A PILOT STUDY OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMMERSION AS A PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH FOR TEACHING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

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NOTE TO READERS
The word "awarenesses" is used fifteen times throughout this dissertation. The use of the word "awarenesses" is intentionally plural. It is used throughout the paper referring to new realizations.

Justification:
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Conclusion: Despite high attrition, preliminary results offer promising considerations for social work education.

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Comments
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FOR TEACHING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Monica M. Murray Smith, MSW

A DISSERTATION

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To my children, Joshua and Rachel, you are God’s gifts to me. Josh, your ability to see the best in everything is a gift from God and you are a true gift to me. I will never forget the day I said that I was stuck between a rock and a hard place. You responded, “Yeah, but that rock is probably a diamond”. You have no idea how that freed me. I was motivated to move forward and I did so very well. Thank you, my precious wonderful son. You are a gem. My dear, sweet, lovely Rachel, your calls and gifts to me while you were in the midst of your own studying to earn the bachelor in Criminal Justice energized me. You drove over two hours to silently support me during my proposal defense – and you brought flowers! That,
Young Lady, I will never forget. You are one of the most selfless, encouraging people I know. You are an inspiration and a champion. I love you both completely and unconditionally. You have enriched my life.

I am a first generation African American female from an underperforming rural school. I am also a two time graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice, an Ivy League institution. I am a statistic in the very best of ways and I am thankful to God for His blessings in this respect. I pray that my accomplishments serve as a model to what you can do.
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Below are a list of some authors and articles that use the term. This is not an exhaustive list.


ABSTRACT

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Phyllis Solomon, PhD

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Background and Significance

The social work profession has a mandate to work with disadvantaged and disenfranchised populations. This often means that social workers serve people of color - ethnic groups that, in the history of the United States, were excluded from social and economic opportunities. This historical occurrence has had far reaching consequences for these populations. People of color are disproportionately represented in poverty statistics and among social service clients. Recent and projected immigration and birth rates suggest that this trend may continue. If so, social workers will continue to serve these populations at a rate higher than any other cultural group.

Cultural competence is crucial to sound social work practice. Because cultural differences between social workers and their clients can be a barrier to developing a therapeutic alliance, social workers must attain a level of cultural competence that will allow them to engage clients around the work that needs to be done. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has defined cultural competence as “the process by which individuals … respond effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each” (NASW, 2008). Cultural competence is identified in the Code of Ethics as one of the professions core values: “Social Workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society … and … be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients’ cultures and to difference among people and cultural groups” (2008). As a result, social work educators have the ethical responsibility to construct “a learning environment which teaches culturally competent knowledge and skills” (Petrovich, p. 158). The accrediting body for social work education programs, the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE), through Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), recognizes the salience of cultural competence to professional social work practice and, therefore, attempts to ensure that social work education programs produce culturally competent practitioners. Like NASW, CSWE standardizes the cultural competence requisite for practitioners. CSWE Educational Policy 3.1 (2008) requires accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)
programs to have a commitment to diversity (stated as age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation) that is “reflected in its learning environment” (p. 10), including educational resources. To meet this mandate, all accredited social work education programs have diversity content in their curricula.

The primary emphasis for teaching cultural competence has been the integration of diversity content into existing curricula (Montiel & Wong, 1983; Gould, 1995; Green, 1999). Researchers have begun to explore the effectiveness of this pedagogical framework (for example, Hall & Theriot, 2007). Questions remain whether the integration of content goes far enough in teaching cultural competence or whether the infusion of experiential learning methods, like cultural immersion, can more effectively meet this goal. Boyle and Springer (2001) note that a “gap exists between education and the providing of culturally competent services in everyday practice” (p. 53). This gap is likely due to “the lack of culture-specific training and measurement techniques” (p. 53) for cultural competence. Infusing diversity material in specific course content or throughout the curriculum is only part of what is needed to effectively teach cultural competence. According to Green (1999), “the skills of competence grow when there is some sustained level of immersion in the community of clients” (p. 93). Given the shortfalls of current pedagogical frameworks, the kind of cultural immersion that Green suggests may well provide the training necessary to bridge the gap between social work education and the provision of culturally competent services. Cultural immersion has been integrated into academic programs for pre-service teachers since the 1970s (Stachowski & Mahan, 1998) with positive outcomes for cultural sensitivity, one component of cultural competence. Taking into consideration the results of immersion experiences for pre-service teachers, the ethical responsibility to teach cultural competence and to provide culturally competent services, social work educators must ask: Is the integration of cultural immersion experiences into accredited Bachelor of Social Work education programs more effective in enhancing cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and cultural competency skills than on-campus forms of experiential learning that survey diverse populations?
Background and Significance

There are four primary justifications for this study: 1) the social work profession has a precarious history with diverse clients, 2) ethnic and cultural diversity in the United States will increase significantly over the next four decades, 3) cultural competence is necessary for effective social work practice, and 4) new and more effective methods for teaching cultural competence are necessary for improving culturally competent practice.

Social Work’s Odyssey with Diversity

Diversity in social work practice refers to differences among groups of people. Respect for diversity has been a longstanding value in social work. However, since its origin, tension has existed between the professions stated ideals and the day-to-day realities. Respect for diversity has been a source of conflict in the profession’s history.

Some social workers have always valued diversity and worked toward social justice. Unfortunately, too many others have not. Historically, the needs of some client populations were made priorities over others. Social work agencies made distinctions about how they would serve people and which people they would serve. This was particularly evident during times in US history when discrimination toward people of color was the societal norm. Since social workers serve the same society that sanctions and legitimizes the social agencies in which they work it is easy for the profession to be subject to the larger society’s biases. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s when segregation was the societal norm, many social agencies maintained a color line. Segregated social services existed. Social work agencies and professionals were predominantly White and Protestant and restricted their services to other Whites in need (Popple & Leighninger, 2011), despite laws that required public agencies to serve all ethnic groups. Some agencies moved out of neighborhoods after an influx of African Americans. Others provided limited services to African Americans or instituted quotas, thereby limiting the number of people served (Green, 1999). The state of Mississippi, for example, “instructed its county relief offices to put a 10 percent quota on the number of African American citizens receiving assistance, even in locations where African Americans were the [numerical] majority” (Popple & Leighninger, 2011, p. 153). Texas
and Nevada acted similarly in an effort to exclude Mexican Americans and American Indian families, respectively. Still other agencies provided segregated activities and/or required the few ethnic minority employees to help an overwhelming number of ethnic minority clients (Popple & Leighninger, 2011). These policies reflected the racial (racist) attitudes that dominated society at that time.

Many changes have occurred in the development of the social work profession. As the profession “diversified and expanded, it also created unifying mechanisms” (Popple & Leighninger, 2011, p.76) such as encouraging all social workers to help all clients in need without regard to ethnicity, sex or gender, religion or social class. Many of the developments have been positive; however, the cultural differences between diverse groups have been largely overlooked. For many mainstream social work professionals the desire and ease to continue “business as usual” has tended to outweigh their obligation to adhere to ethical standards established by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). As a result, the differing approaches to problem resolution used in distinct cultural communities and the larger society have been a tension inducing force in social work practice.

Census Bureau Projects More Diversity in the United States

According to the Census Bureau, “The United States is expected to experience significant increases in racial and ethnic diversity over the next four decades” (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009, p 3). Census Bureau population projections predict the Hispanic population “to more than double between 2000 and 2050, while the size of the Asian population is projected to increase by 79 percent” (Ortman & Guarneri, p. 3). While most racial and ethnic groups are projected to increase in size over the next four decades, the number of non-Hispanic Whites will decline. The projected ethnic composition of the United States has significant implications for the social work profession. Although some social workers anticipate working only with one type of client, the vast diversity in the United States makes this unlikely. It is also imperative that social workers value diversity and recognize strengths inherent in cultural practices of their culturally different clients. Furthermore, social workers must recognize client behaviors that are culturally influenced. This preparation must begin in accredited Bachelor of Social Work education programs.
Literature Review

*Cultural Competence is Critical to Shaping Quality Social Work Practice*

Cultural competence is an essential mandate in social work practice. Cultural competence in social work, according to James W. Green (1999), is the ability to “deliver … services in a way that is congruent with behavior and expectations normative for a given community and that are adapted to suit the specific needs of individuals and families from that community” (p. 87). Benkert, Templin, Schim, Doorenbos, and Bell, (2011) recognize cultural competence as behavioral and cognitive constructs which include awareness and sensitivity. The culturally aware learner is able to recognize factors that influence behavior and recognize behaviors that are culturally influenced. Cultural sensitivity, according to Benkert, et al. “is an affective or attitudinal construct” (p. 2). It involves the recognition of personal attitudes, values, beliefs, and practices which are evidenced by Culturally Competent Behaviors (CCBs).

“Culturally Competent Behaviors consist of actions taken in response to the exposure to cultural diversity, the comprehension of cultural awareness, and the attitudinal shifts in cultural sensitivity.” (Benkert, et al, p. 2) Rothman’s (2008) definition explains cultural competence as “a process which can be learned, through which a social worker attains the necessary knowledge and skills needed to practice competently and sensitively across cultures” (p. 7) and a practice in which the worker uses her “knowledge and skill in working with a specific population” (p. 7). Inherent in this definition is the acquisition of knowledge of the client’s culture and skills to engage clients using culturally relevant methods and resources.

Rothman’s definition emphasizes professional responsibility for cultural competence as stated by NASW and CSWE. Other authors specify self-awareness in the definition (See Smith, Richards, Grandley, & Obiakor (2004) and Petrovich and Lowe (2005) and Sue and Sue (2008). Thyer, Myers, Wodarski, & Harrision, (2010) include “acquiring knowledge of sociohistoric events” (p.49). Common to these definitions of cultural competence are awareness, sensitivity, knowledge and the employment of cross-cultural skills.

Doman Lum (2011) offers a framework for cultural competence that utilizes the CSWE’s EPAS (2008) to operationalize the definitions of awareness, knowledge and skills for accredited bachelor of
social work (BSW) programs. The standards are operationalized as practice behaviors related to the generalist level competencies for accredited BSW programs (See table below). According to Lum (2011), cultural competence includes, “(1) cultural self-awareness of the worker’s own culture and cultural other awareness of the client’s culture; (2) knowledge acquisition consisting of theory orientation and a history of oppressed groups, values, and behavior patterns; and (3) skill development related to a practice process with a culturally diverse client” (p. 125).

Cultural Competence Operationalized (Adapted from Lum, 2011, p. 126)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of own life experiences related to culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contact with other cultures and ethnicities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of positive and negative experiences with other cultures and ethnicities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of own racism, prejudice, and discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge Acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding of terms related to cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of demographics of culturally diverse populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of a critical thinking perspective on cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding the history of oppression and of social groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of culturally diverse values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of how to obtain client background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the concept of ethnic community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use of a positive and open communication style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment of stressors and strengths (within a client’s cultural context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment of all client dimensions (within cultural context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishment of culturally acceptable goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation (with culturally appropriate outcomes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the need for cultural competence has long been recognized, barriers still exist to realizing this important value. One such barrier has been the sluggish inclusion of diversity content in curricula of accredited social work education programs. Although “social work academicians and
professionals have been stressing the need to include multicultural issues into curriculum since the 1960s” (Kohli, Huber & Faul, 2010, p. 254) it was not until 1992 that the Council on Social Work Education mandated diversity content into required courses as a requisite for program accreditation. Prior to this, CSWE suggested the inclusion of diversity. Despite the prompting from CSWE, inclusion was slow and a number of paradigm shifts occurred over a fifty year period. Kohli, Huber and Faul (2010) chronicle the historical evolution of the multifarious paradigms for teaching about diversity in social work education.

### History of CSWE’s Emphasis on Human Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Emphasis on Diversity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>Melting Pot</td>
<td>Emphasis was on the treatment of clients’ problems (Chau, 1990).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>Awareness of Cultural Contexts</td>
<td>Treatment included consideration of clients’ sociocultural contexts (Harper &amp; McFadden, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Minority Perspective</td>
<td>With political and economic turmoil, and the influence of the Civil Rights movement, voting rights, and work programs for the poor, emphasis was placed on minority perspectives. Thus, curricula included information on people of color and women (Gould, 1995; Montiel &amp; Wong, 1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Cultural Pluralism</td>
<td>Content on other vulnerable and oppressed groups became important and was also included in curricula, and importance was placed on identity development (Harper &amp; Lantz, 1996; Torres &amp; Jones, 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s forward</td>
<td>Respect for Differences</td>
<td>Diversity issues encompass not only ethnic and racial issues, but also variables such as age, sex, gender, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and political affiliation. It is now mandated that content on human diversity be included as one of the nine core areas of study in CSWE-accredited schools of social work (CSWE, 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early 2000s</td>
<td>Ethnocultural Framework</td>
<td>Social constructionist views incorporated to teach social work students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These authors highlight shortcomings in each paradigm. The Melting Pot theory prominent in the 1950s emphasized assimilation rather than respect for differences. This model viewed cultural differences from a deficit perspective and focused on “mainstreaming ‘others’ into the dominant ideological perspectives” (Kohli et al. p. 254).

The *ethnic-minority perspective* emerged in the 1960s and 1970s from economic, cultural, and political upheavals. Several authors criticized the minority perspective and emphasized that it resulted in a unidimensional view that was somewhat paternalistic: it limited students rather than fostering respect and sensitivity (Gould, 1995; Montiel & Wong, 1983). This model neither helped the plight of minorities nor enhanced social work students’ understanding of their problems (K. V. Harper & Lantz, 1996). *Cultural pluralism* was the major theory behind the framework of the 1980s and 1990s as more
emphasis was placed on respecting human differences. … dominant ideologies were not challenged enough to allow equal articulation of other ways of thinking and understanding (Minnich, 1991). Gould (1995) alleged that syllabi were simply accommodated to enable White students to receive some basic understanding about various diversity issues. (Kohli, et al., 2010, pp. 254 – 256. Italics added for emphasis)

Inclusion of diversity content into social work curricula does not go far enough in teaching cultural competence. The ethnocultural framework (early 2000s) is used to teach students to become morally active practitioners. Intrinsic to this framework is that a combination of appropriate approaches should be employed when teaching students (Kohli, et al., 2010), including the use of narratives of all students. The ethnocultural framework introduced an important shift in the philosophy of social work education. Instead of mainstream students learning about ethnically and culturally diverse populations, all students should be active participants in the pedagogical process. Even with the inclusion of the ethnocultural framework into social work education, the educational concern for cultural competence in social work practice primarily focused on increasing student awareness and knowledge rather than the development of intervention skills. If social work students are to become culturally competent practitioners diversity education ought to include cross-cultural interactions.

**Instructional Methods for Teaching Cultural Competence**

A review of the social work literature reveals varied methods for teaching cultural competence in accredited Masters of Social Work (MSW) programs. In addition to the traditional didactic method, learning groups (Adam & Schlesinger, 1988), a group therapeutic approach (Eldridge, 1982), minority field experiences (Ilfill, 1989), creative literature (Chow, 1975), culture immersion (Sikkema, 1984), and field learning (Schlesinger & Devore, 1979) have been exercised as teaching practices. These approaches have been effective in increasing cognitive content and affective learning. Whether one of these methods is more effective than others is unclear. The professional literature is lacking with regard to teaching methods for cultural competence in accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs. Since MSW
and BSW programs are accredited by CSWE, it can be assumed that instructional methods in the programs are similar. CSWE does not mandate specific instructional methods. Instead, the accrediting body identifies EPAS in terms of core competencies. Core Competencies are “measurable practice behaviors that are comprised of knowledge, values and skills” (CSWE, 2008, p. 3). CSWE distinction between accredited BSW and MSW programs are “generalist level” practice behaviors and “advanced level” practice behaviors, respectively. Instructional methods have to be effective in teaching the three components of cultural competence: awareness, knowledge and skill.

*From Theory to Praxis*

Despite the inclusion of diversity content in social work curricula and the varied paradigm shifts, the jury is still out with regard to the most effective pedagogical methods for teaching cultural competence. Counselor education underwent similar transitions or “movements” as social work education. Decades of attention to the need for counselors to learn about and provide effective services for minority group members “led many counselor education programs to institutionalize new counseling courses in their curricula” (D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991, p. 143). Similar to social work education a variety of newly developed courses emphasizing diversity have emerged over the past thirty years. The courses “reflect pedagogical diversification in terms of their process and content [yet] three main areas [are] stressed. These include training that emphasizes the following:

1. The acquisition of cross-cultural communication *skills* (Pedersen, 1977)
2. The need to become more *aware* of one’s attitudes toward ethnic minorities (Hulnick, 1971; Parker & McDavis, 1979)
3. The importance of increasing counselors’ *knowledge* about minority populations (Mio, 1989; Parker, Valley, & Geary, 1986)” (D’Andrea et al., p. 69-70) [emphasis added]

The emphasis of the multicultural counseling education courses encompasses the three components of cultural competence. D’Andrea et al. note “substantial differences in the approach counselor-educators take in designing … learning experiences” (p. 70). These differences inadvertently emphasize one or two, but not all three of the training goals. For example, courses that primarily use classroom discussion to explore students’ stereotypes, biases and misconceptions about people who are
different from themselves generally increase student awareness. On the other hand, courses that emphasize cross-cultural skill development tend to include experiential learning (D’Andrea et al. 1991).

Ample theory and research have been published concerning the need for effective methods for teaching cultural competence. However, there is little empirical data to guide faculty in developing effective strategies (Ridley, Mendoza, & Kamitz, 1994) for teaching awareness, knowledge and skills – the three components that comprise cultural competence.

Most social work academicians agree that a combination of approaches is necessary to teach cultural competence. (See, for example, Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010; Weaver, 1998). This may include experiential learning, like cultural immersion, in conjunction with didactic techniques. Cultural immersion is a method of learning about others through “direct observation and participation in their everyday routines in a naturalistic setting” (Green, 1999, p. 93). The purpose of cultural immersion is discovery. It allows for in-depth learning about behaviors, needs, and experiences of culturally different others by immersing oneself in the culture of the other for a sustained period. Immersion experiences are varied. They include reading ethnographies, observing and interacting with culturally different others in their communities, and visiting sites with historical and cultural significance to a particular demographic. Interactions include individual and group activities. Not much is written about cultural immersion as an effective pedagogical method for teaching cultural competence in BSW programs.

When learning about culture it is best to have guidance otherwise it is easy for immersion activities to become academic voyeurism. According to Green (1999), academics who embark on cultural immersion must enter a community as a guest with learning goals. A cultural guide should sponsor the student’s immersion experience. Cultural guides are informative insiders who understand the population the student is studying and can articulate cultural behaviors, the significance of historical occurrences, and help the student to reflect on what s/he has experienced. Cultural guides should also understand the student’s learning goals. Ronnau (1994) employed the use of cultural guides for teaching cultural
Green identifies four components of cultural competence: self-awareness, genuine interest in and openness to cultural differences (attitudes), a “client-oriented systematic learning style” (1999, p. 91), in other words, cross-cultural activities that require the practitioner to learn about the client from the client (acquisition of knowledge), and appropriate use of cultural resources (skills). Salient to Green’s perspective are the cross-cultural interactions necessary in the acquisition of knowledge and the emphasis on utilization of cultural resources, which denote the development and use of skills. Lum (2011) provides support as he emphasizes cultural competence in social work praxis as a “relational, dialogical process … between cultures, and between people and context” (p. 3). Cultural immersion may provide the pedagogical framework for such learning to take place. Since field education is the signature pedagogy of the discipline, BSW programs are in a good position to integrate this type of instruction into the curriculum.

There is some evidence to suggest that cultural immersion is an effective method for teaching the components of cultural competence. Boyle, Nackerud and Kilpatrick (1999) note

> It is commonly accepted by persons active in cross-cultural education that the experience of coming to know persons from another culture on a personal level reduces ethnocentrism. This kind of experience is especially beneficial when it occurs in the context of a structured cross-cultural learning program (p. 202).

They also note “Mio (1989) used experiential learning as an extension of a class on cultural sensitivity and found that students’ educational experiences were greatly enriched by direct contact with members of other cultures” (Boyle, et al. p. 202). Most cultural immersion experiences occur in an international context (Petrovich & Lowe, 2005; Boyle et al. 1999). In 1996 a group of twelve students and faculty from the School of Social Work at the University of Georgia experienced a ten day cultural immersion in the state of Veracruz, Mexico. The immersion was achieved by the team staying in the homes of the local
residents, speaking Spanish, visiting social service agencies, places of historical and cultural significance, attending cultural events and collaborating with Mexican students and faculty on academic projects. Qualitative and quantitative data sets were used to measure the effectiveness of this total immersion experience. Student journals revealed increased student awareness, knowledge, and skills (particularly the ability to communicate in another language). The Multi-cultural Counseling Awareness Scale (MCAS), form B (MCAS:B) (Reynolds, 1982) was used to measure awareness and knowledge/skills. Positive gains were noted in each area.

Holmes and Matthews (1993) conducted a four month exchange experience for “foreign” health and human service workers in the United States. The social workers stayed in the home of an MSW student and attended seminars at a university for several weeks before being placed in community agencies. According to student report, these experiences were beneficial in helping them to understand American society. They ranked the home stays and contact with the MSW students as the most significant experiences, respectively.

Boyle and colleagues (1999) note that although “curriculum issues have received attention in the effort to develop a culturally and ethnically sensitive social work experience … little has been written about cross-cultural education that utilizes experiential learning” (p. 202). Other disciplines, like education, have noted the salience of cultural immersion in teaching cultural competence. Teacher education has increased the commitment to international education since 1971. Study abroad programs, for example, are offered in the majority of US colleges/universities that offer teacher education programs. St. Joseph’s University, a North American University and a counterpart, Fe y Alegria, in Bolivia, collaborate to provide ten-day or more immersion trips for students (Rodriguez, 2011). The University of Wisconsin-Madison has developed the “Teachers for Diversity Program for pre-service elementary education teachers. Pre-service teachers in this program commit to spending three semesters of an eight semester program participating in a variety of cross cultural learning experiences, including having their practicum in a school with a student population that is predominantly different from that of the pre-service teacher (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1993). Lastly, Indiana University in partnership with Purdue
University (IUPUC), offers total immersion experiences to pre-service teachers. The immersion can occur overseas, on an American Indian reservation or in an urban context, specifically, the Chicago Public Schools. Participants in the IUPUC program make a two year commitment to be immersed in the community. (http://www.iupuc.edu/academics/divisions-programs/education/student-teaching/cultural-immersion-project/) Participation in these types of programs has increased exponentially (Rodriguez, 2011). Many education scholars contend that these types of cultural immersion programs should be standardized in the curriculum. (See for example, Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Heyl & McCarthy, 2003; Marx & Moss, 2011).

**Hypothesis**

Boyle, Nackerud and Kilpatrick (1999) assert the “social work profession has been dealing with the shortage of well-trained … culturally competent social workers” (p. 201) for decades. It is quite possible that this is related to insufficient teaching methods. Given the lack of attention to effective instructional methods for teaching cultural competence in accredited BSW programs and lack of empirical evidence toward the same, more information is needed to determine the impact of cultural immersion in the development of cultural competence for pre-service social workers. The research indicates that didactic teaching methods alone can enhance two elements of cultural competence – awareness and knowledge. D’Andrea, Daniels and Heck (1991) acknowledge the experiential learning in counselor education increases skill acquisition. The outcomes of total immersion experiences in pre-service teacher education and the work of Boyle et al. (1999), Green (1995), and Lum (2011) seems to support the hypothesis that pre-service undergraduate students who participate in cultural immersion experiences in diversity education courses will increase their cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and skills more than those students whose education programs use on-campus forms of experiential learning that survey diverse populations.
Chapter 2 Research and Design Methods

Overview and Setting

The research was conducted with a group of undergraduate students attending Eastern University. Eastern is a co-educational Christian university with approximately 4,000 students in undergraduate, graduate and seminary programs. The participants were enrolled in Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction, a course required for the Social Work major. Social Work 110 is offered for fifteen weeks – every fall and spring semester. Each section of the course is designed/structured the same, that is, the same text, syllabus, course outline, and assessments (assignments and content on exams) are used. Social Work students are required to take the course within the first five semesters of enrollment at Eastern; it is a pre-requisite for the junior level practice seminar and field practicum. This course is open to all undergraduate students enrolled at the institution because it meets the Doing Justice requirement of the university core curriculum. Hence, not all students who enroll in the course are pursuing the Social Work major. When this study was conducted in the Fall semester of 2013, 55 students were enrolled in the three sections of the course that were selected to participate in the study.

Study Design

The research was conducted employing a quasi-experimental nonequivalent comparison group design to measure the effectiveness of cultural immersion experiences by comparing two groups of students enrolled in the course. This design was used instead of an experimental design because participants could not feasibly and openly be assigned to a course. Students self-selected the course section in which they enrolled. Some considerations students may have used in selecting a section of the course include: number of days per week the course meets, the time of day the course meets, the instructor of the course – some students develop instructor preference based on previous experience with an instructor or information they have received from other students about the instructor. This is not an exhaustive list of considerations. Two sections of the required course Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction were selected to receive the intervention while another received education and assignments as usual. The comparison group received instruction as usual through didactic teaching
methods and on-campus cross cultural interactions. The intervention group participated in two off-campus cross cultural immersion experiences along with didactic teaching methods. The researcher was the instructor for two of the three courses selected for this study. One of her sections was randomly selected as the experimental group, the other served as the comparison group. The third section of the course was an experimental group. This section received the experimental intervention to control for potential bias of the researcher and it was not taught by the researcher.

During the first week of the course, students enrolled in the three identified sections of the course completed a pretest to determine their level of cultural competence. The Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey (D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991) was used to measure outcomes. The pretest was administered online via Qualtrics (a web-based tool for building surveys) after participants completed an informed consent.

Multiple pretests were used to strengthen the internal validity of the design. Selectivity biases were a concern since the intervention group might be more motivated to change than the comparison group (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). These pretests were administered during weeks one and five of the semester, prior to the immersion experience. Multiple pretests help to “detect whether statistical regression was occurring” (Rubin & Babbie, p. 274). The posttest was available week thirteen (13) of the semester, two weeks prior to the end of the semester. All of the cross cultural immersion activities were completed prior to the distribution of the posttest. Participants had two weeks to complete the posttest online. Three reminders were sent to all participants via email.

To minimize the risk to confidentiality, the pretests and posttest were on Qualtrics. In order to protect the anonymity of the student respondent, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) at Eastern University administered the pretests and the posttests. Each participant was assigned an identifier. The instructors and the research assistant did not have access to individual student information or test data. After the study was completed and student grades were submitted to the Office of the Registrar, OIR provided unidentified data to the researcher.
Sample Size and Recruitment Procedures

The sample was drawn from Eastern University undergraduate students enrolled in Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction. The majority of the students were similar in age. Each met the admission criteria for the university that is pertinent to undergraduate academic requirements (i.e. standardized tests, grade point average, writing samples). In cases where there may have been differences in academic and or intellectual ability, students had access to academic support services provided by the university at no additional cost. Students were made aware of available support services at the beginning of the semester and this information was on the course syllabus. Participants in the experimental group who may have needed accommodations to navigate the off-campus experiences were encouraged to request accommodations prior to participating in the cross cultural immersion experiences. No accommodations were requested by study participants. All experimental group participants were able to adequately participate in the cross cultural immersion activities.

Students voluntarily enrolled in the course to meet curriculum requirements for the social work major or for the university’s social justice requirement for the core curriculum. They enrolled without instructor or researcher input. No additional recruitment was necessary. There were fifty-five (55) students enrolled across the three sections of the course that were selected to participate in the study. Thirty-seven (37) students were enrolled in the two sections identified for intervention. A week prior to the beginning of the semester students received an email informing them of the study and requesting their participation. Students were informed about the purpose and nature of the study on the consent form. They were also informed that they may be part of the experimental or control group. Consenting to participate in the research meant that students agreed to complete three surveys: a pretest survey during the first week of the semester, a second pretest survey week 5 of the semester, and a posttest within two weeks of the end of the semester (following the intervention). Completion of the consent form was required in order to access and complete the pretest. Forty-three (43) students consented to participate in the research. Of those who consented, eighteen (18) completed both pretests and the posttest. Twelve (12)
were assigned to the experimental group. Six were assigned to the control group. Four of the sixteen (16) had declared or intended to declare Social Work as their major course of study.

**Exclusion Criteria:** One section of the course was completely excluded from the study. This section was excluded because the faculty member selected to teach the course had not been identified before approval was granted for the study. The likelihood of the faculty member being new to teaching and to the university was high. Students who were enrolled in this excluded section were not participants in the study. Students who did not want to participate in the study could enroll in this excluded section of Social Work 110. Offering an excluded section of the course allowed students who did not want to participate in the study to take the course without disruption to their academic plan.

**Course Attrition:** The attrition for the course that normally occurs is of those students who are enrolled to meet the Doing Justice core requirement, not those who are pursuing the Social Work major. Because the course is required for Social Work majors, these students usually remain in the course and must earn at least a C to gain credit for the course. Fifty-five students remained enrolled in the three sections of the course. Eastern University drop/add policy requires that students who want to switch sections of a course obtain the signature of the faculty member teaching the course they want to enter sign a Drop/Add course form. Students who were enrolled in any of the three sections of the course remained in the original section.

*Data on Refusers and Drop-outs*

A student’s refusal to participate in the study was known as early as the first class session since consent is required in order to access the pretest. Students who refused to consent remained in the course and were expected to complete all of the course assignments. Those who refused to participate in the study did not have access to the pretest or posttest surveys. Data on refusers was not collected since they did not have access to the pretest or posttest surveys.

Students who consented and withdrew from the course were study drop-outs. Drop-outs were also those who did not complete both pretests and the posttest. One Black female participant dropped out because she withdrew from the university near the end of the semester. She was the only person who
withdrew from any of the three sections of the course. Attrition from the research was high. Of the forty-three who consented, eighteen completed the study. Demographic information and classification of drop-outs is recorded in Table 1: Data on Drop-outs. Race, ethnicity, sex, year in school (classification), and major are recorded.

### Table 1: Data on Drop-outs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Pretest 1</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>2*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not specify</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JR (Junior)</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR (Senior)</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other major</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Some participants used two racial identity markers. These are recorded separately above. See Table 3 Descriptive Statistics, p. 38.

**Addressing threats to internal validity**

Participants in the experimental group did not spend more time with the instructors than the comparison group. Participants in the experimental group received release time from the traditional on campus in class lecture and discussion. The class format for participants in the experimental group was different – not the amount of time spent in class or the amount of time spent with instructors. Release time from the traditional on campus in class lecture and discussion controlled for compensatory rivalry and resentful demoralization. Compensatory equalization was not a threat to internal validity in this study since the faculty/researcher was the instructor for one of the experimental groups and for the comparison group.

**Intervention**
According to James Green (1995), sustained immersion in the communities of clients leads to increased cultural competence. Dining in ethnic restaurants, attending festivals, and touring ethnic communities with friends is fine for tourists. However, for professionals who seek to develop the skills of cultural competence, these are not enough. These activities alone are not immersion. Cultural immersion requires focused attention on a specific population for a sustained period of time. Immersion, according to Green, requires observation and critical reflection of distinctive behavior patterns among the people in cultural communities. Immersion helps the learner to discover things about her/himself and the individuals with whom s/he is called to work. This can be attained by participating in cultural activities and developing relationships with culturally different others, and interpreting them in a community context (1999). Additional knowledge can be obtained through guided exploration of sites that record the intracultural and intercultural history of the population. In short, the purpose of cultural immersion is discovery.

The intervention for this study was ten (10) hours of interactive assignments – cross-cultural immersion experiences - that focused on any one (1) of the following groups that the student chose: African American, Latino (specifically, Puerto Rican), or Jewish populations. There were three components to the intervention that each student completed:

a. Interview a person from the identified group
b. Attend a public activity. Each participant attended a religious activity specific to the ethnic/cultural group they chose: a worship experience at a historically Black church, a Puerto Rican mass, or a synagogue.
c. Visit a site that records the history of the identified population.

The intervention included individual and group activities. The interview was an individual activity. Each student completed this assignment on her/his own. The public activity and site visits were group activities. The researcher (who was the course instructor for the comparison group and one of the experimental groups) attended each of these activities. A cultural guide was present at each of the group activities. The cultural guide guided the students through the activity sharing information about the cultural group’s identity, various cultural dynamics and experiences in the United States. The researcher and a research assistant facilitated reflective discussions immediately following each activity.
Additionally, each student completed information in a Cross Cultural Immersion journal that captured learning of their own self-awareness and new knowledge of the group. The intervention occurred in

1. Philadelphia, Wayne, and Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, areas where distinct cultural enclaves exist (i.e. predominantly African American, Latino, Jewish). These communities are local (within 20 miles) of Eastern University. This radius is necessary because the university is located within a primarily homogenous predominantly White community; many of the adjacent communities have a similar composition. There is more diversity in communities that are several miles away from the university;
2. at a designated event; and
3. a site that catalogs or celebrates historic events of the selected cultural group and responds to the group’s needs.

The two instructors for the three sections of the course in this study have experience teaching the course at Eastern University. One is a White male, the other is an African American female who was also the researcher. They have received similar teaching evaluations for the course. Both instructors are of similar age and religious commitments (Christian). Furthermore, both have earned the bachelor of Social Work at Eastern University. Both have master’s degrees in Social Work and are in various stages of earning the doctorate.

Whether they consented to participate or not, all students assigned to experimental group had to participate in the cultural immersion experiments. They were part of the nature/construct of the course. This increased the likelihood of students completing the immersion activities since assignments were weighted into the final course grade.

All of the participants were required to complete five (5) assignments which required some level of engagement with people who were ethnically and culturally different from the participant. There was also a writing component for each assignment. The participants were also to participate in class discussions. The assignments (as described on the course syllabus) are listed below.

**Comparison Group:** (Education/Assignments as usual)
1. Write a self-awareness paper.
2. Diversity Project - Complete the cross-cultural experiences listed below (a, b, & c) and write a paper for each activity that discusses new awarenesses and knowledge. Use information and terms/concepts from course readings, lectures and discussions in the paper. For each assignment, select one of the diverse populations covered in the course. A different population should be selected for each assignment. The population must be different from the student with regard to ethnicity/race or religion, or sexual orientation/identity.
a. Interview a person whose ethnicity/race, religion, or sexual orientation/identity differs from his/her own.

b. On Campus Meeting/Event - Attend at least one of the following campus association meetings: Black Student League, Latinos Unidos, Refuge (LGBT alliance) or SAGE (Students Advocating Gender Equality). Record the date, time and location of the meeting, along with the purpose of the meeting (agenda). Discuss with the group facilitator his/her purpose for wanting to learn more about this group. Also, find out (from the facilitator or another member) why this association is important. Why does it need to exist? Why is it important to be a member? Finally, how did he/she feel attending the meeting? What new knowledge was gained about this population as a result of attending the group meeting and interacting with members/participants? End the paper with reflections of self-awareness. How did the student feel prior to going to the meeting? During the meeting? What did it feel like to be a “minority” in the group?

c. Watch a movie/video or documentary that focuses on the identified group or a member of the group as a main character (i.e. experiences or social issues). Gather a small group (3-5 of people to view a movie or documentary by or about the chosen population (a list of options will be provided). Discuss the content and themes of the film with the group members. Summarize the experience, including the story line and significant pieces of the discussion. What insights did the student develop about the population? Him/herself? The peers with whom the student watched the film? Use terms and concepts introduced in this course in the paper.

3. Write a justice paper. “Historically, the social work profession has been committed to working with different ethnic and racial communities and has defined its purpose as working with the oppressed. The preamble to the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (2008) calls on social workers to be ‘sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice (p. 9). As a result, social work has directed considerable attention toward issues of social reform and civil rights” (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009, p. 13). Social workers “have a key role as advocates for social policies that help meet the needs of communities in an effective and culturally grounded manner” (p. 229).

The purpose of this paper is to challenge the student to think thoroughly and deeply about a current issue that impacts a specific population. Choose one of the following topics to write about:

- **Immigration**: Write a brief response to the following comments and questions about immigration: The issues around the status of undocumented immigrants have become political “hot topics”. These are complex, and it is important to consider the interests and well-being of all parties. Identify at least one issue associated with immigration and undocumented immigrants. What are the important facets of the issue to consider? What do you believe is an appropriate approach to addressing these issues? What are potential benefits and potential harm to all parties if this approach is used? Discuss and apply the concept of distributive justice to the issue.

- **Classism/poverty**: “Affirmative Action … is defined as government policies that attempt to improve the educational and employment opportunities of historically oppressed populations in the United States” (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009, p. 234). Research the history, definition and purposes of Affirmative Action. Discuss the findings and then answer the following questions: Who benefits from Affirmative Action? How do these policies seek to promote justice? Discuss how these policies impact poverty.

4. Research Project for class presentation – For group presentation in class, research and present the characteristics, experiences and contributions of the culture of one of the diverse groups
covered in the course. The following topics should be included: identity/characteristics, history, social interactions, and contributions to American society.

5. Write a course reflection paper.
6. Participate in weekly class sessions and end of semester evaluation

Experimental (Intervention) Group: Participants received all of the same education as usual as the comparison group. The experiment was an adaptation of the Diversity Project (Assignment #2). This assignment was adapted to create a Cross-Cultural Immersion Project. These are the adaptations:

Experimental group participants selected one population that differed from them as the focus of the project; the On Campus Meeting/Event was replaced with a guided exploration and discussion of a site that recorded the intracultural and intercultural history of the student selected population; the movie/video or documentary was replaced with the student’s participation in a worship service with leadership and a congregation whose predominate membership were people whose ethnic and cultural identification were the population that the student selected to study. The assignments that were adapted for the Cross-Cultural Immersion Project (as described on the course syllabus) are described below.

1. Write a self-awareness paper.
2. (Experimental) Cross-Cultural Immersion Project – Complete the cross-cultural experiences listed below and write a paper for each activity that discusses new awarenesses and knowledge. Use information and terms/concepts from course readings, lectures and discussions in the paper. Select one of the following racial/ethnic or religious groups and complete all of the immersion activities listed below (a, b, & c) focusing on that group: African American, Latino, Jewish. Participants must choose a population that is different in identity from their own. Students should spend at least ten (10) hours (collectively) completing the immersion activities. (Travel time is not included in the ten hour requirement).
   a. Interview a person from the identified group
   b. (Experimental) Visit a site that catalogs or celebrates historic events of a selected cultural group (i.e. Holocaust Museum, an African American museum/cultural center, Mexican Cultural Center). This activity will be completed with the course instructor and class members. Following the event students will engage in reflective discussions with the instructor and class members. Additionally, each student will create a journal that captures learning of their own self-awareness and new knowledge of the group. In the journal
      i. Record insights (self-awareness & other awareness),
      ii. register questions,
      iii. summarize experiences using terminology that integrates concepts introduced/learned in assigned readings and discussed in class.
   c. (Experimental) Attend a public activity with the cultural guide assigned for the ethnic/cultural group in the community of the identified cultural group, for example a religious service or cultural parade among other activities. The activity will be selected by the cultural guide.
3. Write a justice paper. “Historically, the social work profession has been committed to working with different ethnic and racial communities and has defined its purpose as working with the oppressed. The preamble to the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (1999) calls on social workers to be ‘sensitive to cultural and ethnicity diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice (p. 9). As a result, social work has directed considerable attention toward issues of social reform and civil rights”. (Marsiglia & Kulis, p. 13). Social workers “have a key role as advocates for social policies that help meet the needs of communities in an effective and culturally grounded manner” (p. 229).

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- **Classism/poverty**: “Affirmative Action … is defined as government policies that attempt to improve the educational and employment opportunities of historically oppressed populations in the United States” (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2009, p. 234). Research the history, definition and purposes of Affirmative Action. Discuss the findings and the answer the following questions: Who benefits from Affirmative Action? How do these policies seek to promote justice? Discuss how these policies impact poverty.

4. **Class Presentation** – For group presentation in class, students will research and present the characteristics, experiences and contributions of the culture and experiences of ethnic/cultural group that was the focus of their immersion experiences. The following topics should be included: identity/characteristics, history, social interactions, and contributions to American society.

5. **Write a course reflection paper** (usual class assignment),

6. **Participate in weekly class sessions and end of semester evaluation** (usual class assignment),

The site visit and the public activity were off campus cross-cultural immersion experiences. These off campus cross-cultural immersion experiences occurred at different points during the Fall 2013 semester. During the first few weeks of the semester students received the same foundational material (course content) as the comparison group. Each immersion experience was completed with the researcher/course instructor, teaching assistant, and class members who chose the same population to study. Following the activity students engaged in reflective discussions led by the researcher/class instructor and teaching assistant. Additionally, each student kept a journal, the Cross Cultural Immersion Journal, which captured learning of their own self-awareness and new knowledge of the group. In the journal students recorded
insights (self-awareness & other awareness), registered questions, and summarized experiences using terminology that integrated concepts introduced/learned in assigned readings and discussed in class.

One immersion experience was a visit to a historical site or cultural group activity that emphasized or celebrated the identity and culture of the identified group. The visit emphasizing African-American identity and culture was the Philadelphia Historic African American Tour, Philadelphia, PA. The Latino (Puerto Rican) identity and culture activity was a visit and tour to Esperanza College, Philadelphia, PA. The Jewish identity and culture activity was a guided tour of the National Museum of Jewish American History, Philadelphia, PA.

The second immersion experience was attendance at a worship service that celebrated the history and identity of the ethnic/cultural group the participant chose for Cross-Cultural Immersion project. Those studying African American culture attended the 89th anniversary service of the First Baptist Church of Wayne. The Latino (Puerto Rican) worship service was La Misa con Motivo de La Semana Puertorriquena (Puerto Rican Mass Celebration). The Jewish worship experience was Temple Beth Hillel.

Ten students participated in the African-American cultural activities. Twenty students participated in the Latino (Puerto Rican) cultural activities. Twenty-five participated in the Jewish religious and cultural activities. Since these were assignments required for the course, the total number of students participating in the activities is higher than the number of study participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison Group (Treatment As Usual)</th>
<th>Experiment Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Write a self-awareness paper</td>
<td>1. Write a self-awareness paper</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Diversity Project (*a survey of various populations*):  
  a. cross cultural interview  
  b. on campus meeting / event  
  c. movie / documentary       | 2. Cross-Cultural Immersion Project (experimental) (*focus on a specific ethnic/cultural population*):  
  a. cross cultural interview  
  b. visit a site with faculty  
  c. attend a public event with cultural guide  
  d. participate in guided discussion (using discussion guide) with cultural guide and/or faculty and classmates immediately following site visit and public event (on site) |
| 3. Write a justice paper             | 3. Write a justice paper |
| 4. Class presentation                | 4. Class presentation |
| 5. Write a course reflection paper   | 5. Write a course reflection paper |
| 6. Weekly class sessions and semester evaluation | 6. Weekly class sessions and semester evaluation |
Each participant in the experimental group participated in two off-campus cross cultural immersion experiences – a site visit and a worship experience. A cultural guide was available for the participants in the experimental group for each of the off campus immersion experiences. The role of the cultural guide was to answer questions and articulate for participants the cultural context of what they were observing and experiencing. This kind of interaction and explanation ensured the academic nature of the experiences so that they were more than voyeurism. The cultural guide was a person who identified ethnically and culturally with the population that they were discussing with participants and each had more than ten years of experience researching and/or teaching about the population that they discussed. Each cultural guide also had a leadership role in the community and/or the site that was chosen. Each was similar in age (50 – 65 years old) to one another. The cultural guides discussed information and feelings with the participants and answered participant questions. All of the cultural guides used informal question and answer pedagogical styles. Participants were given a Cross Cultural Immersion Journal to record self-awareness, new knowledge and register questions. Prior to each cross cultural immersion activity, students recorded thoughts about the upcoming experience in the journal. (See Appendix E for Journal)

**Cross Cultural Immersion Experiences**

*Preparation for Cross Cultural Immersion Experiences*

Participants were assigned readings about the population they were researching, the site they were to visit, and the cultural history of the public activity (a worship service). The readings included information about identity, culture, significant cultural celebrations and cultural distinctions. Each religious leader had contributed to the reading list that students were assigned and was familiar with the content. This information was used to frame the pre-worship experience discussion. Each participant was given a Cross Cultural Immersion Journal with prompts and questions created by the researcher. Each participant completed pre-activity questions and prompts in the journal. (See Cross Cultural Immersion Journal in Appendix E). Prior to participating in the public activity, a worship experience, participants met with a religious leader of the church or synagogue. The religious leader discussed with participants
the significance of religion to the culture of the people and the significance of the religious institution to individuals, families, ethnic and cultural communities and the larger society. The discussion was informal conversational style interaction. Students were encouraged to ask questions.

_African-American Site Visit_: Students who opted to research African-Americans participated in the Philadelphia Historic African American Tour (PHAAT). Ten students toured the city of Philadelphia on a private 15 passenger bus. The cultural guide for the Philadelphia Historic African American Tour was an African-American female history scholar. She studied African-American history in the context of the history of Philadelphia, PA. She discussed with participants the historic and current presence of African-Americans in the development of the city, contributions to the infrastructure, slave trading, housing/communities, and religious experiences. The tour included Philadelphia landmarks throughout the city and the tour guide discussed African-American contributions in building and preserving these landmarks. It also included discussion of changes occurring throughout the city. The guide discussed the contributions and changes in the contexts of African-American cultural identity, strengths of the population, and oppression experienced. Participants spent three hours on this guided tour of Philadelphia. They were able to ask questions of the tour guide and recorded awarenesses and new knowledge in their Cross Cultural Immersion Journal.

_African-American Public Activity_: The public activity for each participant group was a worship experience. Prior to participating in the worship experience, participants met with the church pastor to discuss the historical and current significance of the Black Church in America. Participants met with the pastor of First Baptist Church of Wayne, PA for about ninety minutes. The worship event was the celebration of the eighty-ninth (89th) anniversary of the First Baptist Church of Wayne. A prominent former mayor of a large metropolitan city delivered the sermon. His discussion of the scripture reflected the Black experience in the United States. The preacher made connections to oppression (racism, classism) and the Black church’s response to it. He identified the Black church as a social structure that aided in the empowerment of Black communities prior to the Civil Rights Movement. The preacher also identified the Black church as a historic institution that is an anchor in many Black communities.
Latino (Puerto Rican) Site Visit: Esperanza College is “a Christian college program dedicated to the service of the Hispanic and local communities” (http://esperanza.eastern.edu/about/our_mission.html). The college was birthed as an extension of Nueva Esperanza (New Hope), Inc., a non-profit organization founded in 1987 by a group of Hispanic clergy in North Philadelphia, PA. These clergy had originally come together to form the Hispanic Clergy in 1982. The mission of the Hispanic Clergy was to serve the community that was “suffering from poverty, unstable housing, low educational attainment, and high crime” (http://esperanza.eastern.edu/about/our_mission.html). The outgrowth of their work was Esperanza College, founded and accredited in 2002 in partnership with Eastern University. Esperanza is a Hispanic Serving Institution. The cultural guide was the dean of the college. She discussed the creation of Esperanza Nueva, Inc., as a faith-based social support agency to assist Puerto Ricans in the community, many of whom were immigrants or first generation Americans. She explained the need for the community members to connect with helpers who could understand the Puerto Rican culture and aid them as they transitioned to American culture. The community members prefer to live in cultural enclaves because these are safe spaces for them and a place where they can continue to practice the traditions of their culture of origin while assimilating to American culture. The cultural guide further explained the importance of maintaining some portion of one’s cultural identity so that individuals can continue to feel “whole.” Assimilation to a new culture should be a growth process rather than a sacrificial one. Striking a balance between one’s culture of origin and the new culture is essential for physical and mental health.

Participants were able to ask questions of the cultural guide and recorded awarenesses and new knowledge in their Cross Cultural Immersion Journal. They spent three hours touring the facility and discussing the history, mission of Esperanza College and the community served by the college and the Hispanic Clergy. Twenty students participated in these immersion activities.

Latino (Puerto Rican) Public Activity: La Misa con Motivo de La Semana Puertorriquena (The Puerto Rican Week Mass) is sponsored by Philadelphia Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations, a private non-profit organization. The mass has been held annually since 1964 as part of Festival Puertorriqueno Fildelfia, (Philadelphia Puerto Rican Week Festival). Participants met with the cultural
guide, a Latina woman who is a leader in her community and her parish. The cultural guide participated in the mass by reading a scripture. Prior to participation in the mass, participants joined parishioners of more than twenty parishes in a march around the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. Most of the parishioners were Spanish speaking. Some spoke English and discussed with study participants the cultural relevance and value of the mass celebration. Parishioners also discussed challenges of teaching younger, American born Latinos, the culture and the difficulties faced with assimilation. Participants were able to ask questions of the cultural guide and parishioners. During the parade march around the Cathedral Basilica, traditional Puerto Rican worship and cultural songs were sung. Parade participants included politicians, community leaders, pageant winners, and highly esteemed community members. These honorees were all of Puerto Rican descent. Following the parade, participants entered the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul for a traditional Puerto Rican Catholic worship service. The service was in Spanish. Study participants were participant observers in the parade and the worship service – they participated in each by allowing themselves to be guided by the community members. The parade and service lasted less than four hours. Study participants recorded new awareness and knowledge in the Cross Cultural Immersion Journal.

Jewish Site Visit: Students who chose to research Jews and Jewish culture toured the National Museum of American Jewish History. Twenty-five students studied this ethnic and cultural group. Once at the museum they were divided into three groups of eight or nine and assigned to a museum selected tour guide. The tour guides were all Jewish American and all of similar age. Each was knowledgeable about history of Jews, Jewish cultural traditions, and the experience of Jews in American society. Participants were guided through museum and briefed on the history of Jews prior to mass immigration to America, during the transitional period, and up to the first century in the United States. Included in the narrative were ethnic/racial and religious discrimination, assimilation, efforts to maintain identity, and solidarity, among other topics. Participants were encouraged to ask questions throughout the guided tour. Each group was offered the opportunity to explore the museum for about 30 minutes following the guided
tour. Participants recorded new awarenesses and learning in their Cross-Cultural Immersion Journal and discussed their learning with each other.

**Jewish Public Activity:** The public activity for the twenty-five participants who studied the Jewish group was a worship service at Temple Beth Hillel-Beth-El, an “Egalitarian, Conservative Synagogue” ([www.tbhbe.org](http://www.tbhbe.org)) local to the university. None of the participants identified as members of the Jewish community and none of the participants had previously attended the synagogue. Students were participant observers in the M’nuchat Shabbat service, a regular Friday night service dedicated to rest, reflection and celebration of Jewish life. The service featured traditional Hebrew melodies. Prior to participating in the worship service, students met with the rabbi who discussed the history of Jews, the maintenance of identity through cultural rituals, and distinction between and relevance of ethnic and religious Jewish identity. The rabbi answered questions posed by participants. Participants recorded awarenesses and new knowledge in their Cross Cultural Immersion Journals.

This researcher and a research assistant accompanied participants in the experimental group to each cross cultural immersion activity. The research assistant was a senior Social Work major (BSW) who had previously participated in Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction. Immediately following each activity participants were instructed to record thoughts, feelings, and new awarenesses in the Cross Cultural Immersion Journal. Using a discussion guide, the researcher and research assistant facilitated discussion that encouraged participants to reflect on the experience and discuss their feelings and new insights with one another. Students were challenged to identify and discuss relevant cultural concepts. The discussion guide (see Appendix D) was comprised of open-ended questions and prompts that focused on self-awareness, knowledge of others and critical thinking and communication skills. The same discussion guide was used for each activity for each of the three groups studied. This ensured that the discussion topics, questions, and prompts were the same following each activity. In addition to this discussion, students recorded insights in the Cross Cultural Immersion Journal and were encouraged to share their writing with the group. Each post activity discussion lasted about fifty (50) minutes, the normal time allotted for class sessions. Since participants in the experimental group
were participating in cross cultural experiences outside of the traditional classroom, the number of times they met in the classroom was reduced. Participants in the experimental group received release time equivalent to ten hours of seat time (about three traditional classroom sessions). The release time hours were built into the course schedule. Participants in the comparison group did not participate in the same off campus cross-cultural experiences and therefore, did not have release time built into the course schedule.

**Measures and Data Collection Points**

Research data was collected from participants during weeks one and five of the semester. This was information from the multiple pretests. Following the study, data was collected at the end of the semester (during week fifteen) for a posttest. Pretests and posttests were administered electronically. The posttest was available via Qualtrics beginning week 13. By the end of week 16 the study was closed – participant access to the posttest was unavailable.

**Type of Sampling:** Sample of convenience – Participants were requested to indicate the following demographic information along with their status in school: Race/Ethnicity, Sex (options were limited to male or female), Classification (year in school), and whether the participant was or intended to major in Social Work. (“Intended” majors are those students who are interested in pursuing the major and are taking the course to meet the major requirement –rather than the university’s Doing Justice requirement- but have not formally declared the major by submitting the required Major Declaration card to the Office of the Registrar). Information about other majors was not requested. Seven participants identified as Social Work majors on pretest one and pretest two. Social class, sexual orientation, religion and ability were not recorded. Demographics of those who participated in the research study are recorded below:

**Race/Ethnicity** – United States Census Bureau definitions are used for each racial or ethnic category.

American Indian or Alaskan Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the North and South America (including Central America) who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation
or community attachment. Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, including for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. White: A person having origins in any of the original people of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa. Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.) (Humes, K.R., Jones, N.A, and Ramirez, R.R, 2011)

The Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey (MAKSS) a sixty (60) item self-administered test was used to measure study outcomes. The MAKSS was designed by Michael D’Andrea, Judy Daniels, and Ronald Heck (1990) to measure the effectiveness of multicultural training in “increasing students’ awareness about their own attitudes toward ethnic minorities, advancing students’ knowledge about minority clients, and further developing students’ cross-cultural communication skills” (Hall & Theriot, 2007, p. 264) The measure is divided into three subscales with 20 items for each of the three subscales. The MAKSS uses a four point Likert-type scale with responses ranging 1 (very limited) to 4 (very good) for most of the items; 1 (very limited to 4 (very aware) for 3 of the items; and 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) for the remaining items. Five items of the 60 items are reversed scored. Scores in each subscale range from 20-80 and a total scale scores can range from 60-240. Brock (2006) notes the following about the psychometric properties of the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey:

The … instrument was normed on 90 graduate students, who completed the instrument before and after a specified training period. Initial reliability and validity information was supportive of the Knowledge and Skills subscales; however the Awareness subscale had questionable reliability. ..In the validation sample, coefficient alphas for the subscales ranged from .75-.96 (p. 43).

Internal reliabilities of the MAKSS are deemed strong with the exception of the Awareness subscale. “Previous research has indicated that the Awareness subscale has questionable yet acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha of .75 (D’Andrea et al., 1991)” (p. 493).
The similarity in goals of multicultural counseling and culturally competent social work practice supports the use of MAKSS as a tool to measure cultural awareness, cultural knowledge and cultural skills for this study. Since the tool was designed for counselors some of the terms and questions were modified to more appropriately reflect social work education and the social work profession. The terms “counselors” and “counseling” were replaced by “social workers” and “social work”, respectively, in the survey. Where “counseling” is referring to skills, “helping” was used instead. For example, question twenty (20) on the MAKSS refers to “basic counseling skills.” This phrase was modified to “basic helping skills.” “Clinical psychology” and “counseling psychology” were replaced with “social work” or “social work profession.” “Mental health” was removed from questions that inquire whether respondents can assess this type of need in clients. The question was restated more broadly, inquiring whether the respondent can assess needs of clients. For example, MAKSS question fifty-four (54), “How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the mental health needs of women?” was restated – “How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of women?” Question fifty-seven (57) on the MAKSS (“How would you rate your ability to effectively secure information and resources to better serve culturally different clients?”) is specific to service delivery. Since this study was conducted with an undergraduate population in an academic setting, it was necessary to replace this question with one that is more appropriate with regard to a cultural competency skill. The new question reads, “How well would you relate your ability to discuss the relationship between cultural diversity and social justice in terms of historical and ongoing oppression and privilege that different social identity groups experience in our society?” This is a critical thinking question. Critical thinking is a skill necessary for culturally competent social work practice (NASW, 2008; Lum, 2011). Finally, there are some terms in the knowledge section of the scale that are not conducive to undergraduate/generalist social work education. “Mainstreaming,” “ethnocentrism,” “pluralism,” “contact hypothesis,” “attribution,” “transcultural,” and “encapsulation” were replaced with “assimilation,” “intersectionality,” “justice,” “hypothesis testing,” “privilege,” “oppression,” and “minority”, respectively. The replacement terms are in the text students are required to use for SWK110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction.
Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction is a required course for social work majors. Students are introduced to professional language in the course. Since the language is introduced in the course, the MAKSS is an appropriate tool for use regardless of the student’s major.

The Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS)—Form C (Reynolds, 1982) was used to strengthen internal validity since social desirability can be a competing alternative/explanation in this type of study. The MCSDS-Form C is a 13-item self-report instrument that assesses a type of social desirability (i.e., need for approval) using dichotomous (true/false) forced choice responses. Scores range from 0 to 13; higher scores represent greater need for approval. Evidence of construct validity for the MCSDS-Form C has been reported (Fischer & Fick, 1993; Loo & Thorpe, 2000), and internal consistency coefficients have ranged from .62 to .89 (Benkert et al., 2011, p. 7).

Analysis

T-tests were used to determine whether the experimental and comparison groups were equal on pretest scores and socio-demographic characteristics. Experimental and comparison groups were compared on outcomes of three subscales of the Modified Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey (MAKSS) and the total scale score using T-tests. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare the post-intervention means of participants in the experimental (intervention) group to the means of participants in the comparison group on overall MAKSS. To examine if there were differences within the experimental and comparison groups on pre and posttest scores, paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare the means of within group differences on pre and posttest scores. Paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare the means of participants’ pretest 1 (baseline), pretest 2 and posttest scores. Since participants were tested at two time points during pre-intervention and three participants were missing from pretest 2, paired samples t-tests were conducted between pretest 1 and posttest to include all eighteen participants who completed the posttest.

Reliability of the MAKKS and each subscale and MCSDS was demonstrated using Cronbach’s alpha at each administration of the scale. Each scale had acceptable reliability including the Awareness subscale which had relatively low reliability. The low reliability of the Awareness subscale could be the
result of the small sample size. It is still acceptable for an exploratory study. Use of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was used to control for socially desirable response tendencies. (See Table 2: Reliability)

**Table 2: Reliability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest 1</th>
<th>Pretest 2</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAKSS Total</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCSDS</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linear regressions were run to determine if overall MAKSS, Awareness, Knowledge, and Skill scores differed between experimental and comparison groups when controlling for their pre-intervention scores.

**Administrative Arrangements**

The necessary resources for this study included: budget, staff and appropriate documentation, including a statement on the course syllabus and Institutional Review Board application and consent forms.

*Budget* – Funds were requested from the operational budget of the Eastern University Social Work Department. These funds were used to copy forms (IRB Application, Application for Approval of Classroom Student Research Projects and Student Participation in Research Projects as Part of Class Assignments). Faculty Development Funds from the operating budget from the Office of the Dean of the Undergraduate College of Arts and Sciences were used to pay for group transportation to historical sites and/or cultural events and admission into historical site.

**Human Subjects**

The research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Eastern University and at the University of Pennsylvania. IRB approval was obtained from both universities. The study addressed potential IRB concerns in the use of students as research subjects as outlined below.
Recruitment – Students voluntarily enrolled in the course to meet curriculum requirements for the social work major or for the university core curriculum. They enrolled without instructor or researcher input. Since students self-selected the course, there was no coercion on the part of the researcher. To reduce the possibility of bias by the researcher, a neutral third party handled all of the student data prior to and during the study. The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) at Eastern University assigned each student a coded identifier that the student used to access the consent form and the pretest and posttest surveys. The pretest and posttest surveys were administered on Qualtrics. The researcher did not have access to student names. Student demographic information (race, ethnicity, sex, classification (year in school), major or intended major) was given to the researcher after final course grades were submitted to the Office of the Registrar.

Using students as research subjects was necessary because the study tested an instructional method. The experimental intervention was not different than other community interaction requirements that are used at Eastern University and in accredited social work programs. For example, the first year seminar course at Eastern University has a required twenty (20) hour service component. Students must complete twenty (20) hours of service learning that requires them to go into communities and interact with residents as they work on community improvement activities. Community interaction is a standard instructional practice in social work education. Field placements are required in all accredited Bachelor of Social Work programs. Social Work 105: Introduction to Social Work, requires twenty (20) hours of volunteer experience at a social service agency. This course is required for all majors before they enter into junior year field placement. The BSW program at Eastern University requires three semesters of field placement in a social service agency. During the field placement students have individual (one-on-one) interactions with clients at the agency, at client’s homes and at various locations within the community. The community based nature of the cultural immersion experiences were similar to social work field placement.

Research during class time – The research was designed to meet the overall course objective to develop cultural competence. An instructional method was being tested. Cultural immersion is similar to
service learning and field placement, two instructional methods used in undergraduate education. These methods require interaction with community members. Field placement is a standard instructional method in social work.

Consent – All students enrolled in the course received an email informing them that a pilot study would be conducted during their enrollment in the course (Fall 2013). The email requested their participation in the study and informed them that they have the right to refuse participation. Students were informed that they may be part of the experimental or the control condition and that they would not know which group they were in until after the course began. It was clearly communicated that their participation or non-participation would not influence their grades in the course. Students were informed that their names would not be given to the researcher. The only identifying information collected was race/ethnicity, sex, classification (year in school), and major or intended major, if it was Social Work. The information was collected to ensure that the groups were equal. This information was needed to strengthen the study design and to describe the sample. This information was not given to the researcher until after final course grades were submitted to the Office of the Registrar. Only coded identifiers were given to the researcher. Student names were not given to the researcher. For students who refused to consent, an alternative to participating in the study was to enroll in the course section that was excluded from the study. Students who opted to remain in the course but not participate in the study were restricted from completing the pretest and posttest surveys.

Confidentiality and Coercion – The pretest and posttest surveys were on Qualtrics. In order to protect the anonymity of the student respondent, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) at Eastern University administered the pretest and the posttest. The Director of Institutional Research assigned participants identifiers. This avoided potential coercion since the instructor was also the researcher. The researcher and course instructor only had access to demographic information that was submitted by participants at the outset of the study. The researcher did not have access to student names, only coded identifiers which were provided to the researcher after course grades had been submitted to the Office of
the Registrar of Eastern University. Overall, the risks to the subjects were reasonable in relation to the potential increase in knowledge for the field of social work.

There was minimal risk of economic, legal, physical, psychological or social injury to the research participants. The requirements for intervention group participants were similar to the community service and field practicum conditions in First Year Seminar and junior and senior level social work courses, respectively. Research participants were instructed to observe during daylight hours, observe and participate only in public settings and events and to travel in a group in order to ensure their safety.
Chapter 3 Results

The sample was mostly non-Hispanic White, female, sophomore college students who were enrolled in a fifteen week Social Work course. The course aimed to introduce students to cultural diversity with a goal of educating for cultural competence. A modified Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey (MAKSS) was used to measure cultural competence indicated by awareness, knowledge, and skills. Forty-three students consented to participate in the study, eighteen participants completed the study. Of the eighteen participants, two-thirds were in the intervention group. One-third was in the control group. Four of the eighteen participants were Social Work majors, all were in the experimental (intervention) group. Half of the treatment group was sophomores and all participants in the control group were sophomores. One participant did not identify Classification. (See Table 3: Descriptive Statistics below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Descriptive Statistics</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
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<td>Black</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Work Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equality of Experimental and Control Groups

T-tests were used to test whether the groups were equal on pretest scores (baseline) and at posttest. The two experimental groups were combined because the small sample size did not allow for a meaningful test to compare the intervention groups’ scores. A review of mean scores showed the range of the scores for participants in each experimental group was similar on each subscale (Awareness,
Knowledge, and Skills), the overall MAKSS and the MCSDS.

We hypothesized that integration of cross-cultural immersion experiences into accredited Bachelor of Social Work education programs would be more effective in enhancing cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and cultural competency skills than on-campus forms of experiential learning that survey diverse populations. The hypothesis was partially supported in that the scores of the experimental group were higher than the comparison group on the skills subscale at posttest.

The t-tests revealed no statistical difference between the experimental and comparisons groups on the Awareness, Knowledge, or Skills subscales or on the overall MAKKS scores at pretest 1 and pretest 2. Results revealed that the experimental group had significantly higher skill scores post-intervention. It appeared as though participants who received the intervention had significantly higher overall MAKSS scores post-intervention than participants who did not receive the intervention (comparison group), however, when pretest scores were controlled, there was no statistical difference. Table 4 (Scores on Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS) and Marlow Crowne Social Desirability (MCSDS) at All Times) shows scores on each of the subscales, overall MAKSS, and MCSDS at pretest 1, pretest 2 and Posttest. At pretest 2 (prior to intervention) the comparison group score on the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was significantly higher than the experimental group. At Posttest, the difference between groups on the MCSDS disappeared.

Both group’s pretest 2 scores differed significantly from pretest 1. The scores were already on an upward trajectory prior to the intervention. The scores of the experimental group were slightly higher than the comparison group on each subscale. There was a greater difference between pretest 1 and pretest 2 scores of the experimental group than the comparison group. (See Table 4: Scores on Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS) and Marlow Crowne Social Desirability (MCSDS) at All Times)
Table 4: Scores on Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS) and Marlow Crowne Social Desirability (MCSDS) at All Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Test 1</th>
<th>Pre-Test 2</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAKSS Total</td>
<td>2.48</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCSDS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>6.36**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.10 ** p<.05

Immersion Intervention Effect on Outcomes

Cross-cultural immersion had a statistically significant impact on the skills subscale of the MAKSS. The skills subscale score raised an average of .44 points. When pretest scores are controlled, the statistically significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups on the overall MAKSS was eliminated. (See Table 5: Immersion Intervention Effect on Outcomes)

Table 5: Immersion Intervention Effect on Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MAKSS</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>MCSDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>** 1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test 2 Score</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>0.13 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Test 1 Score</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4 Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the effectiveness of cross-cultural immersion as a pedagogical framework for teaching cultural competence. The participants enrolled in the fifteen week social work course, Human Diversity and Social Interaction, were pursuing the bachelor of social work degree or taking the course to meet core curriculum requirements to achieve a level of competence for interacting cross-culturally. As noted previously, participant observation is an essential element in understanding cultural communities and developing cultural competence (Green, 1999). Participants in the experimental (intervention) group were participant observers who were introduced to cultural communities and experienced client functioning in their own environments while being guided by culturally knowledgeable community members. Attrition from the study was high. Forty-three students consented to participate in the study and completed pretest 1. Eighteen participants remained in the study.

Despite the small sample size and attrition, the results of this pilot study showed significant increase in the post-intervention skills score, thus partially supporting the hypothesis. The improved skill score supports cross-cultural immersion as an effective pedagogical framework for teaching cultural competence. These preliminary results have promise for future research with larger sample sizes.

Effectiveness of Cross-Cultural Immersion

There were slight differences between the groups on Awareness, Skills, and overall MAKSS scores at pretest 1. These differences are likely due to participants’ experiences prior to enrolling in the course. For example, it is reasonable to assume that participants who live in diverse communities or those who have studied abroad would have attained some awareness of those communities and skills for interacting with diverse populations based on those experiences. It is also possible that some students may have been exposed to diversity or multicultural curriculum in previous course work.

Although no intended effect was expected to exist from pretest 1 to pretest 2, both group’s pretest 2 scores differed significantly from pretest 1. That the scores were already on an upward trajectory prior to the intervention supports the effectiveness of solely didactic teaching methods. The higher scores of the experimental group on each subscale and overall MAKSS could indicate greater motivation of
experimental group members to attain awareness, knowledge, and skills during the weeks of didactic instruction in preparation for the cross-cultural immersion experiences. These students may have spent more time preparing for class (reading, studying) and discussing class material outside of class time. While it is not possible to know the cause of the greater improvement between the experimental groups’ pretest 1 and pretest 2 scores, it is important to note out of class preparation as a possible contribution.

Given the upward trajectory of the awareness and knowledge scores of the experimental group between pretest 1 and pretest 2, it is not surprising that the posttest skill score would show significant increase. There are at least two possible explanations for this. Firstly, the post-intervention skill score demonstrates participants’ understanding of the skills that were introduced during the course: communication and assessment skills. As participant observers, they were able to understand their own cultural mores and compare those with the cultural norms of the communities they visited. Because the students were participant observers during the cross-cultural immersions, they would have had ample opportunity to observe how culturally different community members interacted with one another. Furthermore, they may have had the opportunity to practice / use certain skills while interacting with the community. Secondly, since there were increases in awareness and knowledge prior to the intervention, participants were able to focus on the application of their learning during the cross-cultural immersion experiences. The application of learning manifests in use of skills. Skill cannot be attained without awareness and knowledge. It makes sense to show an increase in skill level post-intervention than at any other time.

These results indicate cross-cultural immersion as a pedagogical framework for teaching cultural competence when measured using awareness, knowledge, and skills as indicators has greater effect in enhancing cultural competence compared to didactic teaching with on-campus cross cultural interaction. The greatest effect is in the area of skill.

Awareness. While participants in this study did not show significant changes in post-intervention awareness, cross-cultural immersion as a pedagogical framework for teaching cultural competence does have validity. We know that scores on the awareness subscale were on an upward trajectory from the
beginning of the study. That the awareness subscale scores of the experimental group increased more than the scores of the comparison group, it is reasonable to conclude that the cross-cultural immersion experiences had a greater effect on awareness for the experimental group. The cross-cultural immersion experiences provided for students the opportunity to consider their own cultural behaviors and values compared to those of the cultural group they were studying. The increased self-awareness lessens barriers to client engagement, like stereotypes, and increases sensitivities. Understanding the positive and negative experiences of African American, Puerto Rican, and Jewish American communities in the United States produces an additional level of awareness. The cross-cultural immersion tours specifically provided the context for students to understand current problems that are environmental in nature and rooted in the history of racial or ethnic groups in the United States. The overrepresentation of African Americans, in poverty statistics, for example, can be linked to the history of slavery and a millennium of discriminatory practices following their emancipation. During the guided reflection students discussed their new awarenesses. Also, their assumptions about the groups were challenged. For example, the assumption that African Americans are less innovative, not hard workers, and lack similar capabilities to Whites was challenged for some students. The distinction between environmental (social) and cognitive issues became more evident. Culturally competent practice requires self-awareness and cultural awareness of client communities. Awareness is the necessary stepping stone to knowledge acquisition. It is attained through contact with other cultures and ethnicities.

Knowledge. The baseline score on this subscale was equal between the groups. This result is expected given the demographics of study participants – mostly sophomore undergraduate students enrolled in this course to meet college requirements. Even for those students who may have interacted with diverse populations prior to this study, it is likely that they would not have attained formal knowledge about the populations. It is reasonable to assume that Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction introduced them to knowledge about the African-American, Jewish, and Puerto Rican culture and experiences in the United States. For example, study participants’ participation in the Philadelphia Historic African American Tours (PHAAT) tour of Philadelphia, La Misa con Motivo de La
Semana Puertorriquena and parade, and the National Museum of American Jewish History provided for them the historical, political, and social milieu that shapes the cultural identity, values, preferences, and experiences of many African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Jewish Americans. During the reflection after the event, students identified new awarenesses that helped them to have a more holistic understanding of cultural group members given the historic, social, and political contexts of the group experience in the United States. This understanding is, in fact, new knowledge.

Skills. One of the more important findings emerging from this study involves the effectiveness of cross-cultural immersion to increase students’ skills in communicating with culturally different others. Participants who received the intervention had significantly higher Skill scores post intervention than participants who did not receive the intervention. Communication is an essential skill for effective social work practice. The cross-cultural immersion activities that were part of this research created the environment for students to participate in active listening, a communication skill that is essential to understanding experiences, worldview and cultural values. Students researching the Puerto Rican community and culture, for example, had the opportunity to communicate with participants prior to the start of the parade and the worship service that were part of La Misa con Motivo de La Semana Puertorriquena. The Puerto Rican community members informed the students that participating in the celebrations brought honor to their ancestors and honored their culture. During the guided group discussion following the events, study participants recognized honor as an important theme in the conversations. Honoring their Puerto Rican heritage via participation in the events was not only a way of passing down culture to the next generation, these behaviors also exposed elements of their worldview. Important in the worldview is meeting the expectations of older family members. This same theme was apparent in the discussions during Jewish cultural immersion experiences. Cultural values were uncovered during these interactions. By practicing the social work skill of active listening, participants were able gain insight into culturally different communities.

Culturally competent practice requires social workers to consider culture in the assessment of client circumstances. Understanding the primary origin of the problem determines where the social
worker will target the intervention. Improved awareness of the client population and environment along with clarity of the source of the problem allows the social worker to incorporate culture as a strategy for problem resolution. Knowing where to focus the work increases the likelihood of effective social services. Cultural approaches to problem resolution are inherent to culturally competent practice. The cross-cultural immersion activities in this study coupled with the leadership of the cultural guides and in class instruction provided for students a framework for obtaining client background, knowledge of the environment, and understanding the ubiquitous nature of culture – all components of assessment.

**Implications for Social Work Education and Social Work Practice**

Researchers (Boyle & Springer, 2001) have noted that a gap exists between education and the provision of culturally competent social work services. They posit that this gap is likely due to the lack of culture specific training and measurement techniques. Meeting the CSWE standards related to diversity content in the learning environment poses challenges for faculty and social work education programs. Cross-cultural immersion used as a teaching method may be one step toward bridging the gap between education and the provision of culturally competent social work services. NASW Standards for Culturally Competent Practice acknowledge Cross-Cultural Knowledge and Cross-Cultural Skills as pertinent elements of effective practice. While cultural competence can never be “fully realized, achieved, or completed” (NASW, Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice, 2001, p. 11) it is learnable. A preliminary indication of this study is that the integration of cross-cultural immersion experiences into the curriculum and coursework of accredited Bachelor of Social Work education programs can be more effective in enhancing cross-cultural knowledge and cultural competence skills than on-campus forms of experiential learning that survey diverse populations.

**Limitations and Opportunities**

This study was limited in a number of ways. First, the data and results rely on students’ perceptions of their awareness, knowledge, and skills. The MAKSS instrument requires participants to record their level of agreement with statements. It is possible that students overstated or understated their awareness, knowledge, and/or skills on the pretests or posttest. The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability
Scale (MCSDS) suggests that the likelihood of the experimental group overstating or understating their awareness, knowledge and/or skill was no different than the comparison group. As noted previously, traditional cross-cultural immersion programs offer complete immersion of the student into a culturally different community for a sustained amount of time. The immersion experiences in this study were limited to ten hours and did not afford students the opportunity to experience the full day-to-day living experiences of the cultural community. Nonetheless, the perceptions of the participants in this study suggest that cross-cultural immersion as a pedagogical framework for teaching cultural competence significantly enhances skills.

Second, the final sample for analysis was small for an intervention study (N = 18). However, linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the statistical relationship among the variables. Conducting regression analysis was justified because of the correlations of the dependent variables and the desire to limit the likelihood of incorrectly rejecting a null hypothesis and overstating the results. Thus readers should focus on the statistical significance of post-intervention skills scores (which were significantly higher) when interpreting the results of this study. The small sample did not provide the opportunity to compare scores between the experimental groups. Despite the small sample, the research results suggest that a larger sample is likely to produce greater effect.

Third, generalizability of the findings is limited to undergraduate students whose demographics are similar to those in this study. Further studies could expound on these findings, using only social work majors as study participants.

Fourth, the number of participants decreased during the study. There may have been a lack of interest in continuing to participate in a study for social work education by those who were not majoring in social work. Since cross-cultural immersion experiences were part of the assignments required for the course, students could participate in the experiences without completing the survey. The attrition was not from the course, it was from the study. To address attrition accredited BSW programs can integrate the MAKSS into required diversity courses as an ungraded assessment instrument. Incorporating the survey into the course can help programs to monitor the effectiveness of teaching methods. Using it as an
assessment tool establishes the expectation for students to complete the surveys at various points throughout the semester, thereby avoiding attrition, or at least reducing the potential for it.

The email informing students of the research project and reminders to complete the surveys were sent from the Office for Institutional Research. It may be possible that an introductory email sent from the professor could address attrition by securing buy-in at the outset of the semester. Subsequent reminders from the professor may have been helpful. Perhaps a reminder from the Research Assistant (RA) who had the opportunity to meet the students would have increased the response rate. Receiving an email from a person rather than or in addition to an office could have been interpreted as more personal thereby motivating students to complete each survey.

Finally, adding an incentive connected to participation level may impact attrition. For example, since the participants are college-age students, offering a pizza party, gift cards to the book store, or a university trinket (key chain) for fifty percent (50%) or greater participation. This incentive could be added to the pre-course email that informed students about the research.

Fifth, the experimental group studied one cultural population in depth while the comparison group surveyed several populations over three separate assignments. It is worth exploring whether similar or improved outcomes would result if the comparison group focuses on one population rather than surveying multiple populations.

Finally, Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Education and Policy Standards (EPAS) promote competency-based education which focuses on student learning outcomes. For accredited bachelor of social work (BSW) programs the program’s expectation for diversity needs to be reflected in its learning environment. BSW programs that use the MAKSS to measure cultural competence can include it in the metrics in self-study reports to CSWE for accreditation.

**Future Research**

One course is not enough to teach cultural competence for effective practice. The information that study participants gained during the cross-cultural immersion experiences may take longer to assimilate. There may be a greater effect with a longitudinal study. Use of the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge
and Skills Survey can be expanded beyond use in a semester long course. Accredited BSW programs could follow up with participants during the spring semester of the junior year which is usually the first semester of field placement. Following up again in the final semester of the senior year (after three semesters of field placement) prior to engaging clients as social work professionals could also be part of the evaluation process. Following up with participants one or two semesters later may show a greater effect since participants will have had the opportunity to further consider the information and BSW students will have had additional cross cultural interactions with clients during field placement hours. Additional follow up with participants who graduated with the Bachelor of Social Work degree at varied points in their professional career would allow them to evaluate their professional behaviors relative to the client populations they serve. Since the kind of learning that is necessary for cultural competence is ongoing the subsequent reviews will expose whether longer time affords the opportunity for more in-depth understanding of the elements of cultural competence – awareness, knowledge, and skills. A greater effect is quite possible since the subscale scores were on an upward trajectory throughout the study.

The Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Survey (MAKSS), designed for use with counselors, was adapted for undergraduate students enrolled in a required social work course. More research on the psychometric properties is necessary since the tool was modified. Consideration of how the MAKSS could be adapted to objectively score participant learning would be helpful. An additional consideration for use of the modified Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey (MAKSS) in accredited Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs is to link it to Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Education Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) competencies and practice behaviors. The modified MAKSS can be used to assess student aptitude in awareness, knowledge, and skills. CSWE requires accredited BSW programs to use objective assessment of student learning and ability. The modified MAKSS can be a tool used to provide this objective assessment.

The comparison group in this study observed or interacted with three different cultural groups to complete the on-campus assignments. In another implementation of the study the comparison group could focus on one cultural group for each assignment rather than surveying multiple populations. The research
could ascertain whether a more in depth study of one cultural group would result in improved outcomes for the comparison group.

An additional opportunity for this study is to include a qualitative component. Following each cross-cultural immersion activity, students participated in individual and guided group reflection of the experience. The reflection required students to consider what they thought they knew and understood about the cultural group prior to the activity and compare it to what they understood following it. Students recorded new awarenesses in an immersion journal that was used throughout the study. The guided group reflection encouraged students to share new awarenesses within the group. This qualitative data may uncover learning themes. These themes could include specific awarenesses, knowledge, and skills.

The addition of a qualitative component in the methodology could address attrition. Since attrition was from the survey, not the course, including information from the Cross-Cultural Immersion Journal would enhance the N. In the journal participants recorded their thoughts and feelings about the immersion experience. These were recorded pre-immersion and post-immersion. Use of the Cross-Cultural Immersion Journal was a required assignment for the course. Collecting data from the journal would enhance the overall N since participants completed the assignment for the course. Using the Cross-Cultural Immersion Journal as a data tool would not have required participants to do the “extra work” of having to complete a survey.

Another benefit to including qualitative data would be to capture the differences in the learning processes between the experimental and comparison groups. Use of the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge and Skills Survey (MAKSS) was an effective way to attain participants’ assessments of their learning. While this outcome is important, just as salient is the process through which that learning occurred. Participants in the experimental group had an affective experience that impacted their learning. The cross-cultural immersion experiences provided the opportunity for participants to have an “insider’s view” of the culture and community of the group they studied. These encounters provided the space for transformation of previously held viewpoints about themselves (self-awareness) and others (other awareness), two important components of culturally competent practice. The transformative process that

Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition and feelings. They set our “line of action”. Once set, we automatically move from one specific activity (mental or behavioral) to another. We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration …

When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience. A frame of reference encompasses cognitive … and emotional components… (p. 5).

Experimental group participants recorded their thoughts and feelings in the Cross Cultural Immersion Journal and discussed thoughts and feelings immediately after the cross-cultural encounter. The process of self-reflection led to epiphanies. Participants realized that their preconceptions were not fact based. The experience of communicating with members of the cultural group and participating in community and worship events allowed them to connect with the humanity of the culturally different other. Participants were able to connect with similarities between themselves and the cultural group members and to understand and accept differences as a different way of living – without a value judgment. Preconceived ideas, stereotypes and prejudices were challenged merely through interaction. The preconceptions were replaced with a beginning understanding of the people and culture they were studying.

The discussions with the comparison group and the experimental group following the cross-cultural experiences were qualitatively different. Participants in both groups were able to adequately explain what they learned by participating in cross-cultural activities. The language and description of the experiences of the comparison group participants was limited to “I learned…”. Participants discussed new awarenesses and knowledge. The activities were intellectual experiences that resulted in an increase of knowledge. The discussion of the experiences however, was void of affective challenges, which was markedly different from the experimental group discussions. Statements of experimental group participants describing the cross-cultural immersion experiences communicated a depth of knowledge,
thoughts and feelings. “I understand why it’s important to live in a community with people who are like you when you’re a new immigrant”, “I thought they didn’t work hard, but now I understand that the hard work doesn’t seem to pay off”, “I felt refreshed. I’ve never heard someone preach about social justice and actually use biblical scriptures”, and “I see them differently. They’re more like me than I would have ever known …or admitted” were statements in the post cross-cultural immersion experience dialogue that resonated among participants. The statements reflected challenges to previous perceptions, values, beliefs and worldview.

The time spent off-campus in the cultural community among people who live in ethnic and cultural enclaves was out of sync with the experimental group’s norm. Mezirow (1997) refers to this as a disorienting dilemma – the first stage of transformative learning. Nella Roberts (n.d) posits, Disorienting dilemmas evoke every conceivable emotion in learners. Our emotions and our feelings provide both the impetus for us to critically reflect, and the gist of which to reflect deeply (Taylor, 2000). Many learners are socialized in sub-cultures that place little or no value on critical reflection and as a result, any major challenge to their established perspective is painful since this questions their deeply held personal values and threatens their very sense of self (Mezirow, 1990, 1991). As learners engage in critical reflection, some experience grief even as they become enlightened (Scott, 1997) and they struggle to embrace new ways of thinking and of being. This is because we are often unaware of our mental models and how they affect our behavior until we are faced with a disorienting dilemma. Mental models are “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (Senge 1990, p. 8). They are often barriers to change and can impede learning. (http://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1249&context=sferc)

The disorienting dilemma experienced by the participants was followed by at least four phases of the transformative learning process: self-examination with feelings, a critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared, and exploration of options for new relationships and actions (Mezirow, 1997). Sustained immersion in the cultural community, information from the cultural guides, and the guided discussion following the cross-cultural immersion experiences created the environment for the phases of transformative learning to occur. The guided
discussions challenged participants to compare their pre-immersion thoughts and feelings to those post-immersion. Confronting those differences in the context of guided group discussion encouraged participants to embrace a particular vulnerability as they critically examined their assumptions. The recognition that their classmates shared similar discomfort or discontent during the discussion sufficiently normalized the discomfort to promote the transformative learning process. Increased awareness of self and others is characteristic of transformative learning and cultural competence. These awarenesses coupled with new knowledge influenced participants’ to consider what to do with the new knowledge, how it impacts them, their worldview and interactions with others – what Mezirow (1997) characterizes as an exploration of options for new relationships and actions. These actions can be manifested in culturally competent skills.

The transformation that was able to occur as a result of the cross-cultural immersion experiences is invaluable. For social work programs that find the logistics and costs prohibitive, alternative off-campus cross-cultural learning opportunities should be considered. Accredited social work programs could partner with a field agency that serves a specific cultural community to create a sustained community encounter for students. Encouraging students to participate in immersion experiences during winter, spring or summer break or study abroad programs also could provide similar transformative opportunities.

Jurgen Habermas’ (1981) *The Theory of Communicative Action*, speaks to the significance of the kind of cross-cultural interaction the experimental group had as communicative learning. The purpose of communicative learning is to understand the meaning of what is being communicated. It “involves understanding *purposes, values, beliefs, and feelings* and is less amenable to empirical tests. In communicative learning, it becomes essential for learners to become critically reflective of the assumptions, underlying intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). The cross-cultural communication, group discussion, and self-reflective reflective processes that were built into the cross-cultural immersion experiences provided a different learning process for the experimental group than the comparison group. This difference would only be captured in qualitative data.
This research project can be replicated with thoughtful and advance planning. Building cross-cultural immersion experiences into the curriculum of a fifteen week course requires knowledge of the local area and cultural sites that students can visit as well as identifying cultural guides. Many colleges in an effort to assist students in becoming situated to the university connect students to community resources (places of worship, museums, and other culture venues) and inform students of local events. Identifying opportunities for cross-cultural immersion experiences would not be difficult.

There are challenges inherent in the applicability. Two related challenges to applicability of this project are logistics and time. It is important to identify the immersion sites, dates and times at the beginning of the semester. This information should be built into the syllabus so that students can plan to participate. Up to four hours is needed for each experience, this includes transportation time, the immersion activity, and discussion. Since the immersion activities occurred during the week, some participants missed other scheduled courses. The instructor drafted a letter for participants to submit to other instructors requesting permission for the participant to be excused from class on the immersion activity date. Participants were also informed that they were responsible to make up missed work from other courses. Cost is the most notable challenge. The budget for this study was nominal. Costs for this research included transportation and museum fees. In this project, students were transported off-campus in vans owned by the university. However, when university vans were not available, they were rented. Entry into the National Museum of Jewish American History cost more than three hundred dollars. This rate was discounted for a large group of students. Other cultural sites were excluded from consideration due to the cost. Consideration for transportation costs and thoughtful selection of sites that are free and cultural guides that provide services pro bono will be important. Selecting sites based on cost rather than the potential for learning could lessen the overall academic experience. Despite the challenges associated with integrating cross-cultural immersion experiences into a fifteen week course, the project was well worth the effort.
Conclusion

Using a required course for the study was a particular strength. For Social Work majors, this emphasizes the importance of interacting with clients in their own communities. This exposure to client communities extends the learning environment. Direct observation of others and participation in their everyday routines and naturalistic settings offers an opportunity to understand culture as a function of living. To prepare students to work with culturally different others before they are faced with problem-solving in the social work field can better prepare the student to work toward solutions in culturally relevant ways. Cross-cultural immersion is one way to expose undergraduate bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students to the environment of client populations prior to the student’s entry into field practicum. The study results indicate that cross-cultural immersion may well be an effective way to meet NASW and CSWE mandates for teaching cultural competence. Incorporating cross-cultural immersion experiences into a diversity course is practicable. The model fits well into the general curriculum for this type of course. Students’ observations and interactions with clients in client communities and engagement with one another following the immersion activities provide experiences that are lessons they may remember. To attain the necessary awareness, knowledge and skills to work with culturally different populations prior to practicing social work better prepares the budding professional for culturally competent practice. Cross-cultural immersion can be a model for continued professional development, thereby increasing cross-cultural knowledge and effectiveness in service provision over the course of the social work professional’s career.
References


Eldridge, W. D. (1982). Our present methods of teaching ethnic and minority content—Why they can't work! 


IUPUC Indiana University Purdue University Columbus. Cultural Immersion Project. 
http://www.iupuc.edu/academics/divisions-programs/education/student-teaching/cultural-immersion-project/


Appendices

Appendix A

Email to Students

Dear Student,

Welcome to SWK110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction! I am glad to have you in this course.

This semester (Fall 2013) three sections of SWK110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction will be part of a pilot study testing an instructional method. The section you are enrolled in is part of the study. You are not required to participate in this research. I would appreciate your participation because it is the subject of my dissertation. Students in the experimental section will be introduced to the instructional method through a series of assignments. The comparison group will be taught using the usual instructional method. Since this is research, anyone who agrees to participate has to sign a consent form. Participants must decide on their own to be involved. The instructor or researcher cannot influence your decision. Course grades will not be impacted by a student’s decision to participate or not participate in the research. The course instructor and the researcher will not be given any student names. The only participant information that will be collected is sex/gender, major/intended major, race/ethnicity, and year in school. It is necessary to collect this information to make sure the groups are equal and to strengthen the study design. It is also necessary so that the sample can be described in the final analysis. This information will be collected by the Office of Institutional Research and will not be given to the researcher until after final course grades are submitted to the Registrar’s Office. Neither the instructor nor the researcher will be able to identify individual students during the semester/while the research is being conducted. The names of students will never be given to the instructor or researcher. Only demographic information will be provided. This information will be coded and will not include the names of students participating in the study.

I am excited to introduce this instructional method in the course. I believe that it will help students to better understand concepts and result in a more rich academic experience. Again, I hope you agree to participate. Students who agree to participate will find out whether they are in the experimental group or comparison group on the first day of class.

Those students who decide not to participate may opt out here. [There will be a link to another screen informing students they can enroll in another section of the course].

If you would like to participate and agree to be involved in the research, please read and sign the Consent here. [There will be a link to the Consent form.]

Sincerely,

Professor Smith
Researcher
Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
RESEARCH SUBJECT
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Protocol Title: A Pilot Study of Cross-Cultural Immersion as a Pedagogical Framework for Teaching Cultural Competence

Principal Investigator: Phyllis Solomon, PhD
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Introduction

Researchers have noted a gap between education and the provision of culturally competent social work services. Given the United States Census Bureau projections of diversity over the next few decades, it is imperative that social work practitioners attain a level of cultural competence that will allow them to effectively engage culturally different clients. This training ought to begin in accredited undergraduate social work education programs. The purpose of this study is to test the efficacy of cultural immersion as an instructional method for teaching cultural competence skills.

Why am I being asked to volunteer?

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Your participation is voluntary which means you can choose whether or not you want to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will not be any penalty. Before you can make your decision, you will need to know what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits of being in this study, and what you will have to do in this study. That information is included below.

This study is being conducted by the Eastern University Social Work Department. The purpose of this research is to explore an instructional method for teaching cultural competence. The research is designed to meet the overall course objective to develop cultural competence. Using students as research subjects is necessary because the study is testing an instructional method. If effective, this instructional method can be used at this university and others.
Upon completion of your participation in this study you will be provided with a brief explanation of the question this study addresses. If you have any questions not addressed by this consent form, please do not hesitate to ask.

**What is the purpose of this research study?**

The purpose of this research is to explore an instructional method for teaching cultural competence. It will compare the differences in outcomes between the experimental intervention and the usual method of teaching cultural competence.

**How long will I be in the study? How many other people will be in the study?**

Your participation will take sixteen (16) weeks. This includes the pretest (which will be concluded prior to the course) and the posttest which will be completed at the conclusion of the course. It is anticipated that approximately seventy-five (75) people will participate in the study. All of the participants are Eastern University students who are enrolled in three sections of SWK110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction that have been identified for inclusion in this study.

**What am I being asked to do?**

As a participant, you will complete a pretest at least one week prior to the start of the course (SWK110: Human Need and Social Interaction). Participants will be assigned to an experimental group or a comparison group. The experimental intervention is off-campus activities focused on a specific cultural population that is different from you. The activities will include spending ten hours observing and participating in these. A cultural guide and/or faculty will accompany you on two of the off-campus activities. Guided group discussions will take place immediately following the off-campus activities. If you are a participant in the comparison group, you will complete three assignments that require observation and participation in on-campus student activities with a cultural group that is different from you. Each assignment for the comparison group will be with a different cultural group. All participants will share their learning experiences in a class presentation. The off-campus and on-campus activities are assignments required for the course. A full description of the assignments will be on the syllabus and distributed and discussed in class. At the end of the course, all participants will complete a posttest. The pretest and the posttests are online. The questions ask about your knowledge of cultural groups who are different from you. It is not graded. It is designed to compare your knowledge before participating in the course to your knowledge at the completion of the course.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts?**

This study poses no known risks to your health or safety and your name will not be associated with the findings. Students who are part of the experimental intervention will travel with other participants, a cultural guide and faculty. The research may involve risks that are currently unforeseeable.

**What if new information becomes available about the study?**

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.
What are the possible benefits of the study?

The purpose of this research is to explore an instructional method for teaching cultural competence. You may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

**Anticipated benefits to society.**

Since this research explores an instructional method for teaching cultural competence in social work, it is anticipated that findings can improve the way that cultural competence is taught in social work education programs. This study can add to empirical evidence to support teaching methods.

What other choices do I have if I do not participate?

The information in this consent form is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in this study. It is important that you understand that your participation is completely voluntary. This means that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time or to decline to participate in any portion of the study without penalty. If you withdraw from Eastern University or withdraw from the course, Social Work 110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction, you will be withdrawn from the study. Students who decide not to participate in the study may opt out and enroll in a section of SWK110: Human Diversity and Interaction that has been excluded from this research.

Will I be paid for being in this study?

You will not be compensated for your participation in the study.

Will I have to pay for anything?

You will not have to incur any expenses. Fees for group transportation and admission to the required historical site and/or cultural event will be covered.

What happens if I am injured from being in the study?

There are no foreseen risks of injury from being in this study. We will offer you the care needed to treat injuries directly resulting from taking part in this research. We may bill your insurance company or other third parties, if appropriate, for the costs of the care you get for the injury, but you may also be responsible for some of them.

There are no plans for the University of Pennsylvania to pay you or give you other compensation for the injury. You do not give up your legal rights by signing this form.

If you think you have been injured as a result of taking part in this research study, tell the person in charge of the research study as soon as possible. The researcher’s name and phone number are listed in the consent form.

When is the Study over? Can I leave the Study before it ends?

Your participation will take sixteen weeks. This study is expected to end by December 20, 2013, two days after final grades are due to the Registrar’s Office at Eastern University. By this date, all participants will have completed the required assignments and the posttest. It is important for you to understand that your
participation is completely voluntary. This means that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from Eastern University or withdraw from the course, SWK110: Human Diversity and Social Interaction, you will be withdrawn from the study.

Who can see or use my information? How will my personal information be protected?

The pretests and posttests will be online. In order to protect the anonymity of the student respondent, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) at Eastern University will be administering the pretests and posttests and will assign participants identifiers. OIR will assign each student a coded identifier that the student will use to access the consent form and the pretests and posttests. The researcher and instructor will not have access to student names; they will only have access to demographic information that is submitted by participants at the outset of the study. Student demographic information (sex, ethnicity/race, year in school, major or intended major) will be given to the researcher after final course grades are submitted to the Registrar’s Office at Eastern University.

Who can I call with questions, complaints or if I’m concerned about my rights as a research subject?

If you have questions, concerns or complaints regarding your participation in this research study or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you should speak with the Principal Investigator listed on page one of this form. If a member of the research team cannot be reached or you want to talk to someone other than those working on the study, you may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any question, concerns or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling (215) 898-2614.

When you click “Consent” below, you are agreeing to take part in this research study. This means that you have read the consent form, your questions have been answered, and you have decided to volunteer.

You may print a copy of this consent form. Keep it for your records.

I agree to participate in this study. **CONSENT**

I do not agree to participate in this study. **OPT OUT**
Appendix C

The Modified Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS)*

The Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS) is a 60-item survey designed by Michael D’Andrea, Judy Daniels, and Ronald Heck, all from the University of Hawaii. Respond to all 60 items on the scale, even if you are not working with clients or actively conducting groups. Base your response on what you think at this time. Try to assess yourself as honestly as possible rather than answering in the way you think would be desirable.

_The MAKSS is designed as a self-assessment of your multicultural counseling awareness, knowledge, and skills._

1. Culture is not external but is within the person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. One of the potential negative consequences about gaining information concerning specific cultures is that students might stereotype members of those cultural groups according to the information they have gained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. At this time in your life, how would you rate yourself in terms of understanding how your cultural background has influenced the way you think and act?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very limited</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. At this point in your life, how would you rate your understanding of the impact of the way you think and act when interacting with persons of different cultural backgrounds?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very limited</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. How would you react to the following statement? While social work enshrines the concepts of acceptance, self-determination, tolerance of new ideas, and equality, it has frequently become a form of oppression to subjugate large groups of people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. In general, how would you rate your level of awareness regarding different cultural institutions and systems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very limited</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. The human service professions, including social work, counseling and clinical psychology, have failed to meet the mental health needs of ethnic minorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
8. At the present time, how would you generally rate yourself in terms of being able to accurately compare your own cultural perspective with that of a person from another culture?

Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

9. How well do you think you could distinguish “scapegoating” from “projection” in a cross-cultural social work interaction?

Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

10. Ambiguity and stress often result from multicultural situations because people are not sure what to expect from each other.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

11. I understand the unique historical background of African Americans and Latinos regarding involuntary migration, segregation, and continued oppression.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

12. The criteria of self-awareness, self-fulfillment, and self-discovery are important measures in most social work / client-worker interactions sessions.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

13. Even in cross-cultural social work situations, basic implicit concepts, such as “fairness” and “health,” are not difficult to understand.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

14. Promoting a client’s sense of self-determination is usually a safe goal to strive for in most social work situations.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

15. While a person’s natural support system (i.e., family, friends, etc.) plays an important role during a period of personal crisis, formal counseling services tend to result in more constructive outcomes.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

16. How would you react to the following statement? In general, social services should be directed toward assisting clients to adjust to stressful environmental situations.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

17. Social workers need to change not just the content of what they think, but also the way they handle this content if they are to accurately account for the complexity in human behavior.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree
18. Psychological problems vary with the culture of the client.

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

19. I know the distinctions in Latino diversity pertaining to language, differences, immigration history and patterns, and traditional and intergenerational acculturation.

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

20. There are some basic helping skills that are applicable to create successful outcomes regardless of the client’s cultural background.

   Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

At the present time, how would you rate your own understanding of the following terms:

21. Culture
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

22. Ethnicity
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

23. Racism
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

24. Assimilation
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

25. Prejudice
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

26. Cultural Competency
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

27. Intersectionality
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

28. Justice
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

29. Hypothesis Testing
   
   Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good
30. Privilege

Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

31. Oppression

Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

32. Minority

Very limited  Limited  Good  Very good

33. What do you think of the following statements? Witch doctors and psychiatrists use similar techniques.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

34. Differential treatment in the provision of mental health services is not necessarily thought to be discriminatory.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

35. In the early grades of formal schooling in the United States, the academic achievement of such ethnic minorities as African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans is close to parity with the achievement of White mainstream students.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

36. Research indicates that in the early elementary school grades girls and boys achieve about equally in mathematics and science.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

37. Most of the immigrant and ethnic groups in Europe, Australia, and Canada face problems similar to those experienced by ethnic groups in the United States.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

38. In social work, clients from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds should be given the same treatment that White mainstream clients receive.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

39. The difficulty with the concept of “integration” is its implicit bias in favor of the dominant culture.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree

40. Racial and ethnic professionals are underrepresented in clinical and counseling psychology.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Agree  Strongly agree
41. How would you rate your ability to conduct an effective social work interview with a person from a cultural background significantly different from your own?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

42. How would you rate your ability to effectively assess the needs of a person from a cultural background significantly different from your own?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

43. How well would you rate your ability to distinguish “formal” and “informal” helping strategies?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

44. In general, how would you rate yourself in terms of being able to effectively deal with biases, discrimination, and prejudices directed at you by a client in a social work setting?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

45. How well would you rate your ability to accurately identify culturally biased assumptions as they relate to your professional training?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

46. How would you rate your ability to explain problem themes (racism, prejudice, discrimination) and expressions (oppression, powerlessness, stereotyping, and exploitation)?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

47. In general, how would you rate your ability to accurately articulate a client’s problem who comes from a cultural group significantly different from your own?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

48. How well would you rate your ability to analyze a culture into its component parts?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

49. How would you rate your ability to identify the strengths and weaknesses of psychological tests in terms of their use with persons from different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good

50. How well would you rate your ability to discuss the meaning of and the connection between empowerment and social and economic justice?

- Very limited
- Limited
- Good
- Very good
51. In general, how would you rate your skill level in terms of being able to provide appropriate social work services to culturally different clients?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

52. How would you rate your ability to effectively consult with another social work professional concerning the needs of a client whose cultural background is significantly different from your own?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

53. How well would you relate your ability to discuss the relationship between cultural diversity and social justice in terms of historical and ongoing oppression and privilege that different social identity groups experience in our society?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

54. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of women?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

55. How would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of men?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

56. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of older adults?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

57. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of gay men?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

58. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of gay women?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |

59. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess needs of handicapped persons?
   
   | Very limited | Limited Good | Very good |

60. How well would you rate your ability to accurately assess the needs of persons who come from very poor socioeconomic backgrounds?
   
   | Very limited | Limited | Good | Very good |
Appendix D

Post Immersion Discussion Guide (Questions and Prompts)

Students are participant observers in each activity. Students are encouraged to record their thoughts and feelings leading up to the immersion experience in a journal. Immediately following the group immersion activity, give students 3 - 5 minutes to freely record their thoughts and feelings about what they experienced. The free write is separate from the discussion questions (below). The purpose of the free write is to allow students to tune into their own thoughts and feelings and to articulate them in writing. This portion of the activity is to encourage self-awareness. Once the students have tuned into their own thoughts and feelings and articulated them in writing, the instructor or cultural guide will facilitate the group discussion.

1. What were your initial impressions upon arrival/involvement in this experience? How did/do these thoughts and feelings compare to your thoughts and feelings when you were anticipating the experience? (Awareness (self))
2. Identify two things that you learned about the cultural group as a result of this experience. (Awareness (self), Knowledge (awareness of other), Critical thinking Skill)
   a. (Public Activity) What are some culturally related behaviors that you noticed? How, if at all, do they differ from your own cultural behaviors in a similar setting?
   b. (Historical site/Cultural Museum) Are any of your new awarenesses related to understanding the historical oppression of this group? If so, how? How might those experiences relate to current experiences in society?
3. What strengths do you recognize in this community/cultural group? (Awareness, Knowledge, Critical thinking and Communication Skills)
   a. How are these manifested in community/cultural group interactions? (How are these strengths utilized to help sustain the community/cultural group)?
   b. How, if at all were, strengths used to help the cultural group to overcome past oppression?
Appendix E

Cross Cultural Immersion Journal Prompts

Instructions: Complete the following information in reference to the cultural/ethnic group you are researching.

Cultural Group:

My interest in exploring this group (why I chose this group):

My previous interactions with members of this group have been:

What I think I know about this group and the source(s) of this information:

Public Activity:

Location:

Date: Time (including length):

Pre-activity Feelings and Thoughts:

I am feeling:

I am thinking:

Public Activity Free Write (to be completed immediately following the event):

Reactions to discussion: What I learned about myself and others from the discussion:

Site Visit:

Location:

Date: Time: (including length):

Pre-activity Feelings and Thoughts:

I am feeling:

I am thinking:

Site Visit Free Write:

Reactions to discussion: What I learned about myself and others from the discussion:
Complete the following after all cross-cultural immersion experiences have been completed.

What I learned about myself and ________________cultural group from the cross cultural immersion experiences.

How I will use this knowledge in cross-cultural interactions:

Questions that remain for me: