


8-23-2017

## Building Multicultural Competency through Direct Experiential Contact: An Immersive Case Study Experience

Michael Baltimore

Columbus State University, [baltimore\\_michael@columbusstate.edu](mailto:baltimore_michael@columbusstate.edu)

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### Recommended Citation

Baltimore, M. (2017). Building Multicultural Competency through Direct Experiential Contact: An Immersive Case Study Experience. *Perspectives In Learning*, 16 (1). Retrieved from <http://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/pil/vol16/iss1/6>

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## **Building Multicultural Competency through Direct Experiential Contact: An Immersive Case Study Experience**

**Michael Baltimore**  
*Columbus State University*

**Jadde Barnes, Tyler Brown, Janae' Carey, Tabria Jackson,  
Kevin White, and Lecia Wright**  
*Columbus State University*

### **Abstract**

As American society becomes more diverse, counselor training programs have the responsibility for instilling multicultural competencies for counselors-in-training. Teaching multicultural competency is a requirement in professional counseling training programs through graduate level courses with the content infused throughout the program. In this case study approach, students were asked to immerse themselves within a different culture in order to become more aware of their own cultural values, become aware of other cultures, and learn appropriate relationship skills necessary for building helping relationships. Resulting writing and presentations show an increase in awareness, knowledge, and skill for students. Recommendations for including an immersive experience in another culture for counseling programs are suggested.

Our American society is becoming more multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural than any other time in its history and can be expected to be even more so in the future. (Holcomb-McCoy & Myers, 1999). In the professional counseling discipline, the multicultural counseling movement is presented as a revolutionary force that has taken center stage in the counseling profession (Cartwright, Daniels, & Zhang, 2008). To that end, Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) note that counselor educators must train beginning counselors to become what is now called "multicultural competent counselors". The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP] (1994, 2016) define multicultural competent counselors as "professionals who possess the necessary

skills to work effectively with clients from various cultural/ethnic backgrounds". Further, a set of multicultural competencies developed through a division of the American Counseling Association, the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) and authored by Arredondo et al. (1996) provides specific (operationalized) behavioral expectations. These expectations are characterized as: (1) the counselor's awareness of their own cultural values and biases; (2) the counselor's awareness of the other's worldview; and (3) skills to counsel those from another culture.

It is the responsibility of counselor education programs to provide training and experiences that lead them to competence in this area. As a result, counselor education programs include at least one course that

## BUILDING MULTICULTURAL

focus on building competencies for graduate students. Accredited counseling programs must also demonstrate how multicultural competences are shown in learning objectives throughout the counseling curriculum.

While working effectively with diverse clients is infused throughout counselor training programs, building competency is not always an easy or straight forward task (McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2012). The term "acculturation" is often used within the counseling discipline to indicate continuous first-hand contact resulting in sequent changes (Pope-Davis, 2003). This term applies to society in general, but also in the training environment. First hand contact results in both personal and professional insight. Due to the personal nature of the content contained within multicultural courses, reflection and self-evaluation are necessary to compare one's own perceptions with the accepted competencies. Instructors must be cognizant of the sensitivity and personal reflection that is involved during diversity training. Providing a safe learning environment that challenges the student to meet new expectations is paramount. The purpose of this study was to show that immersive multicultural experiences in a new environment aid in the learning process for counselors-in-training toward becoming multicultural competent professionals.

### **Counseling the Culturally Diverse Course**

A course within the professional counselor education program at the university required by all counseling students, including the school and clinical mental health programs, was used to examine the experiences during an immersive course requirement. Six master's degree students (i.e., 3 males and 3 females) were enrolled in the course. Students were completing their first year in the 2-year program. The course

eight objectives asked the student to develop a personal approach to multicultural counseling. A cultural perspectives project, as one of the course requirements, asked each student to participate in a cross-cultural experience and write and present a brief description of the experience presenting their experience in class. The assignment also stated that creativity be encouraged. Specific components of the paper and presentation should address: (a) the student rationale for choosing the experience, (b) a summary of literature and resources used in preparation for the experience, (c) a description of a minimum of seven assumptions during the writing of the process paper, (d) a brief narrative of the experience, and (e) a reflection on how the experience has impacted the student personally and professionally. Students were required to plan and implement the cultural experience in line with the following suggestion on the syllabus:

*Some students have chosen religious services, homeless shelters, food kitchens, ethnic festivals, aging facilities, and interviews, as well as a variety of other experiences.*

This cultural experience and self-reflection of the experience demonstrates a willingness for graduate level counseling students to address course objectives regarding personal and professional growth. Expectations for this immersive approach are listed in Table 1.

Once the experience was completed, students were then required to write an APA-style paper on the experience and prepare an in-depth class presentation to share their experiences. These experiences created a case study approach to training in multicultural competence.

Table 1

*Guidelines for Student Paper and Group Presentations*

Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clearly outline major issues, values, and culturally normative behavior patterns for this group;</li> <li>• indicate how these issues, values, and culturally normative behavior patterns may be relevant in counseling settings;</li> <li>• "humanize" the group by providing rationales for social and behavioral themes through convergent exploration. Do not just present what the group looks like from the outside (e.g. shared values or customs), but also highlight how it feels from the inside (e.g. emotional value of customs);</li> <li>• recognize variations, confounds, and the origins of the expression of diversity and functional fixedness within the group; rather than assuming cultural generalities and only highlighting universal themes and shared realities.</li> </ul>

**Case Study Approach**

This case study approach was used to teach beginning counselors the necessity of immersing one's self in the environment of a culturally diverse population, evaluating and reflecting on their personal and professional insights, and sharing the experience. Six graduate counseling students described their unique experience and reflect on the learning process. Students reported the cultural immersive experience in a Ramadan Celebration, an LGBT Church, a Mexican 4th of July Celebration, a Nursing Home, Cultural Las Vegas, and an A.M.E. Church. Students reflected on the experience in the following way.

**Unique Cultural Experience #1**

**Eid Al-Fitr is the last day of Ramadan.** On Wednesday, July 6th, I drove to Atlanta to meet two of my former students who would guide me through my experience, Abdul-Aziz and Abdul Majeed. Aziz is 20, and Majeed is 19, and both have a great love for the United States and hope to stay once they finish their studies. When I arrived, they greeted me, but told me that though my clothes were very nice. They were too dark to celebrate such a happy day. I typically wear greys and blacks for special occasions, as is often typical in the United States, but they felt I needed something brighter. So, Aziz gave me a traditional white thawb typically worn by Saudi men. There was not much to distinguish it from other thawbs other than the Dolce and Gabbana label, which I felt made me seem a bit more important than I was.

After this, we had dinner with their uncle and his family (his wife and 5 children). We had a traditional dish called Kabsa. During the meal we discussed what the celebration meant to them, and the importance of Ramadan for Muslims, as well as the current political climate in the United States and the attitudes toward Muslims. There was also some talk of how I needed to wear a special perfume before attending the celebration as it would probably help me find a nice Muslim wife. This became a running theme throughout the experience. Many that I met felt I was perhaps too old not to be married, and that a nice Muslim wife would surely convince me of the love and grace of Allah. It was almost like having an army of grandmothers attempting to set me up.

After the dinner, they asked me to join them in a prayer, and we then set out to perform acts of charity before heading to the mosque to join the community. The acts of charity consisted mainly of provided food and clothing to some of those in one of the

## BUILDING MULTICULTURAL

more impoverished areas of Atlanta. I helped them hand out bundles of rice and dates, and several shirts to some of the homeless in the area.

When we reached the celebration, I was honestly overwhelmed. There were so many people wearing so many colors. It was almost like a carnival, though not as bombastic. There was general mingling and sharing of gifts to children, and I was introduced to more people than I can remember. Being an atheist, this sort of religious setting was a bit uncomfortable to me, but they were all welcoming, and I quickly relaxed. As non-Muslims are not allowed in the prayer service, I waited outside until it was finished. There was a bit more mingling before we returned to the home of my guides' uncle where we celebrated with music and fireworks, which I am told is custom in Saudi Arabia.

**Reflection.** I was deeply moved by my experience. Not being a religious person, I was quite uncomfortable with the idea of being an outsider, and I experienced a great deal of anxiety at first. However, I found myself welcomed with open arms and was not treated as an outsider at all. I found that most of those I met simply wanted what we all want, happiness and prosperity. In many ways, they were indistinguishable from the "typical" American. I think that professionally, I feel a bit more prepared to work with Muslim clients, as I have a better understanding of their devotion and the nature of their faith. I still have much more to learn, but knowing that we share so many of the same basic wants and emotional needs goes far to build a bridge between our two different worlds.

### Unique Cultural Experience #2

**New Covenant Church of Columbus.** I woke up this morning nervous. I didn't know what to say, think, or feel.

Although at moments in my life I have been the minority, as it pertains to my race and gender, I was still overcome by a sense of nerves. This is a marginalized sub culture that has found a safe heaven. Would I be impeding all in the name of an educational experience? I arrived at the church promptly at 11 o'clock. I decided not to bring my bible because I didn't want them to assume anything about me. I wanted to come in with the perception of a blank slate and not the perception that I already knew the culture.

It was a very small store front church, and the parking lot was in the back. I knocked on the back door and waited for a response. A woman by the name Sharon welcomed me into the building. She informed me the pastor of the church, along with about 8 other members, were not present because they were at a conference in Atlanta. There were six members present. I was introduced to the members: Deacon Sylvia and her partner, Deacon Rhonda, Scarlet, and Lee. All of them were joyful and relaxed. Service begins. Deacon Rhonda and Scarlet are working together to get the audio and visual working, but, for some reason, the system would not work properly so they proceed to the sermon. A young woman interrupts and walks in through the front door. She introduces herself as Janae. They all look at me and replied, "Her name is Janae! What a blessing, two Janae's on the same Sunday!" Janae proceeded into the sanctuary where we were sitting and took a seat.

Sharon proceeded with the message. It was a message about their God fulfilling his will despite evil presents that try to inhibit the plans. Notes to her message were presented in-class. She took us on the journey of her former career as a pastor in the hospital and facing the challenges of babies dying. She questioned, "Is this God's will?" Their God is a God who wants positive blessings to be

present in all their members, suffering is not of their God. I sat there and thought to myself. Wow! It was very different interpretation than my own beliefs, but it was interesting to picture their God as this warrior in the battle blocking his family from harm.

As the service came to an end, the church discovered that Janae was a former musician. She played the piano, and my DID she play! As she serenaded the audience with her skills, Sharon dismissed service. I was about to head toward the door, but no one moved so I was a little confused. Then, I stopped and noticed the other members coming close to one another. They talked about the good and challenging aspects. I realized this is more than a church service, it was a support group. I immediately saw one member wanting to open up herself, but she seemed scared. I looked at her non-verbal cues and saw it was me. She didn't feel safe to open up while I was present so I packed my things and excused myself. I am not sure if it was because I was a guest, but the most important thing was that she felt the safety to pour her heart out. I didn't take any offense because I have experienced that same reluctance toward others, not sure if an outsider is safe and trustworthy.

**Reflection.** In June of 2015, same-sex marriage was recognized across all states. With this breakthrough, individuals are experiencing oppression. There are scars from events like the Lavender Scare, the APA recognizing homosexuality as a mental illness, President Clinton's Defense of Marriage Law, and the various acts of hate and discrimination that are not broadcasted.

I believe some of the members really loved their God. They wanted a place to feel safe to be who they are and praise the God they loved. The other visitor, Janae, made a remark that she loved the Lord, but she wanted to be with "her people". This experience did teach me, despite many efforts

in America to be culturally inclusive, many people are more comfortable around ones like them, whether that ethnic, gender, or sexual orientation. The question remains, how can we make society, especially in the counseling field, a culturally competent place that can properly encompass all place of safety for all?

### **Unique Cultural Experience #3**

**Mexican 4th of July Celebration.** I have a Mexican-American best friend who has an authentic Mexican family that lives nearby. She invited me to a barbeque that was hosted on the Fourth of July. Before I arrived to Lagrange where the event was hosted, I was forewarned this was considered "Little Mexico". I really was not sure if I wanted to attend, but by that time it was a little too late.

As we drove up, there was a little blue house that looked as it was built from the ground up with a garden that included tomatoes, peppers, and onions. My friend drove to the back yard, which to me seemed like an entirely different world. There were a lot of junk cars in the yard. Her uncle was on the grill while playing authentic Mexican music from his car that was extremely loud and upbeat. There was a hand-crafted shed that had an outdoor refrigerator and a lot of empty beer bottles and cans. Also, in the back yard, there was like a hand built cable line going from one end of the house to somewhere. I never could figure out where it ended. There were two roosters in the backyard that were running wild. There were not many people at all, only her uncle and her aunt to begin with. Inside of the house, everything was handmade, from the toilet to the cabinets. It just all seemed to be hand-crafted and put together by man. Her uncle offered us a beer to drink and was persistent about getting more. Once the rest of her family was there, I could see how close-knit they were. They were all communicating

## BUILDING MULTICULTURAL

with each other a lot differently than what my family would. The young were playing with the old, and old was involved with the young. We all sat outside after putting on bug spray and interacted with one another laughing and dancing. My friend even got up and danced with her uncle a few times, which was known as salsa dancing to me. There was a lot of alcohol spread around the table, especially tequila, which I hate. They all took several rounds of shots and slammed down their shot glasses. Their uncle was the life of the party and was known for putting on the best parties. Their family members kept asking, "Berto, you didn't make salsa or guacamole", and his response was "this is Americas Independence Day not Mexican Independence Day". We all just died in laughter. We had hamburgers, hot dogs, jerk chicken, sausage, baked beans, cake, and cookies. It seemed as if the celebration was just planned, but it was so much fun. When preparing the food, everyone helped each other passing buns, forks, and condiments around to make sure everyone was satisfied before they dived in.

**Reflection.** This experience is also an asset to my professional growth as a counselor as it allowed me to be comfortable in the uncomfortable, experience working with diverse populations, understand how cultural differences are important, and just grow professionally in general. First, as a counselor, sometimes we need to be comfortable even in the most uncomfortable situations. Even though I was not exactly as comfortable at first, I was able to adjust and eventually fit right in laughing, joking, and running around with the little ones. I can honestly say that when you are able to adjust to certain situations that are a growing experience. As a counselor, we will forever work with a diverse client base. No one client will ever be the same. We are not limited to who we speak with so, as a future professional counselor, involving myself with different people who on a normal basis

I would not have was different, but it was fun. I was able to interact with them regardless of their culture. Also, it gave me the opportunity to communicate with people who had language barriers and experience a moment with people who chose to be kind, loving, and patient with me despite my miscommunications. Lastly, this experience helped me grow professionally because I allowed myself to gain this experience. I was courageous enough to make a choice of doing things differently.

### Unique Cultural Experience #4

**Nursing Home.** I have to admit that I did have a few assumptions about this experience. I thought that everyone in a nursing home was approaching death and they were just waiting on it to occur. I was pleasantly surprised to find many people in the nursing home that had lived there for 5 years. Some were bound to wheelchairs and unable to care for themselves in their previous homes. Others were up walking telling the nurses what to do. Previously, my first thought of someone in a nursing home was someone suffering from a physical illness. I found this to be false; the majority of the residents were suffering from mental disorders. Many of the residents I spoke with became confused and questioned who I was. I did speak with a few residents who I had a full conversation with about past experiences and their time spent in the nursing home. I was surprised to see so many residents sitting up watching television. I had thought most residents would be sleeping in their bed all day. Many residents were up watching television, chatting with others, or playing board games. I was impressed at the interior and exterior of the nursing home. Residents are able to go outside where they have benches and a fountain with fish in it. Inside it resembles a large home more than a hospital. Everyone shares a room with another resident. I heard many good and bad

roommate stories from many residents. It was refreshing to see all of the visitors visiting their friends and family.

The nursing home can be a scary place, and it is important for residents to communicate with others outside of it. Many residents enjoy communicating with each other as well. I spoke with two women who have boyfriends in the nursing home. I was shocked to hear they met each other there. I never think about older people seeking companionship; however, this is the time it is needed most. Many confessed they were scared about the future and how it helps talking with others. Everyone deserves someone to go through all stages of life with whether it is a friend or partner. Many of the residents had very close relationships with the nurses. This surprised me because, whenever I think about a nursing home, I picture everyone in a bad mood because of what they are going through.

**Reflection.** This was a very personal and growing experience for me. Prior going into the nursing home, I had many assumptions discussed above. I had no idea I had such a mistaken persona. I was enlightened by the intelligent conversations I had with certain residents. One resident spoke about his time in the military; he enjoyed reminiscing on his days serving his country along with some of the best men he has ever known. A female resident shared the story of how she met her husband at the age of 16. They were together their entire lives until he passed away 2 years back. I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with residents about their families. Many had photos they shared with me of important people throughout their lives. Many residents did not want the conversation to end. Some do not have any family or friends visit. This saddened me because, as I learned, many of their friends had passed away. A female resident discussed with me the feelings she

felt after one of her friends in the nursing room or previous roommate had passed. Although she was very upset, she understood it was their time. Everyone in the nursing home is going to pass, and she wants to make the best of everyday until that happens. A few residents were uninterested in talking; however, I did not let this ruin my experience. The joy on their faces hasn't left my mind since I visited.

Prior to this experience, I expressed how uninterested I was working with geriatric clients. I did not believe I would ever be able to connect with them on any level to provide effective services. After this experience, I have a different perspective. These individuals are scared and fragile because they know one day in the near future death will inevitably occur. These feelings would be scary for anyone to deal with. If I could provide care and comfort to an individual in the final stages of life I would treasure that. Although this would be a very tough population to work with due to the fact these individuals are reaching the end of their lives, it would also be very rewarding. The family members of the individual would need care and compassion throughout the process as well. Once the client has passed, the family will grieve for an extended period of time. They may seek out counseling services to manage the feelings associated with a death. Death is a topic that no one wants to discuss but many are struggling with internally. It would be a rewarding career to help others through a grieving process. This has been one of the best experiences to open my mind to other populations.

### **Unique Cultural Experience #5**

**Cultural Las Vegas.** There was a significant difference between Vegas on the "strip" and downtown Vegas. My friends told me that it was easier to win money in downtown Las Vegas because it isn't as rigged as it is on the strip so we went there.



## BUILDING MULTICULTURAL

On the strip, there were droves of tourists walking up and down the street, almost like rivers. It was somewhat fast-paced. The people on the streets were polite and respectful, and there were a few sidewalk showcases. Downtown Las Vegas was much slower; the people looked more urban, there were way more sidewalk showcases, and the lights on the buildings were much flashier. What I noticed is that in Las Vegas, a lot of people find their “hustle” that will attract tourists. There were people selling waters, singing groups, break dancers, and drummers. Everything just about is targeted to appeal to tourists, which was evident in the amount of souvenir shops we saw.

After my conversations with the Cuban and Armenian Uber drivers, I decided to do a little more research on the Cuban and Armenian populations in Las Vegas. According to Simich, Este, and Hamilton (2010), late 19th century Armenians settled close to each other in the U.S. The Armenians proved to be a close-knit group of people who maintained close ties within their own communities and also built institutions that provided economic, social, and political opportunities for themselves. However, as the 20th century came about, news of genocide and war in Armenia made its way to the United States and caused the Las Vegas community to have sympathy for the Armenian settlers and help them transition to American life. Today, the Armenian American population has grown, not only in Las Vegas but in surrounding areas.

**Reflection.** My experience in Las Vegas showed me that, in order to be an effective counselor, you must observe and try to relate to the culture in your area. Talking to several workers in Las Vegas, including Uber drivers, hotel staff, club bouncers, and diner workers, it was evident that being a “people person” is extremely important in this particular area. Many people’s sole

source of income comes from the tourists that travel to Las Vegas so many times the workers must set aside their own issues to ensure the customers experience excellent customer service. This experience also showed me that my own assumptions about a culture could be completely wrong so I must do my own research and actually talk to people within that culture to get the facts.

### Unique Cultural Experience #6

**A.M.E. Church.** I chose to attend an African Methodist Episcopal church worship service as my cross-cultural experience. I chose this predominantly because it was an experience I had never truly had before and I hoped that it would allow me to access a population that I had little or no relevant experience with up to this point. I also chose this as my experience because I knew that I had been to services that were vastly different from my Baptist upbringing that were similar in some ways (all according to my largely ignorant understanding) to this experience. But, I had previously viewed even consciously as so different from my own experience that I held it in contempt. I knew that I needed to confront this prior viewpoint if I was to grow at all.

I noticed during the sermon how drastically different the communication styles I employed and the other attendees employed. The styles seem to seek to communicate different things. One is to establish passion, fervor, personal belief, and spread that to a group whereas the style I typically employ communicates rational and controlled communication that focuses on individual reflection at a later time. I noticed that the language used tended to use self-referents that encompassed the entire body of people, as opposed to just an individual. I noticed that there was a focus on how the “church”, as a group of people, is responsible for its members’ relationships with God, not each individual person.

The most striking moment in this experience, almost like a slap in the face, was when I parked my car at the church and I had this nervous feeling that I was going to be extremely uncomfortable. This made me very angry and ashamed with myself. I had come here to better myself, to have an experience which would likely be transformative in order for me to better serve people. This need to better serve people was a calling I feel very strongly about, and, yet, here I was, letting myself be stopped by feelings of nervousness and discomfort, as I had in the past every time I was in a situation where I was not the majority. This made me realize that this experience was merely a first step and that I had to do better. I had to overcome these influences my stigmas had on me. I realized that this is probably a small glimpse into what people who are not the majority go through all of the time, but they aren't stopped by it. I realized that I needed to be able to identify when others felt how I did at that moment and try to prevent those moments from happening. I wasn't sure how I would do this, but I knew I needed to make a change.

**Reflection.** I needed to have this experience in order to understand how faith and a community of faith can play such an important part in a person's life by experiencing a faith community that was unlike my own in many ways. This allowed me to look at all of the pieces of information provided about what place the community had, the services it provided for its members, and the style of communication that was employed within it. While everyone does not need to be religious, many aspects of religion are considered by its followers to be necessary or helpful in regards to their mental health, and perhaps these aspects are paralleled by methods I might employ when I am a counselor. I also finally understood how you might need to incorporate atypical methods that employ the assistance of

community members who are not mental health professionals in order to help a client the most.

### Discussion

Six graduate-level counseling students in a CACREP accredited program chose new settings and populations to complete an immersive multicultural experience. The result of these case studies aligned with the three areas with the multicultural competencies that underline training in counselor education. That is, each of the counselors-in-training spoke directly to their personal awareness, knowledge of another cultural environment, and demonstrated skill in relating to cultural members within the setting they chose.

For each of the six, students revealed a positive response to the individual experience and a self-perceived awareness of personal and professional growth related to the new cultural experience. These findings show that an immersive experience can be a valuable component within the training curriculum in counselor education. Morgan and Marin (2016) stated, in their research on improving teaching pedagogy for cultural courses, that building relationships with others is an important theme necessary for professional growth and that students requested a variety of experiences to add to the uniqueness of the experience. To address the three component areas of the multicultural competencies, the students in this study listed their increased personal awareness, increased knowledge of the visited culture and improved skills in directly relating with others during the experience. Results from this experiential activity were also analyzed by the instructor using the project rubric. This rubric considered conceptual components related to the multicultural competencies and compared and contrasted the experience from both inside and outside of the group. Findings

## BUILDING MULTICULTURAL

were consistent with the student's reports of an improved conceptual understanding and personal insight for another culture.

The unique immersive experience required in this class, that is, a learning activity outside of class in real world experience, appeared to expose students to the opportunity for personal and professional growth. In addition, all students reported an increase in their self-assessment related the multicultural counseling competencies (Arredondo et al., 1996). Overall, the students reported changes in attitudes and beliefs in their own awareness of cultural values and biases as well as positive results in knowledge in understanding of other racial and ethnic groups. The third area of competencies is culturally appropriate intervention strategies. Given the nature of this experiential activity, no treatment or clinical intervention was needed or necessary.

Counselor training programs across the country expect students to complete practicum and internships experiences with client toward the end of the program. Practicum and internship experiences place counselors-in-training directly with clients with the responsibility to build helping relationships by using knowledge and skill learning in the program. Often, counseling programs will use role-play scenarios within a safe learning environment prior to actual contact with a client. Similarly, students within counseling programs must relate to other students, often with different cultural background than their own. This exposure leads to a better understanding of those with differing cultural backgrounds. Within the current case study, actual experiences outside the classroom provided students with an opportunity to become familiar with expectations required by the counseling profession.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited to individual case studies within a small graduate course in counseling. Due to the personal nature of this learning activity, the generalization of these results is limited. Also, the fact that students were free to choose their own particular population and setting, the standardization of this method is dependent on location and availability and the willingness of each student to use this learning activity in the most productive way. It is also acknowledged that formal pre-and posttest results regarding measurement of competencies were not taken. However, results on in class evaluations related to multicultural competencies showed an increase in awareness and learning. Arredondo et al. (1996), in their article, show that clinical interventions are necessary for a complete grounding in multicultural competence for counselors-in-training. This case study was not designed for counseling interventions with clients. Students will have the opportunity to engage directly with diverse clients during the latter part of the program during the clinical experience (practicum and internships) in the role of the professional counselor. Additionally, students will be evaluated during additional courses and the clinical experience throughout the program and rated by outside supervisors on their ability to demonstrate competencies, including diverse populations.

In the future, research using an immersive model for training, consideration of follow-up during practicum and internship for counselors in training may be valuable. Further, it is hoped that by using this approach, instructors and students can identify gaps within the multicultural competencies expectation.

### Conclusion

This case study depicts an in vivo outside of class experience as a requirement for the graduate level multicultural diversity course in a counselor education program. The results of student experiences were shared to accentuate the importance of immersive, direct contact with those from another culture as a tool for training multicultural competency. Counseling programs have been described as "applied" programs, that is, the expectation of demonstrable skills learned. Observational analysis during the practicum and internships by university and off-site supervisors provide accountability for this learning. In classes prior to seeing actual clients, it is up to course instructors, using rigorous learning activities, to provide the basis for this skill building. The exposure to diverse populations during training and in clinical experiences is of profound importance in developing competent counselors able to respond to difference cultures. The use of direct experiences in counselor training is an important concept that could be extrapolated for use in other disciplines.

Finally, the instructor acknowledges that requiring the student to move outside of the classroom, and comfortable setting, takes courage on the part of the students. The students in these case studies were courageous and set in place higher expectations for themselves, their cohort and the instructor of cultural diversity courses.

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## BUILDING MULTICULTURAL

MICHAEL BALTIMORE is a Professor of Counseling at Columbus State University. His research interests include counselor training, technology in counseling and clinical supervision.

JADDE BARNES, TYLER BROWN, JANAE' CAREY, TABRIA JACKSON, KEVIN WHITE, and LECIA WRIGHT are current graduate students in the clinical mental health counseling and school counseling programs at Columbus State University.