A Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol: Petit Goâve, Haiti

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Abstract

In the human services professions, cultural immersion experiences help satisfy multicultural training standards established by national accreditation bodies. Immersion in a culturally sensitive manner is necessary as we prepare professionals to work with and serve citizens of the globe. The authors describe an international cultural immersion protocol with a semester-long course component, provide recommendations for curriculum developers who wish to establish similar programs, and summarize outcomes related to cultural awareness. Such information might aid other higher education programs aimed at developing similar protocols for their students.

Keywords: Cultural immersion; cultural competence; multicultural outreach programming; Haiti; mental health psychosocial support

Helping all students view themselves as multicultural beings involved in cross-cultural encounters facilitates the examination of unconscious biases and assumptions about other groups (Arredondo, 1994). Using immersion experiences to remove students from familiar relationships, environments, and behavior, as well as to encourage critical self-reflection, are prerequisites for reducing prejudice according to DeRicco and Sciarra (2005). Immersion in an unfamiliar environment produces discomfort, sparks learning in novel ways and assists the individual in highlighting and transcending potential biases (Miller, 1993; Streets, 2011a; Streets, 2011b). Moreover, Langley and Breese (2005) found that students' immersion experiences helped contradict stereotypes. In the human services field, encouraging immersion experiences helps to satisfy multicultural training standards established by national accreditation bodies. Burness (2009) suggests that such international experience, when it coincides with course work or major work, provides the most rigor and benefit. Salisbury (2012) maintains that in order to increase the impact of an experience abroad, we must introduce "more intentionally developed educational experiences prior to departure, throughout the experience abroad, and upon return" (p. 94). This article explores the suggestions mentioned above and describes the varied components of an immersion protocol that seeks to increase the multicultural competence of college students.

Overview of Cultural Immersion Programs

Canfield, Low, and Hovestadt (2009) define cultural immersion as an assignment that "places the student into a social environment in which the student has little or no prior familiarity" (p. 318). In their 12-year study, involving over 1,400 students, examining a variety of instructional formats for conducting cultural immersion assignments, they found that the immersion experience in general seems to "have a positive impact on learning with students reporting an increased level of cultural awareness and sensitivity as a result of the experience" (p. 321).

Immersion models that prepare students for work in an increasingly diverse world by supplementing their training in another country are well known in the field of health education (Jie, Andreatta, Liping & Sijian, 2010; Holmes, Zayas, & Koyfman, 2012; Levine & Perpetua, 2006; Mapp, McFarland, & Newell, 2007; Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010; Tremethick & Smit, 2009; Wood & Atkins, 2006). Likewise, counselor training programs have employed international immersion experiences as one component in the development of cultural competency in their students (Alexander, Kruczek & Ponterotto, 2005; Burnett, Hamel & Long, 2004; Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009; Cordero & Rodriguez, 2009; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005; Fawcett, Briggs, Maycock & Stine, 2010). Study abroad programs, too, have increasingly become interested in how international travel and immersion experiences impact students' global awareness and cross-cultural skills (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2001; Kitsantas, 2004). Study abroad programs, independent international study, mixed model programs, hybrid online partially immersed programs, and semester-at-sea programs are a small set of examples of what many universities call 'internationalizing' the campus. University efforts to internationalize their campuses through short-term study abroad programs are evidence of a broader conceptualization of international exchange programs.

The Association of Black Psychologists (ABPsi, 2003), Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009), American Psychological Association (APA, 2002), American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2010), American Counseling Association (ACA, 2014) and several professional organizations in the human services specifically encourage the development of knowledge, skills, and awareness that promote cultural sensitivity and cultural competency. Many cultural immersion experiences have, as their goals, the expansion of cultural competency by increasing awareness (Doyle, Helms & Westrup, 2004), empathy and sensitivity (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009) in working with persons and groups that significantly differ in some way from the counselor. At stake is the crafting of a cultural immersion experience in these human services programs that is additive to disaster-response recovery efforts, rather than subtractive.

The Haitian Context

In many ways, Haiti holds many titles of 'first' and 'only,' such as being the first nation to gain independence in Latin America (Dubois & Garrigus, 2006), the first Black Republic (Cook Ross, 2010; Dash, 1997; Fanning, 2007; Pierre-Louis, 2011; WHO, 2010), the only nation

in the West to defeat three European superpowers (Thomson, 2000) and the only nation created as a result of a slave revolt (Dubois & Garrigus, 2006; Palmie & Scarano, 2011). In fact, soon after independence in 1804, Haiti became an immigration destination for American free Blacks, "offering universal education, economic advancement, suffrage, religious freedom, and a society with a republican ideology" (Fanning, 2007, p. 62). As the first nation in the Americas to mandate universal education (Fanning, 2007), Haiti was a role model for early Black Nationalist thinkers. Haiti's early struggle for freedom, however, was not viewed through a kindred or sympathetic lens that mirrored the United States' independence from Britain; rather, it was politically viewed from the larger nation's vantage point as a loss of profit and power, and was seen as an excuse to advance a racist ideology that equated Black behavior with deviancy (Fanning, 2007; Hickey, 1982). This perspective of othering, and of the U.S. presuming to know what was best for Haiti was well established in American political history. This offensive historical mindset may explain certain attitudes toward Haiti today (Hickey, 1982).

Haiti's historical resilience and buoyancy are further eclipsed in the American mind by references to the 7.0 earthquake of 2010, which claimed the lives of 217,300 people and left 2.1 million people homeless (UNOCHA, 2015). A lack of support from governmental agencies can amplify the experience of a natural disaster, and according to Nicolas, Schwartz and Pierre (2010), the assessment and treatment of those impacted must take into account the response of the government or state. However, the 2010 earthquake impacted the nation's capital of Port-au-Prince, all three branches of government (Zanotti, 2010), and 17 of 18 ministries (Pierre-Louis, 2011), and killed over 16,000 civil service employees (Klarreich & Polman, 2012). The nation's capacity to respond was crippled.

Consequently, over 90 foreign nations and numerous agencies either pledged money or helped with recovery efforts. However, in some instances, this help may have either further traumatized persons or worsened an already dire and struggling situation (Dargis, 2014; Peck & Velvet Film GmbH, 2013). According to Klarreich and Polman (2012), "the recovery effort has been so poorly managed as to leave the country even weaker than before" (p. 12).

Reflective questions asked by Streets, Nicolas, and Wolford (2015) and raised in this description of our cultural immersion project seek to examine our role in Haiti with this historical, socio-cultural backdrop in mind. Our hope is that curriculum developers, international service providers, and foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will analyze and critique our cultural immersion protocol as they design international cultural immersion field experiences, outreach programs, or service learning activities in trauma-impacted communities.

Components of a Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol

The cultural immersion protocol presented in this paper includes:

(a) an intentional, structured, and sequenced offering of workshops, service learning, or humanitarian activities,

(b) based on interactions with individuals who differ in a substantial way from the student.

(c) both country national and visiting faculty, staff, and/or students participate in said activities, which
(d) take place within the geographical boundaries of the target country and (e) are guided by mutually beneficial goals,
(f) tied to a collaborative relationship with a non-governmental organization within the host country, and
(g) complimented by enrollment in a semester-long course related to the target country,
(h) for the purposes of increasing cultural competency in a trauma-impacted community.

The term 'country national' refers to a citizen of the host or target country. The protocol consists of the following components described below:

Chart 1
Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol

Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol	
Program Components	1. Pre-entry questions and self-reflection for human service providers 2. Course design tailored to specific country
Partnership & Collaboration	1. Faculty-focused pre-immersion trip with consultant to country 2. Pre-(pre) immersion activities, orientation 3. Rehearsal of immersion protocol 4. Consultant-guided, community-informed collaboration about workshops
Immersion Component	1. Daily schedule and workbook 2. Completion of workshops 3. Service to community 4. Tours
Program Evaluation	1. Program evaluation by students 2. Community feedback 3. Debriefing
Conclusions & Recommendations	1. Recommendations for future courses

Note: Arrow indicates that the completion of workshops, occurring by consultant-guided, community-informed collaboration was a dynamic, bi-directional process.

Pre-entry Questions and Reflection for Human Service Providers. Recognizing that unintentional errors occur even with the best of intentions, in our program, we reflected upon our motivations for wanting to assist in disaster recovery efforts in Haiti. Reflection occurred in structured meetings, guided discussions and in consultation with students, experts and colleagues. Of concern was how to interact with those in need without carrying the excess baggage of bias, racism, and ignorance. We were in absolute agreement that having experts in Haitian mental health and worldview as partners would not only be in our best interest, but in the best interest of those we were to assist.

Though outside the scope of this article, the rich discourse on poverty tourism and slum tourism (Frenzel, 2013; Frenzel Steinbrink & Koens, 2012; Outterson, Selinger & Whyte, 2011) deserves a few comments. Poverty tourism is defined as "cases in which financially privileged tourists visit impoverished communities for the purpose of witnessing poverty firsthand" (Outterson, Selinger & Whyte, 2011, page 39). During our reflections, poverty was never the object of our study, mission or course objectives and our roles were not as tourists. In a word search utilizing the terms 'slum tourism and cultural immersion or study abroad, poverty tourism and study abroad or cultural immersion,' within 58 databases including Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsychINFO and Sociology Research Database, no results were found. However, this does not mean that a critical examination of the additive/subtractive impact that study abroad or cultural immersion participants may have on communities is not warranted. It would be due diligence to explore questions emerging from the growing discipline of slum/poverty tourism onto the space utilized by and the identities of participants whose aim is cultural competence in international locations (many locations which lie in under-resourced or developing communities). The manuscript "Pause…Before Entering: Examining Motivations to Help in Trauma-Impacted Communities Internationally" (Streets, Nicolas, & Wolford, 2015) lists the set of questions we considered prior to immersion in a trauma-impacted community.

Course Designed with Objectives Tailored to the Specific Country. Many agencies, schools, and organizations who learned about the earthquake in Haiti wanted to offer some aid and in this vein, our college was similar. However, hesitant to tax the then-current infrastructure and resources, cautious about undermining the formal and informal support networks already in place, fearful of committing unintentional racism, and lacking native proficiency in Haitian Creole, we definitely felt the need for community collaborators and partners with expertise in Haitian culture and worldview as well as Haitian approaches to mental health. This philosophy of *do no harm*, coupled with the redesigning of a pre-existing course in trauma, guided our efforts. This redesigned course, developed in the spring and summer of 2010, Ethno-Cultural Aspects of Trauma: Focus on Haiti, met on weekends, a total of 37.5 hours throughout the Fall 2010 semester. The course, a part of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Certificate in Trauma Studies program at SUNY Oswego, promoted the following objectives:

- Training in culturally competent and language appropriate general educational service delivery and policy decisions regarding trauma-affected populations
- Increasing knowledge of racial and ethnic identity development
- Increasing awareness and sensitivity to different cultural groups
- Improving knowledge about the history of Haiti, including culture, language, politics, traditions, education system, spirituality and the Haitian worldview
- Identifying appropriate intervention skills used in counseling/mental health/psychology that are culturally relevant to individuals of Haitian descent
- Developing the knowledge, skills, and awareness to be multiculturally competent
- Analyzing personal biases

- Increasing knowledge about the concept of *trauma* as it applies to individuals of Haitian descent

The design and creation of the course was an active, collaborative, creative, and interdisciplinary endeavor. An interdisciplinary design model, as utilized by a number of flagship institutions (Lowe, Dozier, Hunt-Hurst & Smith, 2008), broadens the potential pool of students interested in the course. Thus, the course was cross-listed in two departments (Psychology, Counseling and Psychological Services) and offered to graduate and undergraduate sections from each department. The Psychology department at SUNY Oswego rests within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, while the Counseling and Psychological Services Department rests within the School of Education. We also attracted additional interest in the course from community professionals in the helping professions.

The first course was delivered in an urban satellite setting, about an hour's drive from the main campus. It was offered to a total of 18 students, mostly undergraduate. The main campus consists of a predominantly European American/Caucasian student body and its geographic classification is semi-rural. The university satellite center is located in a downtown, urban setting.

Like other models (Alexander, Kruczek & Ponterotto, 2005; Wood & Atkins, 2006), our curriculum infused country-specific information, including the health-related beliefs and values of the population with whom the students and faculty would be interacting. The course format included lecture, group exercises, group discussion, reflection papers, readings, videos, field trips, guest speakers, and the use of technology (for consulting and guest lecturing). The expertise of our consultants, including Dr. Marc Prou and Dr. Gerald Porter, who guest lectured, and Khalid Saleem, who facilitated drum classes in Petit Goâve, added value to the course and immersion protocol.

Evaluation components consisted of reflection papers, journaling, and class participation. A major assignment included the creation of a culturally relevant community workshop suitable for presentation in Haiti. The workshop requirements included the integration of language, history, culture and mental health strategies of Haitian Country nationals. Potential workshop topics included psycho-social assessments of anxiety, depression, grief, and attachment. A vital requirement was that the workshops address trauma-impacted populations and promote healing. It was noted, via consultations with our colleagues, that there is not a word for 'trauma' in the Haitian Creole language. Similarly, Carrilio and Mathiesen (2006), in their U.S.-Mexico, cross-border educational program, discussed an analogous issue when explaining the profession of 'social work,' which reportedly did not have a referent in Mexico.

At the conclusion of the course, eight students met the agreed-upon criteria (including self-reflection, self-awareness, maturity, commitment, and knowledge) for the optional immersion experience in Haiti. Of the eight students, two were of Afro-diasporic descent, one identified as Latina, five identified as European/Caucasian American, and only one was male.

Faculty-focused Pre-trip with Consultant. Prior to the conclusion of the course, and with substantial institutional support, all (four) of the course instructors took a brief trip to Haiti

in early November 2010, guided by our primary consultant who also served as course co-instructor. This pre-trip occurred two months prior to the planned immersion trip with the college students. The trip was vital to enhancing faculty training and development and to connecting with community liaisons in Haiti. Furthermore, this faculty-focused pre-trip with the consultant was important for the following additional reasons:

1. ***Experience in the country***. According to Doyle, Helms and Westrup (2004), faculty members also benefit from international exposure. Of the four course instructors, all had international exposure, but only one (our consultant) had ever been to Haiti.
2. ***Mental preparedness***. According to Cordero and Rodriguez (2009), faculty should be prepared to effectively manage student biases and *'isms*, some of which will unfold on an immersion experience. However, it is difficult to process one's reactions to a new experience while simultaneously helping students process their reactions to novel stimuli. Thus, the faculty who had never visited Haiti went first, which helped them process reactions to visual information, buffer a first experience in a new country, and unpack implicit preconceptions.
3. ***Accurate information***. The pre-trip allowed the faculty to provide first-hand and accurate information to students and the Office of International Education and Programs about what to expect on a first trip to the country.
4. ***Safety analysis***. As in many study abroad programs, safety was a priority (Johns & Thompson, 2010). Prou and Okeefe (2005) discuss issues of risk, responsibility, and accountability when taking students abroad to Caribbean countries. Most study abroad programs or cultural immersion courses have a U.S. Department of State green light to visit. At the time of our faculty-only pre-trip, concerns about cholera, political instability, and crime continued to proliferate the news, and consequently, the minds of students and their loved ones. Simultaneous university and parental concerns about liability and needs to ensure safety were high. Financial support provided to the teaching faculty to have a pre-trip experiences allowed first-hand evaluation of our intended worksite, security measures, and transportation as well as the process of entry into and exit from the country. Importantly, it also allowed our in-country community liaisons to become acquainted with us and reaffirm our mutual goals and objectives.
5. ***Accommodations analysis***. A quick review of travel into, out of, and inside the country helped inform the needs we had as well as examine how and what could be done to accommodate student needs. At the time of our immersion, federal regulations regarding accommodations for students with disabilities did not include extraterritorial applications for a study abroad experience, but our Haitian colleagues were as invested in our success as we were in theirs. Thus, between the time of our pre-trip in early November and the time our students arrived in early January, a ramp was created by country nationals to facilitate mobility, thus ensuring accessibility at the housing site for all of our students.

6. ***Community needs assessment***. During the pre-trip, we observed the community library lacked books and needed painting. Students thus arranged to donate books or paint the library as part of a service component in their experience. Additionally, the topics our students originally chose as workshops were changed to meet the community's specific requests. The community wanted workshops in meditation, leadership, technology, English, dance, drums, coping resources, and general information about mental health.
7. ***Grounds Inspection/change of location***. Lowe et al. (2008) and Streets (2011a) discuss the challenges and rewards of attracting students to emerging countries for the purpose of increasing global awareness. One challenge was changing the worksite. Our original location for the immersion experience was intended to be Cap-Haïtien, Haiti. However, due to the political climate, rapidly changing community needs, professional readiness of the students, and concerns about safety and risk factors, especially regarding a recent eruption of cholera in the area, we began to look at alternative locations. Dr. Guerda Nicolas, a co-author on this paper, recommended the relocation of our program from Cap-Haïtien to Petit Goâve, Haiti.

Pre-immersion Activities, Orientation, and Immersion Protocol. The optional pre-immersion component and cultural immersion experience drew heavily from the expertise of our primary consultant for the project, Dr. Nicolas. The University of Miami offered the support and venue for our pre-immersion experience in Miami, Florida. A pre-immersion experience is important because it allows students and faculty to rehearse delivery of the workshops to Haitian experts and to expose students to cultural aspects somewhat similar to Haiti. The pre-immersion activities included a historical tour of Miami's Little Haiti, a visit to Halouba Botanica (a space where religious ceremonies are conducted and healing paraphernalia are purchased), a sampling of Haitian cuisine, and a guided tour of the Little Haiti Cultural Complex (LHCC). The LHCC provides visual and performing arts events, classes, art gallery exhibits, and educational information about Haitian culture. Pre-immersion experiences cannot possibly capture all aspects of what students might experience in a host country, but exposure to the Little Haiti community served as a limited precursor and kinesthetic introduction to some aspects of Haitian culture (food, art, history, community members, religious practices).

Johns and Thompson (2010) discussed how their nursing students in Guatemala witnessed the power of 'Soul Clinics,' (spaces where intense prayer precedes a visit to a health care provider) which demonstrated the intersectionality of emotional and spiritual health. We introduced students to the dynamics of Haitian spirituality in the course, and by visiting a place of worship that respected the practice of Vodun during the pre-immersion experience in Miami. We respected students' preferences to not enter the sanctuary if it conflicted with their notions of spirituality. [In future trips, it could be a learning opportunity to write about what the challenges are to stepping into such a place of worship and what beliefs prevent a silent observation of the temple and practices].

Rehearsal of Immersion Protocol. Our immersion protocol included continued work at the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies of the University of Miami, the home base for our primary consultant. Our students and faculty reviewed cultural information about Haiti and rehearsed and edited the community workshops we had created. Because the audience that listened to the workshops included researchers of Haitian descent, we were able to alter and tweak language that might offend or would otherwise not be appropriate. Additionally, the translators who would accompany us on the trip had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the content of the workshop material that would be presented. After two-and-a-half days in Miami, the eight students, four professors, one additional consultant from SUNY Brockport, and two translators travelled to Petit Goâve, Haiti, a rural city about two-and-one-half hours southwest of Port-au-Prince. This pre-immersion experience allowed facilitators to further refine our work and prepare for the single-location, short-term immersion experience in Haiti.

Consultant-guided, Community-informed Collaboration. Collaborative relationships matter for the success of the experience (Johns & Thompson, 2010; Carrilio & Mathiesen, 2006). It is normal for course faculty to partner with other organizations and institutions when cultural immersion work opportunities in the target country or the expertise of the teaching faculty for a particular country are limited. Cultural competency assumes openness to the knowledge and power of persons from the community and respect for community-centered needs and values. In U.S. culture, where 'self-expertness' is highly esteemed, transitioning to consultant-guided, community-informed collaboration is an ongoing and humbling process. Simply securing a community consultant is not sufficient. Trusting, hearing, and processing the advice of the consultant at all phases of the project is easy when tasks are simple; more difficult when outsiders' values and beliefs are opposite to the consultants' perspective. Processing critical incidents and debriefing are essential in a progression toward cultural competency.

Community psychologists understand the importance of reciprocal relationships with community members. Educational institutions encourage connections to the community to support civic engagement, global awareness, and service learning. Additionally, community-based immersion activities have been demonstrated to promote compassion in students (Plante, Lackey & Jeong Yeon, 2009). To this end, we worked with Dr. Nicolas from the University of Miami; Mr. Abner Septembre, community liaison, activist, and Coordonnateur Exécutif for the Haitian non-governmental organization (NGO) Association des Paysans de Vallue (APV); and Mr. Stanly Vivalese, a project coordinator. Working with consultants who have direct ties with country national NGOs is beneficial for the following reasons: it supports linkages already existent in the community, and it supports meeting the needs of the community from an informed perspective. Strict measures exist to be a legitimate Haitian NGO, which includes the following three criteria: founding papers for the organization are established in Haiti; the central office is located in Haiti, and at least two-thirds of the board members are Haitian citizens (Schuller, 2009). Mr. Septembre hosted us at the Hotel Villa Ban-Yen, a location noted for hosting conferences and weddings. APV was a non-denominational Haitian NGO, and its community work was not tied to a religious mission. Dr. Nicolas assisted with trip logistics, helped procure

additional consultants, and arranged for bilingual translators. To ease faculty and student transition to the community and its members, Mr. Vivalese provided multiple sessions of a Haitian Creole language class. All students' and faculty's ability to speak and adequately pronounce basic greetings in Creole greatly improved. The expert and local knowledge our consultant partners provided enhanced the experience and understanding of both faculty and students.

Because only a limited number of professionals are credentialed to provide mental health counseling to Haitian Nationals, (Nicolas, personal communication, Feb. 25, 2011), we sought input from community leaders and our cooperating Haitian National non-governmental organization, APV, about what was needed regarding mental health. Although we found out that "counseling as an independent discipline is not currently a part of the emerging formal mental health system in Haiti" (Nicolas, Jean-Jacques, & Wheatley, 2012, p. 510), we did execute community informed workshops that provided psychoeducational material to support emotional health, community cohesiveness, wellness and healing.

Workshops suggested by Mr. Septembre were informed by the needs of the community based on the impact of the earthquake, history of prior contact with foreigners, and the mission of APV. In collaboration with our consultant, we decided that the following workshops would be appreciated and welcomed by the community: Coping Resources (with a focus on children); Dance Wellness; Drumming; Health/Mental Health; Leadership; Technology; and Relaxation and Meditation. Though relaxation and meditation are western-based practices, James, Noel, Favorite and Jean (2012) explain how, "if an intervention is culturally sensitive and compatible, participants can maintain and benefit from evidence–informed Western psychological *and* local explanatory models and coping mechanisms simultaneously" (p. 114). Consultant-guided, community-informed collaboration ensured a strong measure of local accountability and a needs driven agenda, which according to Zanotti (2010) are markers of a program likely to have long-term positive effects on the community.

Daily Schedule and Workbooks. Cultural immersion faculty and students were provided a daily schedule (see below) and workbook. The workbook included the pre-trip report (Streets, Brooks, Wolford & Nicolas, 2010) provided to the Office of International Education and Other Programs, the itinerary for the pre-immersion experience in Miami, pre-trip briefing notes, notes from the pre-departure meeting, faculty roles, student roles, emergency plan, in-flight tips, to-do lists, survival Creole (provided by Freeman, 2002), Haitian Creole for Health Care (provided by Prou & Schorin, 2007) and blank pages for notes and journal reflections. Finally, the workbook also contained the Global Assessment of Relational Functioning Scale by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1996).

Table 1

Overview of Daily Schedule for Cultural Immersion Experience in Petit Goâve, Haiti (2011)

Date **Time**	**Thursday** **6 Jan**	**Friday** **7 Jan**	**Saturday** **8 Jan**	**Sunday** **9 Jan**	**Monday** **10 Jan**
8 – 9 am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9 – 11 am	Travel Day	Creole Practice	Cultural Day (Petit Goâve)	Worship/Church	Creole Practice
				Visit Leoganes[b]	Cultural Exchange[c]
11:30 - 1 pm	Settle into Accommodations	Ice Breaker English/Creole Language Exchange	Haitian Worldview[a]		Cultural Exchange[c]
1 – 2 pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
2 – 4 pm	Tour of Neighborhood/ Community	Community Workshop; Health / Mental Health Workshop; Drumming	Workshop; Drumming	Workshop; Drumming; Workshop; Leadership Development	Community Workshop; Coping Resources Workshop; Drumming
4 - 5:30 pm	Presentation by Mr. Abner Septembre (APV)	Workshop: Dance & Wellness; Workshop: Technology	Workshop: Dance & Wellness; Workshop: Technology	Workshop: Dance & Wellness; Workshop: Technology	Workshop: Dance & Wellness; Workshop: Technology; Painting Library
6:00 PM	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
7:30 PM		Group Processing	Group Processing	Group Processing	Group Processing
Evening		Students Plan Events		Students Plan Events	Students Plan Events

Table 1 continued

Date	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
	11 Jan	**12 Jan**	**13 Jan**	**14 Jan**
Time				
8 – 9 am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9 – 11 am	Creole Practice	Day of Remembrance	Creole Practice	Travel Day
	Market			
11:30 – 1 pm	Ice Breaker English/Creole Language Exchange		Evaluations	

Date **Time**	**Tuesday** **11 Jan**	**Wednesday** **12 Jan**	**Thursday** **13 Jan**	**Friday** **14 Jan**
1 – 2 pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
2 – 4 pm	Community Workshop; Relaxation & Meditation Workshop; Leadership Development Workshop; Drumming		Community Workshop; Consolidation of Gains; Certificates; Celebration; Dance Performance	
4 - 5:30 pm	Workshop: Dance & Wellness; Workshop: Technology	Workshop: Dance & Wellness; Workshop: Technology		
6:00 PM	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
7:30 PM	Group Processing	Group Processing	Group Processing	
Evening				

Note. (a) A discussion of Haitian history, culture; (b) A visit to Leoganes, an area impacted by the earthquake; c. May include museums, ceremonies, service to community.

Service to Community. The course included a service-learning component in which students accomplished objectives related to the needs of the local Haitian Non-Governmental Organization, APV (Association des Paysans de Vallue). Service learning connects course and textbook material to real-world experiences (Lowe et al., 2008). The local community of 117,504 individuals incurred 15 percent destruction as a result of the earthquake (Raviola, Severe, Therosme, Oswald, Belkin & Eustache, 2013). Friends of Petit-Goâve, a Haitian-American organization, arrived early (Jan. 29, 2010) to assist Petit-Goâviens with emergency aid (David, 2011). According to the U.S. Association for International Migration (2015), the Regional Office of the Ministry for Public Works, Transportation, and Communication building was entirely destroyed, and many churches, the hospital, and some schools were partially or completely destroyed (David, 2011), including the town public library (GreenMyParents, 2010; Kniffel, 2012). To address these specific needs, students assisted community members in the construction of a memorial dedicated to the memory of those lost in the Jan. 12, 2010, earthquake. The memorial strengthened community cohesion and provided an opportunity to plan for the future. Resulting from this service, students noted respect for the Haitian values of hard work, community, and desire for education. Students provided materials (age-appropriate toys, games and manipulatives) and resources for a children's play day. Additionally, students painted the school library, brought educational supplies, and donated books to the library. Students obtained

web resources that offered books and dolls that reflected and affirmed the culture and heritage of Haitian Nationals. Students had brief experiences with farming activities; they observed the planting process and learned about local horticulture.

Tours. Students toured a nearby high school, listened to a local community leader speak about the history of the community, rested at a local beach, and visited the community marketplace and the local radio station.

Evaluation of Program and Outcomes. While short-term (one to six weeks) study abroad programs are not sufficient for linguistic and cultural proficiency (Davison, 2007), they are popular (Holmes, Zayas, & Koyfman, 2012; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Lowe et al., 2008). Sixty percent of U.S. students who studied abroad in the 2012-2013 academic year stayed short-term, defined as a summer or eight weeks or less (Open Doors, 2014). Engle and Engle (2003) argue for a classification system of study abroad programs in which foreign language competence is a goal. They propose five levels, with level one being a 'study tour' and level five being a 'cross-cultural immersion program.' Foreign language competence was not a realistic goal for our program; however, movement toward cultural competency for future human service providers was. We consider our program a cultural competence-focused immersion protocol for future human service providers due to the eight components discussed in the section entitled Components of a Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol. This list is not exhaustive and may be modified based on the needs of the host/home country participants. Future studies examining the impact of a semester-long course combined with a short-term study abroad program in the helping professions where cultural competency (as discussed and defined in our Trauma Certificate course objectives, including an examination of unconscious bias and ability to provide culturally appropriate interventions) is the priority are needed.

Our eight students were asked to complete a brief survey at the conclusion of the experience based on questions generated from the primary course objectives (see **Table 2**). Students were asked to rate responses on a scale ranging from *Definitely False*, *Mostly False*, *Mostly True*, to *Definitely True*. While we lacked a control group, had a small sample size, and our results may not be generalizable, our student evaluations reflect an increased awareness of Haitian culture, the Haitian worldview, personal biases, and how the media constructs information about Haiti.

Table 2

Survey Questions and Responses by Cultural Immersion Students

Question #	**Survey Question**	**Total Number of Students Responding**	**Number Responding Mostly True or Definitely True**
Question 1	My awareness of implicit cultural assumptions in counseling or mental health has increased.	7	7
Question 2	I have developed an increased awareness and sensitivity to different cultural groups.	7	7
Question 3	I have an increased appreciation of the complexity both within and across diverse	7	7

	cultural groups in American culture.		
Question 4	I have an increased appreciation of the complexity both within and across diverse cultural groups in Haitian culture.	7	7
Question 5	My knowledge of Haiti has increased significantly.	7	7
Question 6	I have a deeper understanding of the Haitian worldview.	7	7
Question 7	I have a better idea of appropriate intervention skills to use in counseling/mental health/psychology that are culturally relevant to individuals of Haitian descent.	8	7
Question 8	I have an increased understanding of multicultural counseling competencies.	8	7
Question 9	I have an increased understanding of my own racial/ethnic identity development.	7	7
Question 10	I am more reflective of my own socialization process.	7	7
Question 11	I am more aware of my own biases.	7	7
Question 12	I have an increased awareness of how media constructs information about/portrays information about Haiti.	7	7

Community Feedback. Over 200 Petit Goâve community members of all ages participated in the seven workshops offered by our students. Community feedback reflected a genuine appreciation for all workshops and appreciation for the decision to increase the duration and frequency of specific workshops. Of the 36 community evaluations returned, results reflected strong interest in culturally congruent healing practices such as the workshop in African Dance and Drum. African Dance and Drum fits the healing worldview of Haitian Nationals, is a way to support the mental and emotional health of the community (Gray, 2010; Streets, 2011a), and emphasizes the integration of local cultural traditions (IASC, 2007; Wessells, & van Ommeren, 2008).

Community evaluations also reflected a strong interest in continued workshops in English, Technology, and Computing. These findings are similar to those of the Carrilio and Mathiesen (2006) cross-border educational experience, where Mexican nationals displayed an interest in learning and practicing English and meeting with same-aged peers in a technological environment. In our study, most participants arrived early to be in the workshops and remained late, an ethic reflecting the high esteem placed on education. The workshops were considered a success due to the match between the APV goals and the course objectives. All participants received certificates of attendance for their workshop participation. This celebratory event, held on the last night of the immersion, was replete with refreshments, Haitian music, dancing, and statements expressing community and student appreciation for the workshops and opportunities for connection.

A sustained community partnership with our students, faculty, staff and APV is ideal. Our students connected with the community members, and their activities contributed to the goals of education and health promotion for the community. Furthermore, upon return to the U.S., and in multiple news interviews with the media (SUNY Oswego, 2010a; SUNY Oswego, 2010b; WSYR, 2011 [radio]; YNN, 2011[cable news]), our students consistently expressed a deep appreciation of the resiliencies of Haitian Nationals.

Debriefing. Kimmel and Seifert (2009) and Razack (2002) maintain that simply having an immersion experience is not enough; we must engage students in critical reflection and dialogue about the experience for deep change to occur. To deepen students' understanding of their immersion experience, we debriefed, a practice also encouraged by Plante, Lackey and Jeong Yeon (2009). Debriefing occurred twice, during the immersion experience and at the conclusion of the immersion experience. Faculty encouraged deeper learning of the experience by asking open-ended questions during the tail-end of many nighttime dinners in Haiti. Such questions included *What stood out for you today?* or *What surprised you today?* Another debriefing took place two weeks after returning from Haiti, and again one year later. Students processed individual and collective experiences. Students were also invited to join in interviews with local and regional media outlets, including printed and visual news programs, and to join or support the faculty in giving presentations about the trip to the campus community (Brooks, Streets, Wolford & Nicolas, 2010; Brooks, Wolford & Streets, 2011; Streets, Brooks, & Wolford, 2011; Streets, Brooks, Wolford & Nicolas, 2011). Furthermore, students were encouraged to participate as guest speakers in subsequent offerings of the class which would provide opportunities for deeper reflection. Faculty debriefed each other and with the primary consultant several times after the conclusion of the trip.

Debriefing themes included student values, target-country cultural values, and restraints dictated by the brevity of the experience. Debriefing allowed for richer analysis of personal and collective experiences. For example, some students wanted more 'down time' during the trip. Needing unstructured time is very understandable as students are saturated with novel material to process on cognitive, emotional, and physical levels. Also, the Olympian work ethic modeled and observed in many Haitian Nationals struck several of us at such deep levels that uncomfortable self-comparisons were felt. These needs and observations rubbed against the constraints of the program that only lent us eight days to provide workshops and accomplish mutual objectives and expectations. Dealing with anxiety was another reoccurring debriefing theme. Due to the time of year we executed the immersion program (which corresponded, in Haiti, with presidential elections, the anniversary of the quake, and reported outbreaks of cholera) and the novelty of the geographical environment, anxiety for some students was compounded by unpredictable and unexpected family news back home (illness of members) or the inability to speak to loved ones with desired frequency due to technological glitches or satellite unavailability. Multitasking is a cultural value of youth in the U.S. As a reflection of the U.S.'s value of productivity, it was a reoccurring theme that was discussed. For example,

resisting the urge to use technology while at the dinner table conflicted with optimizing infrequent internet access, as opposed to tending to important home-country responsibilities.

Faculty debriefing included the importance of astutely assessing student developmental needs and perspectives versus compromising or tailoring program changes based on a student-as-customer service framework (for example, some students requested an itemized list of expenses or compared our program with European ones; while there are many ways to unpack the meaning and intent of such a request, we as faculty grappled with and had mixed reactions to it). University values may at times reflect overarching societal values. Thus, in a consumer-driven market economy, the disposition of keeping clients/customers/students happy is a natural cultural site of contest, one that cannot be allowed to trump the inherent challenges, uncertainties, or discomforts that are a part of international study or a cultural immersion experience if that experience is to be successfully meaningful for all involved. Faculty must be clear about their roles as Engle and Engle (2003) aptly stated: "We in this field are educators, not service providers" (p. 5). And faculty must be clear about their intentions, again as Engle and Engle (2003) memorably argue, because "treating students as paying customers with needs is to deprive them of unfamiliarity and ambiguity, the troubling interaction with which is the heart of the successful sojourn" (p. 6).

Debriefing also included examining how cultural values such as individualism, privacy and self-reliance may rub against the more communal values of the host country. In essence, unpacking and carefully examining the cultural and personal values each participant brings from the U.S. to the in-country site (Haiti), and the impact of these values on the group, the course objectives, and the in-country community (Petit Goâve), are important components of debriefing. Debriefing required a constant analysis and reflection on the emotional work, maturity, humility and responsibility required to immerse oneself in another culture. This analysis is reflected in the Myers, Hill & Harwood (2005) immersion program, where students were expected to adopt a 'code of conduct' that reflected "the local culture rather than their North American culture" (p. 175). Finally, our students used the immersion experience to acknowledge, examine, and address their fundamental assumptions about Haitian nationals, which was partially informed by U.S. media.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following list provides recommendations for future courses that aim to provide an ethno-cultural immersion component in trauma-impacted communities:

- Reduce the subtractive impact humanitarian aid might have. We did not want our presence to be an additional burden on the community or its resources. Thus, the number of students taken (eight), plus the number of professors (four) provided a balance so that electricity, water, food and other resources were not compromised.
- Screen students carefully.

- Connect course objectives with national, state, university, and division objectives. For example, this course complimented our University Sesquicentennial goals and our School of Education division goals.
- Include high-impact educational practices and deep approaches to learning, as advocated by Kuh (2008), all of which are included in this immersion protocol. For example, our course:
    - integrates ideas or information from various sources
    - includes diverse perspectives (and self-reflection) in class discussions, activities, and writing assignments
    - blends ideas from several courses: cultural competence courses, racial-identity courses, as well as history, religion, language courses, etc.
    - provides the means for student-faculty discussion on the experience outside of class
    - requires students to analyze the basic assumptions they had about the Haitian culture and to question these assumptions
    - requires students to organize and synthesize information in a particular aspect of mental health and trauma in the context of culturally appropriate healing practices
    - requires that students make critical judgments about the value and source of information
    - requires that students apply theories / knowledge to practical problems in a new situation
    - asks students to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their views
    - asks students to better understand someone else's views
    - helps students learn something that helped them think differently about how they understand Haiti and its people (Kuh, 2008, p. 23)
- Ask country nationals to provide formal workshops to students. Doerr (2013) provides a unique critique of the ways in which the discourse of cultural immersion creates unintended reversals of power between home and host country nationals. One way to address an issue embedded in the current practice of immersion is by encouraging country nationals to provide workshops or seminars to foreigners so that formalized learning-by-doing activities are reciprocal.
- Offer course credit for the in-country immersion component of the experience.
- Create a cultural immersion portfolio. Alexander, Kruczek & Ponterotto (2005) had an impressive evaluation protocol that included a multicultural counseling portfolio as part of their international cultural immersion field experience. Though our program was not focused on using counseling skills with the host country nationals, the use of elements such as a portfolio might be amended for future programs.
- Incorporate Haitian Nationals who are on a study abroad in the U.S. as part of the course. According to CSIET (2013), there are thousands more students who come to

the U.S. for study abroad experience than there are U.S. students who go abroad. An area of continued examination would be factors that contribute to the cultural competency experiences of foreign student nationals immersed in U.S. culture.

Cultural immersion is an intentional opportunity to liberate one's self from socialized bias by examining one lens of truth through the worldview of the country national; a perspective often missing in our educational system. Our model provides an example of how universities are involved in efforts to internationalize the campus and course curriculum. Today's study abroad students will benefit from immersive exposure to fluid conditions that impact global populations and be better prepared for future roles in psychology and other related professions. Curriculum developers, in collaboration with country national experts, must consider how to position and craft their course design so as to provide mutually rewarding country national and foreign national multicultural experiences: Experiences that promote humanitarian dispositions and that contribute to the uncovering, appreciating, and honoring of the perspective of another.

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