able to share that with.

Participant 8 shared how connecting with friends and family via the internet was helpful in processing her experience. She stated "I was blogging when I was out there [in Guatemala]. Getting online and talking family and friends and keeping them updated made me more proud of my experience by staying in touch with others."

In addition to engaging in process activities while immersed, several participants discussed ways in which they continued to process after returning back home. Participants described needing time and space away from the immersion to continue reflecting on the experience. Participants participated in a range of post immersion activities including sharing the experience with friends and family, re-reading journal entries, going to see a counselor, debriefing with the larger group and cultural hosts, and

giving presentations for participant's local community. Participant 2 shared how going to

see a counselor after the trip was very beneficial in helping process the experience of the

immersion. She stated:

> I really did take that opportunity to process on my own, to read and to write about my experience and journal and talk with people that may not have been on the experience. I did actually go to therapy after the experience and did share a lot of it with my therapist to work through that [interpersonal/intrapersonal struggles]. I would say that time has been a great thing as I don't know if this would be the same conversation if it was immediately after I had come back. . . . I could imagine that a lot of people could have benefited from counseling from someone that had gone on the trip. A place where they could have shared their individual experiences and they could have processed it because you know it really was a heavy three or four weeks. We were doing a lot of stuff that was very emotionally difficult, hearing a lot of stories that were difficult, seeing things that were moving and then in your own process and whatever is going on with you that affects all of those things. I just think it would have been very beneficial for anyone to have sought out counseling post immersion experience.

Participant 3 shared how having a final process group after participants returned home

was meaningful to her. She stated:

> We had our final process group back in the States and came back together as a group again. We skyped in X and Y from Bolivia and had our final group and I think that was really important, it was still a short time after our trip, but I think it is important to have that reflection on this side of things as well.

Overall, process/reflection activities seemed to play a critical role in participants'

experiences while immersed.

Meaning Making

In general, participants shared that the immersion experience had very significant

meaning in their lives. Participant 1 shared:

It definitely gave meaning to me, I made meaning from it as far as learning, perspective taking, relying on my own skills and intuition as a human being, utilization of the experiences and the knowledge that I gained and sharing it with others through my personal communication, my teachings, through counseling and supervision. It [the experience] has been very meaningful, very useful to me.

When asked about what meaning Participant 8 had made from the experience, she stated, "I think the most salient meaning is how important it was to have the opportunity to experience a culture that was different than my own and be open to being uncomfortable at times and being open to seeing that there is not just one way to do things."

Participant 9 also discussed the importance of having an open mind. She stated:

The overall meaning is that small acts of kindness go a long way. And to come to people with an open mind and try and be as judgment free as possible. And to really meet them where they at; personally and professionally and otherwise. I think it opened my eyes to a whole new possibility and perspective.

Participant 3 stated "this trip really was life changing for me. It helped to formulate my direction and it was also a completion of a circle in my life." Participant 6 shared that the experience was meaningful because it was tangible, an experience outside of the classroom that made the idea of 'other' and cultural sensitivity more real. She stated:

I think that experience was very significant for that reason because, you know I can read and write all day long and recite it back and I can understand it, but the things that really touch me and can change me as a person are the things that I can touch, taste, smell and really just connect with as a person, so being immersed with people with communities was a significant part.

Participant 7 shared that being given the opportunity to see things from a different perspective was meaningful. She stated:

It was an opportunity to see a life outside of my own, a culture very different, I have been to Europe and so forth, but a culture that I had less exposure to. I think giving me perspective that is the meaning I have attributed to it. Giving me perspective of my self and others. If you want to think of it like the lens that I view the world, it impacted the lens. Part of me helped me to see my own prescription and how I view the world and that other people don't have the same prescription.

In summary, participants shared that the immersion experience was a significant experience in their lives and had made considerable impact on their personal and professional lives.

Structure

Participants shared their thoughts and feelings on the immersion, discussing the structure of the trip, course requirements, and overall reflections on varying aspects of the immersion. Participants discussed how aspects of the trip including location of the immersion, size of the group, and personal needs for autonomy impacted their individual experiences while immersed.

In general, participants shared how the location of the immersion was critical to their overall experience, stating that immersing in a non-English speaking country was essential to the overall impact of the immersion. Participant 5 shared "I have never been to a purely Spanish speaking country surrounded by Spanish people and so that was a big part of the appeal of going on the trip and experiencing the culture, it was the most critical part of the trip." Participant 10 shared that she had lived abroad previously for a much longer period of time in a country where English was the dominant language and how different it was to be immersed in a country for just 12 days where English was not widely used, highlighting the importance of location during an immersion. She stated:

One thing that I am thinking about is that I lived in London in 2003 for a year and I worked. And comparing those 2 immersions experiences is just amazing. I was a part of London for a year and I was a part of Bolivia for 12 days, yet it touched me in so many different ways. I think because of the vast differences and because Bolivia is a third world country and obviously London is a very successful country, the whole UK is. So that sort of surprised me, I am just aware of how different the experiences are in my mind.

Another aspect of the trip that participants frequently discussed was how the size of the group impacted their overall experience from feelings of safety in process groups to feeling limited at times in terms of types of activities that could be done based on group size. When discussing lack of feeling connected to all group members, Participant 1 stated that disconnection was mainly due to group size. When asked how things could have been more connected, he stated "I think the only way something could have been changed was if the group was smaller. Since it was such a large group, that I think that kind of delineation of people was bound to happen." Participant 4 shared how the large size of the group was limiting for participants when trying to process and share their honest experiences of the day. She stated:

Breaking into the small groups helped . . . No one wants to say anything negative about themselves, especially in a big group, but we were able to process in a smaller group, so being in the small group helped. It also helped to meet people from the other states as we did not all know each other.

Participant 6 shared similar feelings of finding it difficult to communicate and share within the larger group process. She stated "When you go on an outreach trip and have experiences that are out of your comfort zone . . . I would say there were definitely times in debriefing sessions that were tense and maybe because it was such a large group

it was hard to communicate." Participant 3 shared how the one thing she would have

liked to do differently was to stay longer and travel with a small group so she could

experience things that she was not able to within the larger group. She stated:

> I think that I really would have loved to stay longer, there were a couple of guys
> on our trip that did stay longer and traveled to Peru and had some experiences that
> were not possible with a group of 10, and I think that would have been really cool
> to have some of those experiences.

On the other hand, Participant 5 stated that she decided to participate in the immersion

experience partly in due to the large group size as she felt it was the safest way to travel.

She stated:

> I know that it [the immersion] was something that I was a little nervous about, but
> I decided to do the trip because I knew that it was the safest way I could go on a
> trip for that length and that type of location, with the size of the group and having
> the professor there who was familiar with the area.

In addition to discussing the location of the immersion and size of immersion

group, several participants frequently discussed how having a balance between structured

time and free time was important to their overall experience. Participants shared how

having time to explore independently or process on their own was important to them.

Participant 4 stated "we stuck to whatever we needed to do that day but the rest of the

time was unplanned, so we were basically able to do what we wanted and I thought that

was a huge benefit." Similarly, Participant 8 shared: "It was nice to have some alone time

as I am an individual processor, so to walk around alone or behind the group, was nice to

process on my own what we had done that morning or that night and XXX was really

open to that, so I appreciated it." Participant 9 shared how her desire to be autonomous at times was not supported and encouraged by the group facilitators, leaving her feeling like she wanted more time to explore on her own. When asked what she would change about the immersion experience, she stated:

> To be more autonomous. If I had extra time I wasn't about sitting in my room or visiting with the people from XX. I wanted to be out and about so in that respect, I thought just going there [by myself] on a trip may be nice in the future. I can recognize in hindsight that it was nice to have some leadership in the beginning of the trip and on my first time being out of the States.

Participant 7 discussed another component of the structure of the immersion, sharing how being flexible and responsive while working with the community members was important to her. She stated:

> Fluid is very much it. Recognizing my original idea that we have to come in with something to offer, but rather we come in and do whatever is needed and the fluidness of just meeting needs and the reciprocity of them meeting our needs as well was important.

Taken as a whole, participants seemed to value how different the host country was from their home country, experiencing large degrees of difference between the two, the ability to have smaller group discussions, and time for independent exploration and processing.

Personal Characteristics

Although participants were not specifically asked about how their own attitudes and personal characteristics influenced their immersion experience, several participants discussed how their ability to adapt, attitude while immersed, need for autonomy, feeling

settled or unsettled in life and being comfortable with the unknown impacted them during immersion.

Participant 3 shared how she intentionally changes her mind set when she travels, allowing herself to be open to the unknown and the challenges that she encounters. She stated "when I travel and experience other cultures, this attitude or mindset is imperative for me. I let go of the need to control, the need to know, and just experience and reflect. There is really nothing quite like it." Participant 3 also discussed how sacrificing her need for personal time was important. She shared "I think that is something when you have an immersion experience with a group, personal time doesn't happen very easily and I really enjoy having that personal time. But it was well worth the sacrifice of not having that time." Participants also shared how group member's attitudes and outlooks impacted them. For example, Participant 3 shared "there was one student who had a negative attitude and [she/he] had the potential to be kind of a divisive factor in the group."

Another example of how personal characteristics influenced participants was illustrated by Participant 2 sharing how feeling unsettled in other areas of her life before she immersed impacted her experience considerably. She stated "I don't know if I was necessarily in a good place in my own life. I felt isolated from the group a lot, I was homesick a lot when I was down there." When asked what she would change about her experience, Participant 2 stated "I would go in with more of an open mind and take into account where I am in my own life before I was to go on an experience like that."

Summary

In conclusion, this study generated eight categories that were labeled as 'general' findings, or findings that were true for at least 90% of the participants, 17 categories that were labeled as 'typical' findings, or findings that were true for 60-80% of the participants and 45 categories that were labeled 'variant' findings, or findings that were true for at least 30% of the participants in this study. All general and typical categories are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2. *General and Typical Categories*

General	Typical
General: 1. Observations 2. Interactions 3. Connections 4. Self awareness 5. Counselor self- efficacy 6. Worldview 7. Internal changes 8. Location of immersion	Typical: 1. Being immersed in another culture 2. Gratitude 3. Pay it forward 4. Affirmation 5. Relationships with community 6. Group Dynamics 7. Cognitive empathy 8. Emotional empathy 9. Impact- Very significant 10. Journaling 11. Large group process 12. Effectiveness of process- Interpersonal activities 13. Unsure what to expect 14. Group Dynamics 15. Universalism 16. Continued use of immersion 17. Changes in daily lifestyle

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In Chapter IV, the results from the qualitative study exploring the sustained impact of international immersion on counselors in training were presented. In this chapter, a brief overview of this study is provided, the results are discussed, and limitations of the study are outlined. In addition, implications for counselor education and areas for future research are discussed.

Overview of the Study

The number of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States has been increasing exponentially in recent years (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; Leong & Blustein, 2000). Due to the growing percentages of minority populations, greater attention has been placed on the unique health care needs of these individuals, including access to and quality of mental health services (Alexander et al., 2005; Atkinson et al., 1998; Gilin & Young, 2009). Given that cultural issues are central to mental health services, it is critical for counselors to understand the impact of culture when providing mental health services (Ishii et al., 2009).

Counseling as a profession emphasizes diversity training in preparation standards (CACREP, 2009) and cultural competence in ethical standards (ACA, 2005). Few counselor preparation programs have employed effective methods, however, to train counselors how to therapeutically connect with people from culturally diverse

backgrounds (Alexander et al., 2005; Coleman, 2006; Sue, 1981). One way for counselors to challenge their existing worldviews and assumptions and to develop cultural competency is through engaging in international immersion in which participants are provided an opportunity to experience various cultures by participating and interacting directly with people from diverse backgrounds (Canfield et al., 2009; Pope-Davis & Coleman, 1997). Existing literature on international immersion is scarce, however, and lacks methodological rigor (Lindsey, 2005). The scholarship that has emerged has overwhelmingly been focused on short term and immediate outcomes of study abroad experiences (Paige et al., 2009). Further, to date, this research suffers from a number of methodological flaws, including small sample sizes, primary use of participant journals for data collection, lack of clear methodology, measurement issues, lack of a guiding theory, and an overall scarcity of documented research. As the frequency of participation in immersion experiences increases, it is imperative to document and evaluate both short and long-term outcomes, coupled with critical factors that lead to sustained change among participants including greater empathy for cultural differences, increased self-awareness of one's own biases and assumptions, and increased self-efficacy for working with clients from diverse backgrounds (Tomlinson-Clarke, 1999).

To this end, the purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of counselors and counselor trainees who have participated in international immersion experiences and explore what meaning was made from participation in such programs. This study was designed to further understand the sustained impact of the experience on participant's developmental progression of cultural

competence, ability to demonstrate cultural empathy, self-awareness and self-efficacy, exploring the critical components of the experience in an attempt to better understand what factors of the immersion experience occasioned growth and sustained change. A total of ten participants were interviewed via telephone for this study. Participants were master's and doctoral-level counseling students who had attended or were currently attending a CACREP-accredited Counselor Education program and had participated in a counseling related international immersion experience within the last five years. Each participant in the study participated in a semi-structured interview via telephone. Interview times ranged from 35 minutes up to 1 hour and 10 minutes. In addition to the phone interview, participants completed a demographic questionnaire that included information about previous international experiences.

After the data was collected, the results of the study were analyzed using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) methodology, known for its usefulness in providing rich and descriptive data and the use of a research team to obtain consensus when coding the data. Data were organized into domains, core ideas, and categories and was labeled according to the representativeness of findings across cases. Given that the purpose of this study was to understand a phenomenon of international immersion from each individual's perspective, exploring and understanding what meaning has been attributed to the experience, this research was not approached with hypotheses or directionality. A discussion of the research questions and results follows.

Discussion of the Research Questions

Research questions were created to explore the sustained impact of international immersion for counselor trainees who had immersed within the past five years and who were at least 6 months removed from their immersion experience. Eight research questions were developed to guide the development of interview questions and qualitative inquiry.

1. What are the most salient aspects of the immersion experience for participants?

2. What insights, growths, and changes, if any, occur as a result of participation in immersion experiences? To what extent are changes sustained over time?

3. Based on the DMIS typology, what developmental progression, if any, do participants report in level of cultural sensitivity that they attribute to participation in an immersion experience?

4. Do participants attribute any differences in cultural self-efficacy to their participation in immersion experience?

5. Do participants report that their emotional and/or cognitive empathy changed as a result of their experience?

6. What changes in self-awareness occurred through the immersion experience and to what extent do participants report that these changes were maintained over time?

7. What meaning is made from participant's international immersion experience?

8. Do participants feel any sustained impact that they directly attribute to the immersion experience?

Research Question 1

Participants were asked what the most salient aspects of the immersion experience were for them. More specifically, participants were asked to share the most positive and most negative critical incident of their experience and were asked to rate each one on a scale from one to ten, with one being not very critical to the overall experience and ten being extremely critical to the overall experience. Six participants responded stating that the most positive critical incidents of the immersion were the relationships they formed with the local community members. One illustration of this critical incident was highlighted by Participant 5 assigning this incident a 10, meaning that it was most critical to her overall experience. She stated:

> I mean we are counselors, we are touched by people and that is what we find interesting. While it was great to see the historical sites and do some sightseeing, it's really the human components that stick with you. You need to capture the sightseeing things, but really getting in there and spending time with people, that what really gets to me.

Other positive incidents included seeing and experiencing relational connections being made not due to skills or textbook knowledge, but rather the humanness in oneself and using basic instincts to connect. Additionally, participants indicated critical incidents around having free time to independently explore and interact with the local culture, feeling positive about the relationships with their peers on the trip, and the ability to share and process their experiences together.

Typically, participants shared that the most negative critical incidents were related to group dynamics and having interpersonal issues while immersed. Participants shared that feeling power imbalances, isolation, disconnection and frustration with negative attitudes from other group members all considerably negatively impacted their overall experience. Participant 2 highlighted this critical incident, stating that is was an 8 or 9 in terms of being critical because "I was the one who was excluded . . . because I spent several weeks with a group of people that I wasn't on the same page with." Other negative critical incidents included participants feeling like the immersion was too structured and did not encourage independence and autonomy as well as some participants falling ill while immersed due to traveling and food related issues.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 explored what insights, growths, and changes participants attributed to their participation in the immersion experience and to what extent they felt that the changes were sustained over time. Participants were asked specific questions during the interview about how the immersion experience impacted their development as a counselor or counselor educator, including their self awareness, cultural empathy, self efficacy, worldview and cultural knowledge and skills. Additionally, participants were asked how the passing of time since the immersion had impacted any potential changes they had experienced. All ten participants reported changes in each of the areas of counselor development listed above, but the degree of change and sustainability of change varied considerably among participants. Seven participants reported that the changes in their ability to empathize with people from backgrounds that were different

than their own had been retained over time, with three participants reporting that the

changes had actually increased since the immersion. Participant 7 shared that time has

increased her ability to empathize based on the line of research and area of focus she has

pursued since the immersion experience. She stated:

> I have continued to have that [empathy] sparked and based on my experience, the research I have conducted and in teaching what I am trying to portray to my students about worldview, time has actually heightened the empathy piece for me. I think time has actually strengthened it, because of experiences of having to teach it and the research that I have focused on.

Similar to changes in empathy, five participants reported that time has not

impacted changes in self awareness or that changes had retained over time, four

participants reported that time had increased the changes and one participant reported that

changes in awareness had decreased over time. In sharing how time has not impacted

changes in self awareness, Participant 1 stated "I would say that time has had no effect on

that at all." Participant 5 shared that the changes she experienced in her self awareness

are not as salient or easily accessible as they once were, however they have not been

erased completely. She stated:

> It is not something that is on the forefront of my mind anymore. You get back to your day to day, back to your reality and into university life, that is my day to day now. So both having physical distance and time distance, I wouldn't say has dulled or weakened it, just has made it less prevalent in my mind.

Seven participants reported changes in worldview were retained or increased with time,

while one participant (Participant 5) reported that changes in her worldview decreased

with time.

Conversely, four participants reported that changes in self efficacy decreased with time, three reported that changes increased with time and only one participant reported that time had no impact on changes. Participants who stated that changes had increased or sustained over time all shared how they were able to continue using the lessons learned from the immersion in their current personal and professional lives, whereas participants that felt the changes in their self efficacy decreased with time reported the opposite, stating that they hadn't been able to directly apply the skills since returning home, feeling a sense of stagnation. Participant 4 shared how her belief in her abilities to work with people from diverse backgrounds had decreased since returning home. She stated:

> I think because I can't use them [skills] right now because I am in graduate school, I think some of it may fade but I won't know if it will come back until I get to encounter kids in school and work with students like this, I won't really know. Those skills are obviously fading because I am not using them as much, but I do hope that when I do get into a school they will come back when I get back in school, kind of like riding a bike.

Similar to self-efficacy, five participants felt that their cultural knowledge and skills in working with people from diverse backgrounds had decreased, two participants felt that the changes had sustained and three participants felt that the changes had increased with time. Participant 2 shared how her knowledge and skills had continued to grow in working with people from diverse backgrounds. She stated "I would still say it [time passing] is a big factor as I have had more opportunities to work with people from other cultures and learn from that experience."

In addition to asking participants how the immersion had impacted their development as a counselor or counselor educator, participants were asked about the

magnitude of changes they had experienced. Five participants shared that they felt the changes that had occurred within themselves were large changes, three participants stated that changes were medium changes, and two participants felt that the changes were small. All ten of the participants shared that changes were internal changes, meaning things that they were able to recognize within themselves. Three participants felt that the changes also were external changes, changes that others could visibly notice being different about them after returning home from the immersion.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 was grounded in the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) model, assessing for changes in developmental progression that participants reported in levels of cultural sensitivity that they attributed to their participation in the immersion experience. Based on feedback from the researcher's dissertation committee, interview questions that specifically asked about developmental progression across the DMIS were omitted. The committee concluded that given the tendency to respond in socially desirable ways when reporting levels of cultural sensitivity, it would be best to omit explicit questions and rather see if participant responses unfolded in ways that indicated developmental progression across the DMIS.

In general, participant responses about cultural sensitivity were too implicit to suggest that the immersion experience impacted developmental shifts. Participants 6 and 7, however, did share feelings that the culture in which they immersed was superior than their host culture, a key component that characterizes someone who is using the 'reversal' strategy under the second ethnocentric stage, *Defense,* in the DMIS. The reversal strategy

is when someone assumes superiority of the host culture while denigrating their own culture. An example of the reversal strategy was illustrated by Participant 7. She stated: Americans have everything and we are upset at that and into material goods, and then some of the people in South Africa have nothing and they are so joyful, I feel like we have so much to learn from them. Clearly, it cannot be stated that this strategy of reversal can be attributed to the immersion experience since participants were not directly asked this question. Future researchers should attend to the potential for the immersion experience to occasion this type of reversal

Research Question 4

Research question 4 explored changes in cultural self-efficacy that participants attributed to their participation in the immersion experience. All ten of the participants reported positive changes in their cultural self efficacy as a result of the immersion. Most frequently, participants shared how being able to connect across language barriers with people who lived in a completely different environment than the participants contributed largely to their changes in self-efficacy. Participant 1 shared:

> The fact that we were half way around the world, talking to people that didn't speak our language and had never experienced the things that we experience and vice versa, but we were still able to communicate through those basic human interactions. So seeing that and putting it into use really helped my self-efficacy as far what I believe I can do to help anybody from any culture.

Research Question 5

Research question 5 explored changes in emotional and/or cognitive empathy that participants attributed to their participation in the immersion experience. All ten of the

participants reported positive changes in their empathy as a result of the immersion; eight

participants reported shifts in their cognitive empathy and six participants reported shifts

in their emotional empathy.

Participants who reported shifts in their cognitive empathy shared that their ability

to understand the struggles of others was impacted from being immersed in another

culture and seeing firsthand what it was like to live somewhere other than their familiar

home community. Participants discussed how expanding their worldviews, witnessing the

depths of poverty and thinking about what it is like to not be a part of the dominant

culture all impacted their ability to understand and empathize more. For example,

Participant 6 shared:

> Thinking about people who do not come from the dominant culture where they
> are, thinking people of color from this [U.S.] country and thinking of experiences
> that they might not have not being in the dominant culture. Going to a place
> where you are the other, not part of the main stream culture is helpful and helps
> you evaluate your own culture and also maybe helps to understand what it's like
> to be in a group that is not in the dominant culture.

Another way in which participants were impacted was by changes in their emotional

empathy, or ability to feel what it is like to be 'other' and empathize with that experience.

Participants who experienced shifts in their emotional empathy all shared how being out

of their comfort zone and being in the 'other' group as they were not part of the dominant

culture was impactful in increasing their empathy. Participant 8 shared:

> I could feel what it was like to be out of my comfort zone, outside of my element
> so after having my own experience of being outside of my comfort I can better
> understand what it is like for others having recently arrived in the U.S., and a
> greater understanding of what it is like to walk in their shoes.

In addition to positive shifts in empathy from cognitively understanding and emotional experiencing what it is like to be other, five participants shared that feeling a human connection, being connected across cultures and language barriers impacted their ability to empathize.

Research Question 6

Research question 6 explored changes in self-awareness that participants attributed to their participation in the immersion experience. All ten of the participants reported positive changes in their self-awareness as a result of the immersion, revealing shifts in how their self-awareness changed in both personal and professional areas of their lives. Participants shared how they became more aware of their values and priorities in life, their relationships with people and material things and aspects of their personality that were uncovered or affirmed due to the immersion. Participant 3 shared how the immersion experience reminded her how she loved being in group leadership roles and how that awareness impacted her career path. She stated:

> I think any time you are in an immersion experience you learn new things about yourself. And that was definitely true to me, so it definitely impacted my self-awareness . . . I was put in a position of leadership [while immersed] that I was not expecting. I really remembered that I loved that, that I feel like I am pretty good at that. I love facilitating or helping to facilitate group experiences, and it was just a reminder, gosh this something that I really love, and that has been pretty informative of where am I going from here. And I did end up applying to a PhD program and I think the whole Bolivia immersion experience was pretty key to making that decision.

In addition to participants sharing how their personal self-awareness was impacted, several participants shared how the immersion impacted their self-awareness as

a professional, further understanding the role of their cultures and clarifying their own

values. Participant 9 shared how the immersion experience made her look more closely

at her own culture and way she views other people. She stated:

> My self-awareness has changed in that the way that I understand how Americans
> are perceived by other cultures and the way that I am perceiving others, [which]
> has helped me to put stereotypes and generalizations aside and to treat each
> individual as a completely unique person . . . I learned how important
> understanding other cultures is. It has helped me understand who I am as a person
> and different notions about my family. It forced me to take a look at my own
> personal situation and how we have different ideas and customs and just my own
> family. So it helped me to take those global perspective and internationalism but
> also identify my own situation and my own position. Bringing up things from the
> macro and the micro.

Research Question 7

Research question 7 explored what meaning participant's made from their

immersion experience. Nine out of ten participants stated that the immersion experience

had a very significant impact on their lives, with one participant stating that the

immersion had a significant impact on them. Participants shared that the meaning they

have attributed to the immersion is of being reminded of what is important to them, how

small acts of kindness go a long way, that people can connect through language barriers

and cultural differences and that being taken out of your comfort zone is challenging and

rewarding. Participant 10 shared that she feels like the immersion experience opened up

new possibilities and perspectives. She stated:

> I see it as kind of a window into more change that I could make in my future as a
> person and as a counselor. It opened my eyes to the needs that are out there and
> for people to connect across cultural lines. And it reaffirmed that it is possible to

do that in our lives and I believe our lives would be richer if we did that more often.

Participant 3 shared how the trip was an affirmation of where she has been and where she is going in the future. She stated:

> This trip really was life changing for me. It helped to formulate my direction and it was also a completion of a circle in my life . . . I felt like I was exactly where I was supposed to be in that moment and it was an affirmation of the path I have chosen and an affirmation of the direction I want to move in.

Research Question 8

Research question 8 explored if participants felt that the changes they experienced had a sustained impact on them and if they were able to attribute the changes to the immersion experience. Each interview question about changes in counselor development assessed for the sustainability of changes for participants. In general, participants shared a range of experiences, with some changes increasing, some maintaining and some decreasing. Participant 5 highlighted the sustainability of changes, stating:

> I don't think I can go back to being the same person I was before because the knowledge that I gained over there and the things I saw and experienced and noticed in myself and in my classmates . . . you can't just erase it even if time maybe makes it less distinct, it just doesn't get erased.

More than half of the participants shared ways in which the immersion experience has impacted them and continues to be used in their personal and professional lives. Participants shared how they use the experience with their clients, their research, in the classes they teach and in the supervision sessions they conduct. Participants also shared

how their expanded worldview has opened new doors of possibilities for them, instilling

a desire to 'pay it forward', as indicated by their increased desires to work with clients

from diverse backgrounds to frequent international travel, volunteering both locally and

globally, and interest in facilitating immersion experiences in the future. Participant 9

shared how the immersion experience has impacted her and how the changes have

sustained over time. She stated:

> It changed my ability as counselor and professional to be more effective in
> working with different people and different cultures. It changed me personally to
> realize that this is an important aspect of my life as this is something that I really
> value, different cultures and different experiences, and also had expanded my
> self-awareness to really understand what role I play in this world and how I can
> make an impact and make a difference . . . I travel outside of the U.S. a lot more, I
> volunteer at places where English is frequently a second language and reach out
> to minority populations.

Participant 1 illustrated how the changes have sustained and directly impacted his work

as a counselor educator. He stated "it [the immersion experience] goes into every class

that I have taught, it has made its way into supervision sessions in some way, shape or

form . . . from a professional standpoint, and it is a strong piece of everything I do."

Discussion of Domains and Categories

Eight research questions framed this investigation. Data analysis yielded seven

domains or topic areas that emerged from the data. Within each domain, the data was

organized into categories. This study generated eight categories that were labeled as

'general' findings, or findings that were true for 9-10 participants, 17 categories that were

labeled as 'typical' findings, or findings that were true for 6-8 participants and 45

categories that were labeled 'variant' findings, or findings that were true for 2-5

participants in this study. Discussion of the results based on this study and existing research will be organized into the domains that emerged from this study. The seven domains that emerged are inclusive of all the factors that impacted participants from various immersion experiences: (a) cultural knowledge, (b) empathy, (c) personal and professional impact, (d) process/reflection, (e) relationships, (f) personal characteristics, and (g) structure.

Cultural Knowledge

The results of this study supported existing literature on effective ways to develop cultural knowledge, with participants indicating that the two primary factors that increased their cultural knowledge were observations and interactions. Participants shared that observing cultural norms and patterns while immersed expanded their worldview and broadened the lens through which they see the world. In addition to observing cultural patterns, all ten of the participants shared that interacting with community members while immersed impacted their cultural knowledge by educating and challenging their previously held stereotypes and assumptions and feeling connected to people around the world. Existing literature on effective pedagogical approaches for teaching cultural knowledge and sensitivity emphasizes a multifaceted approach in which students learn didactic material as well as interact with diverse people and engage in self reflection (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; Coleman, 2006; Kim & Lyons, 2003). Similarly, Cordero and Rodriguez (2009) stated that students must move beyond mere cognitive learning through engaging in approaches that focus on the affective processes as well. Results from this study indicate that participants were not only able to cognitively understand

cultural differences, but were also able to affectively experience what life is like in other communities.

In addition to current research on effective pedagogy for cultural competence, the DMIS supports the notion that being immersed impacts cultural knowledge and sensitivity (Bennett, 1996). The model emphasizes that as one's experiences of cultural differences become more complex, one's potential cultural competence increases. Bennett's DMIS views students' behaviors and beliefs as developmental and fluid, capable of change and transformation, emphasizing that behavior and beliefs are impacted by worldviews, with individuals only having access to their own cultural worldviews. Individuals who have been largely socialized in a monocultural society are unable to understand or experience the differences between their own perception and those from different cultural contexts, further perpetuating their cultural encapsulation (Hammer et al., 2003). In sum, the results of this study support existing literature on increasing cultural knowledge and the DMIS in emphasizing that experiential methods in which students have direct contact with people from diverse backgrounds are effective pedagogical tools in developing cultural knowledge (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002).

Empathy

Carl Rogers's seminal works on the importance of empathy continue to influence the counseling profession today. Over 60 years of research have consistently found empathy to be essential to the counseling process (Watson, 2001). Developing empathy is a primary goal in counselor education programs, but most programs rarely take cross cultural considerations into account or provide opportunities for students to develop

cultural empathy (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Boyle et al. (1999) stated that students often

gravitate towards the cognitive aspects of understanding diversity, failing to affectively

understand the experiences of culturally diverse others, limiting their ability to

demonstrate cultural empathy. Results from the current study both support and challenge

this assertion; eight of the ten participants reported having cognitive shifts in their

empathy whereas only six out of ten participants reported experiencing shifts in their

emotional/affective empathy. Although fewer participants shifted in affective empathy

when compared to cognitive empathy, the six participants who did shift and increase their

affective empathy all shared that their own experience of being 'other' is what enabled

them to affectively experience what it may be like for marginalized clients whose daily

experiences are that of being 'other.' Participants described struggling with the language

barriers and trying to communicate their basic needs, possessing physical traits that were

visibly different, and being impacted by the large degrees of difference in cultural norms

and patterns between their host country and home country. Researchers support this

finding, stating that one way to effectively develop empathy is by enabling participants to

experience what it is like to be 'other' or excluded from the mainstream culture (Allan,

2002; Coleman, 2006; Freire, 2000).

One theme that emerged from this study that is not frequently discussed in the

literature is that participants shared that their empathy also was fostered through

experiencing connections across cultures, feeling the 'humanness' with people they could

not speak to verbally but could still understand through universal messages and nonverbal

language. These findings suggest that counselor education programs may benefit from

providing assignments and activities in which students are challenged to both experience what it is like to be 'other' as well as connect with people that are from considerably different backgrounds than themselves.

Personal/Professional Impact

All ten participants from the current study shared various ways in which they had been personally and professionally impacted by their immersion experience. In general, participants shared that participation in the immersion experience impacted their self-awareness, counselor self-efficacy, and worldview. Several of the participants shared how being immersed in a culture that was very different from their own impacted their awareness of their own cultural norms and behaviors. This appeared to further highlight their understanding that each person sees the world through their own lens, and that it is important to not impose one's perspectives on another person. Changes that participants described in self-awareness and worldview are particularly important given that researchers have shown that conflict between individuals in different cultural groups often is due to differences in worldviews, highlighting the need for counselors to be able to understand the worldviews of their clients and demonstrate cultural empathy (Brown & Landrum-Brown, 1995; Chung & Bemak, 2002). One of the core tasks for counselors is to be able to separate their cultural values from their clients; a process that can only occur after the counselor has first examined herself or himself, cultural beliefs, and the impact of these beliefs on values, behaviors, and traditions (Chung & Bemak, 2002). Results from this study suggested that participants felt an increased sense of self-efficacy; these results are valuable as researchers have indicated that many counseling graduates feel

ineffective and unprepared to work with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds

(Arthur & Achenbach, 2002; D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001; Ponterotto, 1997).

The results of this study support Bandura's assertion that mastery experiences, or

experiences in which students actively engage with a task to increase personal capability

are the most persuasive sources in increasing self efficacy (Aponte, 2009; Bandura, 1977,

1992, 1993). Given that counselors report having low self-efficacy when working with

clients from diverse backgrounds, counselor preparation programs need to consider how

to focus on counselor development from a culturally inclusive framework, increasing

mastery experiences wherein trainees are not only able to increase their self-efficacy, but

also their self-awareness and cultural empathy related to working with people from

diverse backgrounds (Constantine & Ladany, 2000). Additionally, participants also

reported feeling gratitude, affirmation, a desire to 'pay it forward' and an increased

interest in leadership and social action initiatives. These findings support existing

research on the impact of international immersion and highlight the spectrum of changes

participants may experience (Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009).

The most noteworthy finding of this study related to the personal and professional

impact of immersion on participants is that all ten of the participants reported some level

of sustained change in their lives as result of the immersion experience. Two participants

described the changes as small changes, three participants described the changes as

medium changes and five participants described the changes they experienced from the

immersion as large changes. Furthermore, when sharing about what meaning participants

have made from their experience, eight participants shared that the experience was 'very

significant' and two participants shared that the experience was 'significant' in their lives. Several participants commented on the immersion experience being an unforgettable experience, highlighted by one participant's expression, "I don't think you can ever get back to being the same person." Some participants described feeling that the immersion experience was not on the forefront of their mind anymore, feeing like some of the changes experienced had faded over time, but most participants reported feeling like the changes could never be erased, implying that the immersion experience had a sustainable impact.

Process/Reflection

Results from this study suggested that for some participants, the role of the group facilitator or instructor of the immersion course was critical for the facilitation of learning, processing and engaging in reflection. Participants who felt the facilitator created a space for safety and validation of feelings reported that group process activities were effective in allowing participant to get deeper in their experience and self exploration. On the other hand, participants who felt there were power dynamics at play between faculty and students felt judged and became 'silent' due to not feeling safety within the group. As noted by Ancis (1998), students may be reluctant to share thoughts and feelings during process groups due to the notion that counselors are to be absent of bias. As a result, it is critical for group facilitators to normalize the notion that counselors have biases and promote safe environments for students to share and reflect on their experiences. Safety is especially important given that past researchers have found immersion experiences to place students in environments in which their biases and

assumptions are continuously being challenged, furthering the need for students to feel safe in processing their experiences (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002).

Relationships

Additionally, the results of this study suggested that relationships were at the cornerstone of the immersion experience. Under the domain of *Relationships*, the results were divided into two categories: *between group interactions* and *within group interactions*. Typically, relationships in the between group interactions (i.e., interactions between the immersion group and local community members) were frequently reported as being the most positive critical incidents for participants. Participants described feelings of connections they had experienced were unexpected, positively sharing their experiences of overcoming language barriers and cultural differences and experiencing deep connections through universal experiences such as song, dance, and nonverbal communication. Conversely, relationships within the immersion group, with facilitators and group members, were frequently reported as being the most negative critical incident of the immersion. Several participants shared that the interpersonal struggles they experienced with other group members and facilitators were unexpected and upsetting. The majority of the participant's shared feeling excluded, isolated, and unsafe to discuss their experiences and challenges they were going through.

Participants in this study identified two categories of interactions with group members while immersed; supportive and challenging. Students who described the group interactions as supportive reported that everyone was taking risks and that there was a level of safety created within the group to process each individual's experience. In

contrast, students who described the group as challenging reported that the groups were

filled with tension that left them feeling like they would be judged for sharing their

experiences. Thompson and Neville (1999) acknowledged that race related discussions

often evoke intense, uncomfortable emotions. These emotions can be countered when an

individual is embraced with empathy and an attempt to work through the emotions is

made. Group therapy scholars assert that when members are able to take risks in a group,

safety develops, compared to when issues go without being acknowledged, perpetuating a

culture of silence that leads to guardedness among group members (Yalom, 1995).

Therefore, it is critical for facilitators of immersion experiences to normalize feelings of

racial experiences and create an environment that is supportive of taking risks and

sharing with group members.

Personal Characteristics

An unexpected finding that emerged from this study was the impact of

participant's personal characteristics. Participants shared how their own characteristics,

such as the ability to be open and adaptable, as well as characteristics of group members,

such as having negative attitudes and outlook, impacted their overall experiences.

Participants also discussed how being settled in their life before the immersion was

helpful, whereas one participant shared how not feeling settled in her personal life

contributed to her negative experiences on the immersion. These findings are noteworthy

given that there is no previous mention of personal characteristics in the literature on

international immersion. Instructors of immersion experiences may need to consider how

to facilitate conversations about the different aspects of the immersion experience and

allow participants to share how their personal characteristics may impact their experiences.

Structure

Results from this study indicated large variations in what participants' needs and expectations were related to the structure of the immersion experience. All participants shared that being immersed in a culture that was different than their own culture was a positive component of the trip. Some participants shared that overcoming language barriers and connecting through nonverbal language was helpful, whereas some participants shared that the language barrier hindered their ability to feel fully immersed and connected with the local culture. Participants also shared different perspectives on having free time versus structured time, with some participants sharing that they enjoyed having time that was not planned or structured as it allowed them to explore the culture on their own and decompress. Other students reported, however, that there were not enough structured interactions with the community members and participants would have appreciated more planned interactions. Several participants shared that the size of the group was too large, although one participant shared that she felt a sense of safety which was partially attributed to the large size of the group she was in. Participants also shared differing thoughts on the helpfulness of participating in pre-trip planning meetings. Several participants shared that it was helpful to learn more about the culture they were going to be immersed in, whereas a few participants shared that it negatively colored their experiences and that they wished they had been given the opportunity to experience the culture without preconceived ideas of what they would see.

These findings highlight the complexity and challenges that instructors face when planning an international immersion course. The results from this study suggest that instructors need to take the needs and expectations of their group into consideration when structuring the immersion course.

Limitations

The results of the current study provide insight into the sustained impact of international immersion for counselors in training. The results, however, should be viewed in the context of study limitations. Two limitations of this study are related to sampling and research design. In particular, the large number of variant categories (45) and the relative small number of general categories (8) suggests that there are many idiosyncrasies in participants' experiences, and that additional research is needed to tease out the nuances of participants' experiences that are vital to immersion trip planning.

One of the limitations in the current study is based on the sample. Given the research methodology and inclusion criteria for participants in this study, the sample size was relatively small ($N = 10$) and participants were recruited via purposive, convenience sampling. Accordingly, conclusions must be interpreted with caution. Additionally, the sample was comprised of nine females and only one male and all of the participants identified as being European-American, highlighting the lack of diversity in the sample. Due to the voluntary nature of the research participation as well as the non-random nature of the sampling procedure, participants in this study may have had different characteristics from those who did not participate, which could have biased the results. Furthermore, given that all participants were volunteers and were responding to issues

such as cultural sensitivity, the potential for social desirability is a limitation in this study. Another limitation of this sample is that all participants had other experiences of traveling internationally either before the immersion, after the immersion, or both. In an attempt to capture the complexity of immersion experiences for participants, the sample was purposely selected to include participants from various immersion experiences. One limitation of this sampling procedure is that the specific activities that participants engaged in while immersed varied. Therefore, there is not a clear assessment on the depth and breadth of activities and interactions each participant experienced. Also, because this study did not use a pre-post design, the quality and quantity of change that may have occurred that can confidently be attributed to the immersion experience is not clear.

In addition to sampling limitations, the qualitative research design of this current study has inherent limitations. For one, the primary researcher was a member on the research team and had previously been on several immersion experiences. Another potential limitation of the study was the use of an in-depth interview as the sole means of data may have yielded responses impacted by reactivity, recall error, and the emotional state of the participant on the day of data collection. In addition, given that the interview questions were provided to participants ahead of time, participants may have had time to develop socially desirable responses.

Although there were several limitations in the current study, a number of strategies were used to try and ensure valid results, including the use of a four member research team who coded the data by reaching consensus, the use of an external auditor to oversee the work and coding of the research team, and the use of an independent

interviewer who had not previously participated in any immersion experiences to conduct the semi-structured phone interviews. Additionally, careful attention was placed on constructing the interview questions, including language that was sure to elicit both positive and negative responses in an attempt to not search for a biased reporting of experiences.

Implications for Counselors and Counselor Educators

The findings from this study provide implications for counselors and counselor educators. Individual differences that emerged from the data illustrate the complexity of planning, attending, implementing and processing an international immersion experience for students and facilitators. Implications in this section include factors that were related to increases in empathy, self awareness and cultural sensitivity, the impact of group dynamics, discussion around needs for process and reflection both during and after the immersion, factors that impacted sustained change and structural requirements for immersion courses.

Results from this study suggested that when participants were taken out of their comfort zone, they experienced some sort of cognitive and cultural dissonance, which may be one of the key underlying mechanisms as to why international immersion may lead to sustained changes in attitudes and behaviors for some participants. Therefore, for students who have majority statuses and limited opportunities of outsider experiences, immersion experiences may provide opportunities to not only increase cultural sensitivity and empathy, but also self awareness, as students become aware of their previously unrecognized value systems.

Participants shared that increases in their ability to empathize were primarily attributed to observing and understanding cultural norms and experiencing what is like to have the experience of being an 'outsider' as well as feeling connected across cultures while immersed. Educators may consider developing instructional strategies that replicate the experiences of being immersed in a culture in which students witness cultural norms that are different than their own and have the experiences of being 'other.' Creating experiential activities in which students do not merely enter a community of diverse others, but rather enter a community in which the student is considered to be 'other' and engage with diverse others for an extended amount of time may provide an opportunity for students to experience what it is like to be outside of the majority population as well as observe and understand common experiences across cultures, serving as a stepping stone towards developing cultural empathy. In this study, participants typically reported that the most positive critical incident of the immersion were the relationships they formed with community members. Participants discussed that although visiting cultural sites and engaging in 'tourist' activities was enjoyable, the most salient memory of the immersion was feeling connected to local community members through formal or informal interactions. Additionally, several participants shared that the one thing they could have changed about their experience would have been to have more time interacting with community members. These findings suggest that facilitators should consider the activities they have planned for the immersion and ensure that there is substantial time for participants to engage in both planned and unplanned dialogue and conversations with members of the host community.

Results from this study revealed that participants typically reported that the most negative critical incident of the immersion was related to group dynamics. Participants shared feeling excluded from the group, that there were negative power dynamics between facilitators and group members, and felt a lack of connection and ability to be vulnerable. This seems to suggest that instructors or group facilitators are well advised to consider group dynamics throughout the immersion experience. The instructor may implement therapeutic factors that promote a productive group environment prior to embarking on an immersion experience (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). For example, the instructor can organize a pre-trip meeting(s) in which students and participants can participate in introductions and the instructor can explain course objectives. Also, students can share their goals of the immersion as well as areas of concerns they may have regarding the course, travel, or anything else that may be relevant. Also, discussion should include the group establishing group rules for communication, such as how to share individual experiences and ask questions on culturally sensitive topics. Also, students should discuss how they will create safety for one another, sharing their needs and expectations openly. The intent of having a candid discussion before immersing is not only to allow group members to connect on a deeper level, but also to provide the instructor with knowledge about what safety means to this particular group (as well as each individual participant) and how to make sure a balance is made wherein students feel safe and supported while also feeling challenged to grow.

In addition to negative experiences with group members, some participants reported feeling like there was not space or safety to process their experiences fully in

group process time, adding that the group process was ineffective in creating a space for

learning to occur or increased growth and self awareness. Arthur and Achenbach (2002)

highlighted the need for safety when discussing multicultural issues. Collins and Pieterse

(2007) also emphasized that safety is important when participating in experiential

activities. Collins and Pieterse suggest, however, that there is room in the pedagogical

repertoire of counseling to push for greater risk-taking and challenging safety as a

potential resistance to growth, articulating that counselors see risk-taking as a necessary

step in promoting growth for clients and that this should be no different for counselors in

training. In discussing effective pedagogical approaches to teach and increase cultural

sensitivity, Collins and Pieterse provided four core elements, highlighting the need for

students to have the ability to acknowledge and share when they encounter an experience

that challenges their racial schemas; engage in a dialogue with others in which the

students confront their bias and assumption while looking at both their affective and

behavioral responses; engage in reflection to gain a better understanding of their

reactions, which is especially seen as pivotal to processing the affective experience; and

lastly, make a commitment to maintain a stance of openness around cultural experiences

(Collins & Pieterse, 2007). While the researchers proposed these core elements as a

framework for working with students when they encounter critical incidents in their

naturalistic environment, group facilitators of immersion experiences may benefit from

utilizing a similar framework during process groups, highlighting the need to validate

students in their own struggles and acknowledgement of biases.

Another finding related to the effectiveness of process activities was that only a few participants found the large group process to be effective, stating that they preferred being in smaller more intimate circles as they felt more safety and an increased ability to be vulnerable. It is not clear whether all of the participants felt 'unsafe' in the larger group or just more 'safe' in smaller groups. Group size should definitely be a consideration, however, when planning and implementing immersion experiences. Larger travel groups may benefit from being placed into smaller sub-groups for processing. Interestingly, more than half of the participants stated that journaling was effective in getting deeper into their experience, stating that it helped to process thoughts and feelings that they were not able or did not want to share within the group context. A few participants did not feel that journaling was helpful due to the immersion course being linked to a research project and knowing that their journals were being collected at the end of the immersion. Implications for this finding highlight the importance of participants having an outlet for reflection that is private and that they feel safe expressing all of their thoughts and feelings.

Additionally, participants discussed the need for post immersion reflection, stating a need for some time to process and "unpack" the experience by sharing with friends and family, reading journal entries, debriefing with the immersion group after returning back home and giving presentations on their experience for their local communities. Implications from this finding highlight the intensity of what participants may experience while immersed and the need for facilitators to acknowledge and implement some type of process experience after retuning back home. This finding also

suggests that post immersion process activities should be done after some amount of time has elapsed, allowing participants ample time to return home and internally process the immersion experience further before structured post-immersion discussions. Additionally, when planning post immersion process groups, facilitators may want to consider the use of co-facilitator that did not participate in the immersion in an effort to create safety and privacy for group members when processing their experiences with the immersion facilitator.

Results on the extent of sustained change from the immersion experiences varied among participants. Typically, participants who felt that the changes were sustained continued to use the immersion experience in their personal and professional lives and reported changes in their daily lifestyles, whereas slipping back into one's daily lifestyle was negatively associated with sustained change. This finding suggests that the timing of immersion experience may impact sustained change, implying that students who are able to return home after an immersion and go directly into a clinical placement or educator role may be more able to incorporate the changes they experienced while immersed when compared to students who return home and are not actively involved in a professional role with clients or students. In order to maximize sustained change for all participants, facilitators could implement follow-up activities or group dialogues to keep participants involved and actively processing the immersion after returning home, such as providing clinical case examples or having participants develop course materials using a culturally inclusive framework.

The impact of personal characteristics has not previously been discussed in the literature in immersion, but emerged as a salient theme in the current study. Several participants discussed how their ability or inability to be open and adaptable impacted their overall experience. When asked what one participant could change if she could change anything, she stated she would change her lack of openness to the whole experience, stating that it forced her to emotionally shut down from the beginning and left her feeling very excluded and homesick for the duration of the immersion. Participants also shared how their own attitudes as well as other group member's attitudes influenced them, stating how negative group members were divisive within the group and impacted group cohesion. Two participants shared opposing views of feeling settled before the immersion. One participant shared that she felt like she was exactly where she was supposed to be in life and the other participant shared how unsettled she felt in her personal life and how going on the immersion was not the best choice for her at that time. Participants also discussed needing autonomy and personal space and time. Implications from these findings illustrate the importance of personal characteristics when traveling internationally. Although personal characteristics cannot be changed, it is critical for facilitators to discuss the potential stress and strains of the immersion, fully preparing participants to expect the unexpected as well as sharing their personal needs with the group and facilitator.

Several findings related to the structural component of the immersion experience have implications for future practice including location of the immersion, depth of immersion, size of group, need for autonomy and impact of pre-trip planning. In terms of

the location of the immersion, all of the participants shared how going on an immersion to a culture that was very different from their own was impactful. Furthermore, participants shared how experiencing language barriers and, in many cases, overcoming the barriers and feeling universal connections was a significant impact for them. This finding highlights the importance of the location of immersion being greatly different than the home country of participants, potentially including differences in languages, cultures, foods, religions, and traditions. Participants also shared that removing themselves from the culture and staying in hotels was a barrier to them feeling fully immersed in the culture. Several participants shared having a desire to stay with host families or in university dorms while immersed. This finding reiterates the desire of participants to be more engaged and connected, whenever possible, during immersions.

Another noteworthy finding related to the structure of the immersion was related to the size of the group. Not only did participants share not feeling comfortable processing in large groups, several participants discussed the difficulties with traveling with large numbers of people and feeling like the size of the group limited their experiences. Facilitators may want to take group size into consideration when planning an immersion, deciding on total number of participants to take on the trip as well as how to meet the needs of participants who prefer smaller group sizes. One suggestion could be to have time for both small process groups and time to come back together as a whole group and to have different subgroups rotate through activities in which they participate, allowing time and space for interactions with community members on a smaller scale. The risks involved in dividing into smaller groups include potential safety risks as well as

participants sub-grouping and forming cliques with one another, threatening the cohesiveness and safety of the larger group. One possibility to avoid this would be to vary sub-group composition each day, so that participants can process in smaller groups with a reduced risk of exclusive cliques.

Along a similar line, participants shared how having time to explore independently or process on their own was important to them, highlighting their need for autonomy and independence. Due to the limited number of days of being immersed in another country, facilitators may have a tendency to overload the days, filled with structured activities, meetings, dinners and process groups. This finding suggests that while much of the structure is needed, a balance between structure and free time is desired by participants. Again, there may be a safety issue with autonomy, therefore a system of accountability in which participants stay in pairs or triads may be preferred. Lastly, an unexpected finding was related to pre-trip planning. The literature on immersion frequently states the importance and need to fully prepare and educate students on what to expect from the host country, including what the cultural norms and expectations are, what the social issues are, levels of crime and poverty, and so on. Although most participants shared that the pre-trip planning was helpful, a few participants in the current study stated how the pre-trip planning was one of the more negative aspects of the immersion, stating that the pre-trip information colored their perspectives and did not allow them to fully appreciate the culture and newness of the experience. Implications from this finding suggest that facilitators should be intentional in the depth and breadth of information shared before the immersion, recognizing the

desire for some students to be able to be as open-minded as possible before entering a community.

In sum, there are several implications for counselors and counselor educators from the current study. As with any research, the results of this study provided as many new questions as it did answers. There are many options and avenues to continue answering important questions on international immersion. Some suggestions for future research studies are described in the following section.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study provided the first empirical exploration of the sustained impact of international immersion on counselors in training. In light of the aforementioned limitations, additional research is needed and warranted to further understand the impact and critical factors of international immersion on counselor development. Results from the current study suggest that counselor trainees who participated in an international immersion experienced varying degrees of sustained change both personally and professionally. There is a need, however, for future researchers to include larger, more diverse samples to replicate and extend these findings. Additionally, future research on immersion and the development of cultural sensitivity needs to continue being assessed within the frameworks of theoretical paradigms to promote further understanding of the impact on counselor development.

Given that the majority of research on the impact of immersion experiences has been qualitative, this body of literature would greatly benefit from mixed methods or quantitative research designs. For example, a pre/posttest experimental design would

increase understanding of the changes that participant's report that can be attributed to the immersion experience with greater confidence. Furthermore, by integrating a mixed methods or quantitative component with immersion and its relationship to counselor development, researchers could triangulate the data and the results could be more generalizable. In addition, a longitudinal design to assess the impact of immersion experiences would increase understanding on how specific time intervals may impact sustained change as well as provide valuable information on both the short term and long term impact of immersion. Replications and extensions of the present study would increase the external validity of the current study findings.

Results from this study highlighted the significance of group dynamics and effectiveness of process groups. Although this study illustrated that group dynamics impacted participants and hindered their ability to get deeper in their experiences due to lack of safety in the group, further research is needed in this area. More specifically, researchers need to investigate how to create group cohesion and safety while also challenging student biases and assumptions. Further, researchers can explore specific critical incidents that cause participants to either feel safe or unsafe within the group. Future research could investigate the impact of large group process compared to breaking into small group process and how both impact overall feelings of connections and cohesiveness for group members while immersed. Further, given that personality characteristics emerged as a salient theme from this study, researchers could explore relevant student variables and personality traits that may influence both the process and outcome of an immersion experience.

Another area of research that this body of literature could benefit from is investigating the impact of leadership styles on participants. Future research could investigate the extent of training that facilitators have had in group process, the extent and impact of international immersion on facilitator's professional identity, facilitator goals or expectations of the immersion experience as well as the extent to which facilitators use process and reflection as pedagogical tools while immersed.

Several other areas of future research emerged from the varying needs of participants related to the structural requirements of the immersion. Further research is warranted to assess the importance of how different the immersion country is from the participants' home country (i.e. language, food, religion, etc.). Further, future researchers can more fully assess the types of pre-trip planning that seem to be effective in increasing cultural knowledge without coloring the perspectives of the participants, the types of activities that seem to be most impactful while immersed, the differences in impact for participants who reside in a hotel compared with participant that reside with a host family while immersed, the impact that length of the immersion have on the sustained impact felt by participants, and, finally, the relationship between personality characteristics and the impact of immersion.

Another area of future research is investigating the relationships between training outcomes and counseling related outcomes for students who participate in an immersion experience. As suggested by Ridley et al. (1994), finding the parallels between more proximal variables (training related outcome variables) and distal variables (counseling related outcome variables) would provide a more comprehensive understanding of

effective pedagogical approaches in expanding cultural sensitivity and developmental

progression for counselor development as well as the effects of training on client

outcomes. Specifically, future researchers may identify relevant training variables that are

attributable to immersion experiences and examine the relationships between the training

variables and actual outcome variables in counseling relationships, such as client

perceptions of the counselor (e.g., working alliance and demonstration of cultural

empathy), client satisfaction with the counseling, and client retention rates.

Conclusion

The counseling profession has a deep commitment to providing effective

counseling services to diverse clientele. As the endeavor to ensure quality counseling

service continues, counselor education programs have the responsibility to implement

effective pedagogical approaches that enhance the development of counselor trainees

while utilizing a culturally inclusive framework. The current study provides fertile

ground to warrant further research on the impact of international immersion and other

pedagogical tools that may lead to sustained change for counselors in training.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT FORMS

Recruitment Letter

Hello, My name is Sejal Mehta and I am a doctoral student at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I am writing to request your participation in my dissertation research project. The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study is to understand the experiences of counselors and counselor trainees who have participated in international immersion experiences and explore what the critical components of the experience are and if any occasion growth and sustained change attributable to engaging in the immersion experience.

In this study, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. In addition, you will be asked to participate in a 75-90 minute interview, via telephone or using an online collaboratory, (*Elluminate Live!*). The purpose of the interview is to provide in depth information on participant experiences of international immersion, including both positive and negative aspects related to your experience.

The total estimated time of the entire investigation is about 120 minutes. This accounts for reviewing the informed consent, interview questions, and completing the demographic form ahead of time, participating in a 75-90 minute interview and reviewing the transcript of the interview to ensure it accurately depicts your answers to the questions. As a participant in this investigation, your name will be placed in a raffle drawing for one $50 Target gift card.

I will limit access to the tape and transcript by keeping it stored in a lock box to which only I will have the key. In addition, I will destroy the digital audio file of the interview at the completion of the study. Informed consent documentation will be kept in a notebook and stored in a separate lock box that will remain in my file cabinet at my home office.

Please note that your participation in this research project is voluntary. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Institutional Review Board makes sure that studies with people follow federal rules; they have approved this study. Should you have any concerns about your rights and how you are being treated, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482.Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. Craig Cashwell who may be contacted at (336) 334-3427. If you are willing to participate in this investigation or have questions, I kindly request that you contact me,

Sejal Mehta, at s_mehta2@uncg.edu and/or by phone at (352)-222-2862 and leave your phone number. I thank you for your time and hope to have your every consideration.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT: Long Form

Project Title: International Immersion: An Exploratory Study of Critical Factors
Project Director: Dr. Craig S. Cashwell
Participant's Name: _____

What is the study about?

This is a research project. The purpose of this exploratory qualitative study is to understand the lived experiences of counselors and counselor trainees who have participated in international immersion experiences and explore what meaning is made from participation in such programs. Of specific interest is to further understand the impact of the experience on participant's developmental progression of cultural competence, and ability to demonstrate cultural empathy, self-awareness and self-efficacy. The critical components of the experience will be explored in an attempt to better understand what factors, if any, occasion growth and sustained change attributable to engaging in an international immersion experience.

Why are you asking me?

You have been chosen to be a participant in this research study because you were a student in a CACREP accredited counseling training program, have completed one required course in multicultural training, and participated in an international immersion experience within the last 1-5 years.

What will you ask me to do if I agree to be in the study?

As a participant in this investigation, you will be asked to answer questions about your experience on the international immersion trip including how the experience impacted you, what the most salient aspects of the immersion were, and what, if any, changes you experienced that have sustained over time. The total estimated time of the entire investigation is 120 minutes. This time frame includes reviewing the informed consent, reviewing interview questions, completing the demographic questionnaire, participating in a 75-90 minute interview and reviewing the interview transcript for accuracy of transcriptions.

If you agree to participate in this study, the student investigator will email you a copy of the informed consent and interview questions five days prior to the scheduled interview will take place.

Within two weeks after the interview is completed, the student investigator will provide you with a written transcript of your responses for your perusal and approval by your preferred method of secure electronic or mail delivery. Should you have any questions, you may contact the student investigator at s_mehta2@uncg.edu or (352)-222-2862.

Is there any audio/video recording?

All interviews will be either audio or web recorded. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will limit access to the tape as described below.

What are the dangers to me?

The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. All interview questions are open-ended; none of the questions are forced-response. Although participants will be expected to talk about personal experiences and the impact of participating in an international immersion experience, given the voluntary nature of the project, there should be no risks to participants such that the participant's reputation or employability will be compromised in the unlikely event that the participant is identifiable.

 If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482. Questions, concerns or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with being in this study can be answered by Dr. Craig S. Cashwell who may be contacted at (336) 334-3427. In addition, the student investigator, Sejal Mehta, can be reached at s_mehta2@uncg.edu and by phone at (352)-222-2862.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

Direct benefits to participants may include increased awareness or insight by reflecting on the impact of the immersion experience and how it may have influenced you, including your ability to demonstrate cultural empathy, self-awareness, cultural self-efficacy and/or cultural competence. It is important to the field of counseling to broaden our understanding of effective pedagogical tools for counselor trainees.

Are there any benefits to society as a result of me taking part in this research?

Because existing literature has focused on the short term effect of immersion experiences, the student investigator intends to examine the long-term impact of immersion experiences, with information from this study potentially enhancing the understanding of the impact of such experiences. Counselor educators may benefit from information about how to best tailor immersion experiences to maximize benefits. As this line of research continues, counselor educators may be able to identify more effective educational opportunities to help counseling students develop cultural competence, a process that will benefit students and the profession. Finally, to the extent that information gained from this study informs counselor development, consumers will benefit from more culturally competent services.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payments made for participating in this study. All participants will be entered into a drawing to receive one $50 gift card to Target.

How will you keep my information confidential?

The external interviewer will either audiotape or web record the interview. If audio taped, the recording will be on a digital recorder that will be mailed through airmail to the student researcher and stored in a lock box that will be kept in the student investigator's home office. If web recorded, the audio file will be downloaded and copied to a compact disc that will be stored in a lock box that will be kept in the student investigator's home office. Only the student investigator will have access to the key. After the interview is transcribed, the student investigator will destroy the digital audio file or compact disc of the interview. Informed consent and demographic documentation will be kept in two separate notebooks and stored in separate lock boxes that will remain in the student researcher's home office. Only the student investigator will have the key to these lock boxes. Although the student investigator will ask you demographic questions like your age, gender and education level for data analysis purposes, no identifiable characteristics will be recorded on written transcripts. A code number will be placed in the upper left hand corner of the demographic form and in the upper left hand corner of the transcript, but not on the informed consent. The student investigator only will revisit the demographic form to obtain information on how you, the participant, wanted to be contacted with the transcribed interview.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the student investigator must add a description of any legal duty to report abuse that might supersede these confidentiality promises.

Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please close your browser when you are finished completing the demographic form so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.

What if I want to leave the study?

You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you do withdraw, it will not affect you in any way. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identifiable state.

What about new information/changes in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing this consent form you are agreeing that you read, or it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing consent to take part in this study. All of your questions concerning this study have been answered. By signing this form, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate, or have the individual specified above as a participant participate, in this study described to you by Sejal Mehta.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

Demographics Form

Name:_____ ID number given by researcher:_____

Age:_____ Race/Ethnicity:_____ Country of birth:_____

_____

Occupation:_____ Gender:_____

What degree are you seeking (please circle all that are applicable): *M.Ed   Ed.S   Ph.D*
Other

In what countries have you lived (stayed longer than 6 months)? _____

What language(s) do you speak? _____

Please describe your experiences with formal training that addressed cultural issues (how
many courses you have taken, any additional training you have done, etc.). _____

_____

What countries have you visited and what was your length of stay in each:_____

_____

_____

The following questions are in reference to an international counseling immersion
program you participated in within the last one to five years:

Location of immersion (country/city)_____

Duration of immersion (months, weeks, days)_____

Time of immersion (What month/year did you participate)_____

Was the primary language of the country (s) you immersed in different than your own?

Yes (if yes, please state what the primary language was)_____ No _____

Please list any other experiences you have had abroad (internships, study abroad, work,
etc.)._____

How may I contact you to provide you with a copy of the interview after it has been
transcribed? Please check your preferred method of contact.

☐   Through email. Please provide email address: _____
☐   Through airmail. Please provide your Address:

_____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Original Interview Questions

1. Please describe your experience(s) of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go? What types of activities did you participate in?
2. How were your goals/expectations of the immersion met or not met? *Potential probe:* As you reflect on your experience, what emotions are attached to those memories?
3. Immersion is defined as removing oneself from the majority culture and immersing in a culture that is different from your own. This includes experiencing different languages, foreign currency, government, dress, food, customs, beliefs, and sociopolitical histories. Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture? *Potential probe:* What causes you to feel immersed or not immersed?
4. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience? What is a key negative moment of your experience? On a scale of 1-10, how critical were each of these moments to your overall experience? (1 is not very critical, 10 is very critical).
5. Do you feel like your belief in your capabilities to counsel people from diverse backgrounds was affected? *Potential probe:* In what ways were your beliefs about your capabilities affected? Positive or negative changes? Have the changes in your self-efficacy sustained over time?
6. What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your thoughts and feelings towards others? *Potential probe:* What triggered any changes in those thoughts and feelings? Towards what populations did your thoughts and feelings change?
7. How effective/ineffective do you feel the immersion was in expanding your cultural knowledge, skills and awareness of working with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge? Least effective?
8. Based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, what stage would you say best describes your level of intercultural sensitivity before participating in the immersion experience? What about directly after

the immersion? What stage do you feel like best describes where you are today?

9. Would you say your awareness of yourself has changed as a result of the immersion? *Potential probe:* Can you give me any specific examples of how your awareness changed?

10. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your current values, ways of living, or beliefs as a result of your immersion experience? *Potential probe:* Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

11. How did participation in process groups and reflective journaling affect your experience? *Potential probe*: Did the group dynamics impact you in any way, both positively and negatively?

12. In thinking about how different life experiences change us, do you think this immersion experience has changed you? *Potential probe:* Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large? Have any of the changes sustained over time?

13. Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed? If so, what would they say is different about you?

14. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

15. If you could change any component of your immersion experience, what would you change? How do you think this would have affected your experience?

16. Is there any information about your immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

Interview Questions as Revised by Consultant

1. Please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go? What types of activities did you participate in?
2. Have you participated in an immersion experience previously? Was it what you expected? *Potential probe:* As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?
3. Immersion is defined as removing oneself from the majority culture and immersing in a culture that is different from your own. This includes experiencing different languages, foreign currency, government, dress, food, customs, beliefs, and sociopolitical histories. Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture? *Potential probe:* What causes you to feel immersed or not immersed? Tell me more (try and get participant to help you understand).
4. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience? What is a key negative moment of your experience? On a scale of 1-10, how critical were each of these moments to your overall experience? (1 is not very critical, 10 is very critical). What makes it critical?
5. Do you feel like your belief in your capabilities to counsel people from diverse backgrounds was affected? *Potential probe:* In what ways were your beliefs about your capabilities affected? Positive or negative changes? Have the changes in your self -efficacy sustained over time? If so, how?
6. What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your thoughts and feelings towards other cultures? *Potential probe:* What triggered any changes in those thoughts and feelings? Towards what populations did your thoughts and feelings change?
7. How effective/ineffective do you feel the immersion was in expanding your cultural knowledge, skills and awareness of working with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge? Least effective?
8. Based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, what stage would you say best describes your level of intercultural sensitivity before participating in the immersion experience? What about directly after the immersion? What stage do you feel like best describes where you are today?
9. Would you say your awareness of yourself has changed as a result of the immersion? *Potential probe:* Can you give me any specific examples of how your awareness changed?

10. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your current values, ways of living, or beliefs as a result of your immersion experience? *Potential probe:* Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

11. When you were immersed, what types of process did you participate in? How did participation in (add what participant says)effect your experience? *Potential probe*: Did the group dynamics impact you in any way, both positively and negatively?

12. In thinking about how different life experiences change us, do you think this immersion experience has changed you? *Potential probe:* Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large? Have any of the changes sustained over time?

13. Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed? If so, what would they say is different about you?

14. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

15. If you could change any component of your immersion experience, what would you change? How do you think this would have affected your experience?

16. Is there any information about your immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

Interview Questions as Revised by Research Team

Interviewer will prompt participants to reflect on their most salient immersion experience as he/she responds to the interview questions.

1. Please describe your experience (s) of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go? What types of activities did you participate in? As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

2. Was the experience what you expected? Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture? *Potential probe:* Why or why not?

3. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience? What was a key negative moment of your experience? On a scale of 1-10, how critical were each of these moments to your overall experience? (1 is not very critical, 10 is very critical). What makes it a (insert number)?

4. Do you feel like your self-efficacy to counsel people from other cultures was affected? *Potential probe:* In what ways was your self-efficacy affected? Positive or negative changes? How has time impacted the changes?

5. What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What triggered any changes in your ability to empathize? How has time impacted the changes?

6. What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills? Least effective? How has time impacted the changes?

7. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion? *Potential probe:* If so, how? How has time impacted the changes?

8. Based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, what stage would you say best describes your level of intercultural sensitivity before participating in the immersion experience? What about directly after the immersion? What stage do you feel like best describes where you are today?

9. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience? *Potential probe:* Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously? If so, what?

10. What types of reflective processes (process groups, reflection journals, debriefing) did you participate in? How did participation in (<u>insert what participant says)</u> impact your experience? How did group dynamics impact you?

11. Do you think this immersion experience has changed you? *Potential probe:* Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large? Have any of the changes sustained over time?

12. Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed? If so, how?

13. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience? How has it impacted your work as a counselor?

14. If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change? How do you think this would have affected your experience?

15. Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

Interview Questions: Final

Please reflect on your MOST salient immersion experience as you respond to the interview questions.

1. Please describe your experience (s) of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go? What types of activities did you participate in? In what ways did you interact with the local community? As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?
2. Was the experience what you expected? Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture? *Potential probe:* Why or why not?
3. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience? What was a key negative moment of your experience? On a scale of 1-10, how critical were each of these moments to your overall experience? (1 is not very critical, 10 is very critical). What makes it a <u>(insert number)?</u>
4. Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected? *Potential probe:* In what ways was your self-efficacy affected? Positive or negative changes? How has time impacted the changes?
5. What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What triggered any changes in your ability to empathize? How has time impacted the changes?
6. What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures? *Potential probe:* What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills? Least effective? How has time impacted the changes?
7. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion? *Potential probe:* If so, how? How has time impacted the changes?
8. Do you think this immersion experience has changed you? *Potential probe:* Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large? Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed? Have any of the changes sustained over time? If so, how?
9. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience? *Potential probe:* Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously? If so, what?
10. What types of reflective processes (process groups, reflection journals, debriefing) did you participate in? *Potential probe*: How did participation in

(insert what participant says) impact your experience? How did group
dynamics impact you?

11. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and
participation in this immersion experience? Given all that we have discussed,
how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor?

12. If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would
you change? How do you think this would have affected your experience?

13. Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other
immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may
be relevant to this study?

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF BRACKETING EXERCISE: RESEARCH TEAM

All four research team members independently completed a bracketing exercise in which they reported their biases and expectations including potential vested interests, personal experiences, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how she/he views the data from the current study. Each team members shared that they had traveled internationally on professional and personally related trips. Biases and expectations from the team are listed below:

- Participants will be more impacted by interactions with community members than by programmatic activities such as site seeing
- Immersion experiences are helpful in increasing empathy, sympathy and understanding people
- Biased towards meaning making, both conscious and unconscious, stating that it will be extremely important to the whole experience.
- 'Vicarious bias' based on conversations with primary researcher and her experiences
- Biased in believing that international immersions are life changing and that participants should have some insights, growths and changes, developmental progressions and changes in self-efficacy, self awareness and empathy
o Immersion experiences have been life changing events, serving as a catalyst for both personal and professional development
- Expectation to have high highs and low lows associated with the immersion, and that the farther geographical locations may yield increased polarized responses as they are seen to be more challenging.
o Expectation for the data to suggest polarized responses based on extent of previous international travel and exposure to people from diverse backgrounds
- Belief in the power of experiential education and need to not only have experience, but process and reflect on what was learned from the activity.
- Bias/expectation that participants that engaged in reflection, were open and connected to the group and immersed for longer periods of time will have positive long term impacts from their immersion.

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTS

TRANSCRIPT #1

J- I am pulling up the XXX questions, are you ready to go?

P- Absolutely!

J- As you know, this is an interview about international immersion experiences. So the first question is, "Can you please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach?"

P-Do you mean describe in what we did or how I reacted to it?

J- Well, let's start with this one, where did you go?

P- Okay, well we went to Southern Africa, the country of South Africa and Botswana.

J- Wow, that's pretty cool. What types of activities did you participate in while you were there?

P- Well, we were there for 3 weeks and so the initial part of the trip, probably the first week or so was really a lot of cultural immersion of being involved in the community and going to see, for a lack of better words, touristy kinds of things, so going to museums, taking tours, going around the city and eating in different places, so really getting a feel for the city, the environment, the different kind of places and cultures in the town and in the places where we were.

J- Okay, so you spent the first part of the trip kind of getting to know the places you were going.

P- Right, right. And the 2nd part of the trip was more of the immersion into the counseling environment. So, we met with a lot of local counselors, we went to a lot of locations, I know for me personally I went into some schools and did some work with school counselors. We also did some work at different orphanages, and a domestic abuse shelter and things like that for the remaining 2 weeks.

J- Okay, so you went to some schools, domestic abuse shelters and also kind of out into the community a little bit.

J- Okay, how did you interact with the local community?

P- As far as what we did when we were out on the sties?

J- Sure.

P- Well, basically what we did was it was kind of an information sharing sort of activity. We gave them perspectives on how we do our counseling in the United States at our sites and we got insight and information about how they do counseling at their sites, some of the techniques they use and different theoretical orientations. You know it was on the background, the trainings, the research they have done, and information they have on the profession of counseling and how they go about doing it with their clients.

J- Okay, so you were able to learn about their methods and they were able to learn about yours.

P- Right, right.

J- So when you reflect on this, what kinds of feelings come to mind?

P- The trip overall?

J- Yeah, I guess so. Over your whole outreach experience. What kinds of feeling do you associate with that?

P- When I think back on it, I guess the two things that pop initially are being grateful, grateful for the chance to get to do something like this, it was an experience you can't get sitting at home or even going out in your local communities because it was so varied and so different being across the world. And then positive. It was a positive experience, as well as far as what I learned and as far as the process of going through the experiences. Now, meaning that all the experiences were not necessarily positive themselves, but the overall experience of being a part of the trip was a positive experience, a positive thing.

J-Okay, gotcha. So, basically you said you had an overall positive experience and you were very grateful for the opportunity, although the trip obviously had its ups and downs throughout the trip.

P- Sure.

J- Gotcha. So, was that you what you expected when you went? Did the experience come out the way you thought it would?

P- I would have to say yes. Although looking back and thinking about it, I really didn't know what to expect as I had never been in that kind of situation before.

P- And I guess I would say that there were some aspects of the interaction amongst us, the people that were on the trip that surprised me. And some of the things that we saw. Mostly the resiliency and the positive-ness that we got from the culture and the people that we were working with that really kind of surprised me.

J- So, the trip was what you expected, but there were a few surprises including interactions with others and how resilient and positive the people were, the people that you were interacting with, despite their difficulties?

E- That's a good summarization.

J- Thanks! Umm, do you think that you were immersed in the culture?

E- I think so, I mean, because we jumped right in. We went right into where they were, and we ate their food, participated in their customs, and you know, there was even a part we were walking around one of the location and some of the people there had never seen a white person before. Umm, so it was quite an experience. So, I would yes, especially when we got into the actual sites and into the schools, we were definitely immersed into the culture versus just being tourists in the beginning part of the experience.

J- So you didn't just get to see the easy cool things that everyone else would normally see.

P- Exactly.

J- Okay, what was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- A positive key highlight would have to be seeing how the people of the culture of southern Africa, the fact that that some of them had obviously had not received the same training as we had in the United States, were not familiar with the research, you know things that we as counselor educators and counselors are so accustomed to utilizing in our fields every day. But to see they still have the skills, the intuition, the knowledge to be effective and appropriate counselors, really kind of blew me away, and left a definite

positive impact on me of the ability of people to do this job as counselors, they are simply using their instincts and relationship building and interpersonal communication and it was just amazing to see it.

J- It sounds like that really encouraged you.

P- Oh yes, it really did. It helped me get my head out of the books and out of the journals, not that it is not important for our profession, but to get out of those things and really put counseling about being with the person, with the client and utilizing the skills you have as a human being. And getting in touch with those and using those to help people dealing with problems.

J- Very cool. If you had to rate them from on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being not very critical, 10 being very critical, how critical was that positive experience?

P- I'll go to a 10. I'll say it was that positive, that critical.

J- Okay. Was there a key negative moment of your experience that you could share?

P- I think the key negative moment or experience during the trip that I saw was some of the power interactions, when I say power I am talking about the people that went on the trip. There were people that there really talked the talk of being multicultural, diverse, aware people as counselors, but yet they did not walk the walk. They kind of ignored some of the local customs and were almost oblivious to certain things that were going on. It was kind of what I was talking about before, how we as people from the U.S. got caught up in how we see the world and there were some people that ignored that. They were self-professed to be culturally diverse counselors. And to see that sometimes, you know, it was the exact opposite of the positive experience; with people not doing what they were supposed to do was probably the most negative experience for me.

J- Okay, so it looks like people set up an expectation or a view of themselves, but then it didn't really seem that they followed through it when they had the opportunity while they were there.

P- Exactly. It didn't match at all and it was hard. It was eye-opening to see that you can't take everyone at what they say, you have to watch what people do.

J- Yeah, I guess that makes a difference. When you pay attention to the actions and see how they match the words.

P- Yes, totally.

J- How critical on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being not very critical, 10 being very critical, how critical was that experience to your overall experience?

P- I would say that was pretty high, even though it was a negative kind of experience, it still a positive in that it helped me to learn and grow from own perspective, so I would probably say an 8 or an 8.5.

J- Okay, and so it sounds like what you are saying is that it really enlightened you in a way and gave you more perspective.

P- Yes.

J- Very cool. Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- I would say so.

J- In what ways was your self-efficacy affected?

P- Define what you mean by self efficacy in that case.

J- I guess your belief in yourself to work with people from other cultures, how was that affected?

P- I would say it enhanced it. Again, it gave me a view of working with people from a very distinct and separate culture and we are not just talking about the simple things like food and dress and appearance. Also, the way they view problems, deal with issues, and the systematic governmental things. To see that it is done differently from all different aspects but it is still getting back to that human relationship that is so vital and important. And the fact that we were half a world away, talking to people that didn't speak our language and had never experienced the things that we experience and vice verse, but we were still able to communicate through those basic human interactions, so seeing that and putting it into use really helped my self efficacy as far what I believe I can do to help anybody from any culture.

J- So the knowledge that you gained as well as the experience helped you to understand that you are capable to work with people from other cultures. And other cultures are not just dress and food as you said, it is a whole life system.

P- Absolutely.

J- Wow, that's a lot. A lot of thing to learn all in one trip.

P- Oh yes.

J- It makes me wonder how much you can hold onto. Do you feel like time has affected those changes you felt from that trip?

P- I would say…a little. I think mostly because of other things getting into your brain and different things you learn and experience, and kind of come to the forefront as times goes on. But I would still say the experience and opportunities I had there are definitely still with me. I would because of the profession I am in, as a professor, I use the experiences and draw upon the stories in the class, for discussion, for assignments, so helps to keep them fresh because as I am still using it on a regular basis.

J- Okay, definitely keeping on exercising them will keep it fresh it sounds like.

P- Right, right. And it also helps just when I am looking at daily life such as watching the news, reading an article, or watching a movie, thinking about it from the perspective of how would this be viewed in this light versus versus that light. So really looking at things in a different way.

J- Like learning a different language almost.

P- Right.

J-You can hear things and say things differently. Were there any negative changes in your ability to counsel people from other cultures?

P- I don't think so, I really don't. Not coming from the experience, I wouldn't say there were any negative things that happened to me.

J- Okay. How about the immersion experience impacting your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P- It definitely helped. It definitely put things in perspective. Like I mentioned, some of the things they were dealing with so amazingly powerful and difficult and to see that strength and that resilience to handle those kinds of things, really impacted me. I am not sure if I answered your questions…I think I strayed off a little bit?

J- I think you did. You talked about how being closer to their experiences and maybe even getting to experience some of what they experienced helped you feel like you were more in their shoes? Does that sound about right?

P- Yeah, yeah.

J- For a moment, so you could then empathize better?

P- Yeah, I think so. For some of the experiences, I know for one…never mind it just left my head. Let's go with what I said.

J- Okay, that sounds great. Do you think that time has impacted those changes at all?

P- No. It is still in the forefront of my mind as well.

J- Great. What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

P- Well definitely just the immersion of being in their sites, working within the context of their culture, their beliefs, their systems, be it, you know, food, dress, the way things were handled, from the arrangement of rooms to the order to which people were supposed to eat and things like that. Being open and willing to accept that this is their style and I am the guest and to be part of that. But also to feel they were also trying to go out of their way as they looked at like they were the host and it is our job to be courteous to the guest as well.

J- Right.

P- And to really see how that balance worked out was incredible.

J- What was the most effective part? And you mentioned quite a few things, was there something that was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills?

P- I guess just the interaction, the conversation and the observation that we had. To see how the counselors there spoke about their clients and things that they did, the techniques, the interventions. In how some of them may have been similar to how they may be used in another context or with a different expected outcome really helped shape that better.

J- Okay. Do you think time has impacted these changes?

P- I would say no again. I think it is still really fresh for me.

J- Okay great. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- Oh yes, I would definitely say that.

J- And how has it changed?

P- In that I definitely try and be more conscious of how I, approach my issues and issues of my clients, or students, or supervisors, and colleagues. To really look at from their perspective as well and try and gain their vision of the world so I can understand and help their work within that context of their reality versus impacting my own or impacting societies on top of it. Of course there has to be balance of what is expected in the real world but to really try and gain that perspective of how they see the world has helped me with my awareness of not judging, not forcing, not threatening or not punishing when it comes to working with a student, a client or even a colleague.

J- Since you work with so many different types of people, it sounds like changing your self awareness has been beneficial in multiple areas.

P- Absolutely. And it has helped me as far as being a teacher, a professor, helping students to gain that perspective as well. Be it through sharing my experiences, lesson plans that we do, activities that we do, or interactions that we have inside or outside the classroom setting.

J- Do you think time has impacted your changes? It sounds like you had that change and it kept growing?

P- Almost. I would almost say that. I would say that time has had no affect on that at all.

J- Okay. Do you think the immersion experience has changed you?

P- I would say that it has definitely changed parts of me. Especially my professional parts, of course, you know, have been changed significantly. But I would say personally I have changed as well in how I view the world and how I view our friends and neighbors across the pond and around the world. And I would say yes.

J- So, your worldview particularly.

J—Do you think people who have known you since before your immersion, have they said you have changed since you have come back from that?

P- Not to me. They have never said anything about it to me. I think…

J- And would you—Oh, sorry.

P- No, go ahead.

J- Okay. And would you characterize those changes as small, medium or large changes?

P- Well to me, I would say they were large changes. Again, it may not have been that they were outward as much as I have not had people really say anything. But for me personally, I think in the way I view the world it would be a large change.

J- Okay. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- I would say that even before the immersion experience I have always had the idea that gaining others perspectives or gaining their view of their worldview of how they see things, what's important, how their problems, what they want, how they want things to end up. But I think this trip really helped emphasize that, to really not just do it as lip service or to do it because that's what we say we do, but to truly work with student or clients with colleagues, with friends and family, to truly understand how they see the world, what they view as quality and important and to really help them to develop skills, techniques, ideas to get the most out of life and to live the happiest life they can.

J- That sounds like that connects back to what you said before, to people maybe not having all of those academic resources but that they were very effective in their jobs and that it is one of the core parts of being a counselor is connecting with people on a human level.

P- Absolutely. Absolutely.

J- Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

P- I think the thing, and I haven't brought it to fruition yet, but I think the thing that I hadn't thought about before this experience, that I would like to do is to bring my students to participate in more immersion experiences. And even if it's not at the international level like we did, but just getting out into the community to do things. And unfortunately, where I am now, our setup is not best designed for those kind of

interactions as most of our students are working students, so they work all day and come to class at night. So it is hard to find the time or experiences for them to get out into the community that doesn't impact or infringe on their time at work or with friends and family and so forth. But that is something that I definitely want to incorporate and bring into my teaching styles future counselors.

J- So it has changed a little bit of your teaching method. You definitely seem to value the 'getting your hands dirty' so to speak method.

P- Absolutely.

J- So, during your immersion, what types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- Well, we had to keep a daily journal for every day we were there. We also, for everyday that we were there had group process meetings if you will, every night. I think that was all we were required to do.

J- Did you participate in anything else, like conversations with roommates, or any other debriefings that were helpful to you?

P- Oh yeah. Absolutely.

J- How did those reflective processes impact your experience.

P- They were positive. Some of the group process, you know the large group process that we did get out of control sometimes, out of hand. As far as some things that were said, some of the things that were implied, some of the things that weren't said, if you will. There was almost an air of superiority at times and it came through that way, between, you know there were different levels of people on the trip as far as education and things like that and those kind of difference were kind of seen. You know it's very interesting, we were on a cultural immersion trip to talk about connecting and linking and being a part of the same cultures, and yet even amongst ourselves you saw the differences and divisions and they were made apparent at times. So I think that was a bit of a drawback, it goes to show, I think we had almost 40 some people that were trying to do a group process every night and it was almost too much.

J- That's a lot of people to try and hear everyone.

P- Exactly. And that's a lot of perspectives, a lot of ideas, so it was difficult at times. Sometimes you know it almost felt like it was forced, it was just uncomfortable from time to time. But I think the idea of it was justified and in the right place, but it just got out of control sometimes. Which is why I think the smaller types of group discussions that went on were more beneficial.

J- Yeah, it sounds like a smaller group may foster more trust and intimacy than a group of 40 people.

J- Especially considering the different ranks or however you said it of people and education.

P- That's a good way to describe it, ranks.

J- The thing that popped into my head was like a caste system, so the ranks kind of goes along with that.

P- Yes.

J- Okay, let's see what the next question is. Oh, I guess you kind of answered this already, but do you have anything more to say about how group dynamics impacted you?

P- Well, I think from the perspective of the processes that is kind of how it was. But as far as just the group and being there, you saw the splitting out about who went with who and who hung out with who. And obviously there were grad students on the trip and faculty on the trip and it was blatant that the grad students gravitated towards the grad students and faculty gravitated towards the faculty. And to really see those dynamics of the group interactions, it was blatant, it was very evident.

J- Would you have liked to have seen something changed about that?

P-I think the only way something could have been changed was if the group was smaller. Since it was such a large group, that I think that kind of delineation of people going out, it was bound to happen. It was a natural progression of human nature, and you kind of flock towards your people, people you know were comfortable with. And us graduate students, we were roommates, we were all staying together so it was just a natural delineation of how we ended up being together. And I think the only way to stop anything like that were it to be a smaller group.

J- I see. Is there anything else about your immersion experience that you would change if you could?

P- I don't really think so, of the top of my head. There were some things that went really well, there were some things that didn't, but I think for the most part it was a good experience the way it was and I don't think I would change anything about it.

J- Thank you. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- It definitely gave meaning to me, I made meaning from it as far as learning, like we have talked about, the perspective taking, relying on my own skills and intuition as a human being, utilization of the experiences and the knowledge that I gained and sharing it with others through my personal communication, through my teachings, through counseling, through supervision and so on and so forth. So it has been very meaningful, very useful to me.

J- So it seems like what it meant to you was a useful, educational experience that you just can't help but share and use as much as you can.

P- Absolutely. It goes into every class that I have taught, it has made its way into supervision sessions in some way, shape or form.

J- Wow, it sounds like it has really permeated your entire teaching career.

P- Absolutely, from a professional standpoint, it is a strong piece of everything I do.

J- So, given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor?

P- That's a difficult question as I have not done a whole lot of work as counselor since then.

J- Okay.

P- Because when I did this, I was a PhD student and getting into counselor education, so my focus has really been on teaching and supervision since then. But I would definitely say it has enhanced both of those, the teaching and supervision.

J- Right.

P- So, can I substitute those 2 things for counseling?

J- Well I know as my own experience as a student, often the supervision session, I know my supervisor utilizes a lot of counseling during the supervision session. Would you say that you use a lot of counseling skills during supervision?

P- Well sure. And in advising and teaching as well.

J- Yeah. You kind of get around using all those times.

P- You can't. It goes back to what we were talking about, using those human skills to build relationships such as listening, being empathic, you know, gaining perspectives, helping people realize what they want and what they need and helping them get there, making those things reality. I don't see those things as different issues, I think they just have different environments and different names.

J- Right, different applications. Thank you for sharing that. So here's the last question, is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P-Nothing that I can think of. The questions covered everything regarding the experience that I can think of.

J- Okay.

P- I would say no.

J- Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate your answering your questions.

P- Is there anything else you need from me or is this end?

J- I am not sure, but X will get back in touch with you if needed.

P- Well great, it was so much fun talking with you and if you need anything, let me know.

J- Thanks!

TRANSCRIPT #2

J- Hi XXX, this is Jemma. How are you?

P- Hi, I am good.

J- I am calling to do our immersion interview, are you ready to go?

P- Yes!

J- Okay great. While we are doing this and responding to the question I would like you reflect on your most salient immersion experience as you respond to the interview questions. So we can start out by you describe your experiences. Where did you go?

P- Okay, so we went to South Africa and Botswana. In South Africa we were in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

J- Okay. So what types of activities did you participate when you were there?

P- When we were there we did some cultural immersion activities, we went to museums, we went to historic sites that would be meaningful for the people we would be working with, historical sites for South Africa, that was interesting and then we also visited

different community centers where we would get a chance to talk with and meet people and we could learn from their experiences.

J- Okay, and how did you interact with them. You said you talked with them, did you do anything else with the local community?

P- We did have a roundtable at a conference that was held at University of Botswana, it was mostly like we were talking with them, but also sort of exchanging cultural, I guess they would share songs, art and dance with us and we would talk about our experiences.

J- Okay, that's cool. What feelings come to mind when you reflect on your experience?

P- I have sort of mixed feelings, I suppose. I enjoyed the outreach, I think learned a lot. But then sometimes when I think of the experience I get kind of sad about it. But then I also feel proud. I am trying to think of more feeling words.

J- No, that's great. Tell me more about what you mean when you say you get sad.

P- Well, I think that is more of my personal experience having gone down there, I don't know if I was necessarily in a good place in my own life, I felt isolated from the group a lot, I was homesick a lot when I was down there. I did not have the best relationship with some of the group members. So looking back, it wasn't necessarily a very happy time personally, but also I think you know there was some sadness about the living conditions and their experiences. So it is kind of a mixed sadness.

J- So it sounds like you had your own stuff going on and being faced with some of the realities of what people were dealing with was a little saddening.

P- Right.

J- Okay. So, was the experience what you expected?

P- Yes and no. I guess I didn't really have many expectations going into it. I felt like I did learn something and grow from the experience. I don't really know what my expectations were going in. But I guess it did meet some of those expectations. I thought that maybe I wouldn't have had as many interpersonal problems with those I had traveled with, so in that regard, it did not meet my expectations.

J- Okay, so it sounds like the group dynamics was a big factor with how you felt about the trip.

P- It was. And I know there were other people that we were down there with that were having similar experiences or similar problems sort of fitting in with the group, so I guess there were 1-2 people that I felt that I could connect with, but as a whole, the group dynamics never sat well with me.

J- Okay, if that were to change, would that have made the trip better?

P- Absolutely. Absolutely.

J- Okay. Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture?

P- I do, I do. I feel like I got a good sense of who they were, what the culture was like, I think that was one the positive aspects of the trip.

J- Okay. What was one of the key positive highlights of your immersion experience?

P- I met some really fantastic people locally that I still keep in touch with via emails and letters and learning about their worldviews and understanding how these people could go through the kind of things they experienced through Apartheid and come out with a stronger role and an understanding of forgiveness and change, that was definitely a positive aspect of the trip.

J- Okay. That was really cool. So, the main positive was to interact with all of the main elements of the community that you were with. So, it you could rate that positive highlight on a scale of 1-10, how critical was that experience to your overall experience with 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical?

J- The scale is 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical.

P- I would say a 5, I would say it is right in the middle.

J- Okay, and what made it a 5?

P- I guess I don't really know. It is hard to say, it is kind of an abstract feeling, so it is hard to put my finger on it or what made it a 5. I also feel like at this point, it was 3 years ago and my life has changed so much since then, and I have had a lot of time to process everything that has happened, it's sort of hard to recall the details with such clarity because I have done a lot of reading, a lot of writing, a lot of time thinking on my experience there, it is hard for me to go back to that place and think of exact feelings and emotions because in a positive way, I can put the experience behind me. So, I don't know, in the most positive way possible, when I came home from the immersion I really did not think of it at all a very positive thing. Having had time to reflect I think I have been able to recall some more of the… I have been able to process some of positive things that came from that, but at the time when I came home I was really very upset with the way that it had gone. I don't know. I even had some thoughts of doing this immersion interview because I wasn't sure if I wanted to go back there as I kind of thought I have put it all behind me and I didn't know how much I could share that would useful, but I wanted to do it for X.

J- Sure.

P- I am not sure if that answers the question of why I have clarity or why I don't.

J- No, I think that's a great answer. And not everyone that went on the trip is going to come back with a shiny smile, everyone's experience has got to be different and I really appreciate you sharing yours for sure. Okay, so this may be an easier question, what is a key negative moment of your experience?

P- I would say that I was really disappointed in the leaders of the trip. And I think that I was disappointed in the it seems like, the pleasure they got out of the dichotomy of those included and those excluded…so that would be one of…

J- Wow.

P- Yeah. I don't know. I kind of left not really having much respect for some of the people that had organized the trip.

J- So, when you say included and excluded do you mean like in certain social groups or what do you mean?

P- Yeah, I guess I would certain social groups and cultural groups. I thought that there were some things that sort of came out that had challenged what my belief was in social justice and inclusion of the 'other' as far as multicultural minorities would be. So…

J- Okay, so how would you rate that, how critical was that to your experience?

P- That was very critical. I would an 8 or 9.

J- Okay, and what makes it an 8 or an 9.

P- I guess because I was the one who was excluded. Because I spent several weeks with a group of people that I wasn't on the same page with.

J- And that didn't feel good at all.

P- No, it didn't. And I think it challenged my idea of what our whole purpose of going down to do the immersion was. Going down into the cultural immersion, I thought that would have certainly been a time when that would not have been tolerated.

J- Gotcha. So, you almost like you expected the whole purpose of the trip was to share and be inclusive and then you got down there and it was your turn to be the outsider.

P- Right. Exactly.

J- That does not sound like it felt very good.

P-No.

J- How has your participation in the immersion experience impacted your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P- I think it really gave me if anything gave me the opportunity to be a minority in a situation and that did not feel very good, I think it maybe provided an opportunity of growth for me to possibly gain more empathy and made me understand what it was like to that 'other.' So, I do think it really did help me gain more empathy for others.

J- In that way, it almost sounds like it was a 'dunking' experience more than an immersion experience as you kind of got pushed into it.

P- Yeah. (laughs).

J- Umm, what triggered any changes in your ability to empathize? Anything particularly that helped you to understand better?

P- I would say just sort of the whole experience of what I have already shared and what we have been talking about, the whole thing from start to finish I just sort of felt, I guess the only way I can say it is more of an outsider of the group, so I think the whole experience you know was crucial to that development of gaining empathy.

J- And how has time impacted those changes that were made in your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P- Well, like I had said, it has been a quite a bit of time and I really did take that opportunity to process on my own, to read and to write about my experience and journal and talk with people that may not have been on the experience. I did actually go to therapy after the experience and did share a lot of it with my therapist to work through that. I would say that time has been a great thing of that ability, I don't know if this would be the same conversation if it was immediately after I had come back.

J- So do you think your ability to empathize was retained?

P- Yes.

J- Okay. And what aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

P- I would say that one of the things that was done really well was trying to prepare us beforehand by doing lectures, discussions, videos, and books that we really tried to get a sense of the culture before we left. And then we did have a lot of opportunities to talk with the local people, visit museums and kind of get a historical perspective on site, so I would both of those things were really great.

J- So was there anything, what you say was the most effective in developing your cultural skills?

P- I would say meeting with individuals on location, probably.

J- Okay, meeting individuals on location. What would you say was the least effective?

P- I would say probably, even though I personally enjoyed it, I would say museum visits. Although I did enjoy it personally, I am not sure if it was effective from a training perspective.

J- And how would you say time has impacted the changes in your ability to work with people from other cultures?

P- I would say greatly. As I have a lot more experience now then I did at that point, I have 3 years more experience. So, the question is how has time impacted my ability to work with other people or development of my counseling skills?

J- Well, not exactly. More specifically, your skills of working with people with working with people from other cultures.

P- I would still say it is big factor as I have had more opportunities to work with people from other cultures and learn from that experience.

J- Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- I would say absolutely. I would say that yes, I would say that my self awareness has definitely become more clear, I feel more self aware, I feel I have more insight. But I think that also has to with the amount of time I spent a lot of time I spent processing the trip and looking at my own behavior and how that may have impacted those around me. So, the counseling process after coming home was the key to that change in my self awareness.

J- Umm-hhh.

P- But of course that is of course directly connected to the immersion experience.

J- So the immersion experience provided a lot of material for you to bring back home and examine yourself.

P- Right.

J- Do you think time has impacted those changes? Do you think you have become more or less self aware since then?

P- I would say more.

J- Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- I do, I do. I definitely think it has changed me. And in the end, I think it has been for the better. I, you know, it is really hard to tease out what prompts changes in your life, you know whether it is emotional maturity, or time, or any other experiences that can really impact you towards positive self growth. You know, I would say the immersion experience really was a turning point in my life that prompted self growth and personal development. And professional development.

J- Okay, do you want to say anything more about any more of those specifically of how it has prompted growth?

P- You know, again, it is really so hard to tease all of that out. I think at this point, you know its weird, I don't really have so much to say on the experience… you know, I kind of feel like I haven't thought about it for a long time, so it is hard to come up with the right words and feelings that would really describe some of these questions that you are asking.

J-Would you characterize these changes as small, medium, or large?

P- I would say that they are probably medium changes, medium to big changes.

J- Okay, and do you think people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- I think so, I definitely think so. And I would say probably if you asked the people that I went on the immersion experience, the group that made up the participants, I would so say and that my relationships with all of them is much better now than it was when we went, and I would say that they might say that I have changed.

J- Okay. Has anyone said anything to you about it?

P- No.

J- Okay. Have any of the changes in yourself sustained over time?

P- I would say a good bit. You know, and it is hard to say if it was the immersion or the counseling, but the immersion provided all of the material for the counseling process and I don't necessarily know if I would have had so many changes and so many positive changes had I not sought that post immersion.

J- Gotcha. Okay, so you think counseling was a really key process into how your changes were sustained and were made into something positive.

P- Yes. And I think I would probably say, and again this is unsolicited but that you know, I could have imagined that a lot of people could have benefited from counseling from someone that had gone on the trip where they could have shared their individual experiences and they could have processed it because you know it really was a heavy 3 or 4 weeks. We were doing a lot of stuff that was very emotionally difficult, hearing a lot of stories that were difficult, seeing things that were moving and then in your own process and whatever is going on with you that affects all of those things. I just think it would have been very beneficial for anyone to have sought out counseling post immersion experience.

J- Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- Well again, it is kind of a hard question. I don't, You know my lifestyle, I mean as far as an interest in the area, I think I would want to go back for a visit that wouldn't be a cultural immersion, I think there is a lot of the culture that we didn't get to see and there is a lot of fun stuff to do in South Africa and Botswana, a lot of wildlife, a lot of scenery to take in and obviously it was not the focus of the trip. So I think it piqued my interest in traveling back to the area.

J- Okay.

P- And I mean lifestyle..I don't know. I guess that is the best answer for that question.

J- Okay. Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously, like other than the travel?

P- I guess, you know, I don't know if its directly related, I think I have more of an interest in teaching at the university level. I don't know if that was a career path I had planned to take, but something about the experience, you know becoming a leader in an Africa area. But I can probably say I don't ever want to do another immersion experience. Unless, you know maybe it was also a tough place for me to do my first immersion experience. I know a lot of other people on the trip had first gone to New Orleans after Katrina that may have helped, being a little bit more on my own soil, kind of feeling like I am still connected to my own culture and not feel like I am isolated. I

think the isolation piece also came because I was in a foreign country and I didn't feel connected to the Americans I was with. So maybe having had this as my first immersion experience would probably keep me from doing another immersion.

J- Okay, was there anybody on the trip that you connected with?

P- There were, and I maintained pretty close friendships with them after the immersion experience was over.

J- Okay. So what types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- Like I said, journaling, and therapy. I did not participate, but it was offered to us to do some reflecting processing as the group when we got back, but I choose to not participate in it.

J- How big was the group?

P- It's so weird, I can't even say that I could identify the size, maybe 10 or 15 people? I don't know.

J- Okay, did you have any mandatory processing groups?

P- I think there were probably as mandatory as you could make a process group. And we did, we had mandatory groups while we were in South Africa and Botswana, every single day, we were required to go. And when we got home, they were also mandatory, but what I was saying to myself was 'you cant tell me I have to go to something' we have already finished and I have already had my 'fun.' So, I chose to do the processing on my own.

J- Okay, how did the participation in those groups affect your process?

P- I found those to be one of the more negative pieces of the trip. Probably only because of the content of the process.

J- What was it about the content that was really negative?

P- It's so hard to really out my finger on it, but you know, I always left feeling really bad about myself or bad other group members, it just sort of felt that there was a lot of discourse in that process or a lot of finger pointing or blaming and I just didn't feel like it was a place where I felt like I could speak openly. I didn't feel like I could trust in that group to be able to process my experience, I don't know.

J- That makes sense. I hear what you are saying. Is there anything you would have changed about the processing that would have made it a little better or more approachable?

P- I think that not always is everyone ready to process and with the same amount of disclosure, I think that you know, being sort of forced to participate in those groups, I mean you were forced to share, I could see just sitting there, but you had to share and I didn't always feel comfortable with that.

J- Okay, so maybe more voluntary instead of mandatory?

P- Right.

J- What about any journals or debriefing?

P- Yeah, we were required to keep journals and do some debriefing.

J- How did the journals impact your experience?

P- Well, kind of in the same way as I didn't really put everything into the journals because I knew at some point we needed to type them up when we came home and turn them in. I knew this project was going to published in the end and maybe in a manuscript and I found it very invasive that they required us to provide our journals after the

experience. So the journal that I was required to keep and the journal I privately kept were two entirely different things.

J- Okay. And what about your private journal was that helpful and did it impact your experience?

P- Yeah, I do think it was helpful. I mean I haven't looked at in some time, but I would kind of be curious to see if I had those same feelings or if I have moved on, I think I have moved on from the feelings that I had during that time. I would say, yes that was more helpful than the other journals.

J- Okay. So, I have a question here that you have kind of already answered, but if you have anything more to say, I would love to hear it. How did group dynamics impact you?

P- It was a big impact, I mean I would also add to that that I was new to the University of XXX, as I had gotten my Master's in XXX and felt that a lot of people in the program were friends from the Ed.S program and moving into the doctoral program there. I knew that a lot of people had friends from previous years that they were going on the trip with. I had hoped that it might provide an opportunity for me to get close to my cohort or make some friends in the program. And that did happen, I did make some good friends. And then I met some people that I certainly did not ever want to spend time with again. But I think that might be a part of any group. But the group dynamic as a whole was unlike any group dynamic I had ever seen before or since really.

J- Yeah, it sounds like some good, some not so great. And it has come up a lot so far, the group and the way people interacted was something that colored your experience.

P- Right.

J- What meaning have you made from your overall experience?

P- I guess that has some significant meaning in that I hope we did some good work and we are remembered positively by those we interacted with, and for me personally, like I said, it provided me with some opportunities for growth, insight and development. So overall, I do think it has had some significant meaning.

J- Okay. So, if you could change anything of your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- I don't know where to begin! I can honestly say that I would go in more open-minded. I can say that my experience has something to do with my own, where I was in my life at that point. I would say that I would go in with more of an open mind and take into account where I am in my own life before I was to go on an experience like that.

J –Okay. When you say open-mind, how do you think you would or could open your mind more, what would be a part of that process?

P- Well, certainly the experience that I had would allow me to go in with an understanding of what to expect. So, I went in not knowing what to expect and then when it didn't feel right, I sort of was a participant in closing myself off. I felt that I got challenged and hurt right off the bat. So, maybe an open mind means discussing more of those issues, even though I didn't feel like I could trust the people to discuss them with, I didn't feel like I gave them a chance to change.

J- Okay.

P- And that is more of a life lesson that could be applied to this situation as well.

J- That's valuable information for sure. How could this have affected your experience, if you trusted the people more or had a more open mind?

P- I am sure it would have probably changed a little bit. But again, the preexisting friendships, they had known each other for years and I was brand new to the situation. I can only hope it would change, I would hope they would have given me an opportunity to feel more included. But I don't know, I can only speculate.

J- That's okay. So given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor?

P- I guess it has impacted my work as a counselor, I don't know. I don't really think about it that much, so maybe it has subconsciously impacted my work. So I don't know if it has, I mean we talked about the empathy piece and the feeling of being 'other' so I think those are it.

J- Okay. That sounds like an important piece in counseling skills to get a chance to feel what it feels like to be an outsider. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience that I have not already touched on that might be relevant to the study?

P- No, I think we touched on a lot of what I had taken from the experience. I guess I feel that I don't really want to put such a negative light on it because I am sure that people have very positive experiences and I do take some responsibility for my experience but umm, I guess I don't really have much more to say.

J- Well thank you very much for your time and for answering all of the questions. Is there anything I can pass along to X for you?

P- I would tell her everything I told you, but I am curious if our names are connected to the interviews? I am sure she could figure it out anyways.

J- I am not sure, the paper I have talks about how I am keeping the file confidential and I know that the files are destroyed once they are transcribed.

P- Okay, that's fine. I just don't want her to, I mean I have come a very long way since that time and my relationship with her has developed since that time and I just don't want anything to, or be any negative feelings. But I would rather honest.

J- I think that is a good standpoint to come from and what will help the study the most. And maybe with your feedback, it can be improved. And people will take this information and provide more privacy in the reflection or something like that.

P- Yes definitely. Well thank you and best of luck to X!

TRANSCRIPT #3

J- Hi, how are you? Are you ready for the interview this morning?

P- Sure!

J- Okay, while we are talking, please reflect on your most salient immersion experience as you respond to the interview questions. You can start by describing your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go?

P- I was in Bolivia and the surrounding areas.

J- Okay, what types of activities did you participate it?

P- Let's see, there were so many. We went to several orphanages, both for older kids, girls and boys, and also infant to 3 year olds. We also brought children's books as there is only one children's library in the country. Let's see, we also visited a public university and private Catholic university, where we had some language exchanges with the students there. Those were the service oriented activities and then we did a whole lot with the person who acted like our guide.

J- How many people did you go on the trip with?

P- There were 10 of us.

J- Who was the trip organized?

P- It was organized by XXX University. It was counseling students. I had already graduated from the program but was working on a certificate, so I was in a little different place than some of the students.

J- Do you think that had an effect, because you were in a little different place from the other students?

P- Yeah, I think it probably did because I was getting ready to close out my expressive arts therapy, so it was kind of a culminating experience for my whole graduate experience. And I had done that in my undergrad, I had gone to Spain for several weeks after I graduated. I kind of intentionally planned this as I wanted to do it like a culminating experience.

J- Okay, so while you were there what ways did you interact with the local community?

P- Well let's see. We had 2 guides down there, X and his wife, Y that had a long standing relationship with XXX University. And, so that was what was really impactful for me, forming a relationship with them. They were with us pretty much the whole time we were awake during the day, so we got to be pretty close to them. We celebrated X's birthday with extended family and you know he took us around and showed us what was important to him. He was able to share an insider's perspective of some of the social and cultural issues the country is facing. And so it was nice to have someone within the culture who was there really exclusively for us. You are definitely still an outsider, but you don't feel as much like a tourist, you are there with a purpose and have someone on the inside who is advocating for you during the trip. That was important.

J- So spending time with them helped you and it was an important part of your trip.

P- Yes.

J- Was there any other ways you interacted with the community, maybe besides your host family?

P- Yeah, we walked around everywhere. We went to La Concha, which is the largest outdoor air market. Which is where everyone goes to do all of their shopping, whether it be for food, clothes or animals. We went there several times. And the exchanges with the students at the University, meeting X's family. There were a lot of ways that we came into contact with the people down there.

J- So while you are reflecting on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- It was a really good trip for me. I guess I feel a little nostalgic and really grateful for the opportunity. I think that it kind of helped to formulate my direction after graduate

school which is kind of why I did it. I think it was a good opportunity for me to kind of be in a leadership role. That was not something that I was expecting, but I do speak some Spanish so I was able to help some students out by translating and stuff. And most of the students on the trip got sick, but I did not so I was in a position where I was helping and had the Spanish ability so I was able to communicate with the doctors.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- You know, I am not really sure what I expected. But it was what I hoped for. It was a really meaningful experience that helped me to reflect on my whole graduate career but also helped point me in a direction for the future, I guess in that way, it was what I hoped for. But you know the details of the trip and what I experienced there, I wasn't really sure what to expect. It was great, I loved it.

J- Okay. Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture?

P- I do. I mean, we were staying at a relatively nice hotel, and we living in a nicer place than your average place person that lives there. You know, we were not living with or staying with local family. It was definitely an immersion experience, but it wasn't, you know I think there are different levels of that. We were with our group the whole time and staying at a hotel. We were immersed, but not to the greatest degree probably possible.

J- So, there was still some time when you came back and resumed your culture in a way?

P- Yeah, I guess when you are traveling with a group that is part of the sacrifice. You know everyone having their meals and speaking in English together, and that kind of a thing. And that is just part of being a group. But I think we definitely still had the immersion experience, and I think for people that didn't speak Spanish and had never traveled internationally before, they were very grateful to have that group time where we were speaking English. We had a group process every night where people could kind of reflect on their immersion experience of the day, but they could do it in the context and safety of the known, you know?

J- Okay. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- I think for me probably what will stay with me was the relationships I formed with our host family down there, that type of connection. I still keep in contact with them, and I still think about the social issues the country is facing, problems that don't have easy solutions and are really complicated. But the relationships I have formed were probably the highlight of my experience.

J- On a scale of 1-10, how critical was that experience to your overall experience, with 1 being not very critical, 10 is very critical?

P- I would say a 10. We would not have had any kind of the experience we did without them.

J- What was a key negative moment of your experience?

P- I mean, I really had such a positive experience there. I guess a key negative was when students did not listen to common sense things like don't eat the lettuce and then they got sick as that impacted the whole entire group. And some students felt better with being sick than others. There was one student who had kind of a negative attitude and had the potential to be kind of a divisive factor in the group.

J- Okay. And how critical was that experience to your overall experience, with 1 being not very critical, 10 is very critical?

P- For me, it was a 1. Because I am not going to, you know I still had a positive experience but I didn't let that persons negative attitude impact my experience.

J-Okay. Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- I think it was. You know you see what people value when you are immersed in the culture. To me it was evident that families, community, religion, spirituality, those kinds of things were really important to the people of Bolivia. Our guide, X, told us that there was something he hoped we took with us, that those values are important for all people in the Hispanic culture. I could really see where their society was set up to support those values. So kind of seeing the inside out was helpful for me in counseling Hispanic families, you know here in the States.

J- So, definitely you learned some about Latino/Hispanic culture that gives you some insight into your work here?

P- Yes.

J- Great! In what ways was your self-efficacy affected?

P- I think that was one of the more salient things for me. I had never owned or claimed my ability to speak Spanish. Because I was one of the few people who was not sick on the trip, I was kind of put into a position where I needed to speak Spanish in order to help the group. And I did, and quiet honestly I was kind of surprised I could get along as well as I could. So, that was pretty huge for me. And, I can translate that to other experiences of my life, where I may be more critical or doubting myself in situations where I don't need to be critical or doubt myself. And you know, I just need to put myself out there and trust that I can handle it. That was pretty big for me.

J- Okay. How about as a counselor, was your self efficacy as counselor affected?

P- I don't know. You know, as I said, being exposed to the Latino culture that was pretty helpful. And anytime you are taken outside of your comfort zone, and put into a situation that is new or different, you learn things about yourself and have that feeling of 'oh, this is what it feels like.' And I think that our clients, definitely feel like that coming into counseling, so I think that it probably did help me, my self efficacy as a counselor as I had that experience of being some place new and some place different, negotiating all of the time, you know my own internal emotions that went on and things around me, and finding my own resources in the process and parallel process that our clients experience in the context of counseling.

J- How has time impacted the changes in your self efficacy?

P- You know, I don't know. Just that underlying message to trust yourself, it is okay to be in new unfamiliar places, to just go with it and see what happens. And it's kind of a process of letting go really, and I think that idea has stuck with me since the trip.

J- Okay. So it has lasted pretty well since the trip?

P- Yes, yes it has.

J- Would you say your self awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- I would. I think that anytime you are in a new place, have a new experience, especially an immersion experience, I strongly believe in immersion experience and feel they are the best way to learn, I think any time you are in an immersion experience you learn new

things about yourself. And that was definitely true to me, so it definitely impacted my self awareness.

J- Can you say more about how it impacted your self awareness?

P- Well, I think that I was in a position of leadership that I was not expecting. I really remembered that I loved that, that I feel like I am pretty good at that. I love facilitating or helping to facilitate group experiences, and it was just a reminder, gosh this something that I really love, and that has been pretty informative of where am I going from here. And I did end up applying to a PhD program and I do think the whole Bolivia immersion experience was pretty key to making that decision.

J- It sounds like it had an important impact on you and gave you some valuable information about you.

P- You know, another thing that has really stuck with me is that when you are in another culture and you are immersed in another experience, you know your lens expands, the lens in which you see the world expands. You, or at least I, it forced me to kind of think bigger. I have traveled quite bit, and I think it is important to have experiences that make us think bigger. And that immersion experience was definitely one of those for me.

J- So think bigger meaning beyond yourself and beyond your culture. Anything else?

P- Yes, beyond me, beyond my culture but also beyond getting out of your comfort zone, beyond your daily routine, putting yourself in a completely new situation, completely new everything, and that reminder that the world is a big place. It made me think bigger, think beyond the job I am currently doing, beyond the mountains I live in, and consider a more global perspective, a larger lens.

J- How do you think time has impacted the changes in your self awareness?

P- Well, the changes have been pretty stable, pretty lasting for me. Like I said, I don't know that I would have applied to the PhD program at least at this time, had it not been for the trip. And so because I was able to see myself in that position, and recognize that's something I really love and I did feel the increase in self efficacy, it pushed me to take steps once I got back and recognize how I can make this a part of my life, this is something I really love. How can I make this a part of my life? And pushed me to take those steps much, much sooner than I would have otherwise, and so because I saw myself in that capacity there, like that, I am still able to still see myself in that capacity now and can use that as I keep going forward.

J- So it really had a lasting impact on you?

P- Yes, it really did.

J- Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- Yes, definitely! I know you will want me to say more about that. Well, for one, I think that I recognize that I really connected with our host family down there. There were things about the culture that I loved. And I realized that my own sense of community here has been lacking in a way, since graduate school ended and that is something that is important to me and kind of filled me up when I was there. So, trying to create that sense of community here is not as easy as our culture is not set up in the same way. But it is something that I value and want to make an effort towards.

J- Okay. Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large?

P- I would say large changes. You know recognizing myself in a leadership role, that was huge, a sense of community and feeling connected to people, that was huge and also the thinking bigger. Even if we are aware counselors and have traveled a lot and are very of diversity and that kind of thing, I think that inadvertently there can still tend to creep in a sense of cultural encapsulation. I think it is a natural process that happens inadvertently and I think it is important to have experiences that do completely throw you out of your comfort zone and naturally force you to think bigger. And when you are dealing with a stressor it kind of helps to keep that perspective.

J- Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- I don't know that they would say that I have changed as far as my personality or anything like that. I think they recognize that it was a really formative, important experience for me, it forced me to think bigger and really helped to find that next step on my path. And so they recognized that it was a really important experience that did not maybe change me, but helped to bring out that which was already in me and see that.

J- So, you think people may have noticed it in you, but have not necessarily brought up. But you think they have noticed that this was a life changing event?

P- Yes.

J- Okay. You have kind of already spoken to this but do you feel like any of the changes sustained over time? Or how did you get the changes to sustain?

P- That's a good question. I will say that I had a really difficult time, not transition to Bolivia that was easy for me. But transitioning back, that was really very difficult for me. I am not sure if it was reverse culture shock or what, but I had a very, very difficult time transitioning back. And I think whenever something shakes you up that much, you tend to pay attention to it and reflect on it. What was it about that experience that made it so difficult for me to transition back. And if it is something about my life here, what about my life here that is making it so difficult to fall back into? So it made me question my life here and it made me realize about what I want, and so I mean it was very unsettling, but unsettling in a good way, ultimately.

J- So, in a way, it sounds like you reflected back on your experience pretty regularly which kept some of these changes alive. And the reason was because it was such a struggle to come back here and get into your regular life again after the trip.

P- Yes. And I raised money for a project in Bolivia. I raised money to buy alpacas and llamas for people living in an Altiplano in Bolivia and a church that I grew up in supported me in that. I have since gone back and have done a presentation for them on my trip, so that involved pretty deep reflection, I put together a book of photos. I think whenever you initially get back from a trip you are kind of looking at things chronologically and even looking at my journal while I was there was all chronological, but I think over time themes kind of emerge. We went on our trip in May, but I did this presentation in December, so 5 months had gone by and so I think there was that kind of thing, you know it is always something I think about, but sitting down and really putting things together for that presentation really helped me in my reflection. The other thing I would say, in June, we had our final process group back in the States and came back together as a group again. We skyped in X and Y from Bolivia and had our final group

and I think that was really important, it was still a short time after our trip, but I think it is important to have that reflection on this side of things as well.

J- It sounds like you had some really good opportunities in reflection, so you soaked up every last bit of what you could get out of the trip by making sure you processed it and reviewed it and came back and presented it.

P- Right.

J- Do you think that helped a lot, would it have been much different for you had you not had all of those processes and reflections to bring it back up?

P- I am sure it would have been different, people are different and people can slip back into things really easily. For me, it wasn't really a choice as I felt pretty unsettled coming back, so I had to reflect on it. I think it helped to have all of that, to that presentation for the church, I think it wouldn't have changed my experience had I not done that, because I still would have been doing that work internally and probably would have put together the book, but I still think that it helped to formulate your experience and digest everything further.

J- Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- Well, I applied to a PhD program, so that was pretty life changing. And I would in my, I know in my relationships they have probably changed. I don't know, it was pretty rough for relationship initially because I was so unsettled coming back. Figuring out that I probably couldn't move to Bolivia, you know but what was it about being in Bolivia that I loved so much and how can I make it more a part of my life? And I think that you know has changed.

J- What are the parts of Bolivia that you loved and maybe wanted to bring back with you?

P- Well, the parts that I loved when I was there was that there was a sense of community, you know X knew people walking down the streets, people would say hi. And the place where he worked was very much like a family for him, his extended family was close by, so you know, family and community were very important. They were celebrating everything all of the time, that attitude of celebration was something that I want to have more of in my life. You know, you turn on the news and there is doom and gloom everywhere, but that is not something I want to, I would rather live with the attitude of celebration, so that is something I saw in Bolivia that I would like to incorporate in my life here. And developing my own community and sense of place, my family lives 12 hours way, so it is much different for me. So figuring out how do I belong where I am now and nurturing those relationships.

J- So, thinking more in a community sense of mind and focusing more on joy.

P- Yeah.

J- Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously other than the PhD?

P- I was actually invited to co-teach the trip to Bolivia this year, which is not going to happen as we didn't have enough students. That was a huge honor for me and solidified

my experience there of being in that leadership there, it was sort of an affirmation that 'this is it, this is what you love to do.'

J- I get a feeling that you felt honored by that.

P- Yes, definitely.

J- What types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- We had a nightly process group, you know so every evening we would come together as a group and reflect as a group about your day, what was coming up for us, being in a different culture, what did we love, what were we struggling with, what were we thinking and those kind of things. And X and Y participated in those groups.

J- Okay. And how did that impact your experience?

P- It created a space where we could be really honest with ourselves, we could be really honest with each other, I think it is essential to have that kind of space, you know whenever you are in an immersion experience.

J-You said it was essential and what else, sorry I was having trouble hearing.

P- Its okay. That it was essential to have that space to get out whatever you were feeling, whether it was joy or deep sadness, or frustration or whatever else, it not only helped us reflect on our experience but what was going on between us a group members. If there was tension or conflict or someone needed support, it allowed a space for that.

J- The space was kind of like it allowed a space to get it out if you needed to.

P- Yes.

J- Okay. How did participation in your reflection journal impact your experience?

P- Well, in the beginning part of the trip I was writing in English. At some point I switched and started writing in Spanish, so it was good for as far as practicing the language and stuff. But it's also good to write in the language that you are surrounded by. It helped me to say personal things that were coming up for me on the trip, it helped to have a safe place to get them out, even if it wasn't, I mean I feel like I was pretty open and honest in the group, but if there were more personal things I didn't want to say to the group, it allowed me a space to reflect on those things, and get them out and be honest with myself.

J- So, how valuable was that to you, your ability to reflect on your own and have that space?

P- That is kind of how I process anyway, to reflect, write and journal so it was kind of natural for me. It was important, it was also difficult to find the time to do it as our days were so busy and so packed and people were sick so I was helping take care of people, so it was hard to find the time to do that, you know. And there were definitely days that I did not write or was behind on writing about what we did, but I think I got out of it what I needed to. It was something I journaled about it when I got back, continued to process about it.

J- You must have been aching to journal while you were there as you were taking care of people.

P- I think that is something when you have an immersion experience with a group, personal time is, you know, doesn't happen very easily and I really enjoy having that personal time. But it was well worth the sacrifice of not having that time. XX would say

that you can go to sleep when we got back and that was true, while we there I wanted to soak up every second of it.

J- Sure, that makes sense. Were there any other debriefings or other things you did to reflect while on the trip?

P- Just going out to dinner and having conversations, I think I was in a little bit different place that the students because I did speak Spanish so I was able to talk with X and Y and, you know, they would ask me what I think the social issues, we would talk about these social and cultural issues, so I think my experience because I knew the language. I think for me, that is probably why I had such a rich experience, or at least part of it.

J- Being able to talk to them, more one on one, it was almost like you had a backstage pass.

P- Yes, exactly!

J- Was there anything about the group dynamics that impacted you?

P- It was definitely something that I was aware of, it was weird because I was a student on the trip, but also in a leadership position, so I didn't get into any of the drama, I didn't get into any of that, as that's not what I was there for. But it was something that I was cognizant of but it was something I was outside of in a way as well. We talked about what was going on in the group in our group process, people not following simple directions that would keep them healthy and safe. There were a lot of good things in regard to group dynamics that were brought out in those processing sessions, I think we were able to be honest with each other.

J- So it was generally positive as it was able to be constructive in the end.

P- Yeah, it was definitely positive, you know, if there were concerns brought up, they were brought up out of love, care, and concern not from an angry place or anything like that.

J- Okay. What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this trip?

P- Wow, that's a big question. This trip really was life changing for me. It helped to formulate my direction and it was also a completion of a circle in my life. I spent my 29th birthday in La Paz Bolivia, and my first Spanish teacher in 9th grade was from La Paz. You know, so however many years later, here I am sitting in La Paz, it was really cool to complete that circle. I felt like I was exactly where I was supposed to be in that moment and it was an affirmation of the path I have chosen and an affirmation of the direction I want to move in.

J- An affirmation, life changing..sounds like a good trip.

P- Yeah, it really was.

J- If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- I could stay longer! And, I think that I really would have loved to stay longer, there were a couple of guys on our trip that did stay longer and traveled to Peru and had some experiences that were not possible with a group of 10, and I think that would have been really cool to have some of those experience.

J- How do you think this would have affected your experience if you would have been able to travel more ?

P- I think I would have had even more difficulty transitioning back, so maybe it was good I didn't. So, I don't know how it would have changed anything. The relationships I had developed there would have continued to grow, I don't really know how it would have changed things.

J- I think those are some good points you have brought up, stronger relationships and may have been harder coming back. So, given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor?

P- So, I kind of have an experiential orientation to counseling anyhow. And when you are traveling abroad it is kind of like a grand experiment, because you don't know what to expect and you are thrown into a new situation. And I think I can take that and use that in counseling, and so I do, I approach counseling with an experiential frame of mind and I ask my clients to try something and see, who knows what's going to happen, but we can try and see it, maybe you will like it, maybe you won't, but let's see. So, kind of bringing that, almost like a playful, just an experiential attitude towards counseling. And I think that my feeling that I have direction will definitely change me as a counselor and I will hopefully be moving forward with my education and I want to keep up my Spanish, so I will like I probably have a little more sensitivity with the Latino clients I work with.

J- So, almost similar to the joy that you talked about earlier, having more of a playful way and finding more things to celebrate.

J- Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- Let me think. Not that I can really think of. The one thing that I can say is that creating cohesion among the group is imperative towards any group immersion experience. And when you are traveling, that cohesion may come through adversity, and that was definitely true in our case. The 2nd day we were there, pretty much everyone was sick except 2 people and through that adversity we did hone our resources and get a lot closer. And there were also things that the group developed its own culture, there were things that we did that helped cohesiveness.

J- So, cohesiveness is a top recommendation of yours. Any thoughts of how to create that?

P- Well I think the group process and then the culture kind of is not anything you can necessarily plan or impose, but our group developed our own culture, and it would have been completely different with other group members. But allowing that space to develop and for people to be themselves and not try and control it and just let it happen.

J- So, letting it happen and allowing time and space. Anything else you would like to share?

P- I don't think so.

J- Thank you!

*** The following questions were left out of the interview. I asked the participant to respond by email, so here are her responses as she wrote them.

What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures? What triggered any changes in your ability to empathize? How has time impacted the changes?

My experience in Bolivia helped me to empathize with Latinos living in the US, because I experienced my own type of grieving as I returned home. The way of life in Latin America is very different. The culture is set up to support the values of family, community, and spirituality. Festivals for the saints happen all the time. Families share an extended lunch together during the middle of the day. Family ties are strong and close, which can sometimes be problematic but these connections see one through all of lives ups and downs. The culture of the US and the way we structure our time is not set up to support these values in the same way, though many people hold similar values. So, for Latinos who have immigrated to the US, I imagine they go through a kind of grieving process. They are here for opportunities but they are also giving up a lot in return. I'm not sure I understood this as well as I do now, because I really experienced this grief myself. Impact of time---Time has allowed me to re-adjust to life in the US, but with a new awareness of what I value and a renewed desire to live sustainably, focusing more on being loyal to myself and what I value.

What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

I like to watch people, so I was constantly just observing what was around me--the different sights, sounds, smells, tastes. Bringing all my senses to the experience helped me to more fully take in and appreciate the culture of Bolivia. Also, talking with our guides helped me to process my experience. Because I spoke Spanish, I could more easily engage in dialogue about questions I had, things that I didn't understand, feelings that came up for me. Our guides were able to share an "insider perspective" so I could check out my assumptions or just listen and learn.

What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills? Least effective? How has time impacted the changes?

Most effective--openness. As Rilke says "let everything happen to you / beauty and terror / just keep going / no feeling is final" When I travel and experience other cultures, this attitude or mindset is imperative for me. I let go of the need to control, the need to know, and just experience . . . and reflect. There is really nothing quite like it.

Least effective--our preparation time was necessary. We did presentations on the economy, culture, government, etc. We needed this exposure and knowledge in order to set the stage for our experience, but the experience itself is what helped develop my cultural knowledge and skills.

Impact of time---Now, when I do an assessment with a Latino family, I feel like I have a different level of understanding . . . maybe I "get them" more than most white people they encounter. I try to convey this by asking them about the importance of family, their family structure, what is important to them, the role of religion/spirituality in their lives, the presence/absence of community and extended family, the connections with those who are not here with them in the states, the difficulties in transitioning from their country of

origin to the US, what they miss most, what they like about living in the US. I would say that what I took from my experience in Bolivia has had a sustained impact on my clinical practice with Latino clients.

TRANSCRIPT #4

J- Hello! How are you? Are you ready to do our interview?

P= I am!

J=Okay, I'll get us started then. As you answer these questions, please think of your most salient immersion experience. So, first of all, where did you go?

P- I went to Guatemala.

J- Okay, great. Can you describe your experiences of participating in the immersion experience?

P- Sure. It was definitely eye opening. I have been to other countries before, never to Guatemala, but other countries. And I would say that I just never saw poverty in such great depth. I guess when I went to other places it was kind of hidden, but here we got to go into a home and see basically what they don't have. And that was definitely just a different perspective for me. It helps to see it firsthand. It really like we just immersed ourselves, like in the culture. Our program people didn't have a lot of schedules, rules, regulations. We stuck to whatever we needed to do that day but the rest of the time that was unplanned, so we were basically able to do what we wanted and I thought that was a huge benefit. Just to interact with the people.

J- Okay, so when you interacted with the people, what kinds of things did you do?

P- We did shopping, that was probably the main thing we did. We walked and went into the middle of the town and people watched, went into the market, went out to eat and enjoyed each other's company and the waiters and stuff, got to know us through that.

J- Okay. When you say enjoyed each other's company, do you mean the people on your trip or community members?

P- It would be both. We would be sitting by ourselves and talking and then we would have people come up and talk to us, like where we were from. Like one night we were at a restaurant and there was a band playing and there were some community members that grabbed us to dance. So I would say both.

J- Okay. Were there any types of service learning activities that you participated in?

P –Yes, we went with an organization called Common Hope. They really do all kinds of things for people living in poverty. They provide homes, schools, medical care, cover some educational costs. So, we took supplies up a mountain and the supplies were going to help build a house.

J- Wow. Okay, so you helped build a house or take the supplies up that were going to build a house.

P- Yeah, taking the supplies up the hill. We didn't actually participate in building the house.

J- But it was pretty critical to get those things up there so the house could be built, right?

P- Yes, definitely.

J- So, were there any types of service learning other than bringing the materials up the hill?

P- No, I don't think so.

J- Okay, well that sounds like a pretty important part of your trip.

P- Yes.

J- So, when you are reflecting on this experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- I guess gratitude for what I have comes to mind, how lucky I was to even participate in the program, you know, we can walk around in our city and its safe and we know if it's not that we have police there, but there, they had military on almost every corner to keep things safe. To see that every day, that would be tough, it would make me feel unsafe to have to see that every day; even though I know they are there for my safety.

J- Okay, so you feel really grateful for the safety and security you have where you live. And for the education and opportunities you have to get that.

P- Right, just the idea that people there would never have the opportunity to come to America for a 2 week trip.

J- Okay. Is that how long you were in Guatemala for, 2 weeks?

P- Yep.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- No, it was not. I expected more structure. I was grateful for not having the structure though. I expected that we would be doing more things, more planned. They didn't have that. They didn't want to have too much planned, they didn't want to overwhelm us and they wanted us to be immersed in the culture and if you are off doing touristy things all the time then you can't do that.

J- Okay and what was the organization called that you went with?

P- It was through my university, WSU Study Abroad Program.

J- Okay. Was your trip specifically related to counseling?

P- It was supposed to be. You know we never did any counseling. We did visit one site, but they only did counseling for pregnancy or pregnancy prevention. But other than that, a lot of questions were focused on pushing your values on someone else and then relating that to counseling.

J- Okay, that makes sense. So, do you feel like you were immersed in the culture? I know you said that was one of the goals.

P- Yes, 100%.

J- Okay, and why do you feel like you were immersed?

P- I guess because we were able to go to Spanish school every day for part of the time and spent 4 hours everyday, learning Spanish and learning about each other's lives, and then go into town and see people and interact with them, trying to use the Spanish we had just learned and things like that.

J- Okay. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- I would say definitely some of the opportunities we had. We had a free day and one of the free day activities was to hike the volcano and then it somehow worked out that we had an extra free day so we had the chance to travel the country and visit a lake. And I

loved that. I thought it was just such a neat idea that we didn't have to stay in that tiny town and do some activities.

J- Okay, so on a scale of 1-10, how critical was that moment to your overall experience?

P- I would say a 7 or an 8, probably an 8.

J- What makes it 8?

P- I think just being there and experiencing in the moment of what I am doing and knowing that, hiking this volcano was extremely hard and I had to stop several times, but the final goal was definitely worth it.

J- Okay. How about a key negative moment of your experience?

P- A negative moment would be, because I didn't speak the language and didn't know anyone in Guatemala of course. You know I was traveling with the group that was so big, and oftentimes people would want to go off and do other things, and then I felt that we couldn't do things as a big group, then people were splitting off into little groups…I guess that was not something I enjoyed as much, the feeling of not being included with all of the groups.

J- Okay, so it sounds like there were times that the group was split and that your opinion wasn't valued as much.

P- Right, exactly.

J- Okay, how critical was that experience to your overall experience, with 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical?

P- I would say a 2.

J- Okay, what makes it a 2?

P- Just because the overall positive of the trip overtook those few moments, it was just not really something to dwell on.

J- So, in the end, it wasn't really a huge deal, but since you had to come up with a negative, that was the one?

P- Exactly.

J- Okay. Do you feel like you ability to counsel people from diverse backgrounds was impacted?

P- Yes, I would say in a positive way.

J- Okay, how?

P- I guess seeing the poverty, we see poverty here but not to the extent that I see it now. I am planning on doing school counseling and community counseling. I think if I were to some somebody now from Guatemala or another country that is impoverished, I think I at least have a general idea of what they have come through, you know of getting through customs and getting settled, I at least have a better idea of what that it is like that will help me relate to those students and their families.

J- So it sounds like you were able to understand that culture a little more because you were there and now you are able to apply that more to your counseling work back here?

P- Yes, definitely.

J- Okay. How do you think your self efficacy was affected?

P- I guess I would only say it just got better. You know the teachers proposed a lot of questions, a lot of what would you do types questions and I think it just gave me the time to reflect on those questions.

J- Okay, so by reflecting on those points, you feel like that increased your belief in yourself to work with people from those cultures?

P- Right.

J- Were there any positive or negative changes in your ability to counsel people from other cultures? I guess you focused on the positive, but were there any negative changes?

P- No, I wouldn't think so.

J- How do you think the passing of time has impacted those positive changes you were able to make in your ability to counsel people from other cultures?

P- I think because I can't use them right now because I am in graduate school, I think that some of it may fade but I won't know if it will come back until I get to encounter kids in school and work with students like this, I won't really know. Those skills are obviously fading because I am not using them as much, but I do hope that when I do get into a school they will come back when I get back in school, kind of like riding a bike.

J- Okay, you are doing the school counseling track right now?

P- School and community.

J- So, maybe some of the self efficacy and skill say have not lasted as longer as you would liked since you have not had as much of an opportunity to practice since you have been back?

P- Right.

J- Okay. So what impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from the other cultures?

P- You know I don't know. I would just say experiencing it, not just one moment.

J- Okay, do you think you are better able to empathize with people of other cultures?

P- I think so. Because I have experienced being in that culture.

J- Okay, do you think time has impacted those changes in your ability to empathize.

P- No. I think I am still able to do that.

J- Okay, but you said that there was not really any key moment that triggered that increase in empathy?

P- Right.

J- Okay. What aspect of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills in working with people from other cultures?

P- I guess I would say everything. There was nothing that was specific. I mean it was all combined. We visited a university, a pregnancy agency, worked with the personal tutors, but I don't think anything specific.

J- Okay, so nothing was more helpful than the others in helping you increase your knowledge and skills?

P- Right.

J- Was there anything in particular that was not helpful in helping you learn those skills or get that knowledge?

P- No, there was nothing negative. I think the pre-trip planning of what we did before was helpful in helping us preparing us for what we were going to experience and I think that was helpful in empathizing with the people down there, but nothing that I brought back to my career now.

J- Do you think time has impacted the changes you were able to make in your cultural knowledge and skills?

P- No.

J- Okay. Would you say yourself awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- Yes, definitely. I am more self aware of any biases that I had.

J- Okay, can you say some more about that?

P- Just biases in terms of, I guess I would say about people who come into this country with nothing, and I've always been like open to meeting new people from other countries, but there has always been that question of 'Are these people safe? Can I trust these people?' And I think, knowing that, I am aware of my own biases, will make me better so I can shut them out during a counseling session.

J- Okay, so it sounds like you got more of an opportunity to become more aware of what your biases were and knowing that you know them you are using them in your growth as a counselor.

P- Right.

J- Okay, do you think time has impacted the changed in your self awareness?

P- No, I think it has just grown stronger.

J- Do you think the immersion experience has changed you?

P- Other than the biases and being just more self aware of the things I say and do, I would say no. But I think travel is just so amazing, as it helps you learn so much of what you can and can't endure and the challenges that you face so yes and no.

J- It sounds like you were also more aware of your own comfort levels.

P- Right.

J- Has anybody said anything to you, that you are different now than from before you went?

P- No.

J- Okay. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- No, they haven't.

J- Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

P- No, can't think of anything.

J- While you were on your trip, what types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- We did journaling, and at the end we did a portfolio, we met in a small group to discuss reflection questions and discuss those.

J- Okay, how did those impact your experience?

P- They helped. Breaking into the small groups helped, although previously I said I liked being a part of the large group. No one wants to say anything negative about themselves, especially in a big group, but we were able to process in a smaller group, so being in the small group helped. It also helped to meet people from the other states as we did not all know each other.

J- So the small groups helped you be more comfortable with one another?

P- And to process what we were going through.

J- Okay. How about the journals, how did that impact your experience?

P- I think it was good, because now I can go back and reflect on what I was thinking or feeling that day, it was good to put down on paper.

J- Do you ever go back and read your journals?

P- I do, actually.

J- What is like when you do that?

P- It brings me happiness. I put pictures in my journals, and I really enjoyed my trip and feel like I took so much out of it. So when I go back and look at the article and the picture, it brings me happiness because I know I was there and that I made myself better because of it.

J- Okay. How did group dynamics impact you?

P- Just the sense that we were in a different country and didn't know anyone but we still had each other, a sense of comfort. But we didn't do too much as a big group, so it was more comforting being around the smaller group them.

J- Okay, it sounds like you were comfortable in the big group but more comfortable in the smaller group.

P- Yes, the smaller group was more intimate, I was able to talk freely, and I was a little bit more reserved in the big group.

J- Okay. So it was easier to be more open or say something that doesn't flatter you when you are not in front of a lot of other people?

P- Right.

J- Okay, so what does this trip mean to you? What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- An overall great experience. One that was challenging but one that I faced and to go back and look at the pictures and the journal, it makes me happy that I went and grew.

J- So overall, an experience that helped you to grow as a person and learn about your own culture.

P- Yes.

J- Anything else this trip meant to you?

P- It just meant that I was in the right career.

J- Okay, a kind of confirmation.

P- Yes

J- If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- I don't think I would change anything.

J- Given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor? I know you said you are not doing any work yet, but are you doing an internship or any role-plays in class that you could apply to this question?

P- We do role-plays in class, but typically multicultural role-plays are not popular with whomever we are taking classes with, so I don't feel like I can ever practice with that. But I do work right now in an after school program for children living in poverty. Although we have none that are living in the extreme poverty like Guatemala, but I do feel like I am able to relate to some of the families because of what I have seen. They are of course better off than the people in Guatemala, but I think I can better relate to what poverty means and understand the struggles they are going through. As far as practicum

and internship, we are not there yet so I don't know how it will help, but I am hoping it will help there.

J- Okay, sure. Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- I don't think so.

J- Anything you wished I would've asked or didn't give you a chance to say more?

P- No, you are a great counselor!

J- Okay, thank you so much for your time.

TRANSCRIPT #5

J- Hello! Are you ready to do our interview? Please reflect on your MOST salient immersion experience as you respond to the interview questions. Can you please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach?

P- I went to Bolivia in May, 2010 and I was there for 2 weeks with 10 other people and my professor and we had a local contact as well.

J- What types of activities did you participate in?

P- We did a lot of site seeing and participating in the local and historical sites, we visited several colleges and a public university, which was for free, so it was interesting to see how they organized that. We also went a private Catholic university and we also able to go to a language school. At the Catholic university and language school, we got to interact with some of the students who were studying English. We also went to a few orphanages and got to interact with the kids there.

J- Did you do any service learning projects while you were there?

P- I guess the interacting with the students who were learning English, which was part of our service learning, as we had a couple of sessions with them. The one at the language school seemed a little bit more structured, and a little more effective, I am not sure but I felt like I got more out of it as the students were asking us more questions were really practicing with their English compared to the Catholic school. And at our time at the orphanage, we got a tour and got to interact with the kids. We brought some donations to one of the orphanages that had really young kids, I guess they were a little more particular for their security and screening process and we brought donations, as there is only one children's library in the country, so they kind of do a book drive and try to spread the books throughout the country, so we brought donations.

J- So, you definitely brought some supplies into the country and gave to the book drive. When you interacted with the students at schools, what types of things did you do?

P- It was a little less structured at the Catholic university, the kids came to class, there were more of us, at least it felt that way, so we kind of had a conversation with them, but it was really unstructured. I guess that is one of the most important things when you are trying to learn a new language, that conversational piece, so that was kind of how that

was set-up. At least with the instructor and the group of students that I was working with at the language school, we basically split up into small groups and there was 5 students and they basically took turns asking me questions and I answered them, it was still pretty unstructured. I think they were supposed to practice things.

J- So, the main point of going there was to practice conversational English.

P- Yes.

J- Okay. As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- It was definitely a good experience. It was something completely different than I have ever experienced before. I have never been to South America, so that was different in it of itself, eye-opening. There were a lot of different experiences and feelings.

J- When you think back on it, what do you feel now?

P- I think it was definitely worthwhile. I know that it was something that I was a little nervous about, but I decided to do the trip because I knew that was the safest way I could go on a trip for that length and that type of location, with the size of the group and having the professor there who was familiar with the area. It was a little bit, I don't want say nerve wracking, but something to that extent. It was eye opening and unexpected, as you didn't know what to expect.

J- When you were there, where did you stay?

P- We spent most of our time at two places, in a hotel on the coast and in the middle of the town, it was a 3 star hotel. By their standards, a decent hotel, different that what we have in the states obviously. But it was right in the center of things. And we did a few day trips outside of the city. We also stayed in La Paz, which is more like New York city and we stayed in a nicer hotel.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- Yes and no. Like I said, it was kind of hard to know what to expect. I obviously expected it to be different than anything I have ever done before. It wasn't what I expected in that we didn't do as much of the service learning component as I would have liked. I mean I definitely appreciated the experience to do the site seeing and being able to explore the areas that we are in. But looking back, I think it would have been nice to do a few more sessions at the language school or be put to better use at the orphanages, so in that regard, it wasn't exactly what we expected. I had been on little work camp trips before in high school and was thinking it would be more like that but it wasn't, so that was different than what I expected.

J- So, it sounds like you expected to get your hands dirtier than what you did, to be more active in your work.

P- Yeah. And obviously going there as a counseling student is a little different than going as a church work camp. But I did think there was going to be service learning every day and there definitely was not.

J- So, it definitely wasn't what you were expecting in the activities case, but was a new cultural experience for you.

P- Yes, definitely.

J- Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture?

P- you know, it's hard to say. You know our location, we were right in the middle of the city and we did a lot of walking, so that I feel like we got observe a lot. But I am not sure

if immersed is the right word since we have that language barrier, it is hard to be immersed. There was a component that I was missing, I am not very familiar with Spanish, we had several Spanish speakers in our group, both of our local contacts and our professor and at least one student. I picked up a little bit, the basic things, like ordering at a restaurant or bargaining at the market, but it is hard to be totally immersed when you have that kind of a barrier. So, and like I said, staying in the hotel was nice and it made me feel safer, being in such a different area where I didn't know the language, but when you stay in a hotel like tourists do, it doesn't give you the day to day feeling that the local's experience.

J- That makes sense. So the barriers were the language and being separate by staying in hotels. But you were immersed in some ways by walking around and speaking some of the language.

P- Yes.

J- Okay. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- I don't think I can really pinpoint any event or anything. But just the overall experience to be in a different country surrounded by people who spoke totally different than me and have different cultural norms and expectations than me, different geographies, you know that was a completely different experience than anywhere else in the U.S. So just that experience of being somewhere totally different is generally why I travel , so that definitely lead up to my expectations of being somewhere different.

J- How critical was that to your overall experience, with 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical?

P- I think it is the most critical, so a 10.

J- Okay. What makes that a 10?

P- Well, I think that if a similar trip had been offered, but it had been offered to go do something in Maryland for example, it would have a completely different feel than the idea of going to Bolivia, the appeal was 'wow, I have never been to Bolivia, I have never been to a purely Spanish speaking country surrounded by Spanish people and so that was, it was a big part of the appeal of going on the trip and experiencing the culture, and lived up to my expectations, that's why it was the most critical part of my trip.

J- What was a key negative moment of your experience and how critical was that to your overall experience?

P- Well, about ¾ of us got terribly sick. That was the worst part of the trip. The actual illness was terrible, but then the recovery, I felt like I was a waste for part of trip, as I got sick the 2nd day as most of us did and was out for a day or two and couldn't participate I some of the activities there. I don't think anyone did anything our 3rd day there as so many of us were sick. And then once I recovered enough to not be in bed, my energy level was low and then part of the fun is to experience some of the foods at the different places, but my stomach was still a little iffy, so it I was able to experience everything. It put a damper on the range of experiences I was able to have, I feel like I wasn't as gung-ho after I was ill on trying new things or wasn't as energetic as I would have liked to have been.

J- So, how would you rate that on a scale of 1 to 10.

P- I would say a 7. It wasn't the most important factor on the trip but kind of colored the whole experience because it was so lingering. When you don't eat anything for several days because you are so sick, I mean that is hard to get over even in your home in comfortable surrounding when you are so sick. I mean we were well taken care of, they called in doctors and everything. It was just a huge hurdle to get over. And then I felt like the residual effects of the illness were still lingering up until almost the very end. And then we were almost recovered and went to La Paz for a few days and a few people got altitude sickness. I didn't get sick but I definitely could feel it, like if you were walking uphill, I would have to stop every 10 feet and re-acclimate. So those physical barriers, that's why I would say a 7, as it really affected your ability to experience as much as you wanted to.

J- Okay. Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- I think that is was an amazing experience, something that I had never been a part of before, so definitely yes. It was different being in a minority perspective and standing out so much. I have been to some other countries in Europe and have studies abroad in Ireland for 4 months and that was the type of thing that I blended right in. As soon as I opened my mouth and they heard my accent, they knew I was from somewhere different, but I blended in otherwise. In Bolivia, most of the people had darker complexity, were shorter and had darker hair, so I looked very different from them. That was that giveaway that I was somebody different. Just being able to have that experience on my side is something that I could pull out of my back pocket anytime I am working with someone who has a cultural background different than I do or relates to a different group than I do.

J- So, you felt like you really had that experience of feeling like 'other' for that couple weeks while you were there?

P- Yes, definitely. For sure.

J- Okay. What about your self-efficacy? How was that affected?

P- Can you elaborate on that at all?

J- Sure. Basically I am asking about how your confidence in your self as a counselor working with people from other cultures, do you feel like that was affected?

P- Well, I know that I mentioned the language barrier. And being on the other side of things, being that other person. It made me feel like I different person. Whether it was interacting with the locals or in a small cultural exchange, like bartering with another person. I felt like a different person as I wasn't as confident in that exchange since I was not familiar with the language. So I feel like I can related a little more to people, for people that English is not their native language, I think it effects how they interact with the world. So interacting with those types of clients in a counseling setting, I think having a glimpse into maybe they are not quiet, shy, hesitant, or indecisive, maybe it is that lack of confidence of communicating in my primary language, so having that perspective I think is helpful to be able to potentially pull that up when I am working with clients who are potentially from a different culture than I am.

J- So, you feel like you are able to draw on that and you feel like it potentially helps you in your confidence in working with others?

P- Yeah. Being able to realize what they are experiencing, with their feet in rooms sitting across from you, what I was experiencing while I was there in Bolivia, but they are here

to potentially talk about something important, whereas I was in Bolivia primarily vacationing. And I had someone to hold my hand basically and explain the language to me, to help get through that barrier, and this person maybe doesn't have that. To, be able to empathize where they are coming from and seeing things through their eyes a little bit.

J- So things that helped you to be able to empathize more was seeing how even with someone helping you, the discomfort to navigate another culture and language. So speaking of these changes in your ability in your self efficacy or your empathy, do you think time has impacted these changes?

P- I think that everything that I experienced while I was over there was more salient right after it happened. It's so easy to get back into our day to day routine and what is normal for us when we get home. I think it is something that when I think about it or focus on it, it is something nice to have in your back pocket or say 'remember when I felt this way' or 'remember when I was in this situation' so it is definitely something good to draw upon, but it is not as much a forefront part of my thoughts as it was a couple months ago.

J- Sure. So, you think that goes for both, self-efficacy and empathy?

P- Probably more for self-efficacy. I think empathy can be more malleable and flexible, you can listen to what someone says and hear what they are saying and be empathic even if you can't necessarily put yourself in their shoes.

J- Okay. So the changes in your empathy can be a lasting change as it can be quickly triggered in having conversations with somebody?

P- Yes. And having generalized feelings of general discomfort, or feeling like you are an outsider or a minority is more generalizable feeling, instead of the specifics of how is my counseling or self efficacy in working with clients from a Hispanic culture. But having that experience of being able to empathize with someone who is from a different background or a different culture, that is more lasting.

J- What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills when working with people from other cultures?

P- I guess to see where people come from, what is there reality. You know you read about that in a book, or a magazine, or see pictures, but there is nothing quite like being there in person. And like I had said, even though I was there in person I didn't feel like I was totally immersed. Maybe having that total immersion experience would something that takes a lot of work to get, but even just being there in another country, it was a huge impact. Something as simple from the ride to the hotel from the airport when we first got there, to seeing all the street animals, and who we treat animals in the U.S. and how we pamper them and take them to the vet and they are pets that we spend thousands of dollars on, and it's not like that, they are a poor country and they are not able to control the animal population like they should and it is the same with people, seeing that and seeing the kids that were homeless and addicted to drugs, and they form these alliances with these dogs, and that's what you see when you are driving into the town and have that feeling that we are somewhere different. And the country does not have the resources or the programs in place to make a change.

J- Being there, actually being with your feet on the ground in the place had the most impact on your cultural knowledge and skills.

P- Yes.

J- Was anything about your immersion experience not effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills?

P- Not effective. No, I don't really think there was anything that wasn't. There was some variation of things that may have been less effective. Such as staying in a hotel, maybe was a little of a, well that was an experience in it of itself, learning the culture there, but maybe if we had host families for example, that kind of thing, and to see how the families live. And I understand there were logistics involved that would have made that more difficult. So, I think there were things that were less effective, but I wouldn't say ineffective at all.

J- Right. And how has time impacted the changes in your cultural knowledge and skills?

P- Like I had said before, I think like with anything, immediately after the fact, everything was more on the forefront and I thought about it much more, it just seemed more present, not relevant, but it was more on my mind then it is now, I don't know, 8 months down the road. I think time always has that impact, I would think.

J- Sure. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- Yeah. I think you learn a little more about your self when you are put in a situation you have not been put in before. I know that is really vague and open. Being in a country that I hadn't been in, and speaking a language I didn't speak, and there is a reality totally different than mine, I think that totally had an impact.

J- What did you learn about yourself?

P- I think I learned a lot about my reality, my background and how different that is from large chunks from the rest of the world and that is kind of an eye opener. We get so accustomed to middle class suburbia, where we are I am a grad student and that is my reality. And to see people who were, if we want to take into Maslow's hierarchy, there were people there who were on the street and were worried about where there shelter was going to be for the night and where they were going to next their next meal you felt for them and you felt for their kids and you realize that is their reality and that is something that has never been my reality. That just makes you realize, in my situation, how lucky I am and where did that luck come from? Just because I happened to be born into a particular family in a particular country? So, it seems a little bit unfair. I thought about that a lot.

J- So, it gave you a bigger view of a framework of the world and where you fit into it.

P- I would say that is accurate.

J- Okay. How do you think time has impacted those changes in your self awareness?

P- Same as I have been saying. I can draw upon them and go back to that and realize how I felt and that was something that I was experiencing. But it is not something that is on the forefront of my mind anymore. You get back to your day to day and back to your reality and in a university life and that is my day to day now. So both having physical distance and time distance, I wouldn't say has dulled or weakened it, just has made it less prevalent in my mind.

J- Is there anything you have done or do that brings it up again for you or that you try to do to hold onto some of the changes you made?

P- A lot of us journaled while we were down there, so having your own personal account of your thoughts and feelings and everything is nice to have that tangible record. And

same with the pictures and everything, so those are real easy triggers. And some of the souvenirs that I bought can snap me back there for a second. I can't say that I do a whole lot to tie me back to that type of a experience or that type of population difference. But I do some volunteer work, with other types of populations and cultures that are different, with people who have experienced things different that I have.

J- Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- Yes. I don't think you can go back to being the same person you were before because the knowledge that I gained over there and the things I saw and experienced and noticed in myself and in my classmates…you can't just erase it even if time maybe makes it less distinct, it just doesn't get erased.

J- Would you characterize that change as small, medium, or large change?

P- Maybe somewhere in between small and medium. I don't think it was a big as it could've been, maybe if I had spent more time there, or more time while I was there being more immersed, but 2 weeks compared to other types of visits and that type of cultural experience was still a chunk of time and we did get to see a lot of things. So, maybe bigger than small but less than medium.

J- Okay. Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- I really don't think that they would say that. I know we talked within our group how difficult it was going to be, explaining our experience to our friends and family who weren't on the trip because of everything we had seen, witnessed and experienced. So, I did my best with the people who were closest to me, to explain and show them and tell them about everything. But it was one of those things that was so exhausting, that after you did a few times, you got down to your sales pitch for everyone else. I still talk about it with a few of my classmates that went and that is something that we share and so we will always have that. I can make a reference or I can refer to something that we went through and though know exactly what I am talking about. So having that experience with those people is far more impactful and something that I noticed in me more than something that people who didn't go on the trip would notice.

J- So the small to medium change that just the people who went on the trip could recognize, do you think that change has lasted?

P- Yes, I think so. I know something that I have been mentioning, that it is not on the forefront just because, even though the change I experienced is with me and a part of me and always will be, I think it is hard to bring something like that to the present from another place that is so different from the place you experienced it at. I am not sure that makes sense?

J- I understand it. Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- I am not sure. I don't think I have changed anything in my lifestyle. While I was there, certainly, because we have different norms and expectations and available resources, so while I was there I certainly changed my lifestyle. But now that I am home and where I am used to living, I don't think that has stuck because it is not a necessity. And as for worldviews, I think my perspective has broadened a little bit. Especially when someone mentions Bolivia, I kind of have a frame of reference and have that personal experience

so I can have a little bit of say or could see it form a different perspective, as they have just read it form a newspaper. And as far as just opening your eyes to someone else's reality that is so different than your own, I think that automatically impacts your worldview. Just knowing that there are people out there that are living so differently from yourself.

J- Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

P- I had the motivation previously and I am such a list maker, so I added to a list of things, that someday I would love to learn Spanish. We have all the statistics out there that one day a majority of U.S. citizens will be Spanish speaking. And so there is that motivation, and also being in a country that is so poor off and seeing all the help that country could use as well as other countries just like that could use the help, so I would love to be able to speak Spanish to maybe not go to Bolivia and make a difference, but maybe open my doors to Spanish speaking clients that maybe wouldn't feel comfortable going elsewhere would be incredible.

J- What types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- We had the suggestion to keep a journal while we there, I naturally like journal, so that fell right in line with me. So, keeping a journal everyday because so many things were happening everyday, so I was able to stay on top of things more or less and grateful for that as so much was jammed into everyday. And we met for a processing group everyday, usually lasted about an hour, sometimes 2 hours. We took turns and passed around a pen and took turn reflecting on our day. Sometimes they would say a prompt but usually it was reflect on your day and then we would have a small discussion at the end. And obviously everyone was taking photographs like crazy, so going through the photos was more of an informal thing. But you do that with your roommates, and reflect in a visual way.

J- How did participation in the group impact your experience?

P- I think that probably next to the sickness, the group dynamics has the second biggest…I don't want to say negative impact. I knew a lot of group members before we went, so I kind of expected things to go one way and they didn't go as smoothly with group dynamics for me as I would have thought it would. I don't think everyone in the group would say that, but that was definitely an experience that I had. I think the being ill played a role in that and you are not at your best. Things that you could normally look over would get irritating and that kind of thing. And I feel like we were largely sensitive group and thoughtful and considerate, but there were just things that were hard to pinpoint, but I didn't think we were as flawlessly cohesive as I would have liked to be. And I am sure you can imagine when you are with a particular group of people for 24/7 for 2 weeks, then that can be difficult, even if you like everyone. There were a couple of interactions that I had, some of it may have been based in cultural norms, but kind of rubbed me the wrong way with how some of my group members handled things. So, that was a big piece for the trip as well. Something that I had not expected to be a barrier or a hurdle, that came out of left field.

J- It sounds like the group dynamics colored your trip as well. It didn't change everything, but wasn't something you enjoyed as much as you hoped you would.

P- Yes, that's accurate.

J- What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- I'm not really sure how to answer that. I feel that it was a meaningful experience. It is something that I feel very lucky to have experienced. It was an expensive trip that not everyone has the opportunity to go and travel out of the country in the way we were able to. So, it was a meaningful experience and something that I wish everyone was able to do that kind of a trip, an immersion experience. It was definitely worthwhile.

J- It sounds like you feel like it was worthwhile and revealing, in terms of allowing you to see how fortunate you were?

P- Yes.

J- If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- I think I mentioned before, having a little more interaction with the locals, maybe in a host family kind of setting. While we got to interact with our local contacts, and that was great, other than them and our van driver and maybe some other staff at the hotel, that was our most consistent contact that we had with local folks. If I could change anything, it would be to have more consistent interaction with local folks, whether it was with a host family or more regular service learning sessions, maybe each day. Whether the same group or different groups, having that contact every single day, would have helped with making the experience more meaningful.

J- So you feel like it would have been a richer experience if you had spent more time with a local family or doing something that was a little more, that required more interaction with the people there.

P- Yes.

J- You already kind of answered this but do you have anything to add to how you think this would have affected your experience?

P- There is nothing that I haven't said. I mean we are counselors, we are touched by people and that is what we find interesting. While it was great to see the historical sites and do some sightseeing, it's really the human components that sticks with you. You need to capture the sightseeing things, but really getting in there and spending time with people, that is what really gets to me.

J- Given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor?

P- That's hard to say, seeing that I have just graduated. I haven't done a whole lot of work since the immersion experience and definitely not as a graduate yet. So, kind of hard to answer. But a few things that I mentioned, just having something like that in my repertoire of experiences is something to draw on and be able to related to others who may be in similar situations.

J- Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- I can't think of anything right now. I feel like we have gone over the important pieces of the trip.

J- Okay, thank you!

TRANSCRIPT #6

J - Please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach.

J - Where did you go?

P - The only outreach experience I had was in Southern Africa, I went in the Summer of 2007 to South Africa and Botswana.

J - What types of activities did you participate in?

P - We did a lot of group supervision, we worked with a lot of other counselors, professionals, and para professionals. They would present cases to us and counselors from our trip and also counselors from South Africa would get together and split up into two groups, a group of para professional from South Africa and a group of professionals from the US. I worked with the group of professionals and we talked about issues that the clients were facing. It was considered a group supervision session. We did that also with a large group of professionals from Johannesburg. I think it was all the professionals at the center from Johannesburg that were present and all the professionals from our trip in our group. That was what I mostly did in South Africa. We also got to hear professionals from South Africa speak. I remember one woman, a social worker, who was out of the projects in South Africa and in Cape Town. She was trained in New York and was able to talk with us about what she learned and applied it to her community. In Botswana we spent a couple of days at their centers. I was at a community mental health center mostly there I just spoke with people and hung out with clients. I was only there for about two days.

J- It sounds like you guys did a lot

P - Yeah we did, we were there for three weeks, it was wonderful though.

J - When you interacted with the local community outside of the counseling world, were there any specific activities you did?

P - Just in passing when walking through the communities. In South Africa the counselors really worked and lived in their specific communities. The counselors walked us throughout the community showing us where they lived. We also spent time in these places where its not just walk-ins that were holistic centers. I remember one center were we could play with the kids that were dropped off there and everyone fell in love. At the drop in center all the kids were there when we were there. A lot of the kids did not speak English, but the program did a lot of work with mothers and the kids. The mothers and kids were come and try to speak with us, but that was the extent of interaction with the community.

J - Were there any service learning projects that you were involved in?

P - I know that some people that worked in the school or the domestic violence centers did, but I did not do that much in the health centers. I was at the disposal of the center staff helping them do whatever they needed. Mostly office admin things and helped out. Not sure that would count as service learning. We were asking a lot of questions about what they did and did whatever was needed to be done around the office.

J - Sounds like you got some interaction with the center staff through helping out at the office.

P – Definitely.

J- As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P - A longing, when looking back now I can look back and say it was all positive. I learned so much I could not process it until I got back to the US and read through the journals I was reading and talk with friends and family. There were things about the practice over there that I feel like would be benefit over here if we were to implement one of those being strength based counseling. I would say that that is part of my orientation and even before the trip I may have said that, but did not understand it the way I do now. A lot of their practice is strength based and also very organic. People seem to be self identified healers and work directly with the community that they are from. Those are things that really struck me. I am grateful to have had the experience and been able to participate in counseling in South Africa.

J - Was the experience what you expected?

P - Probably not. Honestly, I could not say what I was expecting when I went. But, I am sure I did not get what I expected. I have never out of the country before, but only in Europe. I have never interacted with counselors from other countries before.

J - Sounds like you did not know what to expect given your only American and European experiences.

P - Yes, I think that is a concise way to put it.

J - Is a there anything you would like to add to that?

P - I think what I was saying before, things that struck me and stayed with me were just how organic it was. The way counselors practice, in South Africa and how strength based they are. The woman social worker I spoke of earlier, found women with AIDS and healthy babies and created a model of how they kept they babies healthy and trained them to train other mothers how to raise healthy babies. So, that was kind of a model in this very strength based practice has stuck with me and how I can use it in my practice.

J - Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture?

P - That is a good question. We had some good training about the culture before we left. When we got there we did some touristy things to get a sense of the historical, cultural, and political contexts of where we were and going to Robben Island and driving through township were people of color home's were taken away, being able to see it was a good immersion. Being in the community and centers the counselors pretty much stayed right next door. Then at the end of the day we would drive across town and stay in these pretty nice hotels in the city. I always felt there was a weird disconnect, maybe it was a feeling, like we were immersed in the center and neighborhood during the day and at night go across town and be a world away.

J - Almost like going back to, "Oh yeah we are different, we are separate."

P - Yes, exactly. Definitely a feeling in South Africa.

J - Was there an option to stay on that side of town?

P - Well, I mean, option, I do not know. I never asked. The way the trip was sent up we stayed in the hotels and when we booked it was a package. Transportation to and from the hotel and you stayed with everyone else. I know at Botswana there were some people who stayed on the Botswana campus. That would have been cool to do that, but we did. I do not know if I would have questioned it, you go so down in it, these questions did not come in it until a little too late maybe.

J - Do you think it would have changed your trip more to have stayed in a place more like the culture you were working with?

P - I do not know. I think staying at the University of Botswana would have been a great experience. I do not know if staying where we worked with, a lot of them live in townships in dire conditions. You know honestly it would have changed things a lot. I do not know if we would have been allowed to or if I would have wanted to or if we would not have felt as safe. Some of the conditions were terrible. I had never seen shanty towns, I had never seen shanty's as far as you can see. There was a lot of that in South Africa.

J - Sounds like whether it was practical or not, if you had stayed with the people you were working with, it would have been completely different, would have it have altered your experience?

P - Yeah I think so, staying at the University would have been a great experience, there was housing that only men lived in which were dorms in a way. The townships had middle class housing and other housing as well, but staying in the township would have been a different experience. We saw one other white person staying in the township and I remember we had a debriefing conversation about it later. It was odd to see a single white man walking down the street. If we stayed in townships, not only being foreigners and some of the only white faces around, it definitely would have been a different experience.

J - What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P - I would say, in the place I mentioned before working with the professional and learning from them was incredible. The way they took care of each others, the singing and dancing with them was amazing and playing with the children in the circle. I could not remember the words to songs, but they tried to teach us, it was in one of the languages there, the black African languages in South Africa, they taught us games and love playing and hanging out with the kids and learning from the counselors, especially the singing and dancing was amazing. They are just strong beautiful amazing people. Some of them do not get paid and they work with a lot of the same kind of human issues that were as community counselors work with here and often times, or seemed to me that, the issues were complicated with poverty and HIV/AIDS, so a lot of the same issues.

J - So, spending time with the people, you mentioned singing and dancing, spending time with the children were two positive key highlights?

P - Just learning about the counseling practice there and learning about their practice and how they take care of each other. Just being able to be with them. The singing and dancing was amazing because it is a part of their culture and how they heal and that is

one thing I struggle with because it is one thing that I want put in my practice, but its not a normative here.

J - How would you rate the dancing, because that is a thing that stands out from 1 to 10, 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical, how critical was the dancing in just that understanding in the way of them healing themselves?

P - If I could put singing and dancing together I would give them a 7 or 8.

J - What makes it a 7 or 8?

P - As an outsider, spending a little of time with them and being present it seemed that it is a big part of how they spend time together and heal each other and I just appreciate it so much because I love singing and dancing. I almost do want to make it sound like it was all about the singing and dancing, as I think it was more than that. It was a way to connect with each other, connecting with something higher and very spiritual because what they sing about was God and love, so I think it is them coming together and singing and dancing and the message that is in them.

J - What was a key negative moment of your experience?

P - Well, I can remember times, yeah I guess what I would have to say, there were times that were difficult, that were painful such as going to the Apartheid museum, going to Robben Island, but I do not know that I would say that those were negative experiences because it was important to the overall experience to the trip. But, the first thing that comes to mind, there definitely was some tension between the group. I think it is common when you go on an outreach trip and have experiences that are out of your comfort zone, and so I would say there were definitely times in debriefing sessions that were tense and maybe because it was such a large group it was hard to communicate. I found ways around it and would tend to communicate with people I already had relationships with and felt sort of more individual relationships more and sort of think that during the debriefing session. We could have had more connection as a group if we would have communicated and talk to each other more effectively.

J - How critical, on a scale of 1 to 10, was that experience of having difficulty with communicating and connecting with the other group members?

P - I would say a 3 or 4, because like I said, probably in the beginning it was maybe a 5 or 6 but you adapt and find ways around it and got my needs met other ways.

J - Do you feel like your self-efficacy to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P - Yes, absolutely

J - In what ways your self efficacy affected?

P - Well, I think that getting outside of my training and my culture I think that always increases your awareness, you know when you sort of get out of your own fish bowl and you can look from the outside and have more discriminating against your own practice and your own culture. I think that is just a starting place to having that awareness, so I definitely think that I was able to again think about strength based counseling in a more practical way and I think I understood, you know, I know an issue in this country is that a lot of cultural diverse clients don't seek out counseling services at the same rate as white middle class clients and also they tend to terminate services early. And I think going on that trip helped me to understand and again, you know, I've read some of the literature on it and know some of the research and to be in a culture where healing is much more

organic and culturally relevant by design really helped me, it just brought it to light. It really helped me understand, so that when I am working with clients who maybe that have to come across town or maybe African American clients who see me as a white woman and do not know if I am going to understand who they are, it helps me have that knowledge and just be able to work from a place having more knowledge and be able to have more open conversations and maybe more informed skillful conversations as well.

J - So you feel like your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures was increased?

P - Yeah, I think so,

J - It sounds like you were saying, you got a little more of an idea of what it's like to be in the shoes of someone who does not have as many resources or who has maybe misgiving or hesitations about seeing someone who is different from them?

P - Yeah I think that had a lot to do with it. You know, just seeing how just some cultures and I mean here too, a lot of people to seek out healing in different ways, not just from a counselor, and so seeing that and really understanding that definitely helped me understand how difficult it can be for someone to sort of step outside of what's comfortable and normative for them and try to get help and that helped me appreciate that more.

J - Do you think that you believe more in your ability to work with people from other cultures since your trip?

P - Yeah, I think I do because being able to connect with people who are, you know, almost half way across the world and build relationships in a short amount of time and also it was really wonderful to spend time with counselors because we all had that bond, you know we were all counselors, you know, even though they were working in South Africa and Botswana and we came from the US think that that definitely increased my self efficacy because you know I just realized that you know wherever you are, you know me coming from where I was, they are coming from where they were, we were all counselors and we all had that bond and we were able to relate to each other that way and also seeing to that a lot of the human issues are all the same. Like I said before there were complicating factors that those counselors were working with, but it was really interesting that, you know, a lot of the clients that came to see them had a lot of the same kind of issues that people would come in for counseling with family, relationships, and those kind of things.

J - Do you think that time impacted the changes in your self efficacy?

P - Time?

J - Since your trip, have the changes you made grown or subsided a little bit?

P - You know I think that I have held on to things like especially thinking of myself as a strength based counselor, definitely considering myself as a multi-cultural counselor, I think those things, I mean it's not just that trip that I am drawing from but definitely that trip is part of my journey that I have continued you know, just in terms of identifying myself as a strength based multi cultural counselor. I have lots of other experiences because I basically went on the trip because I was working with XXX and so a lot of the work I did with her and just in my PhD also were around, just kind of in that same vein,

so I would say that time has immersed me more in culture centered strength based practice and I would say that the trip was a significant part of it.

J - So, it almost encouraged you to get more involved in those types of activities?

P - Yeah, probably

J - You kind of spoke to this a little, but what impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P - Well, let's see, yeah, again I think you know, I love to travel and so at this point I have been some other places to besides just Europe and African and I think anytime you travel and kind of take yourself out what is comfortable you kind of understand what it's like to be a fish out of water, so to speak. I feel like I do not know how to answer that, it's such a loaded question. But you know working with counselors from other countries was such an amazing experience I would love to do that again because I think that helped in terms of realizing how we are all similar and all linked and all different. As a counselor it's nice to be tuned into non-verbal's so you can kind of see how people are responding to you and you being different and being in a culture that different than yours. So, I think that whenever I travel and am in a place I try to gauge that and I think it helps too because when it feels to be in a culture that's different I think, you know at least for me it kind of helps me be able to emphasize and I do not know if this is what you were getting at but I what comes to mind is thinking about people who do not come from the dominant culture where they are, you know, thinking people of color from this country and thinking of experiences that they might have not being in the dominant culture and when you go to a place where you are not, you know, you are the other, not part of the main stream culture I think it's helpful and helps you evaluate your own culture and also maybe helps to understand what it's like to be in a group that not in the dominant culture in a small way.

J - So you got to understand what it's like to be an other?

P - Yeah

J - I have heard you say some things earlier about understanding a little better what is might be like for somebody who does not have the same resources that you have, just by going over and seeing what it was like over there and getting more of a feel for what it that like, do you think that relates to the efficacy as well?

P - Oh you know what though, when you say that, it makes me think of something that I wrote a lot about in my journal its really interesting because we definitely spent time in townships and some people had next to nothing, and there was something in the culture and I think it had a lot to do with the community or the communal nature of the culture, you know one story that I feel like we heard more than once, you know seemed like a thread, there was a lot of AIDS orphans in South Africa and it was pretty common occurrence that neighbors would take in children that their parents had died, and I found myself wondering would that happened in this country? Because I think even though we were in an area that was very impoverished their culture was very rich and I think that is where the singing and dancing comes in and you know these community centers come in and these grass roots organizations come in and people begin not even making any money but because they want to help their community and their neighborhood, and you see these kids who are thriving who even though you know, materially they have nothing

a lot of that is the richness in the culture and I do not know if I would call it empathy I would call it appreciation, I really gained an appreciation of the culture there and was able to compare that to the dominate culture here. And it left me pretty sad.

J - How has time impacted your ability the empathize?

P - Time impacted my ability to empathize, I mean I think that probably that with time I would like to think anyways that I become more empathic as I live as I have my own life experiences and the more people that I connect with in my life, I think all of that helps. One of my mentors, I remember him saying that, you will hit a moment when you have been a counselor long enough you will kind of have seen all the human issues, human conditions that you do not see people as individuals anymore you kind of see all the conditions and issues kind of come from these very large threads you know that they are all kind of related in some kind of way. So, I think in that way time increases empathy.

J - Alright, so for you personally you feel that is true as well?

P - Yeah I think so, you know, it's kind of like when you have been around the block or the more you travel around the block I think, the more you kind of feel, connected more comfortable you feel, I mean I still have a long way to go, but yeah I definitely think that time helps you be more empathic.

J - Thanks for sharing about that. What do you think was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills while you were on the trip?

P - I think the group supervision session, probably because working in partnerships with other counselors in South Africa I think really helped me understand the similarities and the differences in terms of counseling, yeah in terms of counseling.

J - So, the group supervision part was the most effective?

P - Yeah I think so, you know I mean getting the background and doing more of the touristy kind of things were important to kind of set the stage and get background knowledge of the culture, but I would say what was most significant for me was working with the counselors in South Africa. That was really a great learning experience for me, because in some way I learned that as counselors we tend to have a lot of the same values and think about issues in the same way but then I also learned that we have differences and they have differences because it works in their context and I noticed that counselors from the US may approach an issue one way and the counselors in South Africa may approach it in a different way and it probably had to do with just being in a different context; and then sometimes it had to do with their culture with the strength they come do certain things like rely on neighbors and with the children and rely on extended family because in the culture they could do that in the community are so strong there, and just learning all that and being able to compare and contrast all that to how things are done here, I would say that is it.

J - Ok, what would you say was the least effective impact on your cultural skills and knowledge?

P - The debriefing sessions.

J - Is that when you got together with the people on the trip and talked about what happened during your days and what was going on in your head and stuff?

P - Yes

J - Can you tell me what that meant?

P - You know cause we would all get together and talk about what happened during the day, but I think that there were dynamics in the group that do not allow us to talk to each other and really get at the issues and what was going on. I think people maybe did not feel safe and people did not really say what they were feeling and what they really meant some of the time and so I think at some point I would hold back too as probably many of us did and then we would just go and talk with people that we did feel comfortable with afterward.

J - So, it would have been something that could have been more useful if people would have been more comfortable and were maybe open in spite of their fears?

P - Yeah I think so, I mean I think that I do not know what would have to have been different for that to happen but I think that if there was safety in the room, I think things would have been different.

J - Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P - I am sure it has, I mean, I almost lump together the immersion with a lot of the other experiences I had in my PhD program, so I do not know if I could flush out the specifics of it, but I have to say yeah I mean it had to have.

J - How do you think it has impacted your self awareness?

P - Well again I think it's just being outside of what's comfortable I think always has a way of teaching you more about yourself in a way that I think you can only learn when you can step out of what's comfortable to you, you know and in some way too I think I, you know in the since of like, finding a way to be able to the debrief on my own and get my needs meet in terms of that I think I found my voice and learned to kind of trust myself and my intuition a little bit, so that and in kind of a weird way I think was part of it and also to just really become immersed in another culture. I mean I feel like it has to increase your self awareness because I was more able to more critically evaluate the dominate culture here and my culture and my up brining and just made it myself and my personality , who I am as a person.

J - How has time impacted the changes on your self awareness?

P - Oh gosh, well, I mean as I went through the PhD program I did a lot of work in, just working with cultural issues, working on a diversity initiative, working on a project that was examining how low income African American female students are positioned or viewed as math and science learners, so I did quite a bit of work around different cultural issues and actually continue to in my work, post doc work. But it's funny though because in terms of self awareness like in a way I think it would increase my self awareness but in another weird way, you know, it so much of it is academic and to time spent with people actually doing counseling really increases my self awareness and time spent at my desk reading and writing probably just keeps it stagnate, you know kind of wherever it is.

J - So, it sounds like the more time you spend with other people the more you learn about yourself in that way?

P - Yeah, definitely

J - That's really interesting.

J - Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P - Yeah, I think it did.

J - Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large?

P - I would say, at least a medium change, and a piece of a very large change as a result of my work with XXX, my PhD studies, the trip, work with clients, in particularly working with cultural diverse students.

J- So it sounds like you had this was, like you said, I like how you put that it was one piece of a big change but overall it was a medium change. What do you think made that a medium change in the grand scheme of a big change? Or what makes you say that in particularly?

P - Well it was, it was like a big piece of the puzzle. You know there were definitely other pieces of the puzzle like I mentioned but this was definitely a significant one because I think also because what you said earlier that the more contact I have with people the more I learn about myself, that is just how I am and I think I have always operated that way. And I think that experience was very significant for that reason because, I can read and write all day long and recite it back and I can understand it, but bring things that really touch me and can change me as a person and the things that I can touch, taste, smell, really just connect with as a person, so being immersed with people with communities, so that why it's a significant part.

J - It touched on the part of you that really responds to change?

P - Yeah.

J - Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P - I know that XXX would probably say that. I do not know if anyone else has noticed, you know one thing that people have said about me is that people who know the work that I do know that I m passionate about my work, they know that I am passionate about educational equity and I would even say social justice and just I am very involved in culture and very interested in cultural issues so I think definitely people who knew me before I started the PhD program and still know me now would I think that much at least.

J - Have any of the changes sustained over time? And how do you think you have helped them to sustain?

P - Yeah, I think they will continue to sustain because my work for me is very spiritual and I always intend to work in counseling in some kind of way and I did not think working in education is something that definitely started with my PhD program, but seems something that is going to be a part of my life for a long time. I just kind of fell into that when I started working with XXX, but you know doing some kind of social justice work is spiritual for me, so that is something that I will definitely continue with and so will sustain and now its educational equity.

J - Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P - I mean well yeah I think it is a piece of that larger puzzle that has definitely changed me, it really started with my Master's program in a multicultural counseling class I had with XXX and then after that class it changed me so much that I tried and got accepted into the PhD program and I came to her and I said I would really like to work with you. And she accepted me and ever since then the change process really started and it definitely impacts most if not all areas of my life.

J - So it sounds like the trip definitely continued to push you along that path of working in social justice areas?

P- Yeah and I would say specific to the trip too is that I do not know that I ever really thought about doing work abroad but now that I have taken that trip and I am still involved in work with XXX I am sure that I will. I do not know when but at some point that I will do more trips abroad and working with other counselors.

J - Is there anything else that you did not plan on doing before you participated, but now you decided that you want it to be a part of your life or your studies?

P - I mean it's probably because I already was on the path to be doing the kind of work that I am doing, um, but I definitely plan on taking more trips with XXX I know that she has plans to do more immersion trips and if I had still gone on that one I still would have probably been interested, but now I see such a great value in it that I hope someday that I can take students abroad as well. I think it's incredibly valuable especially for we know that like 80 to 90% of counselors in this country are white middle class women, so I think it is the only way to take them abroad and to take them into neighborhoods that they, well that need to be served well and white middle class women do often have a lot of contact with, in this country, not outside of this country.

J - What types of reflective processes (process groups, reflection journals, debriefing) did you participate in your immersion experience?

P - Well, I definitely had a lot of conversation with my roommates about the trip and was really lucky because I do not know her before rooming with her on the trip, but she was wonderful. And we talked a lot and processed a lot together just the two of us. I also had some conversations with people that I knew friends on the trip and we also did a few maybe two or three group with XXX just the students from XX had some discussions with XXX And those definitely felt much different, to me, than the process sessions in the large group.

J - Ok so, it sounds like you got to do a few one on one debriefing/processing as well as some smaller XXX group sessions. Do you feel like those were more helpful to you than the larger group session you mentioned earlier?

P - Yes

J - OK, so how did participating in those impact your experience, the smaller groups?

P - Well, I think it was important because a lot of the days felt like a whirlwind, everything was new. So many of the experiences were new, new people new places and so being able to reflect and talk and discuss it I think was really important to make sense of it and also for an emotional release just to be able to kind of unpack, so that the next day you can go and be kind of fresh and kind of be ready for what the next day had in store for you. I had a quite, I think many of us had a lot of emotional days, so it was wonderful to have people to connect with and just be able to share that with.

J - You really had a chance to unload and unwind anything it sounds like?

P - Yeah

J - Is there anything more you would like to say about how group dynamics impacted you?

P - Well, as I am talking the one thing I am thinking about is how adaptive how I think people are and I do think that the big group was there and I think it served some purpose

but I think that what needs did not get meet in the large group people did sub-group and find way to get what they needed from other people. We were all connected in some way to all the other people in the group and I think that was good, it was helpful and I just remember two processing things. There was this one woman and she was…I think viewed as a matriarch, or the matriarch at the organization, they called her "Mama Pat." I remember talking to her about what I was experiencing there and just talking to her about thing. She started talking to me about her daughter and I will never know for sure but I had this sense that she was thinking about me as her daughter she was talking to me, "Oh my daughter is about your age" and, so I do not know about the group dynamic but I think also that the relationships we built, with the people in South Africa, it was just amazing. Again just the way that we found similarities with people who live so far away. You know whether because it was we were counselors or whatever it was, we found these connections and there is just something for me very spiritual, just for me, my relationships with people are very spiritual, so that was just really, I do not even know what to say about it. It was important and a learning experience and I think just to know that while there are many things that separate us there also things that really can connect us.

J - What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P - So, what meaning have I…

J - In other words what did this immersion experience mean to you?

P - Well, I mean as I am talking its funny because I do not, when I first got back I thought about the trip a lot and it has been in the back of my mind for a really long time. So, this is really a great chance to think about it again and as I am talking I am realizing that it was a great part of how it impacted me was just realizing the connections that you can share with people in a short amount of time, who live far away from you. I think a sense of responsibility to the sense of social responsibility that these amazing people have for their community for their neighborhoods, for their people. They really just were loving and caring and had this amazing strong sense of social responsibility. So that has definitely touched me and stayed with me and you know I have tried to bring that into my practice here and also just the strength based bit too. Just realizing that frame a situation really impacts how you are going to deal with it and how you are going to approach it and that you can really deal with any situation from a strength based prospective and its inevitably going to change the way you approach the situation and treat the people involved in it.

J - Yeah I think you are getting to the point that you were inspired in a lot of different ways and it impacted your counseling work and impacted the way that you see the world and impacted how you direct your work. Does that sound right?

P - Yeah it does. That was way more succinct than I could get it

J - If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P - Oh gosh, I almost want to say that I would not want to change anything, cause if I would have changed anything it, the whole trip could have been different. I mean again,

the whole process sessions, would have been nice if we would have been able to connect more as a whole group, that's all I can really say, I think.

J - How do you think this would have affected your experience if you were able to do that?

P - I think that as opposed to the relationships that we had I mean, I did build a great relationship with my roommate on the trip and some other people too that I did not have relationships with before the trip. But I think that we had more opportunity or I do not know if the situation was different perhaps we could have created greater connections amongst ourselves and the group that came from the States, and how it would have impacted it, I do not know. We were sort of, actually, it's funny now that I am thinking about it, I was going to say that we were in this similar situation where we were all coming from across the ocean and in this immersion experience, but in a way I think maybe part of why we did not connect completely was because we were not all having the same experience.

J - Given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor, if there is anything you want to add because you have already brought a lot to that subject already?

P - Yeah I would say the big pieces are definitely spending more time you know just even reading. I remember when I got back I was like OK what literature can I read about strength based counseling and just trying different techniques and really just sort of seeing myself more in that orientation you know being culture centered too was already on my radar. I am sure this pushed me a few steps ahead and also just gave me examples to draw from.

J - Alright here is the last question, is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P - I think that it's a wonderful experience for any counselor but I think that you do not have to go across the ocean to do it. I think immersion can be across town, but I definitely think an immersion experience just in terms just of taking yourself out of your own neighborhood whatever is comfortable for you, taking yourself out of your comfort zone and just spending time with people how are different, neighborhoods that are different, places, that you wouldn't normally travel to, places that you have never been too before I think is important for a counselor because I think, it does give you that understanding of what it looks like. When a person comes in for counseling their uncomfortable and there entering this world that maybe they have never entered before. So, I think it's really important for counselors to have experiences like that. I highly recommend it.

J - So you totally recommend it and its just, I had this great summary and just lost it. Let me think for a second—Ok I remember what it was now. Basically, you are saying get out of your comfort zone wherever it may be, It does not have to be a huge, big, giant trip to some place you have never thought you would go. It can be in your own community, but get uncomfortable so that you can make other people comfortable.

P - Yeah, that's beautiful, I like it. And it's like what too when you were asking me what impacted my practice, what I am doing right now, I am working in six different school across the state of Indiana and we are working to develop and implement this cultural

responsive positive behavior support frame work in these school. Like we have model sites and eventually the aim is to scale it up so that we can offer this practice, with frame work and practice to whatever school in Indiana that wants it. So, what I 've found is that when I am working in a school and these are all over the State, I am driving anywhere from like 45 minutes to 5 hours to get to these schools and I find that I will drive around the neighborhood and I am very aware now of when I see cultural differences in a neighborhood. Like I was in this community where it's a pretty homogenous staff but very diverse student population, so I am like I know there are communities of color around this school and I will drive around now and I saw there was this street with all these black businesses and salons, barber shops, you know black faces on the wall, and a black book store, you know just businesses that were catering to African Americans. But I definitely now will drive around the neighborhoods and I will just want to know how the people are living, where do they live, what do the houses look like, how are they different, how are they the same. That's definitely come from that trip if not from you know the other kind of cultural training that I've had.

J - So, If I'm hearing you right, you are saying that you are a lot more comfortable with exploring and finding other cultural or other sub-sets of cultures in the towns that you visit.

P - Yes, absolutely and I see the importance in it. I think it's important and I encourage the staff that the school. So of them say that the student's parents own businesses, have you been to the businesses? Do you hang out and have lunch in the neighborhood, do you shop at the grocery store, just even once or twice hopefully more than that. But just seeing that it's important for the staff and for the students and the families that they work with.

J - That's really cool, I appreciate you sharing those extra thoughts for sure.

P - Well thank you this has been a really nice way to think about the trip again.

TRANSCRIPT #7

J- As you answer, if you could please reflect on your most salient immersion experience. Please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go?

P- I went to South Africa, where we went to Capetown and Johannesburg as well as Gaborone, Botswana.

J- What types of activities did you participate in?

P- We did some cultural immersion, the first part of trip was more sightseeing to get familiar with the culture. We went on a safari, went to the Apartheid Museum, and in Johannesburg, we got to take a trip and visit Soweto, which is a township where we got to see the way that the poverty impacts the way that people live. We went to the Regina Mundi Church and learned about the Apartheid and its influence on the culture. In Capetown, we got to go Robben Island, although I missed that day. We got to a lot of

things that showed us what the daily life of how South Africans live to some extent. In Gaborone, we didn't do as much cultural immersion in terms of sightseeing, but we did get to interact with the people a lot, which was amazing. I already forgot the first part of the question, what did we do, right?

J- Sure! When you said you got to interact with the people and that was amazing, can you say more about that?

P- Sure. Well, in both trips we had the opportunity to do that. We had the opportunity to bring over books to the University of Botswana and they have a lot difficulty to get books over there because they are so expensive to ship. So through that, we had a lot of opportunity to interact with the university professors and students in their counseling program and talk about what their program was about. Some of the most giving people I have ever met, both in South Africa and Botswana, just willing to give you the shirt off their backs. Someone told someone they liked giraffes, and 3 days later, he shows up with a painting of a giraffe. And in another instance, a girl told someone she liked her necklace and she took it off and gave it to her. We were just amazed by stuff like that. And also, particularly in South Africa with the poverty and AIDS epidemic, how amazingly joyful the people were, I mean Americans have everything and we are upset at that and into material goods, and then some of the people in South Africa have nothing and they are so joyful, I feel like we have so much to learn from them.

J- It seems like they really value their relationships and making a good impression without material possessions.

P- Oh, without a doubt. I mean in South Africa a couple of times when we were doing outreach and professional development, they would bring their own food from their own house when they didn't have anything to eat, and they are giving us there food. And we are Americans and we take advantage and have so much money in comparison and they are giving us the very little of what they have.

J- It sounds like that really impacted you.

P- Yeah, I was just amazed over and over again at how welcoming and hospitable and welcoming they were. And even when there was a language barrier, it is not words you need, it is actions. And they definitely showed hospitality through their actions and just so welcoming and wanting us to be there and feel comfortable and wanting to show appreciation and I am not sure we do this as much here in the U.S.

J- Yeah. It sounds like you got to spend some time interacting with people and them feeding you and picking up on the little things that you mentioned and trying to make you really happy while you were there.

P- Yes. And always a smile. I think the best thing to walk away with, I said it before, but just so joyful.

J- As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- I know we are supposed to talk about the most salient immersion, but I recently just went to Haiti which was really similar with the poverty and same joy. So I think it is really fresh in my mind, I comparing both the trips. For me it is perspective taking, you know just the little things that happen and I blow them out of proportion like oh, I have to fix something in my car and oh gosh, it is a lot of money. But I have a car, and that is amazing, just perspective is a lot of it. And just being joyful in all circumstance, trying to

be more loving in that sense, I think it has impacted me personally for sure, and just recently being reminded of that is really making it stick out. Because it is so easy to get back into our culture and the way the U.S. does things and forget that piece.

J- Gotcha. While you were you just talking about some of those experiences and what they meant to you, what were you feeling?

P- In the moment?

P- I think grateful and thankful for the opportunity to witness something different. And there is admiration in seeing their ability to do that. And not guilt, and why can't I do that to. Thankful for the opportunity to see that and conviction, that I can live my life differently if I choose to.

J- To what extent the immersion experience include service learning?

P- So, in South Africa we went to a university, **not sure there** was really service learning unless they were serving us. Actually, that was more cultural immersion, sorry. In Johannesburg we worked with paraprofessionals that were serving people with HIV/AIDS and we did some case conceptualization. One thing that I thought was really amazing was how much they knew about what they were doing without the tiniest bit of training and how much training we have in the U.S. , but they were just doing amazing work. We were able to validate what they were doing, which was amazing. I perceived them to view us as the experts as we were coming from the States and had all this education, but really they were doing everything and even more than we would ever think of with all our books, lectures and conferences. So, I thought that was really a nice thing to be able to do. To validate that they were already doing what they needed to be doing, so that was a cool experience. The other one that sticks out is an organization that works with orphans and does outreach outside of Johannesburg, although I am not really sure where. And we were able to, we tried to go in and do something professional development, and the idea was emphasized throughout the trip was that we don't really know what they need and can't assume we do, so we really went in with a loose idea of what we wanted to do, but really waiting to see what they tell us they need. So it ended up being more professional development, for both parties, and there was a lot of singing and dancing, and supporting each other. That was the service learning part. I think we thought we would not go in there and teach, as that was not the model we were taught, but go in and offer something, but really it wasn't. It was more together that we provided support and created an opportunity for these professionals and paraprofessionals to talk about their experiences and many of them were dealing with HIV/AIDS in their homes or have it as well, so just being able to sing, dance and process was a neat service learning opportunity. And again with all of these service learning opportunities, we ended up learning more than what we trying to offer. I know giving is not always the service pieces, but learning so much more through the process.

J- I wonder if just being with others, it does them a service to be able to interact with others in that way.

P- Sure. I think for all of us, just an opportunity to share experiences and I don't feel like we shared as much about our counseling, but it wasn't through words really. That was a big piece I came with, you don't really need to talk, it was the dancing and singing that was the therapy and not just talk and dialogue like traditional therapy in the U.S., it was

more about movement and feeling. And just interaction, like you said, was the therapy. It was a really amazing experience.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- To be honest, I had no idea. I think my idea was we kind of, its exactly what we weren't supposed to come in with, I thought we would have provided more information or something like that. I saw afterwards that it wouldn't have been helpful. It was more being and responding to what they needed and not that thing that we had to offer, doing that needs assessment and not assuming that you know what someone needs or that you even have it to offer. So, from the immersion experience, sure I learned a lot about the culture but I thought we would have more to offer so I walked away realizing it was a lot more reciprocal, and maybe more of them offering it to us.

J- It sounds like you walked in expecting to be able to serve a lot and you got served a lot more in return than you expected.

P- Yes. And I do think that was an aspect of the culture, not sure if exactly how it would be visiting another country but I think the result would be the same, you would end up getting served more than imagined.

J- Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture?

P- I do think so. There were times I would have loved even more interaction with people. I think interacting with not just paraprofessionals but individuals just living their daily lives, maybe not related to counseling, I think that would have been a valuable piece as I think we would have had a different perspective, clearly. I think in the amount of time we did have, we were immersed. I do wish language hadn't been such a barrier, I know language is always a barrier, but I do think it was limiting at times, although not sure if it was avoidable. It made it tricky at times to interact with the people we were interacting with.

J- So interacting with people outside of the counseling realm would have made it like you immersed in the culture more.

P-For me, yes. Or more individual time. We did have some of that, I don't want to make it sound like we didn't, but I just think the more the better. I think it is through the interactions with the people that you feel immersed and learn the most about the cultural nuances of each individual.

J- What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- There are so many! I would say the time at the orphanage. The organization was the one that worked with the orphans and did outreach outside of Johannesburg. That part to me, was just, even three years later, the power of the strength and the resilience of the people. That's where we got sing and dance with the paraprofessionals and professionals, and I snuck out and got to hang out with the kids a little bit. All of it was that they taught us some games, and we had no idea what it was, but it was their smiles and their joyfulness and the resilience and the beauty of the people there and all their ability to have to deal with, with having HIV themselves and then going to counsel people with it and the loss that comes with being in a country ravaged by HIV/AIDS . I hope it never leaves. We sang "lean on me' and there was a song they taught us, "never give up", there was not there many words to it but there was a beat to it, that was one of the highlights. I have talked about South Africa a lot, another highlight in Botswana, one day we got to go

out to different agencies or schools and I had the opportunity with another individual to go to a middle school and work with a lady who had HIV. Even though she was 18, she looked much younger and we did some play therapy and spent some time loving on her. And that to me, was really impactful. She was a beautiful young girl who had HIV and had a lot of strength and hope and courage dealing with that and that was really amazing, another highlight. To be with them, to just be with them without an agenda.

J- Some freedom in your interaction.

P- And taking over that piece of what I am going to do and how I am going to do it, instead just going and just being and connecting and seeing where it goes.

J- How would you say, let's start with the first one where you were able to sing songs with the community? How would you rate that on a scale of 1-10 to your overall experience, with 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical?

P- I would say that is probably a 10.

J- What made that a 10?

P- I think it was everything together. There was the counseling piece, as we were out there doing the work, it was the human piece of how difficult it was to have to confront these difficult issues and the resiliency and the joyfulness and the hope and never giving up. And the way it came together, that is wasn't just talk therapy but was singing and dancing, for me and seeing the strength they portrayed, and they were so welcoming, I can picture faces now even which is kind of funny, and not just valuing life but also valuing what they are doing and knowing that it has such a big role knowing what they are doing to help people with HIV/AIDS.

J- It sounds like those experiences that were more fluid or natural and unplanned stick out the most to you, does that sound right?

P- Yes, exactly. Fluid is very much it. And recognizing that with that original idea that we have to come in with something to offer, but rather we come in and do whatever is needed and the fluidness of just meeting needs and the reciprocity of them meeting our needs as well.

J- How about the other experience of when you were able to counsel that middle school girl?

P- I would say that is probably an 8. It sticks out, but to the same, because it was on an individual basis, I feel like it was just a different experience.

J- So, the one on one nature of it versus the collective group experience, the group may have had a stronger impact on your overall experience.

P- I think part of it, yes. I think part of it was also that what we did with the individual girl was kind of bringing in some of the activities that we do here in the States, so I think in that sense, but it was not the expert role but bringing in what I already knew. And it was great and we were able to show her school counselor how to do play therapy, which was neat, but it had a different feel to it. It was still very impactful, but I think that was part of it, I was bringing my own stuff in, but that other piece was more of a reciprocal process.

J- Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- I do, but I am not sure how. I am not sure if I boxed it in somehow. Wait, let me take a second. I think it helps me to look at culture in a more global sense, to look at it

differently and be more attentive to the role it plays. So, yes, on a global scale, yes. But more on a micro scale, no, because every client is different. But it did help me recognize the way I view the world, and how it is so culturally based on my own culture and recognizing through this cultural immersion, it so greatly differs. The contrast was greater by being there in a totally different country, as opposed to U.S. where some of the cultural underpinning are uniform to some extent. Just because we mandate them, like being on time, because time is so important and hierarchy, so the culture pervades you regardless of cultural background I think. So, being there, where a lot of underpinnings were not there, it was like black and white, so it helped me recognize that there may not be as big of the contrast, but the cultural piece is still there and I need to recognize it.

J- So, it helps you to see into cultural differences that might be there, even if not so obvious to you.

P- Exactly. The differences were a lot more noticeable when you are overseas or international but then recognizing that it still extends here in the U.S.

J- It's almost like being somewhere else tipped you off and reminded you to look for it back here. I forgot to ask you something, was there a negative key moment of your experience?

P- I don't think there is anything negative in the sense of the experience. I don't think it's a negative, I guess this was more of a growth, being on an immersion experience and the interactions among group members can bring about some tension and stress I think. But I am not sure that is really negative, just more an aspect of this process. And not that tension is bad but I think for me, that is something I am working on, so I am not sure that really classifies as negative, which I know makes it tricky for the research. I think one aspect to acknowledge, is that the group dynamics of an immersion is amazing but can be difficult because of the stress in being in another culture and experiencing some of these things and trying to process it. And having your own cultural values, such as time. Time is something that sticks out to me, for me in my head 'you gotta be on time' and that is not the cultural value elsewhere so that whole dynamic together is something that is not negative but needs to acknowledged that is part of the immersion and needs to be processed.

J- So, it sounds like discord among group members.

P- I wouldn't even call it discord. I would call it dynamic. And the way that each individual processes this trip may be in really different ways. But again. I wouldn't say there were any negative experiences.

J- Okay, not negative but challenging?

P- Yes. I think it's part of going on something like this. There is a group dynamic and it must be acknowledged and taken into account.

J- How did the group dynamic effect your overall experience?

P- I think at times the tension was uncomfortable. And we did process and work through it and it was fine, but that made some of the interactions intense. There was a group of students and a group of already professionals and there was different knowledge bases also, so it was uncomfortable but because we are counselors we were able to process through it and resolve it. I think there was discomfort, but I think it is through discomfort

that change happens, so it wasn't so uncomfortable that it ruined anything, maybe in some ways it has ignited more change if anything and more personal reflection.

J- As you said, it didn't seem to be anything negative but more an element of discomfort that effected it in a positive way.

P- In then end, yes. It was definitely uncomfortable during it, but similar to a counseling situation, through that discomfort there is positive change.

J- Okay. Can you rate that on a scale of 1-10 with how critical it was to your overall experience?

P- I would say that a 7. A 6 or a 7.

J- What would you say makes it a 6 or a 7?

P- I would say the discomfort and the dynamics made me be more self reflective and see some pieces of myself that I wouldn't have been able to see if we didn't have that piece. Kind of my own cultural beliefs and recognize ones that I didn't know I had, cultural values that I didn't were even culturally embedded and my own needs and security a little bit. So I think a lot was impactful because it made me be self reflective.

J- It was critical in that it caused enough ruffling in the group that it caused enough self reflection to promote some growth and change in the group.

P- I can only speak for me, so yes.

J- Back to discussing how the trip impacted your ability to counsel other people. You said you noticed how globally, you feel like you are more able to see those now. In what ways was your self-efficacy affected?

P- My initial reaction is not much. But I think increased exposure to some things, it may have improved slightly. I can't say to a great deal.

J- Even if not a lot, can you say more about how it was affected?

P- Sure. I think having just a greater knowledge base know, more experiences, a different way of seeing the world, a different idea of what counseling could look like. So, it doesn't need to be talk about. I had heard that but I got to see that, so in that sense, being more experimental and moving away from talk therapy and having what I already thought was important like play therapy kind of reaffirmed that, so self efficacy in that sense for sure.

J- So it provided another example of what counseling could look like and reaffirmed your belief that counseling happens in many ways. How has time impacted the changes?

P- I think some of it has maintained. Especially in terms of what counseling can look like. I think that as I get back into the U.S. culture it's easy to forget some of the lesson learned. Just talking about it brings it back up, it's so easy to get back into the flow of the way we always do things. I think time has dulled some of the lessons, but I wouldn't say it erased them.

J- What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P- I think I am having difficulty answering this. I am sure that it did but it is not something I can pinpoint and haven't thought about it before. I think the awareness of myself and my culture and learning my worldview, so that self reflection piece and knowing my own worldview better helped me realize when I was kind of projecting or pushing it in someone else, so less apt to listen and put myself in their shoes. So I think it

has increased my empathy, knowing my own stuff and how it can get in the way of empathy or how I am trying to see what the client may be going through my worldview and not seeing it through theirs.

J- So it has opened up your ability to see that your worldview is not the only one and to expand your knowledge?

P-Yeah. I kind of knew that already, but seeing how that interplays in a tangible sense and that my worldview, and that empathy is about seeing it from the clients point of view. I am not sure I fully grasped that prior to the trip. I understood that it what was supposed to happen, but I think the trip enabled me to see that more.

J- Okay. Was there anything on the trip that triggered that change?

P- One thing that sticks out that seems kind of small, but I think I touched on it earlier, it was time. In my mind, it was always appropriate to be on time and you know be there when you say you are going to be there, because that was right. It was a moment that sticks out and talking about how that was really culturally based and very U.S. culture, white middle class was to be on time. And that other cultures time was to be more fluid, so to judge someone for not being on time because that is what I think is right, it's not what's right, it is my cultural view, but not the ultimate truth. In my head, I thought it was what we needed to do and that was across cultures. And recognizing that through talking with others, that was part of the uncomfortable piece of the group dynamic, and how I was viewing time was based on my cultural belief and I was pushing that on others.

J- So your value of being on time was a trigger and really illustrated that change for you. Has time impacted the changes?

P- I would say no. I have continued to have that spark and based on my experience and the research I have conducted and in teaching what I am trying to portray to my students and worldview and that it has actually heightened the empathy piece for me. I think time has actually strengthened it, but that's because of experiences of having to teach and the research that I have focused on. I am not sure if that would have been the case if it wasn't for those 2 things.

J- What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

P- I think it helped me recognize the role of my own culture, so that self awareness. I am not sure that I actually gained specific skills because I feel the skills are going to change and adapt, but recognizing that I need those skills.

J- What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills?

P- Interaction with the people. It highlighted my own self awareness, helped me recognize that knowledge about other cultures was needed and that certain skills would be more effective depending on the cultural relationship and cultural nature of the people.

J- Was something the least effective?

P- For me it was that we had a one day international conference and for me that was not as helpful. It seemed like more talking and less experiencing and that was not effective for me.

J- Okay. So experience over dialogue.

P- In that sense, it was more lecture, not a dialogue.

J- How has time impacted the changes?

P- I think similar to the empathy, I think that time has enhanced it. The trip was a strong tipping point for me to see that it was important and was the trigger for finding out more to see it more evidently in everything that I do, so the time has helped.

J- You have talked about this a lot on your own, but I want to make sure and ask it in case you have anything else to add. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion and has time impacted the changes?

P- I think self awareness was a piece in terms of cultural self awareness and group dynamics and my own insecurities for sure. Over time, I think it hasn't necessarily decreased. I think some of my experiences and training have helped me in terms of my self awareness. But the cultural awareness, that was such a strong piece, I feel like it has not increased as much of the empathy, knowing the role of my own culture, it maybe has increased at a slower rate than some of the areas.

J- Okay. Is there anything you would say has affected that slower rate?

P- I think the immersion piece helps you really see that and then coming back to the U.S and not having that contrast again, and the contrast isn't so drastic, so you are less apt to see it. So kind of getting back to the U.S mainstream culture and seeing that it is culture, not reality.

J- It is more difficult what is so particular about you when you are around so many people who are so similar.

P- Exactly. So I think that has impacted my own cultural awareness.

J- Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- Yes. I think by seeing the poverty, the joyfulness and some of the stuff that I talked about in the beginning has impacted me as a person. And seeing ways that I can improve and emulate the spirit from those in South Africa and Botswana, the giving, loving spirit.

J- Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large?

P- Medium.

J- And what makes them medium?

P- I think the fact that I wouldn't characterize them as large, they haven't pervaded my life as much as I hoped they had. And that is me, how easily I fall back into my old way of doing things and my old way of seeing the world, but I do think I recognize it in small ways and see it in different aspects, but I wish it had been even more pervasive.

J- Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- No, no one has said that. I have not had that specifically said to me.

J- Have any of the changes sustained over time?

P- Not to the extent that I wish they had. Again it goes back the 'medium' of how I wished they had changed my old way of doing things. But in terms of self awareness and seeing culture more clearly, I think it has been pervasive. But I wish it would have been stronger.

J- Is there anything you think would have helped to maintain?

P- Maybe continued dialogue with those we went on the trip with. I think more chances for immersion. More opportunities. I think I mentioned that I recently went to Haiti and it brought back some of this and I think the more that it becomes a way of life and part of

your being and the way you see the world, I wonder if more trips would have made it more sustainable.

J- Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- I think what I have mentioned about time, recognizing more aspects about what is my worldview, so an awareness of my worldview.

J- Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

P- I think having been on an immersion made me more willing to look at opportunities in the future. Like having gone to Haiti recently, I think the immersion experience made me more confident in trying new experiences again. Actually, it sounds like more action based is what you are talking about?

J- Right. Like changing some life decision or what you were planning on doing with your life.

P- I think it has made in my research, that culture is a bigger piece. In terms of what I want to look into and research. But other than that, I can't say that anything else sticks out for me.

J- What types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- We did journaling which felt like a very helpful piece. And we also did dialoguing and group process at the end of certain days and I think those 2 things were really helpful in not just experiencing it, but making you reflect on the experience.

J- So, it affected your experience by making you reflect throughout?

P- For sure. I think it would be easy to just go to the Apartheid Museum and see it, but how do I own it, make it my own, experience it and allow it to touch me versus just experiencing it and out it out of my mind.

J- so, how did the journal impact your experience?

P- I find that when I journal I tend to think about things about a little more and it is helpful for me. I am more of a verbal processor and although I wasn't speaking it, just writing it out lets me see things that I am recognizing about myself, so by taking the time to process it.

J- How did group dynamics impact you?

P- It helped me to look at myself and see myself as someone that impacts the group but also the group dynamics pushed me and forced me to look at myself in a deeper way than if I would have done if I made the trip by myself or with just 1 other person. The group enhanced it, by causing discomfort and exciting change.

J- So it sounds like the journal helped you slow down and the group helped you to reflect into yourself.

P- For sure. And just learning from each other too.

J- What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- It was an opportunity to see a life outside of my own, a culture very different, I have been to Europe and so forth, but a culture that I had less exposure to. I think giving me perspective is the meaning I have attributed to it. Giving me perspective of my self and others.

J- So it really meant to you, a new mirror to look and see yourself differently and also see others differently from the lens that you came into the world with.

P- Sure. I think part of it, if you want to think of it like the lens that I view the world, it impacted the lens. Part of me helped me to see my own prescription and how I view the world and that other people don't have the same prescription.

J- If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- Nothing about the immersion experience. Maybe the after part of making it more a part of my life, that is what I would change, but nothing other than the immersion itself. And maybe the conference, I didn't like that part.

J- Anything about the conference that would have made it more impactful or useful?

P- Well, I just thought while we were there I would have rather been interacting with people rather than doing presentations that we could have seen in the U.S.

J- Okay, so if you could have changed anything it would have been to scrap the conference and spend more time interactions with the people in the community because those were the most valuable.

J- How do you think this would have affected your experience?

P- I don't think it would have made a big difference to be honest. It would have just been one more day of interaction. So, in the big scheme of things, not a big influence.

J- So not a big difference, but would have added to what you were already enjoying and growing from.

P- Yes.

J- How has it impacted your work as a counselor?

P- I think you have highlighted a lot with the questions. Empathy, recognizing my worldview, recognizing my own and my client's worldview, reemphasizing how important culture is. All the things we have already talked about.

J- Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- I don't think so. I think the Haiti trip reemphasized some of the same points in terms of culture and the immersion trip made me see how important cultural responsiveness is and really just re-highlighted the same points and some of the lessons learned.

J- I wonder did your Africa trip help you in terms of your Haiti trip?

P- I do. I think it helped me to just see culture and to be looking for it more and to be respectful of it. The trip was not a counseling trip, it was religious based. And it helped me recognize wanting to be respectful of the religious views of the people in Haiti. And it enabled me to be more confident on the trip in general.

J- Anything else to add?

P- No, I don't think so.

J- Thank you!

TRANSCRIPT #8

J- Please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go?

P- I went to Guatemala. My feelings about it are mostly all positive. We had a lot of fun and the team I went with was great and we had a lot of great experiences so that was really beneficial.

J- What types of activities did you participate in?

P- We volunteered a few days working with Common Hope building a home, we toured a few places that help out around the area and went to ethnically rich places.

J- So it sounds like you got to volunteer, what did you build?

P- We helped build a house on a mountain ridge and passed supplies up like an assembly line.

J- So, how did you interact with local people?

P- We mostly interacted when we were shopping for souvenirs or eating meals or connecting with the hotel staff. We got to know a guide in Antigua. We met with one and he gave us a tour around Antigua and then he let us see a Mayan ceremony at his restaurant.

J- So mainly by visiting restaurants and visiting with a host person?

P- He was a local friend, not a guide.

J- Sorry. It is hard to hear. As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- I would say that going down there and experiencing what counseling may be like there down there I feel like my knowledge of the world is greater and that my worldview is more wholesome as I experienced what life was like outside of the U.S. And I am proud of what we did and what we saw, so have a lot of really positive experiences.

J- It sounds like you feel proud of your experiences because they helped you grow your worldview.

P- Yes.

J- Any other feeling words that come to mind?

P- Not sure if I have one word but the teachers from my college who facilitated the trip, I got to know one of them, and continues to be a mentor to me and that was nice to have such a positive experience with someone I respect. That was exciting.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- No, I don't think so. I don't know what I expected, but knowing that it was different. We read before we went there, I think the book was talking about an older time in Guatemala and didn't take place in a city like the one we were in. And I didn't expect to have a variety of experience such as restaurants and shops. I also didn't expect to be constantly aware of my surroundings at all times. When you live in your home country, you are kind of used to the way things are but when in Guatemala, there are so many new things all the time. so I came back cognitively exhausted, trying to learn Spanish or do things by their standards and trying to be immersed in that new culture and being aware of how they live and not going down there like an American but to be respectful of their life.

J- So it sounds like it was a little bit more real than you were prepared for, as you read books before you went but being there was a whole different experience. Instead of being a tourist, you were there trying to experience the culture and it wore you out some?

P- Definitely. By the end of the day, I wanted to do American like things and talk in English and not worry about translating. It was exhausting.

J- Do you feel like you were immersed in the culture?

P- Even as far as the hotel we stayed in, it was Guatemalan- like. It wasn't swanky or anything so at the end of the day it wasn't like we went back to our original culture. We spent a lot of time away from the hotel on different tours and doing different activities in Antigua and in Guatemala. So, definitely we did not have the choice to not experience Guatemala when we were out in it all day.

J- So even in your hotel, you were still immersed in the culture?

P- Yeah, we still had Guatemalan meals and processed the days so it wasn't like it was done and over with when we got back home.

J- Okay. What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- I don't know if there was any particular one. I think it was just the feeling of everyday we would have an activity until about 5:00 in the afternoon. After we were done we could rest at the hotel or walk around Antigua or go to dinner. By the end of the day, we would walk around on the cobblestone streets and after being there for a few days it was nice to get a feel for the community and what it is like when they wind down after their day as well. And it was nice to know that this is Guatemala and it was nice to meander through Antigua. It was nice to have some alone time as I am an individual processor, so to walk around alone, maybe behind or alone a group, it was nice to process what on my own what we had done that morning or that night and XXX was really open to that, so I appreciated it.

J- So being able to explore by yourself and process and be in a quiet way?

P- Yeah. Antigua is so nice to just be surrounded by beauty.

J- Sounds like a really nice, serene peaceful experience. If you could rate that on a scale of 1-10 with 1 not being very critical and 10 being critical to your overall experience, how would you rate that?

P- I think keeping in mind how much I do value alone time, makes it a 6 or 7.

J- Okay. What makes it a 6 or 7?

P- I just know myself and if I don't get my alone time then I feel negatively. Even if I was not valuing it as much at the time, when I look back I realize how much I valued that.

J- So how did that experience directly impact your immersion experience?

P- I think it helped me be prepared for the next day and made me soak in what had happened the previous day. And it kept me alert and gave it me time to plug back in when we did go to dinner.

J- So it helped you recharge your battery. So you had said earlier that you were pretty exhausted at the end of the day. So this was your recharge time?

P- Yes. It would have been worse had I not had that.

J- What was a key negative moment of your experience?

P- There are a few that come to mind. When we helped the family build the house on the

mountain that day it was so much work, so pretty negative as it was so hot and really taxing on all of us. It was emotionally rewarding but at the same time it was a lot of work and our buttons were being pushed. You know, I will say at the time we were not as cheerful as we could have been, we tried to just get through it. Nothing too large.

J- So the physical labor itself, that was difficult? Did you say something about your buttons being pushed?

P- Yeah. We had to carry these pieces of sheetrock but weren't taught how to give them to the next person. We had to be really cognizant of how we interacted and communicated.

J- So fatigue and stress and made it difficult to communicate with team members?

P- Yes.

J- How critical was that to your overall experience on a scale of 1-10 with 1 not being very critical and 10 being very critical, how would you rate that?

P- I would say like a 4.

J- What makes a 4?

P- A 4 because I could have done without it but I am glad we did it. It felt good to help someone that did not have the means to do it without us and would have had to wait for someone else to help.

J- Okay. Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- Yeah, I think in a roundabout way. I would have liked to have had more direct experiences in the counseling realm like sitting in on a session while I was there to be directly impacted but it did impact me in the way of seeing the culture and being more aware that if I were to have a client from Guatemala or that area like Central America seeing the culture opened my eyes to see what is normal for them.

J- So it gave you some insight into what the culture is like over there. Any other ways you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- No, I don't think so. Not other than being more of culture in general. Being out of my own element and being able to see what it may be for any immigrant.

J- So you gained understanding of culture and also what it was like to be in a culture different than your own. Do you think your self efficacy was affected?

P- I don't know, maybe. We kind of stuck together as a team so we didn't go through many things independently. But we all had our independent experience so we developed greater empathy in some way.

J- Okay. Where there any positive or negative changes in your self efficacy that you can specify? How has time impacted the changes?

P- No not really. Time has definitely played a factor as far as that experience of being on a study abroad trip as it has made me a part of who me I. I may not experience it in such direct ways but I think it has developed my personality and my counseling work and has made me more empathic towards different cultures and other ways of life. I don't always tell people that I was in Guatemala but it has definitely shaped how I view the world and I how I view people and their backgrounds and their systems. So it is not direct but definitely part of my counseling and the work that I do.

J- So it sounds like it is kind of integrated into you and has not gone away.

P- Definitely.

J- What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P- I think the time that we had there was so short as we were there less than 2 weeks. But even in that short time I could feel what it was like to be out of my comfort zone, outside of my element so after having my own experience of being outside of my comfort I can better understand what it is like for others having recently arrived in the U.S., and a greater understanding of what it is like to walk in their shoes. And it is more difficult for them as we knew as students and tourists that we could go home and had the things to look forward to, but for them they may not have that future orientation, like '3 more days' to make it.

J- So when you are the visitor you can go home and someone who lives over here they don't get that. And that helps you to understand and empathize better. Is there anything that triggered those changes?

P- I don't think so. I didn't realize that at the time. I think that is something that has been recently been brought to my attention, that it is different for us when we are immersed in a culture as we have the hopes that we will go back home again and some people are forced to be here and forced to stay here. I don't think I had really thought about that at all.

J- How has time impacted the changes?

P- I think that when I went to Guatemala I wasn't involved in my Master's program at the time. When I went there I was still in undergrad and didn't know I was going to be starting a program in counseling. So, when I went there I think it heightened my empathy for people in the community and not so much in a professional realm. And it wasn't until a year later that I applied to the grad school for counseling. So the empathy wasn't as much counseling related.

J- Okay, so it sounds like the changes in empathy were not categorized into counseling as you were not in that frame of mind yet. But you are able to look back and see how that relates now. Do you think that has still stuck with you?

P- Yeah I think so. It has become a part of who I am now.

J- What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

P- I am not sure I can quantify that into an answer. I think just being a part of their culture and getting a feel for what their daily life was like. It helped me realize that the American way is not necessarily the 'right' way, that our government, or even our social programs, so all of these things that are so American, we might think that our way is the best way or the most beneficial way but in Guatemala they had some services that were doing really well. It taught me to see that there is not one way, to be open to how the other cultures do it and different ways things can be done.

J- That's valuable information. So you feel like your cultural knowledge and skills was expanded in that there was a lot more ways to do things than just the way we do things in America.

P- Definitely.

J- Was there anything that really illustrated that point for you while you were there?

P- One day we worked with this nonprofit that worked with teenage women. At the time

they were having a lot of women that were uneducated and what the process of becoming a mom was like. A lot of women that thought it had to be the next step in their life, to get married and have kids. So they did a lot of education on safe sex and family development and all the resources that might be there for young women. We toured the agency and talked with someone who worked there and it was so different than I had experienced in the past and different things I have heard of and the way they went about it. It was unique and really informative.

J- So you got to see people in the culture teaching people about the right way to do something but it wasn't what you were used to but you got to see another way to do things.

P- Yeah. And not knowing that was a need of the people of Antigua or Guatemala. I kind of felt ignorant and naïve and it was neat that they didn't have fancy facilities but were getting the work done effectively, so that was cool.

J- Okay. Do you think that worn off over time or stuck with you?

P- I think I forget at some points but also am reminded at some points. I don't think it is a constant. It wasn't a constant when I got back other than the first 2 weeks or so, but it is more something that comes up in discussion with my classmates, but it is definitely still there and feelings are still that strong.

J- Okay. So maybe touch and go a little bit but the underlying feelings are really strong. Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- Yeah, definitely. I think just being aware and processing things as they were happening and at the end of the day impacted my internal messages to my self and encouraged different thought processes. I think coming back from the trip and reflecting with my teachers and peers I had to process it and communicate about what we did so it kind of wrapped it all together and also telling my friends and family about what we did really helped.

J- Okay, so all that processing really helped. What did you become aware of about yourself?

P- That I enjoy traveling, I like experiencing other things and being outside of my comfort zone. I really appreciate seeing how other people do things and being able to experience it and learn outside of the classroom and outside of the United States, so I appreciated the uniqueness. Part of self awareness was noticing the little things and the big things that I enjoy and this experience really polarized that for me. And when we came back I was really grateful and appreciative of that.

J- How has time impacted the changes in your self awareness?

P- I think it has increased with having other travels and experiences within my city. It has increased my gratefulness and the respect I have for other cultures and for being a part of things that outside the norm.

J- So it has been just more and more?

P- Yes. And I think it has gotten more refined. Not that it wasn't before but I can verbalize it better and put some of feelings into words more easily and recognize when I am being appreciative.

J- So you are able to recognize when you are being grateful. Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- Yes, definitely. It is kind of what we have been talking about all along. How it has adjusted my worldview and realized how much I liked working with other cultures or appreciate what other people do. It has heightened that part of my personality.

J- So the changes you have been talking about, you feel like have been incorporated into who you are.

P- Yes.

J- Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large?

P- I would say, I think it's subjective for people who might or might not value culture being a part of their worldview. It's not that I didn't appreciate going to Guatemala, but it has been heightened since then and I don't know if there was room for a large change, so it was probably a medium change as it heightened what I was already feeling.

J- So it was a medium change because you almost didn't realize what was happening at the time but now you are able to say what it is.

J- Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- I don't know. I think the same way that I answered, it is kind of who I have always been, but it is now more valid to travel and have other experiences. It was my first time traveling and going somewhere other than a vacation.

J- Have any of the changes sustained over time? If so, how?

P- I think the only way they have not sustained is that they might not be on my mind as much, but they are definitely still there.

J- Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- Yeah. Just like being more aware that there was not one right way to do things and the different needs that other countries have and how the needs are met within each culture and things like that.

J- How about your lifestyle. Since you have been back did you do anything that you had not previously planned on doing?

P- Not that I can rally think of. In small ways like the language I use.

J- Can you say more about the language you use?

P- Trying to be more accepting or not so stereotypical or politically incorrect.

J- So bring more culturally sensitive. What types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- Well, a lot of it happened on my own time and also with my classmates. Whether it was after a specific activity or at the end of the day or with my roommate before we were going to bed.

J- So nothing formally that you had to do. So how did doing that, chatting at the end of the day impact your experience?

P- I think can of several ways it helped me to see, if I didn't notice something for example, I was able to see it when they brought it up. It was helpful to see what they were noticing and what was important to them and also for me to verbalize instead of keeping it inside or in a journal and not needing to put into words. I think putting it into words and discussing helped to make sure I wasn't making things up or BS-ing it. It was good to see other people's reactions and what they had seen and what they were feeling

as it brought new perspectives to what I was feeling.

J- So it helped to validate your experience and also made it richer. Did you do any journaling or anything?

P- Yeah, definitely.

J- How did that impact your experience?

P- I was blogging when I was out there. So getting online and talking family and friends and keeping them updated made me more proud of my experience by staying in touch with others. And it was similar to what I just said, I had to qualify one statement, trying to back it up with the experiences I was having, it helped me convince myself and convince others that I wasn't just like doing something out there and it wasn't the stereotypical thing to say about my experience. So writing and blogging helped to pull them out from swimming around in my head.

J- Okay, so it gave you something more solid to use to get the thoughts out of your head?

P- Yeah. And it was nice to come back and even like over the last few years to see what we really did and when we did it and all the opportunities we were given.

J-? What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- I think it meant a lot, but not sure one specific meaning to it. I think the most salient meaning is that how important it was to have the opportunity to experience a culture that was different than my own and being open to being uncomfortable at times and being open to seeing that there is not just one way to do things.

J- It meant a new paradigm shift for you.

P- Yeah.

J- If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- Probably having more direct counseling experiences. Whether it was sitting in on a session or viewing a tape from a session. As I said, we didn't have any discussions on individual or group counseling in Guatemala. It was more about the culture and their different groups. So more counseling stuff.

J- It would have been nice to be on a counseling focused trip.

P- Yeah, it was a counseling class. It was a grad level class, which I took even though I was in undergrad. So maybe they underestimated what kinds of counseling experiences we had. There were two other undergraduate students that went with us, so it was mostly grad students. They kind of had the counseling experiences but we didn't, so maybe that is why they didn't teach it as much.

J- Okay, that makes sense. How would it have changed your experience if you could do more stuff like that?

P- I think it would have made the course name be accurate. I was disappointed, but still had a good time. I think it would have helped me sooner along my educational process if I wanted to go into counseling. I ended up doing it anyway but afterwards I didn't have a better idea of what it meant to be a counselor or therapist.

J- So you would maybe want to have known that sooner. How has it impacted your work as a counselor?

P- Just what I have answered in several answers. It has come to be a part of who I am as a

person and as a counselor. Who I am as a person is very similar to who I am as a counselor. So having that experience within a group has developed me, my worldview, my understanding of other cultures and how I work with them, made me aware and more appreciative of them.

J- Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- I am glad you asked that. I meant to tell you earlier that we had Spanish lessons for several days. I am not sure why I forgot to mention that as it was a huge deal. It was mostly in the afternoons a few days a week, where we went to a Spanish school and learned Spanish while we were there. It was neat as everyday we went there we had our own Spanish teacher, kind of like individual tutoring. So we got to interact directly with someone that lived there and we didn't really talk a lot about the culture but we could tell by the way they reacted and it was really cool and interesting.

J- Thank you for sharing!

TRANSCRIPT #9

J- Please reflect on your most salient interview as you answer these questions. Please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go?

P- My most salient experience is when I went to Guatemala through my Master's program at XXX and we went down there for 2 weeks and spent most of our time in Antigua.

J- What types of activities did you participate in?

P- We spent most of our time doing community outreach through an organization called Common Hope. The sponsors are from MN so we got acquainted with them. We spent time going to the school and the programs that they have and got to meet the kids. One day we also helped build a house. We carried cement slabs in 95 degrees up a hill for this family, it was a really powerful experience as they were so grateful.

J- That sounds like a lot of work too.

P- Yes, but it was so worth it. We also worked with this community organization called WINGS. It's focus is on women's health and wellness and they did gynecological appointments for women, talked about counseling for pregnancy, and we were very involved in that as well.

J- So you were involved in many activities?

P- Yeah. It was a fantastic experience and a fascinating country. There were aspects that were very poverty stricken and then around the corner there was a car that you could never imagine paying that much money for. There were so many different levels of economy there.

J- So it sounds like you did some outreach activities, were there any other ways that you interacted with the local community?

P- Definitely. We really took every opportunity we could to interact with the locals. Everyday we ate at the restaurants and the group I was with, we kept a pretty small group and would converse as much as we could at the restaurants. It was amazing that even if the servers didn't speak English and we were pointing on something on the menu they would go to the kitchen and bring it out. It was amazing that we were almost beyond language and still communicating and how much nonverbal and the community played a role when we were walking around smiling and how well received that was and reciprocated also. And it was also interesting walking around being viewed as an American and the way people would treat you. People would come up and were beggars so they would ask us for tequila. They seemed to gravitate towards certain skin tones and I have long blonde hair, so a lot of people would come up and want to feel the texture of my hair. And in just knowing that they could tell that we were from the U.S. so would want to show us things more often.

J- It sounds like you felt noticed for sure.

P- And that was different. It was a very different experience.

J- Different than it is here in the U.S.?

P- Absolutely. I think being American is something I take for granted and you don't see people begging on the streets as much or don't get approached by them, so you still want to be respectful and noticing the differences in culture and the way people handle this stuff.

J- As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- Oh, I miss it. I would love to get back down there and volunteer again. And spend more time wholeheartedly focusing on the non-profits. You know we were there for educational purposes so we spent a lot of time sightseeing and things like that for part of the time, so I would love to go back and just volunteer all of my time.

J- So it sounds like maybe joy the nostalgia and longing.

P- Empathy towards the people there and being able to experience something completely different from my everyday life. Doing that and being in an area where English is not the dominant language, I developed a whole new understanding for immigrants living in the U.S and their having to navigate and feel your way around this country. And they were very welcoming to us and how that is something I have made a conscientious effort to do here. I have this token that I bought from Antigua and every time I see it I have this sense of a need to make a difference, make an impact. Also very positive, happy and fulfilling memories that come along with the difficult experience.

J- So, it is a reminder for you to be conscious of what it is like for you there and for people who are here who are others.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- It was beyond that. It was much more impactful than I had expected. A lot of people in our group had bought the Guatemala travel guides and had read into. I chose not to. I chose to just go and take everything in as it happened. I was glad that I did that as I guess it made it a much more shocking experience to learn all of these different aspects of the culture while being completely immersed in it. And not being impacted by someone

else's perception of the country. So, I was glad for that, it was a really phenomenal experience. Something I would do over again for sure.

J- You said you were completely immersed in the culture. How do you know you were immersed in the culture?

P- I sat down, I would go and sit down with groups of children, it almost became like a game, I would say something and they would say it in Spanish and I would say it in English. There were times I stayed away from the group and it was just me and them. There were moments that I would go for a walk just by myself without everyone else and it gave me a chance to feel like I was more a part of their life rather than them looking at me because there was a group of Americans or tourists coming along.

J- So you participated and interacted instead of just observing and looking.

P- Yes. I took it upon myself to separate from the group for some time so I could get the feeling of what that was like.

J- What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- Oh boy, there are so many. One in particular, we took a 2 hour car ride through some extreme areas of poverty. We took it to a base of this volcano. And the people figured out that they could make money off of the tourists coming to see this volcano, so they built this city at the base. You would go there and people would offer their horse to take you up the volcano. So I decided to do that, so this gentleman put me on his horse, and he would lead the horse as he only has one of them. And he has to hike up this awful steep path. And when we got to the top, we had all of these bag lunches provided to us. So I gave him my lunch because he did all the work as I didn't think it was fair that I ate my lunch when I just sat on the horse. And he was so grateful, he just couldn't believe it. And then we went to volcano part and saw the lava flow and there of course were no barriers so you went right to where the lava flows and your shoes start to melt because of the volcano. If you were to fall on the ground you would light on fire from the heat. And when I walked away I was the only person who came up on the horse to have him pick me up right there. He was so appreciative and it was such a small gesture that I hadn't thought that much of when I did it, but that was really powerful to see that one small thing went such a long way and was so meaningful.

J- It definitely seems like that meant a lot to him.

P- Yeah it meant a lot to me. It was a great reminder that a small act of kindness could go along way.

J- If you could rate that on a scale of 1-10 with 1 not being very critical and 10 being critical to your overall experience, how would you rate that?

P- I would give it a 12! It was just a really special moment.

J- You said you would give it a 12.

P- I know you said to stick to 1-10 but it was really a 12.

J- Okay, so you would give it a 10, but if you could you would give it a 12.

P- Yes!

J- What makes it a 12?

P- I think the overall meaning in that one small experience was what the whole purpose of the cultural immersion was for. It isn't the language or a big gesture but something small and making a human connection is what it is all about.

J- What was a key negative moment of your experience?

P- I would say there were a lot of days that we didn't have things going on and we were still going out in the community. Towards the end of the trip we were being discouraged from that by the faculty so that was tough to have to take a step back that our leadership had not wanted us to be so immersed and to be spending so much time around all of the people.

J- How critical was that from 1-10 with 1 not being very critical and 10 being critical to your overall experience, how would you rate that?

P- I would say it was a 7. It was critical in the sense that it made me want to do future cultural immersion on my own more than with a group that were giving boundaries of that nature.

J- So you would like to do more if you wanted to?

P- So to be more autonomous. If I had extra time I wasn't about sitting in my room or visiting with the people from Minnesota. I wanted to be out and about so in that respect, I thought well maybe just going there on a trip may be nice in the future. I can recognize it in hindsight that was nice to have some leadership in the beginning, or my first time being out of the States.

J- So it was critical in the sense that it shaped your plan of what you would like to do in the future. Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- Certainly. From meeting people where they are coming from and really embracing it and recognizing how important nonverbal communication is, to now when I get someone that I am working with I don't get nearly as nervous as I would have in working with someone where English is there second language. I am much more confident in my ability to be patient and use other means to connect with them. If I not as clear about something, I am not afraid to ask for clarification.

J- In what ways was your self-efficacy affected? It sounds like you are more confident now and are more able to dive in and ask for questions. Anything else as far as your self efficacy goes?

P- As far as self efficacy, it made me overall as a person much more open to global connectedness and learning about other cultures, which led me to meet my husband from Europe.

J- So it really opened you up to a whole life of something completely different. How has time impacted the changes to counsel people from different cultures?

P- I would say that since that experience I have done much more international travel. It has inspired me, has made it a part of life and has maintained my ability to effectively counsel people from other cultures.

J- So it has maintained or even grown since then?

P- Absolutely. There is no way to have the feelings and thoughts become stagnant because I have incorporated them in both personal and professional development.

J- What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures?

P- I would say it's had a profound impact. To be in a country not speaking the dominant language and having different rituals made me much more able to empathize with people

here in the U.S. as we are such a melting pot and there are so many, so I always find that if there are people around me that need some guidance I always now take the time to be of help if I can.

J- What triggered the changes in your ability to empathize?

P- I would just being someone in those shoes in another country. Just being able to step inside those shoes and see what it is like to be the minority opened my eyes to be more accommodating to others.

J- How has time impacted the changes?

P- I did an extensive amount of journaling and emailing while we were there every night. I emailed my family and documented everything we did and how I felt about it. And I took well over 600 pictures which I love to go back and look at. So having documented the experience and having integrated more cultural immersion experiences really keeps it on the forefront of my mind.

J- Sounds like you made a definite effort to not let go what you learned there. What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

P- We had an experience where we met former counseling students in Guatemala. It was a pretty new Master's program and so we spoke with them about barriers that they run into and barriers that we run into and that definitely helped to increase knowledge about their culture.

J- So just knowing that you can run into the same barriers, no matter where you are from?

P- Yeah and learning about different ways you can accommodate them.

J- What was the most effective in developing your cultural knowledge and skills? Or least effective?

P- Least effective is thinking that everyone from a culture is the same. So it is important to recognize cultural difference and avoid generalizations, to recognize that there are differences, so generalizations are really only a guide. So counseling for me overall is having an open mind and meeting people where they are at.

J- How has time impacted the changes?

P- I think time has only enhanced my awareness and my ability to work with different populations because I have made it a priority to keep in on the forefront of my mind. It has only grown and gotten stronger.

J- Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- Absolutely. My self awareness has changed in the way that I and Americans are perceived by other cultures and the way that I am perceiving others has helped me to put stereotypes and generalizations aside and to treat each individual as completely unique person.

J- Is there anything else you learned about your self?

P- I learned how important understanding other cultures is. It has helped me understand who I am as a person and different notions about my family. It forced me to take a look at my own personal situation and how we have different ideas and customs and just my own family. So it helped me to take those global perspective and internationalism but also identify my own situation and my own position. Bringing up thing from the macro and the micro.

J- It sounds like a great way to put that, you learned about yourself and things you like but also how the world may see you and your family.

J- How has time impacted the changes in your self awareness?

P- That also continues to grow and be fostered and get stronger as I get older and have more experiences in different cultures and maintain a self awareness about my thoughts and feelings and emotions related to those things. It continues to grow, develop and evolve.

J- Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- Yeah. It changed my ability as counselor and professional to be more effective working with different people and different cultures. It changed me personally to realize that this is an important aspect of my life as this is something that I really value, different cultures and different experiences, and also had expanded my self awareness to understand really what role I play in this world and how I can make an impact and make a difference.

J- Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large?

P- Large.

J- Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- Yeah. Certainly my family. I came home with a whole new energy and couldn't wait to book my next trip to some place unknown that I had never been before. I just have a whole new perspective of the world and the possibilities out there that I want to experience.

J- When you said they were large changes, why are they large, how do you characterize them that way?

P- Because of how much of it has had an impact and how much the cultural immersion has played a role in my life. I immediately felt this need to do more and experience more and get to know other and truly understand different cultures and ways of life. It is something that I have focused on and have gotten involved in local organizations back home when I am not able to travel. And I have done a significant amount of travel since then.

J- So it really changed a lot of what you were going to do in your life, so it has really colored your life since the trip.

P- Yes. I was in a small town who went to a local university and had planned to stay in the area. Since then I have been drawn to a bigger city having more diversity and I am have fell in love with a guy from a different country and international travel is what drew us together.

J- And it is very much a part of your life now. How have you made these large changes sustain over time?

P- Being aware of it on a daily basis, it helps to be married to an immigrant so it is something I am constantly aware of what it means to be married to an immigrant in this country or to have English be a second language or how I can help people in that situation, if there is anything I can do or to see if they even want my help. As well as looking at where is there a need to understand a different population and where are these opportunities.

J- So you are always looking to apply what you have learned in your personal and professional world?

P- Yes, to apply it both personally and professionally and to grow that, to expand it to new experiences.

J- Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- Yes. I travel outside of the U.S. a lot more, I volunteer at places where English is frequently a second language and reach out to minority populations. And just as an individual, I do my part to stay active and aware of things.

J- Is there anything you have done or plan to do as a result of your participation that you hadn't planned on doing previously?

P- Just to always be aware of it. To always look at my pictures and my journals to be an example to me of how powerful that first experience was. And to always be looking to learn more and further my education and my ability as a counselor by finding the areas that aren't well understood. And just to bring that into action and make an effort to be immersed again and to share that experience with others so they too can see the possibilities.

J- So going back over what you learned and looking for places to do that similar type of thing again whether it is locally or internationally, you have made it really important.

P- And sharing the experience, getting other people involved to.

J- So telling other people is also a way to keep it fresh in your mind.

P- Yes.

J- You mentioned you did keep a journal. What other types of reflective processes did you participate in?

P- We had several meetings before we left and we did a debriefing and a large questionnaire when we returned home. And while we were there we turned in daily journals. I did the daily journals but also did my personal work to release all of my feelings and emotions and kept my personal archives, so went above and beyond that.

J- How did participation in the journaling impact your experience?

P- I am not someone that usually enjoys journaling, that is not something that I typically do. But it was so rich with new experiences that I am so glad and I did and glad I took it one step further to really document everything I was doing.

J- How about your meetings beforehand and debriefing questionnaire afterwards?

P- I thought it was helpful in knowing what sort of things to bring and answering some of the questions we had. What I would have preferred to have less of was giving us too much information about the culture before we got to experience it for ourselves. Because there was a lot of emphasis on what to typically expect out of the people and being an American and a tourist and part of a group and as far the requirements of the University, they may have had to go into that but I would have rather experienced it for the first time and then discussed it later in the day. Or processed in the moment rather than at the end.

J-So, as you have gone on other trips, have you done it without so much prep and so much I guess coaching about the culture beforehand.

P- Yes. I have just gone on the trips without much study or preparation and I find that I personally really appreciate that as I am able to really stay present to experiencing the moment and not coming with a lot of preconceived notions or judgments. It has helped me to be much more open-minded.

J- When you were in your group, how did group dynamics impact you?

P- That's a good question. Our group definitely had some interesting dynamics. It was a unique bunch. I tend to be someone who goes off on their own and I will kind of navigate from group to group to see how they are perceiving things and how they are viewing this experience. I may go off on my own and pay attention to all of those different dynamics. There were some people in our group who had not done well with e food so they were pretty sick for significant periods of the time, so I would touch base and make sure they didn't need anything from me and then go off so I could really maximize my time and get as much out as I could.

J- What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- The overall meaning is the small act of kindness going a long way. And to come to people with an open mind and try and be as judgment free as possible. And to really meet them where they at personally and professionally and otherwise. I think it opened my eyes to a whole new possibility and perspective.

J- It is almost like it means that it's worth it to take a step out there and do that act of kindness and go unprepared and maybe it is scary but really worth it in the end. If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- I would say the piece about the extra or additional knowledge given ahead of time about the culture, I would rather just experience it there. And to really allow freedom to explore and use the time fully and seek out opportunities outside of the group.

J- How do you think this would have affected your experience?

P- I would want to know what it would be like for those around me as a lot of people got caught up preparing for this specific immersion experience. They did so much reading about other people's travel experience to Guatemala and had all these preconceived notions and I wonder how more than anything it would have made a difference for them.

J- Do you think it would have changed it for you?

P- It probably would have had an impact on me, I think there would have been more people profoundly impacted like I was. Seeing things completely fresh with new eyes. I think having more people to process with at the end of the day.

J- And that would have been a positive experience as you feel like you would have had more people to relate to?

P- Yes.

J- How has it impacted your work as a counselor?

P- It has impacted my work in a profound manner. It has made me much more respectful in working with international folks. It has actually made that even a possibility. I think that had I not gone on this experience I would be less comfortable taking on people who are from cultures extremely different from my own, I wouldn't have felt that it was ethically right. But now I feel that I have the capacity to work with people from different

cultures and the opens and the desire to learn and understand that I may not have developed otherwise.

J- So it really gave you confidence and bravery to work with people from other cultures.

P- I feel much more comfortable and capable to help people different from my own culture.

J- What do you think is the key to realizing for yourself that it is okay to work with people from other cultures?

P- I think having it as a personal goal and realizing that it is something that I can integrate into my professional life. And knowing that it was just me, so it was not going to have negative impact on others. We are in the counseling role, that is different, you are sorta in a leadership role working with people who come to you in a distressed state of their life. I would have been very hesitant had it not been for this trip and put myself personally in these experiences to open my eyes to differences and human beings and acknowledge that they are there.

J- Thank you. Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- I think we really covered a lot of it. I would be interested to see how often people really make this a part of their life because it became such a part of my life and have sought out more immersion experience and they have continued to shape my perspective so much. So I would just be curious to see how one immersion experience could lead to more. If that is common or unique about me?

J- It sounds like you are saying that it was life changing to you and it would be hard to see how it could not be life changing to others. It sounds like you are really interested in the results of this study?

P- Yes I am! It is a great study.

J- Anything else that we missed that you wanted to share or say?

P- Perhaps you would be interested to know along the lines of how this impacted me, that I did come back to my community and do presentations on the Guatemalan culture. There is a community nearby that has a Guatemalan population, so I did come back and share my experience.

J- So getting your local community involved was something else you did when you came back?

P- Yes, sharing my knowledge and experiences.

J- How was that received?

P- People were real interested and I had bought a number of different things such as clothing and instruments and dolls, things that are common in the U.S., so I bought them in Guatemala so people could see how they are different and sharing pictures and general statistics was well received. I think it opened the community up to be more welcoming and seeing some of the differences as well as similarities in the cultures.

J- Thank you so much for doing this interview!

TRANSCRIPT #10

J- Please describe your experience of participating in an international immersion outreach. Where did you go?

P- I went to Bolivia, specifically La Paz and Cocha Bamba.

J- What types of activities did you participate in?

P- Well most of the time was spend in Cocha Bamba, we stayed there for 7 days as the trip was 12 days long. We visited a local orphanage, the national children's library, which was a very impactful experience because the library was probably half the size of my living room in my apartment. And it was the national library. They basically have one library for the entire nation and it was tiny. The 2 women that were running it were so enthusiastic and so happy we were there. And we donated a suitcase full of books in English and in Spanish and there were at least 10 of us that went. So they were thrilled with that. Let me tell you a little bit about the format of the trip. So one of our professors, XXX , has led this trip in the past. So he was the professor of the course. But we had two locals that lived in Cocha Bamba so they were a married couple and they took care of us while we there, and played interface for us throughout the trip and were very helpful in setting up activities and things. And the front end of the trip, I was actually sick. A lot of us were sick. So I missed out on visiting the orphanage, which I was very disappointed by. But some of the other places we went, we visited two universities, one was public and one was private. We spoke with professors in the counseling department at the private university and had a discussion on what students at that university could expect from that program and shared with them our experiences as well, so we learned that it was not required that you had a license to practice in Bolivia so a lot of us were like 'we should just stay here after we graduate and dodge the adventure of applying for licensure'!

J- In what ways did you interact with the local community?

P- We had a lot of scheduled places to visit. I know moderate Spanish so when we visiting with the women with the library or professors at the University I would try my best to communicate and that in it of itself was an experience trying to communicate. I know one purpose of the trip was to immerse ourselves in a culture that was different than our own and to personally experience the barriers that come along with that. So, at times it was difficult and other times it was really rewarding as you realize that there is a language barrier, there were other ways we were able to connect and other ways of communicating, other than just verbal. We also had the opportunity to speak with students at the University, I spoke with a student who spoke English. So it wasn't as challenging, but was really cool to speak with him. He was from Africa and he was studying in Bolivia. I haven't really thought about that conversation in a long time since this trip was in May of last year, so sorry if I can't remember everything. We found ourselves connecting about being a young person who was interested in educating themselves, we connected on the social life on the university campus and found that our interests were really the same, we talked about dating and good places to eat and that sort of thing. We also did a lot of shopping, we went to La Concha, which is the largest outdoor shopping market in all of South America. Communicating with the vendors in Spanish was challenging and exciting and something that I really enjoyed, it was a lot of

fun. We got to see the local culture I think at its best. A lot of the vendors, this was their livelihood and they had been selling their products all of their life, so that was interesting.

J- As you reflect on your experience, what feelings come to mind?

P- A feeling of humbleness and appreciation. I felt connected to the community on a very different level than I am used to in America. A feeling of connection outside of my culture, a deeper, a more human, a more organic level, and being part of this world today not just necessarily part of one country or one nationality. I felt like it broadened my horizons and I had never visited a third world country before. I saw how people lived and survived with happiness in their lives, with such little materialistic items, their quality of life seemed to be. I was surprised, that was another emotion. I had these preconceived notions of visiting this country and being poor and I didn't associate happiness, I had no idea what emotions to associate with that.

J- So you said humility and gratefulness and almost a worldliness, a better sense of the world and have a better idea of third world countries and lack of emphasis on materialistic things, which maybe revealed something about America?

P- That's a great way of putting it. Not sure it is a lack of importance on material items as they definitely respect it, but there is just a different emphasis on it. The materials did not define success or happiness or love and I think it made me feel that we have a different relationship with materialistic things in our society. The other feeling, yes the worldliness feeling and feeling connected, it's kind of hard to describe.

J- I think you did a good job describing how you felt. Maybe you were proud of your accomplishments and your broadening of your horizons.

P- Definitely. It made me want to do more of the same thing and continue traveling to places that are less fortunate.

J- Was the experience what you expected?

P- Yes and no. Yes for all the reasons and feelings we talked about, I wanted to be challenged in that way and wanted to turn my own experience kind of upside down and see the world from a completely different perspective, and I felt that. But in terms of being a course in my graduate career, I desired more one on one time with members of the local community in a lot of settings. As I look back, I understand why, I think that was just the nature of this kind of trip. Oftentimes it probably served as protective measure for us but a lot of activities we did were as a group. That one on one time, speaking with a student or speaking with the ladies at the library, that wasn't something that was scheduled per say. And it may have been something that in the moment that I did not take that opportunity. It is just something that sticks out in my mind.

J- So it's like what you expected as you wanted it to be completely different but that there are things that held you back such as being in a large group the whole time.

P- Yes. And in terms of the trip serving as gaining more awareness and experience in multicultural counseling, I felt like I was satisfied with that. Because so much of learning how to relate to someone of another culture is experiencing that culture yourself. So that was another reason that it was what I expected.

J- What was a positive key highlight of your immersion experience?

P- There were a lot. I would say every night, the group of students, we had processing time. Without that time, I know that the trip would not have been what it was for me.

Basically, during that time, we had an hour every night to sit around and talk about what happened that day, any emotions that came up for us, challenges that were there, the opportunity to share with the group where we were. Our host also joined that time which made it that much richer. It was a key highlight. So kind of the time to process and come together as a class.

J- Could you rate that from a scale of 1-10, with 1 not being very impactful and 10 being very impactful, how much did that group process impact your experience?

P- Definitely a 10.

J- What makes it a 10?

P- For me, the chance to have a conversation with my classmates, whom I had already gone through this year and a half of grad school with. We had already formed that bond of being in the trenches, so being able to share with others emotionally and intellectually I had gone through that day, that enhanced my own awareness of the experience. And also hearing other students share as well, that interaction, that back and forth like a domino effect, it deepened the experience because maybe I had not thought about something that another classmate had. So when they brought it up, I guess it enlightened me in that way.

J- So it kind of combined it all and made it a richer experience for you all together.

P- Exactly, versus everyone just going to their room and journaling about it. It was just much different, the interaction. And that is why I am in this field so it makes sense that it was such a critical thing for me on the trip. Another key highlight was that we took a trip one day to a small town and we broke up for a few hours. 3 of my classmates and I just wandered down a small street and ended up having a conversation with a local vendor. He spoke broken English and we spoke broken Spanish. It was an exciting interaction and learning that if you challenge yourself you can reach a connection and you can communicate because through that conversation we shared with him that we were from XXX and he shared that he actually owns a townhome outside of D.C. and he travels there. It was amazing to make that connection so that was a really special moment for me.

J- So a connection that you did not expect to make. How would you rate that from 1-10?

P- I would give it a 10 because it is moments like that which make a trip successful for me. In that moment I felt like I was doing to set out to do and the purpose of the trip had been met in that moment. I was trying to cross a barrier, whatever that barrier be, whether language, socio-economic status, location or whatever. But crossing that barrier to makes a connection, that's why it is a 10.

J- It sounds like that was very important to have that barrier breached.

P- Definitely. I looked at that as inevitable and an exciting part of counseling, starting a counseling career. It is almost like with every client we are going to have barriers, and to be able to know that I can connect and relate with any client, it kind of pulled it all together for me.

J- In a way it symbolized your goal of wanting to connect with a client and find that common group that build rapport. What was a key negative moment of your experience?

P- I would have to say when I got sick. It was very difficult for me. I couldn't partake in the activities for 2.5 days. 2.5 days out of 12, it was just hard to take. So that was a negative point.

J- How would you rate that from 1-10, with 1 being not very critical and 10 being very critical?

P- I would say a 3 or 4. It did not define that experience by any means. I am reading the scale as a 10 would be critical to the experience, is that right?

J- Correct.

P- A 3 or 4 as it did not define the experience and actually made me appreciate being healthy even more after I got well.

J- Do you feel like your ability to counsel people from other cultures was affected?

P- Yeah, definitely. It gave me confidence. I think I will always be a little, not hesitant, but aware of differences, as it is just a part of my personality. I think this trip helped me through experiencing the interactions and being there for 12 days as a part of that community. It was kind of like a test, it showed me that I can reach out and that I can find common ground with someone who speaks a different language, who lives in a completely different part of the world, country, and community than I do. So in that way I think my ability to counsel was affected positively.

J- So it pushed you to just do it?

P- Yeah. I wanted to challenge myself. And I walked away feeling more equipped, like I had another tool.

J- In what ways was your self-efficacy affected?

P- Yeah. In a lot for the same reasons as the previous question. I typically learn through experiences. I had taken the course for multicultural counseling and this was just completely different and so much more impactful for me. I felt like it contributed to my worldliness and I felt more rounded. I understood life a little better since I came back.

J- How has time has impacted the changes, have they lasted?

P- I have several reminders in my apartment, some pieces of local art as I wanted to remember. Naturally, it has worn off, I mean I have been through a lot of other transitions since the trip such as moving and graduating and getting engaged and starting a career, all of those things have been major changes for me. So I would say that it has worn off, but I think of it quite often and I remember it. And I have these visual reminders that I have put up purposefully to remember and not forget. I have all of my journal entries to read. I have not gone back and read them, but I am inspired to go back and do that now that I am thinking about it.

J- So you have made it a point to not forget and it is there when you are ready for it. What impact did your participation in the immersion have on your ability to empathize with people from other cultures and what triggered any changes in your ability to empathize?

P- I think my ability to empathize was strengthened. And things that triggered it were things that I saw, the women and the children specifically. I think because I am a woman, so seeing how a woman lives in Bolivia versus how I live in America. I don't know if it was a gender level or what, but seeing a lot of woman walking around without shoes and a lot of homeless women. That was something I have not seen a lot of in our country and I did not expect to see a lot of homeless women, so that strengthened my ability empathize. When I came back I participated in a research study looking at homelessness and I thought of those women often. And was reminded of the feelings I felt, and wow, what it must be like to be her and that she had a smile on her face.

J- It sounds like it gave you some perspective. Do you think time has impacted the changes?

P- No, I don't think so.

J- What aspects of the immersion process most impacted your cultural knowledge and skills of working with people from other cultures?

P- I would say the nonverbal communication. Learning that there are other ways to communicate outside of verbally. And just being there and seeing how the people lived. We took a trip outside of the city to visit some of the ruins. So having the two hosts with us, that was like having first hand eye witness experiences about everything. I would say the hosts were very, very significant.

J- So the hosts and seeing that there are other ways to communicate. Do you think time has impacted those changes?

P- I feel like the skills are still there, but the emotions that go along with the skills are not as fresh.

J- Was there anything on the trip you were supposed to do to increase your knowledge and skills that was not effective?

P- I can't think of anything. I remember feeling an appreciation for every moment that I was there, I think they all added up to make the experience what it was.

J- Would you say your self-awareness has changed as a result of the immersion?

P- Yes definitely. I have become more aware of my relationship with material objects and how much I do have. And in terms of a comfortable life, it made me realize that my family is very important to me. In Bolivia, the emphasis on community and family is so different from what I have experienced as an American. And I felt that first hand through the host couple, they treated us like family while we were there. So I have become more aware of my relationship with my family, being very thankful for it and desire to be closer to my family. I live 6.5 hours from my parents, 13 hours from my sister and even further from my brother. So coming back I just had this feeling of wishing we were closer together to one another geographically. So I was aware of that.

J- So it kind of refreshed your love or longing for your family. Anything else?

P- I think in terms of my career and the future of my career and where I saw it going before the trip and after the trip. I was aware that I wanted to dedicate more time to people that were less fortunate than me, even outside of America. Reaching out to other cultures is now important. Even though I can't take a job in another country, I want to travel and do more short term help.

J- So it helped you uncover a part of yourself that likes to travel and be in a helpful position. How has time impacted the changes in your self awareness?

P- It is kind of like reality struck. I have graduated and am job hunting right now. It is kind of like I have kept that self awareness with me when I am looking at job opportunities. It has allowed me to be more open with the possibilities I am seeking, with different populations instead of just sticking to one. It has broadened the pool for me.

J- And it has remained important to you. So lasting change?

P- For sure.

J- Do you think this immersion experience has changed you?

P- I don't think it changed me, I think it uncovered parts of me that I had not met yet.

J- Would you characterize the changes as small, medium, or large?

P- Big changes. Because it just reaffirmed my belief that humans are always evolving and there is always a possibility to uncover more of yourself through experience, that is my personal perspective, so I feel like it was a big change for me, an important change for me to realize because it is down to a core belief that I have and that is also why I wanted to go into counseling. Does that make sense?

J- Yeah it does. It sounds like you have uncovered parts of yourself and directed your future and confirmed changes that you have already made. Have people who have known you since before your immersion experience say you have changed?

P- No, I haven't heard anyone say that I am different. I don't think that differences are external, they are more internal. I think it strengthened and reaffirmed me being myself. It didn't change me necessarily; it made me aware of parts of myself that I hadn't had the opportunity or experiences that the trip provided me with. But then, no one has said that to me, but I have never asked anyone if they think I am different either.

J- Have any of the changes in yourself sustained over time and if so, how?

P- I do think they have sustained. How have they sustained, that is a little tricky. As I mentioned before with the job search, I am carrying that in the back of my mind, I am just more open to positions that require a bilingual therapist, they catch my eye.

J- Are you bilingual?

P- Moderately. I am not fluent in Spanish. When I see the postings, I see a pull to challenge myself in that way and become fluent. When I was in Bolivia, my Spanish started to come back really quickly. So, my openness to work with people from different culture is still very much with me. And just being aware of my community and my surroundings. I was very much interested in finding a location and neighborhood that had a community feel to it. That may be just a personal preference but I think the trip enhanced that desire to feel like a part of a community, in my work and personal life, so that is another way. And maintaining a close relationship with my family, although we are not close geographically, I keep in touch quite often and that is another way.

J- It sounds like you have made it a point to hold onto the things that changed your outlook and your heart a little bit.

P- Yeah. And it is like the trip enhanced my desire for those types of things. I think it made me more aware that it is what I want, I want community, I want to be close to my family regardless of the function of some those things. So the trip influenced me in that way.

J- So, confirmation.

P- Yes.

J- Have you incorporated or changed anything in your worldviews or lifestyle as a result of your immersion experience?

P- Yeah. In terms of my worldview, I kind of look beyond physical differences and ethnic and nationality, I look beyond and look to see this basic connection that we all have humans and this ability to feel and experience the world. It enhanced my worldview; it is not like I didn't believe that before the trip, so it really just confirmed it. And the other part, is that day to day?

J- Yeah, lifestyle like day to day or plans for your future?

P- Lifestyle, I really try to support local business and purchase local food and support the community versus supporting a large corporation. So that is definitely a lifestyle change.

J- You mentioned before when you look at job listings your perspective was different. Is that a change or influence on your lifestyle or plans?

P- Yeah. It influenced me in a way to continue going forward with a career path that I have chosen. You know I have switched careers and going to graduate school for counseling was always encouraged for me. So the influence was not like what changed for me, but what remained the same if that makes sense.

J- Anything else you plan to do that you had not planned on doing prior to your immersion?

P- No, nothing I can think of.

J- What types of reflective processes (process groups, reflection journals, debriefing) did you

participate in?

P- We did evening processing groups and I journaled and mainly just talking with my classmates, my roommates and I would talk every night about what we saw that day. So mainly talking and writing.

J- Okay. I know you had already mentioned how the process groups impacted you, anything else you want to say about that?

P- I am almost speechless because it was almost like getting all this great therapy every night. It was intense and it was difficult at times. Not only were we discussing our adjustment to being in this culture and our relationships with the locals, but there were also issues going on in our group. Personality differences, which of the class members that just made it difficult at times. That was another challenge to overcome. And seeing how it was discussed and actually talked about each night in that setting was helpful. I have been on trips before and there are personality differences that are never talked about in that way. So the group was made stronger, I felt like because everyone had a voice and they were able to speak when things were not going well for them. It allowed us this freedom of expression and increased our vulnerability because choosing to share with a group that you are having this difficulty with another group member or classmate puts you in a vulnerable spot, so it was almost like there were a couple different systems going on. We had the group of ourselves in relating to each other and then we had the experience of relating to the culture and relating to the local community and being part of that system as well. It was just a multilayered experience and I think the process sessions made that experience more real. It made me more aware that we had a few different experiences going on here, not only are we trying to relate to Bolivianos, we were also traveling internationally with our cohort.

J- How did participation in journaling impact your experience?

P- It really allowed me to write things down so I could remember. And it allowed me to think about things when there wasn't an opportunity to share with the group or I didn't' want to share with the group. It was outlet or expression for more of my private thoughts that I was having.

J- How did group dynamics impact you?

P- I am so happy that I went on the trip with this group. I think probably 3 or 4 of my closet friends in my cohort traveled to Bolivia as well. Having those special people alongside me made the experience richer for sure. And at any moment on the trip I knew I could turn to one of my friends and reflect on what I was thinking and generally they would have thought about the same thing earlier that day. It enhanced the experience and made the group feel more whole, it affected it positively for sure.

J- What meaning have you attributed to your overall experience and participation in this immersion experience?

P- I see it as kind of a window into more change that I could make in my future as a person and as a counselor. It opened my eyes to the needs that are out there and for people to connect across cultural lines. And it reaffirmed that it is possible to do that in our lives and I believe our lives would be richer if we did that more often.

J- Okay so it gave you more ammunition to participate like things in the future and that it does matter and it is important. If you could change anything about your immersion experience, what would you change?

P- I would have been able to visit the orphanage because I was sick on the day the group went, so that is what I would change.

J- How do you think this would have affected your experience?

P- I don't really know. I think it would have added to the trip for me and enhanced the emotional connection I felt for the community. I already felt a connection whenever I would see children walking around whether they were homeless or not. I think had I gone I would have just experienced more of the culture and would have brought back more to remember.

J- Okay. Given all that we have discussed, how has your immersion experience impacted your work as a counselor?

P- It has opened my eyes to other cultures and it has reminded me that they face a lot of the same struggles and trials that we do. And that I have a choice to be involved and reach out to other cultures if I want. And at this point in my life, I really want to reach out and to remain open to working with clients from other cultures. Also learning about the profession in other cultures, I am open to exchanging ideas and having a conversation about what it means to be a counselor in America and what it means to be a counselor in South America or anywhere.

J- Is there any information about this immersion experience or any other immersion experience that I did not ask that you would like to share that may be relevant to this study?

P- Yeah one thing that I am thinking about is that I lived in London in 2003 for a year and I worked. And comparing those 2 immersions experiences, is just amazing. I was a part of London for a year and I was a part of Bolivia for 12 days, yet it touched me in so many different ways. I think because of the vast differences and because Bolivia is a third world country and obviously London is a very successful country, the whole UK is. So that sort of surprised me, I am just aware of how different the experiences are in my mind.

J- So the Bolivia trip influenced you significantly more than the London trip because of the stark differences?

P- Yes.
J- Okay, thank you!!