

## **ABSTRACT**

SANTOS FIGUEROA, SYNTIA DINORA. Cultural Competence Development Through Study Abroad Initiatives: Case Study Honduras. (Under the direction of Stanley B. Baker).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to acquire an in-depth understanding of the study abroad experience from a sample of counselor education students. The theoretical framework of the study was based on the multidimensional model of cultural competence (Sue, 2001) and the relational counseling theory (West, 2005), in addition to the available literature on international education, study abroad, and international counseling. Eight counselor education students who were enrolled in a 2012 study abroad program to Honduras agreed to participate in the study. Three sources of information were analyzed to obtain detailed and rich descriptions of the case: extant documentation about the program, extant journal entries, and a follow up survey. Journal entry prompts were developed as part of the study abroad program based on a detailed review of the literature, the professional experience of the leaders, the developmental process of the group, and the on-site daily activities. Survey items were aligned with the purpose and research questions of the study, the theoretical framework, available literature, and previous research. Each data source was coded and analyzed independently identifying emerging themes, and then collectively guided by the research questions of the study, providing a more comprehensive description of the case. The emerging themes were validated by the participants. Main findings included the value of exposure through cultural immersion experiences, the significant influence of study abroad programs in the cultural competence development of the participants, the importance of growth-fostering relationships in acquiring cultural competence, the influence of the study abroad experience on social justice and advocacy, and the potential use of the relational

cultural theory in international counseling. Limitations of the study were discussed addressed, and implications for practice and research were also addressed. Concluding remarks regarding the potential impact of study abroad programs in the cultural competence development of counselors in training and their value in the process of internationalization of the counseling profession were provided.

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Cultural Competence Development through Study Abroad Programs: Case Study Honduras

by  
Syntia Dinora Santos Figueroa

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## DEDICATION

A mis padres por su gran amor y dedicación. A mi padre por sus enseñanzas de vida, su apoyo y su fortaleza. Y a mi madre que esta e el cielo, la mujer más maravillosa que he conocido en la vida; mi inspiración, mi mayor apoyo, y mi mejor amiga.

To my parents for their great love and dedication. To my father for all his life-long lessons, for his support and his strength. And to my mother in heaven, the most amazing woman I have ever met; my inspiration, my greatest support, and my best friend.

### **If Roses grow in heaven**

If roses grow in heaven

Lord pick a bunch for me

Place them in my mother's arms

And tell her they're from me

Tell her I love and miss her

And when she turns to smile

Place a kiss upon her cheek

And hold her for a while

Remembering her is easy

I do it every day

But there's an ache within my heart

That will surely never go away

Anonymous

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Syntia Dinora Santos Figueroa was born and raised in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. She earned a bachelor's degree in School Counseling from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM). She subsequently graduated with a master's degree also in School Counseling from the State University of New York at Buffalo through a Fulbright scholarship. After graduation, Syntia returned to Honduras and worked at the UPNFM as professor and later as program coordinator. Her passion for teaching, counseling and cultural exchange allowed her to seek for travel opportunities and build friendships around the world. As a result of these experiences, Syntia pursued her doctoral degree in Counseling and Counselor Education at North Carolina State University with a focus on international counseling. As a doctoral student, Syntia presented at state and national conferences, initiated a counselor education study abroad program, supported the organization of two counseling conferences in Honduras, and facilitated the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the UPNFM and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The world is reshaping itself in the twenty first century. Changes in the economy, technology, and public policies have contributed to the creation of worldwide systems in which countries and cultures mutually influence one another. More powerful nations significantly impact the lives of people in less powerful ones. The same is true for cultural groups within a nation. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential that every person, every culture, and every nation has to make a global contribution. The reality of a diverse and interconnected world has potential for a great impact in all fields including counseling (Gerstein, 2009).

Leung (2003) referred to the world as a global village in which all lives are interconnected. What happens to a small group of people may impact the well-being of others in any other part of the world. Leung stated that mental health professionals should be at the vanguard of initiating international relationships, developing equal alliances with professionals around the world and using global perspectives to meet local needs in diverse cultural contexts. He declared that this process, now called internationalization, is not an easy journey but it is indeed worth traveling. Furthermore, he mentioned that, despite the increased commitment to diversity issues and the ideals of multiculturalism, the multicultural movement has remained restricted to ethnic and diversity issues in the United States. He challenged the profession to transcend national boundaries to advance the counseling profession.

The process of internationalization requires a great commitment. It involves stepping out of one's comfort zone and exploring deep-rooted beliefs. To move forward, the profession should confront personal and professional ethnocentrism and *cultural encapsulation*. That is, believing that one's alternatives and methods are faultless and should be imitated by everyone else. This false belief will only perpetuate isolation. In order to enter the process of internationalization, it is necessary to examine our own attitudes, confronting the false sense of self-sufficiency and supremacy. It is imperative to recognize the value of different methods of inquiry, models, theories, and practices, and encourage learning from the world community. It is also imperative to pay careful attention at a program-specific level. Training programs have the responsibility to nurture a global perspective and to expose trainees to the world. Trainees should be challenged to read widely, think globally, and expand their knowledge beyond the United States borders (Leung, 2003).

Cultural awareness constitutes a major challenge for American society and American education. There is very limited international perspective among the American population that may be due to the large size of the country and relative geographical isolation. Americans tend to segregate within subcultural groups despite the variety of cultures, regions, and ideas existing within the country. Therefore, intentional international experiences are essential to start moving from ethnocentrism to the appreciation of diversity. Thus, the role of counselor educators is critical in creating opportunities and guiding the learning process to promote the cultural competence development of future counselors (Jurgens & McAuliffe, 2004). Furthermore, the code of ethics of the American Counseling

Association (ACA) and the professional standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) instruct counselor educators to create opportunities for students to develop cultural competence (Wilson & Taylor, 2013).

Experiential methods have been increasingly used to support the cultural competence development of trainees because of the impact on raising self-awareness, enhancing cultural awareness, and developing cultural empathy. Cultural immersions, such as study abroad programs, have been particularly valuable because they provide students with first hand experiences of different cultures and people. Cultural immersions provide counseling students opportunities for exposure and interactions, otherwise unapproachable, which may contribute to their cultural competence development and may reduce prejudice (Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997).

In a recent study, counselor education graduate students self-rated their multicultural competency levels before and after a 10-day travel-study to Guatemala. Significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test in all dimensions of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies Self Assessment (MCCSA) were reported. The results suggested that short term cultural immersion programs can be effective in increasing multicultural counseling competencies (Fawcett et al., 2010). In a study of a program conducted in Europe, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was used as an assessment tool; the findings suggested that short term programs can have a positive impact on the overall development of cross-cultural sensitivity (Anderson et al., 2006).

Qualitative studies have also been conducted in order to understand the experiences of students traveling abroad and the value of study abroad programs. Jurgens and McAuliffe (2004) found that study abroad programs may have lifelong impacts on students, especially on their intellectual and emotional development, and they may also increase cross cultural sensitivity, cultural self-awareness, social and global awareness, and commitment to social justice (McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2010). Students have also reported a sense of humility, self-confidence, self-awareness, and deeper appreciation for cultural diversity as a result of study abroad experiences (Jaoko, 2010).

### **Rationale for the Study**

Although there is evidence of the positive impact of study abroad programs, the research literature on the topic remains relatively scarce, particularly within the counselor education field (Wilson & Taylor, 2013). Related research findings suggest that graduates in the mental health profession feel unprepared to work with culturally diverse clients (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). Study abroad experiences, when well designed, have the potential to provide students with the opportunity to engage in a learning process that may significantly influence their cultural competence development (Jaoko, 2010). There is preliminary evidence that study abroad programs have value in promoting cultural competence development; however, further research is needed to gain better understanding of successful programs and the long term impact in students' lives (Anderson et al., 2006). It is important to pursue a deeper understanding of the program designs, the student experiences, the benefits, and the challenges in order to offer high quality experiences abroad that truly

impact the cultural competence development of counseling students. Given that study abroad experiences are usually lead by faculty members, counselor educators have the opportunity not only to create best practice programs specifically designed for the counseling field but also to conduct studies that may shed light on improvements for the existing programs that contribute to the cultural competence development of future counselors, and add to the body of knowledge available. Existing publications tend to be descriptive rather than evaluative. Therefore, more research on the influence of study abroad on counselor education students is needed.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Concepts and frameworks are necessary to study and understand human thinking processing (Ollinger & Goel, 2010). The conceptual framework of this study was based on an integration of fundamental definitions, theories, processes and previous programs in order to better understand the study abroad experience of counselor education students (Glatzeder et al., 2010). A detailed exploration of available literature and previous research in the areas of international education, study abroad, international counseling, and cultural competence development constitutes the foundation of the study. Special attention was given to emphasizing the meaning and standards of quality of short-term study abroad programs, as well as to study abroad programs as a tool to promote cultural competence development.

The overarching framework of the study was cultural competence development explained through the Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence (MDCC). The ultimate goal was to create opportunities to support the cultural competence development of

counselors in training that may affect the profession both locally and internationally. The MDCC created by Sue and Sue (2003), also called the tripartite model, is centered on nurturing positive attitudes, knowledge and skills to equip counselors to work in a diverse world. This model has also been identified as an important foundation to develop international counseling competence (Ng, Choudhuri, Noonan, & Ceballos, 2012).

The Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) offered a second framework for reflection on the process of internationalization and competence development. RCT emphasizes the importance of building strong, healthy, equalitarian, growth-fostering relationships to support the well-being of all people (Comstock, et al., 2008). RCT also provides a social justice lens aimed at offering support in developing resilience, relational competence, and empowerment to individuals and communities (Duffey & Somody, 2011). These competences are extremely valuable and can be used in developing international relationships and mutual support among nations. Cultural competence and relational competence development are undoubtedly essential for the counseling field both locally and globally.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Cultural competence development* has been defined as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Kirmayer, 2012, p.151). Sue and Sue (2003) describe cultural competence as an active, developmental and ongoing process where helping professionals seek to become aware of their own assumptions, biases and beliefs, to understand the worldview of others

culturally different, and to develop and practice appropriate strategies and skills to work with culturally diverse populations.

*Cultural immersion* has been defined as “direct, prolonged, in vivo contact with a culture different from that of the trainees” (Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997, p. 232). Cultural immersions provide students with exposure and knowledge through lived experiences. They may vary in structure and focus including class assignments, service projects, practicums, and study abroad programs (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009). Cultural immersion experiences, that promote sustained and meaningful cross-cultural interactions, have been found effective as training tools for counselors (Pope-Davis et al., 2009). They increase understanding of diverse communities, promote self-awareness, and reduced biases (Alexander et al., 2005; Canfield et al., 2009; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005).

*Internationalization* according to Knight (2003) is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education institutions” (p.2). Moreover, Hansen (2002) described international education as a dynamic concept and as a process involving movement; a journey not only of people but also of minds and ideas across cultural frontiers.

*Study abroad* is one of the most impactful forms of cultural immersion (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009) and has been proven to be instrumental in promoting mutual understanding and collaboration among nations. It may also play an important role in increasing commitment to social justice (Cordero & Negroni Rodriguez, 2009). Traditionally, study abroad in the U.S. has been defined as an “academic study in another

country for credit toward a U.S. degree” (Brockington, Hoffa, & Martin, 2005, p.5). Today, the meaning of study abroad is much broader and relates to the goals of international education of providing students with opportunities to expand their knowledge, experience and competence beyond geographical borders (Brockington et al., 2005).

### **Goal of the Study**

The goal of the present study was to acquire an in-depth understanding of the study abroad experience for a sample of counselor education students. The MDCC and RCT frameworks were a foundation for the inquiry. Therefore, the constructs of interest in the present study were: (a) the value of exposure to other cultures, (b) the developmental process associated with acquisition of multicultural counseling competence, (c) the types of relationships developed in a cross-cultural context, and (d) the importance of growth-fostering relationships, personally and professionally, for counselor education students.

### **Research Questions**

A case study qualitative research design was employed to meet the goals of the present study. Sources of data will include: (a) extant journal entries, (b) extant documentation, and (c) a follow up survey of a sample of counselor education students who engaged in a study abroad program in Honduras in 2012.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How did the 2012 study abroad program *Counselor Education in Honduras* support the cultural competence development of the counselor education participants?
2. What powerful learning experiences of the study abroad program have been assigned more meaning by the participants?
3. How did the short-term study abroad program influence the perception of participants regarding their cultural identity?
4. How did the study abroad program impact the participants' perception of themselves and their professional career upon return?

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the state of the literature regarding international education, international counseling, cultural immersion and cultural competence development. The literature describes study abroad programs as valuable strategies to develop cultural competence and defines the quality standards that programs should include. In addition, the Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence (MDCC) and the Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) are discussed as theoretical frameworks for cultural competence development and internationalization of the counseling profession.

### International Education

In order to discuss *international education* it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what *globalization* and *internationalization* imply. Even though the terms are intertwined, it is important to make a clear distinction among the two. According to Knight (2004) the international dimension of higher education is embedded in a globalized environment. Kreber (2009) asserted that the internationalization of higher education responds to the market demands associated to the economic dimension of globalization. In other words, the term internationalization refers to the relationship between nation-states promoting recognition and respect of differences and traditions. On the other hand, globalization does not respect differences or borders which leads to homogenization and denationalization (Gacel-Avila, 2005). Furthermore, globalization creates interdependence and competition, whereas internationalization promotes mutuality and cooperation (Kreber,

2009). In that sense, globalization represents systems and patterns such as politics and economics whereas, internationalization refers specifically to education.

The benefits of international education are certainly impactful. Several studies have shown the importance of international experiences highlighting personal growth and professional development (Greateax-White, 2007; Sawyer & Lopopolo, 2004; Whiteford & McAllister, 2007). However, a warning has been issued regarding the purpose of entering the process of internationalization of higher education. If the institution's reason behind developing international initiatives is only financial (attract and retain international students), the higher education primary goal of preparing students with intercultural skills and global competence will be lost (Kreber, 2009). Furthermore, the success and sustainability of the internationalization process relies on the systematic integration of internationalization into the culture, policy, planning and organizational process of the institution as a whole (Qiang, 2003).

### **History and Current Status of International Education**

The process of internationalization of higher education, in the United States and around the world, has strengthened international relationships and mutual understanding among nations for decades. The history of students and scholars crossing borders for educational purposes dates back to the Greeks scholars traveling to Alexandria in 300BC; however, the scale and direction of the process has been changing throughout the years. Prior to World War II, the main destination to travel was Western Europe, and the United States became the number one destination for international students by the mid-1940s. In the 1960s,

international education was associated with development aid where students travel to developed countries through government support or philanthropic programs (Cantwell, Luca & Lee, 2009).

Presently, even if the movement of international students traveling from developing countries to developed countries has persisted, the financial context has changed. Host institutions are generating revenue from international students' fees, and the number of students paying for education in relation to those receiving aid has significantly increased. Countries also see recruitment of international students as a source of potential skilled migration, a fact that has also influenced change in immigration regulations. In addition, there is also an increment in students traveling from developed countries to developing countries. Thus, the question arises, how do we define international education? (Cantwell, Luca & Lee, 2009).

### **Definition of International Education**

According to Knight (2003, p.2), "Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education." Knight (2003) explained that the term *process* is used to highlight the nature of internationalization as an ongoing and continuing effort. The *international, intercultural and global* dimensions are intentionally included as a triad in which *international* denotes the relationships between and among nations, cultures and countries; *intercultural* refers to the diversity of cultures existing within countries, communities and institutions; and *global*

represents a worldwide scope. In essence, Quiang (2003) referred to the process of internationalization of higher education as a response from a country to the impact of globalization remaining respectful of the nation's individuality.

Hansen (2002) described international education as a dynamic concept, as a process involving movement, and a journey not only of people but also of minds and ideas across cultural frontiers. A broad field that involves several areas and affects several people around the world; whether it is by traveling to other countries to study, teaching overseas, or interacting with internationals at home. Those interactions and learning experiences are the most vivid proof of the movement and dynamism of the process of internationalization. Hansen also mentions the term *Worldmindedness* as an important goal for any school, and the possibility for any school to become *truly international*.

*Worldmindedness* represents a vision of fully understanding the existence and meaning of a global and interconnected world. It develops from global awareness to appreciation for others' worldviews. Three key signs of developing worldmindedness are (a) consciousness of how personal decisions affect people across the world; (b) place value on how others perceive our own nation; and (c) use of the term "us" in reference to people globally. Worldmindedness is an important concept to walk away from the dangers of a blind ethnocentrism where people may erroneously learn that anything foreign is bad or dangerous (Merryfield, Lo, Po, & Kasai, 2008).

Developing worldminded citizens requires (a) the acceptance of other cultures, awareness and appreciation of others, and communication with people from different

nationalities; (b) concern with world's issues, interest and awareness of the present and future of the world; (c) interconnectedness, the realization of our interdependency and need of one another; and (d) world citizenship, internalization of our position of citizenship not only of one's own nation but of a global society recognizing equality and respect for all human beings (Merryfield et al., 2008). International education constitutes a valuable answer to the need of developing worldmindedness, a tool to learn together in an environment of mutual collaboration.

Based on an extended literature review, Quiang (2003) identified the elements of internationalization subscribed to two broad categories: academic activities and organizational factors. It is important to make the differentiation between the categories to ensure that none is overlooked. Programs and activities should complement each other and become an essential part of the institutional mission. Furthermore, internationalization should be embedded within the culture, policy, planning and organization of the institution to ensure success and sustainability. Quiang included the elements of *governance*, *operations* and *support services* under the organizational category; and under the academic/program category, he included the elements of academic programs, research and scholarly collaboration, extracurricular activities, and external relations and services. Each element may encompass several activities; for example, the *academic program* element may include activities such as student exchange, work/study abroad, international students, faculty/staff mobility, visiting scholars, and foreign language, among many others. The present review

will focus on study abroad specifically as an effective strategy to contribute to cultural competence development.

### **Study Abroad**

The goals of education abroad are pedagogical and based on the conviction that students who have lived and experienced a foreign culture will benefit greatly academically and culturally in ways that cannot be accomplished at home; and they will be better prepared for the challenges of a globalized world. Study abroad improves students development and classroom performance and helps participants to become contributing and empathetic citizens of the world. Nevertheless, in order to develop an effective program international educators and program coordinators should contextualize their services. *Thinking globally but acting locally*, that is being aware of a global perspective but contextualizing knowledge and practice to the local culture, is indispensable to the success of any international initiative. Only by acknowledging the value of each culture participating in the partnership is that we can ensure the translation of abstract knowledge to practical competencies for both visitors and locals (Brockington et al., 2005).

Traditionally, study abroad in the U.S. has been defined as “academic study in another country for credit toward a U.S. degree” (Brockington, Hoffa, & Martin, 2005, p.5). Presently, study abroad has a wider meaning, involving a variety of activities with the purpose of preparing students for life and careers within an interdependent world. Study abroad relates more to incorporating international experience in education than to merely

earning academic credits. Students are seeking opportunities to expand their knowledge and experiences beyond their intellectual and geographical borders (Brockington et al., 2005).

### **History of Study Abroad**

Study abroad initiatives in the U.S. date back to the 1920's with a small number of programs called Junior Year Abroad (JYA) sending students to Europe. These credit earning programs join early initiatives of faculty-lead study tours that were at that time non-credit cultural enrichment options. In 1927 the Institute of International Education established a committee specifically for JYA matters, including facilitating enrollment, establishing quality standards, and seeking funding. At the same time in 1926, another program model was launched with the first of many World University shipboard cruises. This first voyage around the world lasted seven and a half months involving 504 students accompanied by 35 faculty members. These floating campuses were in place from 1926 to 1936 with a comparative and contemporary focus, visiting a large number of countries in each trip. Unfortunately, all study abroad activities were stopped at that point and did not resume until 1945 as a result of the Great depression and the beginning of World War II (Brockington et al., 2005).

After World War II study abroad emerged with even greater strength taking students overseas during the summer for study, work and service experiences. Leaders of the U.S. government demanded more information and awareness about other cultures and nations after WWII emphasizing the need to educate the young generations of future leaders. Senator J. William Fulbright created one of the most prominent initiatives in 1946. Senator Fulbright

believed that firsthand encounters with other countries and cultures would advance international cooperation. The Fulbright program has influenced the field of international education since its origins, especially through the impact of returning Fulbright faculty and visiting Fulbright lecturers. This reciprocity has constituted a foundation for the idea of international educational exchange (Brockington et al., 2005).

Throughout the Cold War, education abroad emphasized two separate but not conflicting goals: earning academic credit and contributing to peace building and understanding among nations. This view of study abroad in addition to the increasing presence of international students coming to the U.S. positioned education abroad as an important component of international educational exchange and campus internationalization. By the 1950s, the basic framework for study abroad was already constructed and students were sent to other countries on a regular basis. In addition to the basic framework, two other models were in place: the branch campus model, which was initiated by Stanford University opening its first site on 1958 near Stuttgart, Germany, and the work-study model originated at Antioch College through a program that combined study and work in France. Since then, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, education abroad has diversified greatly in terms of design, programs, activities, purpose, and goals to become a very extensive area of the international education field (Brockington et al., 2005).

### **Current Status of Study Abroad**

According to the Institute of International Education (Farrugia, Bhandari, & Chow, 2012), the number of international students in the United States has increased 5.7% over the

previous year, reporting over 764,000 students in the 2011/2012 academic year. The five leading countries of origin of international students are China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. In contrast, the number of U.S. students participating in study abroad programs increased only 1.3%. However, the increment in the number of students studying abroad has been consistent for the past 10 years. The more recent reported number of U.S. students participating in study abroad programs is of 273,996 from the 2010/2011 academic year. Europe remains the leading region of choice, hosting 54.6% of study abroad students, followed by Latin America hosting 14.6% and Asia hosting 11.7% of the students. The number of students enrolled in long-term study abroad programs has remained constant for the past 20 years while mid-length and short term programs, ranging from one semester to eight weeks or less, have been increasing significantly.

Short-term programs tend to be more attractive for their duration and cost, allowing students to more easily fit them into their curriculums and even participate in more than one experience. Short-term programs are one to eight weeks in length, usually faculty-lead, and typically sponsored by a U.S. university. Programs can be held in one specific city, one country, or through multiple sites (Brockington et al., 2005). Acknowledging the need to ensure quality standards in study abroad initiatives, a group of international education professionals created the *Forum of Education Abroad* in 2001. This non-profit organization is officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the standard development organization for education abroad (The Forum in Education Abroad, 2009).

### **Short-Term Education Abroad Standards of Good Practice**

The latest standards of good practice specifically applicable to short-term education abroad programs were published by the Forum in 2009 as a complement to the more general standards of practice. The standards were created to ensure that programs included all the essential elements that will maximize student learning and development while assuring safety and well-being of the participants. The Forum established nine basic standards. The program: (a) relates to the education abroad institutional mission and has well defined purpose and objectives; (b) is reviewed according to its stated purpose and outcomes; (c) follows the institutional academic framework and policies for education abroad; (d) includes clear policies for extra-academic frameworks; (e) provides a comprehensive preparation and support for the experience abroad; (f) maintains fair and appropriate policies for student selection and conduct; (h) defines adequate financial and personnel resources; (i) has established policies, procedures and training to ensure health, safety, security, and risk management; and (j) follows ethical principles and practice (The Forum in Education Abroad, 2009).

In addition to the standards of good practice, The Forum also created a Code of Ethics for Education Abroad with the purpose of providing a guide for ethical decision-making. The code centers on six principles: (a) truthfulness and transparency, (b) responsibility to students, (c) relationships with host societies, (d) observance of law and good practice, (e) conflicts of interest, and (f) gifts, gratuities, discounts, rebates, and compensation. The code also stated four guiding questions to assess study abroad programs regarding ethics: (a) is the

program true, fair and transparent? (b) does the program put the interests of the students first and contribute to their intellectual and personal growth, (c) does it reflect the best practices of the field? and (d) does it foster international understanding? The code of ethics in addition to the standards of good practice serve as points of reference for all study abroad programs without substituting specific institutional and organizational policies and practice (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2008).

### **International Counseling**

It is evident that a different set of skills and knowledge is required to respond appropriately to the characteristics of our current, dynamic, fast-speed, globalized, diverse world. This is especially true for the counseling field that aims to provide the most accurate and effective support to the new generation of global citizens. Counselors are challenged to learn to work effectively not only in a variety of settings but also with culturally diverse clients (Arthur & Achenback, 2002). Pederson and Leong (1997) raised the question why should we be concerned with other countries and cultures? As a response, they discussed the realities of cultural context, personal and professional ethnocentrism, and culturally encapsulated assumptions that may diminished decision making and effectiveness in counseling. Sixteen years later, the process of internationalization has become a key element for success in all fields including counseling.

The process of internationalization has been facilitated by a number of events in and outside the U.S. throughout history. The counseling profession has been engaged in international initiatives since the 1940s and since then three well distinguishable waves have

been identified: (a) the need for counseling after both World Wars, (b) the increased number of international students completing their degrees in the U.S. and bringing their knowledge back to their home countries upon completion, and (c) the growing emphasis on internationalization of counseling and psychology professional organizations in the U.S. (Leung et al., 2009).

Leung et al. (2009) identified three essential elements of internationalization from the literature: (a) development of a global perspective in counseling scholarship through teaching, research and service, (b) collaboration among counseling professionals globally in practice, research and training, and (c) indigenization of the profession in local settings. The term indigenization was first used in psychology and was defined as “the study of human behavior and mental process within a cultural context that relies on value, concepts, belief, systems, methodologies, and other resources indigenous to the specific ethnic or cultural group under investigation” (Ho, 1998, p.94). Consequently, internationalization in counseling was defined as “A continuous process of synthesizing knowledge generated through research, scholarship, and practice from different cultures and using this knowledge to solve problems in local and global communities” (Leung et al., 2009, p.115). In addition, respect and cultural sensitivity were highlighted as fundamental elements of internationalization and may only be accomplished through collaboration and equal partnerships. Furthermore, the internationalization process should strive for the indigenization of the counseling profession seeking for the development of theories, practice and systems that respond to the local culture.

More recently, Ng and Noonan (2012) presented a new definition of internationalization of the counseling profession created from a committee of counseling professionals with ample experience in international work. The group defined internationalization as: “A multidimensional movement in which professionals across nations collaborate through equal partnerships to advance the practice of counseling as a worldwide profession. The goal is to provide and promote mental health wellness and intervention by empowering individuals and communities to meet their needs in culturally respectful and informed ways” (p.11). In addition, the panel identified five areas that constitute the scope of internationalization in counseling: international collaboration, theoretical foundation of practice, training and development, professional advocacy, and social advocacy.

Every definition of international education and international counseling involves the consideration of a global multidimensional perspective, the importance of indigenization and respect from one another, the urgent need of mutual collaboration through equal partnerships, and the common goal of improving knowledge and practice. None of these elements that constitute the vision of internationalization can be accomplished without working towards cultural competence development. It is only through culturally competent professionals that the vision for a different world may become a reality.

### **Cultural Competence in Counseling**

Sue and Sue (2003) described cultural competent professionals as those who are actively involved in the process of becoming aware of their assumptions, values and biases, aware of others' worldviews and effective in choosing appropriate interventions, and of

strategies and techniques required to meet their clients' needs. Kirmayer (2012) stated that developing cultural competence will contribute to providing: "More accessible, acceptable and effective" services in the helping professions, and defined cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p.151).

Mental health professionals have been discussing the urgent need to develop cross-cultural counseling competencies for decades. Sue et al. (1982) emphasized that traditional counseling practices were criticized and perceived as "demanding, irrelevant and oppressive towards the culturally different" (p.45). They also highlighted that the existing literature was not addressing cultural characteristics nor better understanding of ethnic groups' needs. They maintained that research proposals and analyses of findings are closely related to the researcher's personal, professional, and societal value system that has an important impact on the helping professions. Furthermore, the debate continued to conclude that cultural factors do influence the counseling process and the helping relationship. The concluding argument of this position paper specified that research and practice were not adequate for all ethnic groups and that a cross-cultural perspective was urgently required.

Counseling and psychotherapy professionals have been discussing the appropriateness of services offered to minority clients since the 1960s (Sue, 1982). It is alarming to realize that statements such as the ones discussed in Sue's 1982 article continue to be debated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, Kirmayer (2012) published an article entitled

“Rethinking Cultural Competence” in which once again he declared that (a) culture influences mental health services; (b) that the helping process and its goals depend on cultural worldviews, values and concepts of self; and (c) that clinical practices and interventions tend to ignore the cultural history of the client. Kirmayer also stressed that cultural competence models should be evaluated and rethought to work in diverse settings not only across communities and regions, but also across nations. It seems clear that traditional western approaches are not effective with minority groups and that mental health professionals still struggle with the process of developing cultural competence, currently aggravated by a diverse, globalized, and virtualized world.

Sue (2001) based on his own emphasis on social justice proposed a more comprehensive, inclusive and action driven definition of cultural competence:

Cultural competence is the ability to engage in actions or create conditions that maximize the optimal development of client and client systems. Multicultural counseling competence is defined as the counselor’s acquisition of awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society (ability to communicate, interact, negotiate, and intervene on behalf of clients from diverse backgrounds), and on an organizational/societal level, advocating effectively to develop new theories, practices, policies, and organizational structures that are more responsive to all groups (p. 802).

### **Study Abroad as a Tool for Cultural Competence Development**

An essential foundation of cultural competence development is exposure and as such should be given special attention during training. One of the teaching methods proven to be effective in achieving cultural competence and providing opportunities of exposure to different cultures is experiential learning. Jurgens and McAuliffe (2004) noted that experiential learning theory describes the lived experience as the most vivid and long-lasting means of learning. They also stressed the responsibility of counselor educators in enhancing multicultural competence for all counselors in training.

Arthur and Achenback (2002) have studied the value of experiential learning as a teaching method to achieve cultural competence. They explained that experiential learning can be used to raise awareness, to challenge personal frameworks and to help develop cultural empathy. Jaoko (2010) also supports the importance of experiential learning and described it as a means of developing appreciation for diversity. Furthermore, he concluded that study abroad when well designed and consisting of academic learning, field activities and reflections is a great contribution to developing cultural competence.

Cultural immersion experiences, such as study abroad programs, have potential for expanding cultural awareness and enhancing empathy and sensitivity. They are a catalyst to improve counseling effectiveness. Cultural immersions can provide exposure and knowledge through lived experiences. These experiences may vary from structured class assignments in traditional or online courses to practicums and internships, service projects, and of course

study abroad which constitute one of the most impactful forms of cultural immersion (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009).

Study abroad experiences in conjunction with teaching, research and service have been widely used to expand the learning experience and promote mutual understanding and collaboration among nations. Study abroad programs may also play an important role in increasing commitment to social justice. They can provide opportunities to connect with the reality of others, and open opportunities for future collaborations and mutual support (Cordero & Negroni Rodriguez, 2009).

Offering an experience that goes beyond a regular site visit or vacation and supports the process of cultural competence development and social justice requires a program that provides what Kottler (2012) calls a transformative travel experience. Real transformation takes place when individuals are required to solve problems in new ways when confronted with a different environment, and when challenged to develop new and stronger relationships, see their lives through the eyes of others. It is only when connections are established that individuals self-reflect and humble themselves in order to learn from others and start true transformations.

### **Study Abroad Programs in Counseling**

A review of published and unpublished study abroad programs reflected the range of structures available in counseling and related fields. Programs vary in location, duration, purpose, and teaching and evaluation strategies. Some programs declared their emphasis in cultural competence in general (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Jaoko,

2010), others in advocacy and social justice (Cordero, & Negroni Rodrigues, 2009; Fairchild, Pillai, & Noble, 2012), and some have a service learning focus (Tomlinson-Clarke, & Clarke, 2010; West-Olatunji, Goodman, Mehta, & Templeton, 2011). A few programs are specifically designed for counseling (Jurgens, & McAuliffe, 2004; McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2012) and some of them are centered on practicum or internship experiences abroad (Alexander, Krucsek, & Ponterotto, 2005).

These programs include several teaching and evaluation strategies to achieve their proposed objectives. There are three activities that were frequently mentioned in the reviewed programs: lectures (Cordero et al., 2009; McDowell et al., 2012), site visits (Cordero et al., 2009; Fairchild et al., 2012; Jaoko, 2010; McDowell, et al., 2012; West-Olatunji et al., 2011), and journal reflections (Alexander et al., 2005; Jaoko, 2010; Jurgens, & McAuliffe, 2004; West-Olatunji et al., 2011). All programs included orientation and debriefing sessions that vary in length and content. In addition, some of the programs included standardized normative measures such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (Anderson, et al., 2006), and the Multicultural Awareness/Knowledge/Skills Survey to assess cultural competence development (Fairchild et al., 2012).

### **Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence**

Sue's 1982 position paper has been widely cited in the literature and has become the foundation of cultural competence development. His article presented a thorough list of the characteristics of a culturally skilled counseling psychologist. This set of characteristics was organized into three categories: beliefs/attitudes, knowledge and skills. These three domains

composed the three dimensions of the Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence (Sue et al., 1982). Moreover, the tripartite model of multicultural counseling competence, which has been developed since then, has recently been identified as a foundation for conceptualizing and developing international counseling competencies. Cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and skills are essential not only locally but also internationally (Ng, Choudhuri, Noonan, & Ceballos, 2012).

Sue (2001) emphatically described the influence of sociopolitical factors in the mental health field and the risk for counseling and psychotherapy in becoming instruments of cultural oppression when defining culturally different life-styles as abnormal or imposing culturally bound interventions. He also stressed that psychology has failed in addressing issues of racism and discrimination, and has played a passive role as advocate of social justice. As a result, the Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence (MDCC) (Sue, 2001) was published as an integrative model to organize the multifaceted dimensions of cultural competence. The model includes three primary dimensions: (a) racial and cultural attributes of competence, (b) components of cultural development, and (c) foci of cultural development.

The MDCC highlights the importance of the interrelationship and interaction of the multiple components viewed from a systemic and holistic perspective in the path of becoming culturally competent. The model is based on a 3 x 4 x 5 factorial combination where three refers to awareness, knowledge and skills; four to individual, professional, organizational and societal; and five to ethnic groups in the United States. It is important to

mention that despite the MDCC's emphasis on ethnic minority groups in the U.S., it has been suggested that the model may also apply to other populations (Sue, 2001, p.816).

### **Race and Cultural Specific Attributes of Competence**

The first primary dimension responds to the need of improving multicultural understanding and sensitivity. The MDCC is based on three basic premises that work as a framework in understanding personal identity: (a) "All individuals are, in some respects, like all other individuals," (b) all individuals are, in some respects, like some other individuals," and (c) all individuals are, in some respects, like no other individuals" (Sue, 2001, p.793).

These three premises apply to every individual in all parts of the world. They highlight the reality of a global world without undermining the wonderful individualities of every person, group, community, region, and nation. These are individualities that within their interconnected nature, constitute the foundation of society's strength, knowledge and development.

Sue (2001) argues that mental health professionals have focused on either the individual level or the universal level of the Race and Cultural Competence dimension. Three main reasons have been identified as explanations for the lack of attention to the group level: (a) the traditional western individualistic perspective that values independence, autonomy, and uniqueness, (b) the history of psychology that generally has sought for universal standardized principles and laws to explain human behavior, and (c) the sociopolitical and normative reality through which discussing issues such as race, disability and sexual orientation bring up personal biases, social injustice, and oppression. An important premise

of the MDCC is that understanding the great influence of race, ethnicity, and culture in people's lives will reshape the mental health profession in terms of concepts, therapeutic relationship, ethical codes and professional standards.

### **Components of Cultural Competence**

The second primary dimension of the MDCC refers to the categories of beliefs/attitudes, knowledge, and skills that have evolved since 1982. Most existing measures of cultural competence and some multicultural training programs have used this framework as a foundation for development and validation. Researchers have acknowledged the conceptual value of this three-domain structure. Furthermore, the MDCC operates from a set of five core principles: inclusion, fairness, collaboration, cooperation, and equal access and opportunity. These principles respond to the premise that multicultural competence should purposely involve social justice in support of a democratic and egalitarian society (Sue, 2001).

The primary dimension of Components of Cultural Competence in addition to some of the MDCC premises was the foundation for developing measures that seek to assess the cultural competence development of counselors based on the improvement in knowledge, attitudes, and skills such as The Cross-cultural Counseling Inventory-Revised, (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991), the Multicultural Counseling and Awareness Scale (Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Rieger, & Austin, 2002), the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (Sowdowski, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994), and the Multicultural Awareness-

Knowledge-Skills Survey (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991). All these measures have been widely used and tested to ensure reliability and validity.

### **The Foci of Cultural Competence**

The third and final primary dimension of the MDCC refers to the relationship between the individual and the organizational/system level. It emphasizes the struggle of training culturally competent professionals when the organizations, systems and environments operate from a monoculturally discouraging frame. The MDCC describes the need to operate from four main foci: individual, professional, organizational and societal. In order to accomplish competence within each foci, counselors need to overcome the related challenges. For example, at the individual level of foci, counselors need to work on their personal biases, prejudices and misinformation to continue their developmental process. At the professional level, counselors need to confront the culture-bound definitions and ethnocentric standards of ethics and practice to be able to make needed changes to better serve a diverse population. In terms of the organizational level, counselors should work together in making every organization move from monocultural to multicultural within its policies, practices, programs and structures. Ultimately, improvement at the societal level is expected when working together against ethnocentric monoculturalism ideologist and a biased interpretation of history and reality in the world (Sue, 2001).

**Individual level of foci.** Another assumption of the MDCC is that no one is born with a desire or intention to be biased or prejudiced. Misinformation and negative behaviors are learned, and imposed by processes of social conditioning. This assumption relates to the

individual level of foci and conveys the message that these patterns can also be unlearned; individuals have the capability to change. The main obstacles in achieving personal cultural competence include: the difficulty to reflect on personal biases when people generally perceive themselves as moral and decent beings; a sense of politeness that can prevent open discussions and reflections about unpleasant racial realities; the imperative need for people to accept responsibility for actions or inactions that may have, directly or indirectly, caused injustice; and finally, the intense emotional process of healing and repentance that must be encountered to produce a positive transformation (Sue, 2001).

There are four principles to help achieve individual cultural competence: reflect on the validity of our own assumptions and beliefs by experiencing and learning from as many different sources as possible; recognize that gaining knowledge of any specific cultural group requires spending time with healthy and strong people from that culture; complement factual understanding of any particular group with experiential reality; and become constantly vigilant to manifestations of bias in one's self and others. Sue (2001) accentuates personal responsibility in seeking personal growth experiences in the real world and the imperative need for training programs to include such experiences to support the developmental process.

**Professional level of foci.** An additional premise of the MDCC regarding the professional level is that Eurocentric perspectives have historically dominated the mental health and education professions and are often inapplicable to other cultural groups. Using criteria based on individualistic perspectives to judge healthy functioning, well-adjustment, or development may result in harm to those with different cultural characteristics. The

profession must move towards transforming the code of ethics and standards of practice translating cultural competencies into actual practice (Sue, 2001).

**Organizational level of foci.** Multiculturalism is an individual and collective responsibility. It should be part of the agenda of every organization and system including mental health delivery systems, educational institutions, governmental agencies, and professional associations. Not surprisingly, most of the knowledge on multicultural organizational development (MOD) has been drawn from business and industry because they constantly have to adapt to the changing workforce and marketplace. The MDCC operates on the MOD's premise that organizations, just as individuals, vary in their views and are impacted by issues of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and gender. Organizations that value multiculturalism are better prepared to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings that are characteristic of monocultural institutions; they are also better equipped to serve a diverse clientele by offering culturally relevant services (Sue, 2001).

A multicultural organization functions under five central values: (a) a vision that reflects multiculturalism; (b) a mission, operations, products and services that portray the contributions of diverse groups; (c) strategies that ensure equal access and opportunities; (d) acknowledgement that equal access and opportunities does not mean equal treatment; and (e) continuous efforts to diversify their environment. Hence, mental health professionals should be aware of how organizational policies and practices affect them and their clients, and what changes are needed to develop cultural competence (Sue, 2001).

The final level in the foci of cultural competencies speaks of the society in general and the American society in particular. There are three obstacles for achieving cultural competence at this level. The first obstacle is the invisibility of ethnocentric monoculturalism; it refers to the belief that one cultural group is superior to the others. Thus, all the other cultural groups are inferior and their cultural heritages, customs, values, traditions, and languages are dismissed; therefore the dominant group holds the power to impose its standards and beliefs upon other cultural groups. These ethnocentric beliefs and values are imprinted and manifested in programs, policies, practices, structures, and institutions of the society, and result in a false assumption of universality (Sue, 2001).

The second obstacle lies in the power of one group to define reality from its single perspective, and it is captured in the concepts of white supremacy and cultural racism. This is the inability to self-reflect and become self-aware of the ethnocentric values that have dominated the history of the country and that cause stereotypes, oppression, and social injustice. Closely related to the second obstacle, the third one refers to the bias of historical legacy. Failing to understand that history from the dominant society has been imposed on other groups has contributed to ethnocentric monoculturalism and has strengthened erroneous beliefs such as the myth of meritocracy. This myth states that achievement is a result of individual efforts alone with no considerations of social injustice, oppression and power differences. Such assumptions need to be deconstructed to overcome the issues of ethnocentric monoculturalism (Sue, 2001).

### **MDCC Strengths**

Sue (2001) listed seven strengths of the model: (a) promotes identification of culture-specific and culture-universal domains, (b) helps on organizing education, practice and research efforts, (c) places the Euro-American culture on an equal level with other cultures, (d) indicates that cultural competence for one group may not be the same for other groups, (e) explains the need to play different roles in the process of becoming culturally competent, (f) helps minimized misunderstandings and miscommunications at the different foci levels, and (g) provides a structure that can be transferred to all populations.

The MDCC exposes the complexity of a diverse world and the challenges of achieving the cultural competence required to deliver effective mental health services locally and internationally. Every dimension adds truth to the reality of life and interactions, and as a whole there is a drive for reflection, social justice and change. The model is useful for better understanding reality, context, diversity and cultural competence. It seems clear that the MDCC should be used as a foundation and reflection model for cultural competence development. It helps those who use it to understand complex concepts, explore the reality within its context, and acknowledge the number of dimensions and layers involved in developing cultural competence.

### **Relational Cultural Theory**

The Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) complements the multicultural and social movements in the counseling profession as a valuable theoretical framework. RCT plays an important role in exploring how issues of sex role socialization, power, dominance,

marginalization, and subordination affect mental health and relational development (Comstock et al., 2008). The RCT and the MDCC respond to a tangible need of new theoretical frameworks to work effectively with diverse populations both locally and globally. Theoretical frameworks such as these, that are inclusive, comprehensive, and holistic in nature, may be conducive to the process of internationalization of the counseling profession (Tang et al., 2012).

RCT was created in 1976 by Jean Baker Miller after the publication of her groundbreaking book *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Through her work, Miller noticed the centrality of relationships in her clients' lives (Comstock et al., 2008) and built her theory on the premise that people develop through connections and relationships rather than individualism and separation (Duffey & Somody, 2011). Interestingly, RCT was built from the very core of its tenants, through a strong relationship of mutual empathy. Five experienced practitioners, all women built a "Monday night group" seeking to better understand their experiences listening to other women's live stories (West, 2005).

RCT proposes that people develop through connections. Relationships are the cornerstone of growth and it is through the complexity of relationships and the context of those connections that development can be assessed (Duffey & Somody, 2011). To better understand the essence of the theory, assumptions, tenants, key constructs, and therapeutic foundations are discussed in the following sections.

### **Assumptions and Tenets**

RCT has been constructed from several fundamental assumptions, all highlighting the relevance, centrality, and impact of relationships through the lifespan: (a) traditional models do not address relational experiences and needs of women and other minority groups; (b) healing takes place through mutually emphatic, growth-fostering relationships; (c) relational development through the lifespan is closely related to racial/cultural/social identity; and (d) the experiences of oppression (i.e., isolation, shame, humiliation, marginalization, micro-aggression) and social injustice are relational violations that cause suffering and trauma (Comstock et al., 2008).

RCT's assumptions and tenets align well with what the process of internationalization requires and aims to accomplish, that is, building strong, healthy and equalitarian relationships across cultures. RCT has seven core tenants: (a) people grow through and toward relationship through the lifespan, (b) movement proceeds towards mutuality characterized maturity, (c) psychological growth is characterized by relationship complexity, (d) mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are the core of growth-fostering relationships, (e) authenticity is necessary to establish real engagement in the relationship, (f) development takes place when all people in the relationship contribute to and benefit from it, and g) the goal of development is to increase relational competence (Comstock et al., 2008).

### **Key Constructs**

RCT's tenants become comprehensive when the key constructs of the theory are explained. The key constructs are: growth-fostering relationships, empathy, mutual empathy,

authenticity, connections and disconnections, the central relational paradox, relational images, relational resilience, and relational competence. These constructs unfold from one another and support the basic principles of the theory. The basic principles are: the need for connections with others, the reality of disconnection, and the importance of becoming relational competent to distinguish growth-fostering relationships from toxic or abusive ones capture the foundation of the theory (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

**Growth-fostering relationships.** These types of relationships are explained as those in which each party contributes, grows and makes the relationship a priority. As a result of developing growth-fostering relationships, each person involved feels a greater sense of “zest” (i.e., vitality, energy), a greater sense of worth, and a stronger connection with each other. They also feel more motivated to develop connections with others outside that relationship. Mutual empathy and relational authenticity are fundamental components of these growth-fostering relations. (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

**Mutual empathy.** The basic concept of empathy has been considered as an indispensable therapeutic condition, especially through the contributions of Carl Rogers; however, this cognitive and affective process of understanding others’ experience while reflecting on our own is not sufficient through the lens of RCT. The process of mutual empathy transcends the concept of empathy alone by highlighting a relationship where each person is affected and transformed by the connections with one another. Feeling and knowing that the other person can be actively involved and impacted by the relationship and the other person will result in feelings of empowerment, connection, self-reflection, and hope. Thus, to

develop this type of relationship, where all people contribute, benefit and develop, every person has to be authentic not only with the other but also with themselves. When we can be honest and kind to ourselves and others, we are more able to know, understand, and communicate our feelings and thoughts effectively (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

**Connections and disconnections.** RCT acknowledges that one of the challenges in working with strong connections is the reality of disconnections. The process of moving from connections to disconnections and back to new transformative connections is known as relational movement. Disconnections happen in every relationship for a variety of reasons. Those reasons include failure to respond emphatically or according to the person's expectations to situations of power deference and social injustices. However, working through those disconnections effectively will help individuals become and feel more competent in their relationships and increase their relational resiliency (Comstock et al., 2008; Duffey & Somody, 2011).

**Central Relational Paradox.** Although individuals yearn for connections throughout life, it is also true that in the midst of feelings of vulnerability, fear, shame, suspicion and mistrust people attempt to use strategies that result in further disconnection and isolation. These feelings are caused by perceived or real risk of hurt and rejection experienced by the person or group through their previous or current relational contexts. In the context of multicultural and international counseling, the same principle applies in building relationships with other cultures. This reality of human behavior is called the Central

Relational Paradox, and it is reinforced by the person's experience of social injustice and oppression (Comstock et al., 2008).

**Relational images.** Previous experiences, knowledge or lack of knowledge, preconceived notions, and bias build what RCT calls relational images. These images are expressions of the person's expectations and fears towards relationships with others. When individuals constantly receive messages of rejection and disconnection, their expectations of future relationships may become negative and distrustful. On the other hand, if they receive opportunities to build empathic relationships and connections with others, their expectations will be more positive. One of the goals of RCT is to support the process of redefining relational images and to prepare people to respond to negative and conflictive images or situations (Comstock et al., 2008).

**Relational resilience and relational competence.** The main goal of RCT is to support people in developing relational resilience and relational competence. A process of developing resilience in the lens of RCT refers to preparing individuals to seek and move towards growth-fostering relationships and mutual empowerment in the face of adversity. Learning how to connect and reconnect and shifting a traditional paradigm to a postmodern view of the concepts of life, growth, and well-being will help individuals develop relational resilience and therefore also relational competence. Relational competence involves the willingness to be vulnerable, open to a mutual learning process, conscious of the impact that we have in others, and able to choose mutuality and an in-depth relationships rather than a power-over, superficial or detached ones (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

## **RCT Therapeutic Foundations**

RCT describes the nature of the counseling relationship as collaborative, engaging, mutually empathic, and culturally sensitive to the client's experiences and to the therapeutic relationship itself. It also acknowledges that it is not a technique-driven theory, but that creative techniques can be successfully used in the therapeutic process. RCT also describes its therapeutic goal as the movement out of isolation through growth-fostering relationships and the development of relational resilience and relational competence (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

RCT supports the multicultural/social justice movement that strives for respect, collaboration, advocacy, and mutual understanding. It recognizes the pain and suffering caused by social injustice and the importance of the person's life experiences and context, in relation to their well-being. The concepts of multiculturalism and diversity are at the core of the theory. RCT considers the environment, the relationships, the culture and the background of individuals to help them acquire life skills. RCT has the potential not only to be a foundation for cultural competence development but a life changing reflection for every person involved, including researchers, practitioners, students, and counselor educators. It may infuse what is missing in the variety of relationships that are fundamental in education, including research, advising, and service not only locally but also globally (Comstock et al., 2008; Duffey, 2011).

## Chapter Summary

The process of internationalization requires a major commitment from all parties involved and must be embedded at every level of the institution to be effective and impactful. The benefits of international education have been proven advantageous throughout the years, and it is necessary to respond to the current needs of society. The counseling profession is being called to take part of the internationalization movement incorporating relevant knowledge and skills to practice, research, training and service. Internationalization cannot take place without real experiences, interactions, and sustainable partnerships that promote mutual understanding and cultural competence development.

MDCC and RCT provide significant foundations for the development of cultural competence nationally and internationally. The principles of MDCC and RCT speak of a diverse world that requires global citizens and cultural competent professionals unafraid of leaving their comfort zone and reaching, more than ever, for a profound understanding of one's self and others. The process of acquiring such skills must be intentional and should start with exposure. Counseling programs must offer opportunities to serve that purpose and model cultural competence through the opportunity to establish long lasting diverse relationships.

Study abroad education provides wonderful opportunities to learn, serve, and develop. Well-designed programs will contribute to the personal and professional growth of counselors in training, serve as a bridge among cultures and nations through growth – fostering relationships, and actively support the multicultural and social justice movements.

Understanding the experience, the critical events, the thoughts and emotions lived by the participants of a study abroad program will increase the understanding of their developmental process and help shed light on program improvements as well as suggest future research and practice ideas. A program infused with opportunities for exposure, knowledge gathering, and relationship building will be a transformative experience for every person involved in the process.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

Details about the research process of the study including sample selection, data collection, and data analysis are presented herein. A qualitative research paradigm was selected because it better tailored the purpose of understanding the meaning people attribute to their experiences. Qualitative research entails the study of people's lives and examination of their perspectives in context and was aligned appropriately with the purpose and the research questions of the present study (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 2008). More specifically, the case study approach was selected as the qualitative research design for the study. According to Ying (2014), this approach better fits studies that are designed to answer "how" type research questions in which the researcher has little or no control over behavioral events and that have a contemporary rather than historical focus. In addition, the case study approach better serves circumstances that required an in-depth description of a social phenomenon. In this study the phenomenon of interest was the experience of studying abroad.

Merriam (2009) characterized qualitative case studies as particularistic, descriptive, holistic, and heuristic. Case studies are particularistic because they are centered on a specific phenomenon, event, or, as in this study, a program. They are considered descriptive because the goal is to provide a rich description of the case under study. They are viewed as holistic because of an interest in the unit of study as a whole rather than in specific variables. Finally, case study research is also considered heuristic because the purpose is to acquire

understanding of the unit under study. Case studies provide the opportunity to discover new meaning, confirm knowledge, or expand the experience.

### **Research Design**

Case studies have been commonly used across several disciplines, including social sciences, to better understand complex real life experiences (Creswel, 2013; Noor, 2008). Case study research has been defined as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Merriam (2009) explained that in order for a study to be in fact a case study, the case needs to be intrinsically bounded. In other words, the case should present clear boundaries describing the following limits: (a) the number of people involved, (b) the amount of data collected, and (c) the time frame of the study. According to Lichtman (2013), the case study approach constitutes an in-depth examination of a case or several cases. It is the research’s task to define the case and set its boundaries. A case can be a single person but it can also be defined as a program, project, or setting.

The phenomenon of interest in this single case study was cultural competence development through study abroad programs. The unit or case selected for this study was the program “Counselor Education in Honduras” which was a faculty lead short-term study abroad program to Honduras conducted in the summer of 2012 (Casey & Houghton, 2010; Merriam, 2009). The program may be considered an exemplary or model case because it was the first study abroad effort developed in the targeted counselor education program

specifically designed for their students and alumni. Results of the present study may serve as foundation for evaluation, improvement, and decision making regarding study abroad initiatives in the targeted counselor education program. The research questions of the study were answered by analyzing data collected from different sources of information in order to obtain detailed and rich descriptions (Lichtman, 2013).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher decides what information to gather, and all information is filtered through and influenced by his or her knowledge, experience, and skills (Litchman, 2013). Due to the on-site data collection process in the present study, the importance given to organizational processes, and the active role of the researcher, the case study approach is characterized by considerable personal involvement of the researcher (Spath & Pine, 2004). In the present study design, the researcher was fully involved with the development, implementation, and evaluation of the study abroad program, and fully conducted the present case study.

### **Research Subjectivity Statement**

The research subjectivity statement also called reflexivity, has been defined as “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). The purpose of this section was to share my interest in the topic of study and my biases and assumptions that may have also influenced the interpretation of the findings.

The 2012 study abroad program was initiated by a personal interest in developing a relationship between North Carolina State University (NCSU) and the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) in Honduras. I initiated conversations with the Counselor Education program coordinator at NCSU regarding my personal interest until the initiative became the first study abroad program for counselor education students at NCSU. I was at the time of the program, an international student at NCSU. I was born and raised in Honduras, held a bachelor's degree in education with a major in school counseling from the UPNFM and a master's degree, also in school counseling from a graduate school in the U.S. In addition, I was also a faculty member of the school counseling program at the UPNFM in Honduras and had worked in the university for four years before beginning my doctoral studies.

Since the program ended I have continue to work on the internationalization process of the College of Education at NCSU. I was able to support and accompany a group of teacher education students to Costa Rica for another short term study abroad program and have support the organization of three teaching abroad programs offered by NCSU to China, Brazil, and Russia. I have also continue my involvement with the Office of International Service were I have had the opportunity to learn more regarding receiving international students and supporting their adjustment process and academic success. I have also established strong connections with the National Board of Certified Counselors International (NBCC-I) and the International Registry of Counselor Education Programs (IRCEP). The NBCC-I sponsored the counseling conference in Honduras on 2012 and again in 2013. I have

served as a liaison between the NBCC-I and the UPNFM promoting the relationship between both institutions that have resulted on a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 2013. In addition, I have started to work with IRCEP as a member of their steering committee supporting the development of the counseling profession around the world.

As a counselor, Person Centered and Gestalt theories have guided my professional path. However, I cannot deny the western traditional roots of these theories and the need to enrich them with a postmodern, multicultural, holistic and comprehensive view of the world in order to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century. I believe that the theoretical framework of a counselor should be responsive not only to theory per se but also to one's own self. It is important to acknowledge that every person is unique therefore, even when using the same set of theories and techniques, the way to make them alive will be somehow different. The Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence (MDCC, Sue, 2001) and the Relational Counseling Theory (RCT, West, 2005) have become part of my professional and personal framework, offering a valuable emphasis on development, self-reflection, and relationship building.

Various travel experiences, professional training and my professional career path, in addition to interactions with different cultures and the personal experience of being an international student have enhanced my interest in cultural competence development. Personal experience, relationships, and training lead to the belief that the harmonious combination of who we are and how we see the world influence how we approach life. Personality, values and beliefs, as well as every life experience shape who we are as a person

and as a professional. Our self-identity, worldview and career development are certainly interconnected. Every learning experience in the field shapes our personal life and view of the world. As counselor educators we have the responsibility to support the learning process of future counselors by helping them see a world that is bigger than their own. These experiences in addition to a detailed review of the available literature led to my strong belief that cultural immersion experiences such as study abroad programs offer a valuable opportunity for exposure, relationship building, and knowledge acquisition that may significantly influence cultural competence development.

### **Participants**

The potential participants of this study were the 10 counselor education students that were enrolled in the 2012 Counselor Education in Honduras program. Ages of the participant vary from 23 to 46 years old; 70% were in their 20s at the time of the program. Six were African Americans, three were Caucasian, and one was Native American. Four of the participants were enrolled in a clinical mental health counseling program, two in a school counseling program, two in a college counseling program, and one was in a counseling psychology program. One of the students participating in the study abroad program was not invited to participate because she was not in a counselor education program. Four of the participants were from NC State, one was from UNC Pembroke, three from NC Central University, one from LaSalle University, and one from University of Missouri-Kansas City. Two of the participants were men and eight were women.

The sample is considered a convenience sample because the participation in the study was voluntary and constricted to the number of participants in the 2012 program to Honduras. The 10 counselor education students that were enrolled in the 2012 Counselor Education in Honduras program were invited to participate in the study. After confirming email addresses, the researcher sent a formal email invitation that included a link to the informed consent and the follow up survey. Participants were also informed that they had the opportunity to win a twenty-five dollars Target gift card. The drawing was held after data collection was completed.

Eight of the ten students that participated in the 2012 program agreed to participate in the study. Table A.1 presents a summary of their demographic information (see Appendix A). Names were replaced for pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The researcher assigned pseudonyms that attempted to match traditionally used names according to gender and ethnicity that were also short and easy to remember.

### **Annie**

Annie was 23 years old at the time of the program, she identified herself as a white female, and she was studying her master's degree in college counseling. She did not travel before Honduras but has traveled for leisure upon return.

### **Chris**

Chris was 25 years old, identified himself as a Caucasian male, and was a student in the clinical mental health master's program. He did not have opportunities to participate in any study abroad programs before Honduras, but he has been able to travel since then.

**Cloe**

Cloe was 27 years old, identified herself as African American, and was enrolled in the clinical mental health master's program. She did not participate in any other study abroad program before Honduras and had traveled since then.

**Elroi**

Elroi was 46 years old, identified himself as a black male, and was enrolled in the clinical mental health counseling master's program. Honduras was his first study abroad opportunity and has not traveled since then.

**Hannah**

Hannah was 28 years old, identified herself as an African American female, and was an alumnus from the clinical mental health counseling master's program. She did not participate in any other study abroad program before or after her experience in Honduras.

**Kayla**

Kayla was 25 years old, identified herself as an African American female, and was studying her master's degree in college counseling. She had not traveled before or after her experience in Honduras.

**Laila**

Laila was 32 at the time of the program, identified herself as an African American/black female, and was a student in the school counseling master's program. She traveled to Scotland before her experience in Honduras and since then she had the opportunity to travel again as part of her coursework.

**Mary**

Mary was 34 years old, identified herself as a Caucasian female, and was an alumnus of the clinical mental health master's degree. She did not travel before or after the program in Honduras.

**Instrumentation**

Case study research does not rely on any special method for data collection or data analysis. Researchers may choose to utilize any and all methods that seem pertinent to their research (Merriam, 2009). In the present study, data was collected through three different sources of information: (a) extant journals entries; (b) a follow up survey; and (c) extant documentation about the program. The journals and documents concerning the study abroad program constitute archival data collected for course/program evaluation purposes.

**Journal Entries**

Participants were asked to write journal entries throughout the program. They were given daily prompts to help guide their reflection process (see Appendix B). Participants submitted their entries by email or directly uploading the file to a Moodle project site designed specifically for the program. Only the program director and program assistant had access to the files and they provided feedback to the students in order to enhance the reflection process. The prompts were developed by the program director and program assistant based on a review of the available literature regarding study abroad programs, their professional experiences, and the program's objectives and itinerary.

Including the assignment of writing journals responded to the findings in the literature that states that well-designed study abroad programs, that include academic learning, field activities, and *reflections*, may contribute to cultural competence development (Jaoko, 2010). In addition, one of the underlying purposes of the program was to create not just another study abroad trip but to develop a true cultural immersion experience. An experience that increase understanding of diverse communities, promote self-awareness, and reduced biases (Alexander et al., 2005; Canfield et al., 2009; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005). Self-reflections support the students' process of making sense of the world around them and understanding their own feelings, beliefs, behaviors, and biases (Carey, 2007). Self-reflection as part as a cultural immersion experience is intended to help develop appreciation for others and understanding of different cultures and social realities (Genor & Schutle, 2002; Komins & Nicholls, 2003).

Journal reflections have been widely used on study abroad programs in the mental health field. Journals entries responded to the nature and purpose of the study as well as to the daily activities of the specific program (Alexander et al., 2005; Jaoko, 2010; Jurgens, & McAuliffe, 2004; West-Olatunji et al., 2011). Journal entries may also respond to the developmental process of the group and can serve to challenge students' current thinking (Jurgens, & McAuliffe, 2004) and consciousness stage (West-Olatunji et al., 2011). Entries have also been designed to reflect specifically on cultural components such as assumptions, values, and biases; and to help processing personal reactions to lived experiences (Alexander et al., 2005).

Four of the journal entries written by each participant were selected to be part of the present study. These journal entries represent a time line of the program and the developmental process of the participants. These four entries were pre-determined and designed to capture the developmental process of the participants and as part of the program evaluation. These entries referred to expectations, first impressions, self-reflections, and final reflections of the participants. The rest of the journal entries were designed and adjust on-site based on the daily activities. The four selected journals were related to research questions one, two, and three of this study: (a) How did the 2012 study abroad program Counselor Education in Honduras support the cultural competence development of the counselor education participants? (b) What powerful learning experiences of the study abroad program have been assigned more meaning by the participants? and (c) How did the short-term study abroad program influence the perception of participants regarding their cultural identity? The sequencing of the four selected journal entries was as follows:

1. The first journal was requested prior to the trip as part as the pre-departure orientation process. Most articles regarding study abroad programs emphasize the importance of orientation and reflection for the success of the program (Alexander et al., 2005; Cordero et al., 2009; Fairchild et al., 2012; Jaoko, 2010; Jurgens, & McAuliffe, 2004; McDowell, et al., 2012; West-Olatunji et al., 2011). Students were presented with the following guidelines: “*Reflect about your expectations and goals for this experience. How do you expect this experience to be, how are you preparing for it and what do you plan to achieve?*”

2. The second entry was written upon arrival to Honduras on May 13, 2012 to capture the students' first impressions of their study abroad experience. The pre-arrival journal and the first impressions journal serve as a base line to explore the transformation of the participants throughout the experience (Kottler, 2012). The prompt for this entry was as follows: *“Take your time to reflect on all your experiences in this first day of our adventure. Talk about your emotions, thoughts and cultural differences in your journey, and describe your first impressions of Honduras.”*
3. The third journal entry included in this study was requested on the seventh day of the 13-days trip to Honduras. This journal entry prompt was designed to give participants the opportunity to reflect exactly half way through the program. The prompt is particularly related to the impact of study abroad programs in the self-awareness and self-confidence of the participants mentioned in the literature (Jaoko, 2010). The prompt was: *“We have experienced a lot in a very short time. Please write yourself a letter overviewing (in as much detail as might be helpful to you and in your own style) the experiences we've had/your personal experiences. What have some of your highlights been? What are some key things you have learned about yourself? What are some impacts on your personal and/or professional development?”*
4. The fourth entry was requested in the form of a final reflection written upon return to the U.S. It was important to give the students opportunity to reflect on

the program upon completion and capture their impressions. Jaoko (2010) affirmed that study abroad programs, when well-designed, may influence cultural competence. This journal entry may present some evidence of the development of the participants. Prompts for the final reflection were: *“Reflect upon your experience addressing your multicultural awareness, knowledge, and how these will improve your multicultural competence (how will this awareness and knowledge influence your skills, what will you do to build on your knowledge in practice). Keep your response to a maximum of 5 pages in length (double space), adhere to APA, 6th ed., and limit grammatical and spelling errors.”*

### **Follow Up Survey**

After the analysis of the journal entry data, a follow up survey was sent to the participants (see Appendix C). The survey items were aligned with the purpose and research questions of the study; based on the available literature and previous research; and responded to the theoretical framework of the study on cultural competence development.

1. *What are the most powerful learning experiences that you remember from your study abroad program to Honduras?* Jaoko (2010) mentioned the importance of a well-designed program and the impact of experiences that will make a travel experience transformative.
2. *Please share the story of what has happened since you came back from Honduras?*  
The literature highlights the need to explore the long term impact of study abroad programs (Anderson et al., 2006).

3. *How did the study abroad program to Honduras influence what you think about the world and about yourself?* Culturally competent professionals are described as those involved in the process of becoming self-aware and aware of others. This item is designed to explore the participants' perceptions in this regard (Sue & Sue, 2003).
4. *Please describe any impact that the study abroad experience in Honduras has had on your life (personally and professionally)?* This item is based on the assertions that short term programs may have a positive and long lasting impact on cultural competence (Anderson et al., 2006; McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2010).
5. *Anything else about your study abroad experience you would like to add?* The final item gives the participants the opportunity to elaborate on their responses considering that study abroad programs have been declared one of the most impactful forms of cultural immersion experiences (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009).

Item number one of the survey represents the second research question of the study: What powerful learning experiences of the study abroad program have been assigned more meaning by the participants? The aim of this question is to explore the learning experiences that the participants are able to remember over time and are perceived by them as most powerful. The aim of item number two is to capture the story of what has happened in the lives of the participants approximately 18 months after returning to the U.S. This item relates specially to research question number four: How did the study abroad program impact the participants' perception of themselves and their professional career upon return?

Item number three relates to the participants' identity and cultural competence. It pertains to research questions number one and three: How did the 2012 study abroad program Counselor Education in Honduras support the cultural competence development of the counselor education participants? and How did the short-term study abroad program influence the perception of participants regarding their cultural identity?

Item number four relates to cultural competence and to research question number one, in addition to research question number four: How did the study abroad program impact the participants' perception of themselves and their professional career upon return? Finally, item number five gives participants the opportunity to elaborate in their statements or add additional comments that seem important or valuable to them.

### **Documentation**

Available documents regarding the program was examined according to their relevance to the present study. According to Yin (2014) the most important use of documents in case studies is to corroborate and/or expand information from other sources. For this study four extant documents were examined to expand the overall knowledge of the study abroad program and its context: (a) program syllabus (see Appendix D), (b) program statement of purpose (see Appendix E), (c) program itinerary (see Appendix F), and (d) program evaluations (see Appendix G). The first three documents were created by the program director and program assistant based on literature review, other programs in the field, and their expertise. The program evaluation instrument was created by the Study Abroad Office (SAO) of NCSU as part of their mission and goals. SAO's mission is to provide academically

well-matched, immersive experiences abroad ensuring safety and accessibility, and their primary goals include developing and administering programs that enhance intercultural learning outcomes and support academic units with their discipline-specific programs (<http://studyabroad.ncsu.edu/about-us/mission-statement/>). The evaluation instrument designed by SAO for all NCSU study abroad programs given to the program coordinator. The instrument was anonymous and administered on site the last day of the program. It was collected and sealed by one of the students in the group. The sealed envelope was submitted to the study abroad office directly. SAO sent the instruments back to the program director and program assistant upon revision.

### **Procedure**

Prior to initiating the study, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina State University was obtained. Upon IRB approval the data collection and data analysis initiated.

### **Data Collection**

As previously stated, three sources of information were used in this study: (a) journal entries, (b) documentation, and (c) follow up survey. Journal entries and documentation were collected from the program archives. Participants' names were replaced by pseudonyms to protect their identity. All participants from the 2012 study abroad program to Honduras were invited to participate in the study through an electronic message containing access to the informed consent and the follow up survey. A survey was selected rather than an interview in an attempt to offer participants more time to elaborate their responses and more freedom to

reply without potential influence from the investigator as she was the program assistant in their experience in Honduras. Information was stored on a password protected and encrypted computer storage device.

An informal message was first sent to the students to obtain or confirm their preferred email address. The formal invitation message was sent on December 8, 2013. A reminder was sent on January 17, 2014, and individual messages were sent to those who had not yet reply on January 24. Recruitment efforts resulted in the participation of eight students from the total of ten potential participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative researchers are not interested in analyzing predefined variables. Rather, they seek to understand the participants' perspectives, to explore human behaviors in context, and to present a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2002).

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative data analysis refers to the process of preparing and organizing the data, reducing the data into themes by coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data through narratives, tables, or figures. Particularly in case study research, the analysis should result in a detailed description of the case and its context.

The analysis was conducted fully by the researcher. Some technology tools were employed to assist with the organization of the data such as spreadsheets, word-processing, and word-frequency visualization tools (Excel, Word, and Wordle). The primary sources of data in this study were journal entries, documents, and surveys. Each data source was logged, hand-coded, and analyzed to identify emerging themes. Data sources were analyzed

independently first and then collectively in order to present a more comprehensive description of the case. Codes were not determined in advance but were defined as they surfaced from the data in relationship to the research questions, the literature review, and the conceptual framework.

The data analysis of this study followed the process suggested by Creswell (2013) with his specifications for case study research. It is important to note that Creswell considers the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing as a spiral endeavor where all stages are interrelated and often simultaneous. The process begins with the data and concludes with a narrative of the case. In between, the researcher will move in different analytic circles rather than following a fixed linear movement. More specifically the study followed the steps below:

1. Organized data: created and organized data files.
2. Read data: read available data making margin notes to create initial codes.
3. Described data: described case and context.
4. Classified data: established themes using categorical aggregation of codes.
5. Interpreted data: further analysis using direct interpretation and develop naturalistic generalizations of the lessons learned from the analysis. Direct interpretation
6. Represented data: present an in-depth description of the case using narrative, tables and figures.

Categorical aggregation refers to the process of seeking a collection of instances in the data from which meaning may emerge. In this case meaning emerged from the individual analysis of each source of information and from the collective analysis guided by the research questions. Direct interpretation, on the other hand, refers to analyzing a single instance without identifying multiple instances. Ultimately, both processes helped the researcher in interpreting the data and developing naturalistic generalizations. (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). These generalizations are naturalistic rather than propositional; they are presented to the readers for them to elaborate their own interpretations. Naturalistic generalizations constitute the lessons learned from the study from which readers can learn, relate to, or use for their own projects (Stake, 1995).

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to issues of internal validity, reliability, and external validity or generalizability. There are several strategies that can improve trustworthiness, and in combination with an awareness of ethical issues, they contribute to validity and reliability of the study. The meaning of these concepts of quality is certainly different than the concepts utilized in quantitative research; the definitions and processes of achieving these concepts continue to be revised and changed, especially through a postmodernist view of scientific inquiry. In more traditional terms, internal validity in qualitative research refers to congruency between the findings and reality; understanding the perspectives of those involved, studying the complexity of human behavior in context, and presenting a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon. Reliability refers to the consistency or

dependability of the results in relation to the collected data. Lastly, external validity or generalizability refers to the learning driven from the analysis and the transferability of the knowledge to different situations (Merriam, 2002; 2009).

### **Internal Validity or Credibility**

Trustworthiness in the present case study was addressed through a variety of strategies (see Table A.2 in Appendix A). Triangulation is one of the most used strategies to meet internal validity or credibility. In this study triangulation took place through the utilization of multiple sources of information including journals, surveys, documents, and available literature. Every source of information was analyzed independently first allowing the codes and themes to emerge freely, and then checked against each other guided by the research questions of the study. It is important to note that in postmodern research the concept of triangulation has been updated to the concept of crystallization (Merriam, 2002; 2009). Triangulation assumes the existence of a center point that can be triangulated; while crystallization acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, a multidimensional view of the world (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Member checking is also an important strategy to support the internal validity or credibility of the study. All participants were invited to review the preliminary results of the analysis (see Table A.3 and Table A.4 in Appendix A). This strategy gave participants the opportunity to validate the information and present their opinions and suggestions to better capture their experiences. A message was sent electronically on February 27, 2014 requesting the participants to review the information provided and to send their opinions by March 5,

2014. Six of the participants responded with their comments. Annie responded, “I agree with the information presented and I cannot think of anything to add.” Mary said “I read through your summaries and feel that they do really represent our experience.” Kayla mentioned “I did have a chance to review the document & I think it captures the overall experience very well!” Laila said “It looks good.”

Hannah elaborated her comments in relation to what had deemed more meaning for her, “The survey: I definitely more so relate to the reflections that touch on the injustices/issues of poverty that I saw in Honduras, social justice/Counseling, and then building multi-cultural competency for my professional gains. There appeared to be a lot of first-timer experiences reflected in the survey which I think is great but is not what I related to as much. However, I would like to encourage/note (if I did not before) the need for longer study abroad opportunities like these which can truly foster multi-cultural competency, immersion, and even research. I left feeling like I had only hit the tip of the iceberg & was left desiring more related experiences to build my professional competency serving the Latino population. The Honduran experience invoked many feelings, and I am left wanting more and trying to figure out ways to gain such experiences here or abroad in LA one day! However in regards to the general survey, I think that it does a great job of capturing the essence of our feelings and experiences!”

Linwood reflected, “As I read the Summary of Findings more closely, I see the comments about the value of the professional relationships that were established and maintaining the open lines of communication. In my personal and professional reflections

since the Trip, my multicultural awareness has deepened, as I speak about Honduras and the trip as much as I can with my students and colleagues [...]. The entire study abroad experience has changed me for the better professionally in regards to diversity and multicultural counseling implications. This opportunity needs to be a mainstay in the Counselor Ed. Dept. [...]"

In addition to member checking, the researcher's position is also a significant strategy for validation. The researcher presented her own biases, experiences, and assumptions that may have influenced the study in the Research Subjectivity Statement section. This statement will help the readers to better understand the researcher's interpretations. Lastly, an additional strategy for validation called peer review or peer examination was already built in this study as it constitutes a doctoral dissertation. The dissertation process already included a research committee that closely reviewed the process and the findings of the study to ensure quality and trustworthiness (Merriam, 2009).

### **Reliability or Consistency**

Reliability in qualitative research holds a different meaning than in quantitative inquiry. Rather than focusing on whether or not the study can be replicated with similar results, qualitative research focuses on the consistency between the data collected and the results of the study. In other words, the study will be considered dependable if there is consistency between findings and presented data. Triangulation, peer examination, and the investigator's position served as strategies to support both validity and reliability of the study (Merriam, 2009).

### **External Validity or Transferability**

External validity also differs from its definition in quantitative research. Qualitative research is not interested in generalizing to large populations; instead, it seeks an in-depth understanding of the particular phenomenon under study. In qualitative research external validity refers to transferability from the perspective of the person seeking information rather than from the investigator perspective. The investigator is responsible for providing sufficient information for the readers about the study; it is the readers' responsibility to assess applicability of the study in their own situations and context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

The most common strategy used to attest for transferability is presenting a rich, thick description of the study. In this case, a detailed description of the setting, the participants and the findings of the study are presented. Quotes from the participant journals and surveys, in addition to the program documents, serve as evidence of reliability or transferability (Merriam, 2009).

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

The ultimate goal of a case study approach is to provide an in-depth description of the social phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014), in this case the 2012 study abroad program to Honduras. This chapter presents the results of the study providing a comprehensive description of the 2012 study abroad program in counselor education, the context in which the program was implemented, the participants' perspectives of the experience, and the responses to the established research questions emerged from the data.

### **Honduras**

The country of Honduras was selected as the destination for the 2012 study abroad program in counselor education. The idea of a study abroad arose from the counselor education program coordinator and the researcher of the present study. The researcher is from Honduras, was at that time of the program an international student at the leader institution, and was also a former faculty member of the host institution in Honduras in their school counseling program. Her strong ties to the country and the institutions involved were instrumental for the successful completion of the program. Honduras is at the heart of Central America, bordering the Caribbean Sea to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the south, Guatemala to the west, El Salvador to the southwest, and Nicaragua to the southeast. Honduras' geographical area is 112,492 square kilometers, approximately the size of the state of Tennessee. It has a population of approximately eight million, its national language is Spanish, its government is democratic, and it is predominantly catholic. Regarding access from the United States, a direct two to three hours flight from Miami or Atlanta lands in the

capital city of Tegucigalpa (Embassy of Honduras in Washington DC,

<http://www.hondurasemb.org/>).

The program was implemented mostly in the capital city of Tegucigalpa where the main campus of the host institution is located. The group also traveled to the northern part of the country for the purpose of being immersed in the culture and experienced diversity within Honduras. The group visited two of the host university regional campuses, one in the city of San Pedro Sula known as the industrial capital of the country, and the other one in the city of La Ceiba, known as the bride of Honduras for its tropical flare. The group ended the trip enjoying a relaxing Caribbean weekend at Roatán. Roatán is the largest of the northern islands and one of the prime touristic destinations in the country especially for its coral reef (see Figure 1 for a map of Honduras and the route traveled on site).



The islands, known as Bay Islands, are known for their tropical beauty and also by their habitants. Roatán is inhabited by indigenous populations, including an English-speaking Creole group and a small number of Garífunas which constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in the country and in the Central American region. The socioeconomic, cultural, and even political position of the Garífunas in the country is very complex. They have a particular culture within the country and the region; they believe in the value of indigenous tourism and have a prominent place in the national folklore. The Garifunas relate to their African origins and also recognize their uniqueness, preserving their particular language and customs. They also struggle with protecting and sharing their identity as well as with the socioeconomic situation of the country (Kirtsoglou & Theodossopoulos, 2004). The participants of the study abroad program were able to experience the island as a touristic destination but also as a very diverse part of Honduras. They were able to tour the island, see living conditions of the locals, enjoyed an artistic presentation from a Garífuna performance group, and even danced with the locals accompanied the sound of their drums.

### **The Host Institution**

The Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) was the host institution for the program due to its educational nature and its connection to the researcher. The UPNFM is a state university founded in 1956. It is the only institution of higher education in the Central American region dedicated to training teachers. It offers 23 undergraduate programs, 13 masters, and one doctoral program in education. It is member of several international professional organizations and has established relationships with

universities around the world including countries such as Spain, Germany, and the United States, as well as several countries in Latin America. Currently, the UPNFM has a population of 30,000 students around the country and has presence in all main cities (UPNFM <http://www.upnfm.edu.hn/>).

The University offers an undergraduate degree in education with an emphasis in school counseling. The current curriculum, reviewed in 2008, includes three major areas: general knowledge which includes courses such as Spanish, history, and sociology; pedagogical foundations, which focus on the development of teaching competencies with courses such as curriculum design and evaluation; and finally, the area of specialization. The specialization of school counseling contains 16 courses such as individual counseling, group counseling, career development and ethics. In addition, the program also includes three courses dedicated specifically to practicum/internship under supervision lasting approximately 12 months (Plan de Estudios, 2008). Participants in the study abroad program spent most of their time at the main campus in Tegucigalpa interacting with Honduran faculty and undergraduate students in the school counseling program. They were also able to see the campus of San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba and interact with faculty and students in those regions.

### **Counselor Education in Honduras: A Cultural Immersion Experience**

Education abroad is based on the conviction that students who have been immersed in a foreign culture will benefit greatly from the experience, personally and professionally, in ways that cannot be accomplished in their home country. As a result of that experience,

students will be better prepared for the challenges of a globalized world (Brockington et al., 2005). Acknowledging their responsibility as training institution and the potential benefits of an immersion experience, the counselor education program at North Carolina State University designed its first study abroad program.

Although students in the program were able to create their personal immersion experiences as independent studies or attended other study abroad programs, this was the first structured opportunity to participate in a study abroad program tailored specifically to graduate students in the counseling field. The idea of creating such a program emerged organically but also intentionally as a connection between two countries through the researcher, an international student in the U.S. The process of creating this faculty-lead short-term study abroad program was initiated in 2011 and implemented in 2012.

The program was designed after a careful review of the available literature and by following the guidelines of the university's study abroad office. The implementation of the program took place in May 2012. The program included pre-departure orientation through on-line communications and one face-to-face session, 13-days in the destination country, Honduras, and one face-to-face debriefing meeting at a local Latin American restaurant upon return to the U.S. Several documents were created during the design stage of the program including the course syllabus (see Appendix D), the statement of purpose (see Appendix E), and the program itinerary (see Appendix F). These documents constitute the foundation of the program and present the overall planning.

## **Documentation**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The statement of purpose focused on providing innovative learning opportunities that contributed to the preparation of multiculturally competent counseling professionals. The program was designed to promote self-awareness, mutual understanding and reflection. Its objectives highlight the three major components of higher education: education, research, and service including several tasks and activities throughout the program (see Appendix E). The program objectives are well aligned with the objectives of the course, the conceptual framework of the college of education at the university, and the national standards established by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (see Table A.5 in Appendix A). In addition, according to the documentation and the knowledge of the researcher, the program also followed the standards of good practice for short-term study abroad programs created by The Forum (see Table A.6 in Appendix A).

### **Program Syllabus**

The program syllabus was created to guide the academic component of the program. It followed the university standards and incorporated the conceptual framework of the college of education. The syllabus included a detailed description of the course, information about the instructor of record (program director) and teaching assistant (program assistant), recommended textbooks, and provided course objectives. The syllabus also included a

thorough description of the teaching strategies, course requirements, evaluation strategies, and proposed course content agenda.

### **Program Itinerary**

The itinerary (see Appendix F) provides an overview of the 13 days spent in Honduras. Every day the group was assigned time to meet and reflect on the activities of the day, students also completed daily journal assignments to support the reflection process. The first day was dedicated to travel. Students flew mostly from Atlanta or Miami taking about three hours to arrive in Tegucigalpa. The program assistant arrived to the country a week earlier to have all the logistics organized and welcome the group upon arrival. The group was taken to the hotel, had lunch, time to rest, and ended the day with a group meeting for on-site orientation and dinner. Day two was spent at the host institution, meeting authorities, faculty and students from the school counseling program. The group was always accompanied by at least one faculty member and a group of Honduran student volunteers. A couple of the Honduran students spoke English and helped with the everyday translations and support. Most of the activities in the itinerary were achieved except for a cultural visit to downtown that included the Museum of National Identity; instead, the group had the opportunity to visit the rain forest hiking along the La Tigra national park.

Students had the opportunity to listen to different guest speakers discussing a variety of topics. They heard about the host university and the educational system in Honduras from the dean of the Faculty of Humanities. They discussed the advising process available to Honduran students that want to study in the U.S. a service provided by the U.S. embassy in

Honduras through a program called Education U.S.A. In addition, participants were able to hear from a representative of the U.S. embassy in Honduras sharing the perspective of living in the country and interacting with the locals.

During the first three days in the country the group was able to visit three different schools. The first one was a K-12 school founded to serve as a practicum and research center for the pedagogical university. School teachers are under the university faculty category and required to acquire the same education, meet the same standards, and they receive the same basic benefits. The school has historically been one of the higher ranked in the country and is the first choice for practicum and internship placements. The second school visited was also a K-12, private bilingual school where instruction is in English taught mostly by foreign native English speaking teachers. Finally, the group visited a traditional public school with grades from seventh to twelfth. The group was able to talk with administrators, school counselors and students in all three schools. The student demographics, resources, and school conditions vary greatly from one school to the other and represented the socioeconomic disparity of the Honduran society.

The group arrived in Honduras on a Sunday, spent Monday through Wednesday doing site visits, listening to guest speakers and getting to know the host institution. On Thursday the group departed from Tegucigalpa to the Northern part of the country. The first stop was in the city of San Pedro Sula, visiting the regional center of the host institution. This center also has a school counseling program and the group was able to have a meet their faculty and students. The second stop was in the city of La Ceiba where a smaller regional

campus is located. The group experienced campus tours, conversations with administrators, faculty and students, as well as a visit to the student services centers in all the three campuses.

The group traveled to Bay Islands on Friday afternoon by a public ferry having the opportunity to see the movement of the locals on the mainland and on the islands. The group spent Friday evening through Sunday in an all-inclusive hotel in the Caribbean beach at one of the most touristic places in the country, the island of Roatán. They were able to interact with foreigners visiting Honduras, enjoyed the natural beauty of the country, and experienced firsthand tourism in the country. However, as part of their stay they were also able to interact with the locals and see their living conditions outside the confinement of an all-inclusive hotel. One of the highlights of the trip was a folk dance presentation conducted by a Garífuna performance group. The performance was conducted in a small humble location in the middle of the island, sharing some of the traditions of the ethnic group of African descent. The American students were able to join the group in dancing and take pictures with the performers. The group departed the hotel at noon on Sunday and traveled back to the capital all afternoon.

Monday afternoon was dedicated to the service project. American students joined their Honduran peers in a mental health campaign at the university. Every American student chose a team of Honduran students to be a part of and together planned activities for the mental health campaign. The group did not have assigned translators for this activity; therefore, nonverbal communication was very important. Students were able to communicate

and had to use their basic language knowledge to support one another. The health booths included an aromatherapy and massage station, a healthy eating station with samples of health snacks, and a cathartic station with several activities for expressing emotions. All stations were located in the main hallway of the university and were available to the entire university community.

The program finished with a counseling conference. American students were required to attend the conference and to present programs. They were each assigned a Honduran student that spoke English either from the School counseling program or from the English education program. The conference was open to all students, alumni and faculty members in the counseling field. The event was initiated with a networking lunch and an opening ceremony. The visitors were officially welcomed by the university authorities; the program director was the keynote speaker of the event followed by a presentation by the school counseling program coordinator that addressed challenges and achievement of the program. The conference also included a presentation from Dr. Schweiger, vice-president of the National Board of Certified Counselors International (NBCC-I). NBCC-I has been an important supporter of the conference and the counseling program in Honduras ever since the 2012 visit.

Honduran faculty members presented sessions on topics such as educational communities, action research, and conflict resolution. While the American students presented topics on social justice, academic achievement, college life, and emotional stress among others. Forty five minutes were assigned for round table discussions on future plans. They

were four tables: Honduran students, American students, Honduran alumni, and faculty. Every table had time to discuss the value of the conference and their goals for the future. Each group shared their conclusions with the larger group. The conference ended with a closing ceremony filled with acknowledgements and messages of gratitude, followed by dinner and dancing. The following day was reserved for evaluation meetings, debriefing, and farewells. The group returned to the U.S. on Friday and the program assistant stayed behind to collect evaluation data, and discuss future plans with the host institution and the vendors in Honduras.

### **Program Evaluations**

During the evaluation time on site, students were asked to anonymously fill out an evaluation form provided by the Study Abroad Office (see Appendix G). One of the students collected the forms and sealed them in a provided envelope. The sealed envelope was sent directly to the Study Abroad Office upon return. The program director received scanned copies of the evaluations after the Study Abroad Office reviewed them; unfortunately, one of the 11 evaluation form copies was illegible resulting in a total of 10 forms analyzed in this study. The evaluation form is divided in three components: (a) a rating table of materials and services provided (see Table A.7 in Appendix A); (b) a set of nine open ended questions regarding the quality of the program; and (c) an overall numeric rating of the program in a scale of one (poor) to 10 (excellent).

Question 11 of the evaluation form read, “Taking all aspects into account, how would you rate the program?” From the 10 available forms, 50% of the participants rated the

program as excellent marking 10 in the rating scale. 30% marked nine, 1% marked eight, and 1% marked seven. Nine of the ten participants assigned a high rating for the overall quality of the program and only one of the participants assigned an average rating of seven. In addition, when asked if they would recommend the program to other students, all participants responded yes. Describing why they would recommend the program, students referred to the learning, growth, immersion, relationships, cultural knowledge, and professional development acquired by it. Students used statements such as:

“It facilitates growth and understanding, personally and professionally in a very brief amount of time,” “Without a doubt I would recommend this program to every student that is able to attend a study abroad experience,” “This trip has changed my life forever and given me a very important appreciation not only for Honduran culture but for all other minority population living in under privilege communities,” and “There isn't a better way to experience and learn about another culture than to go there and experience it first-hand.”

Regarding materials and services, 90% of the participants rated the publicity materials, the pre-departure orientation, the travel information and arrangements, the assistance with housing and meals, the facilities, and explanation of safety provided upon arrival as excellent or good. One hundred percent of the participants ranked the housing arrangements as excellent or good. Seventy percent of the participants rated excellent or good the on-site academic counseling and informal support. When asked for further comments on strengths or weakness regarding the materials and services listed in the evaluation form, the participants elaborated on three aspects: (a) good leadership as one of the strengths of the

program, (b) the need of more individual counseling on site, and (c) the need to improve the pre-departure information, especially regarding information about dress code and technology availability.

No crime or safety incidents were reported during or after the trip. When asked “where you a victim of any crime or experience any other safety incident while abroad?” all students wrote no (60%), not at all (1%), or not applicable (30%). Question six asked the students to describe their experience with the Study Abroad Office. Nine students described the experience as positive, using adjectives such as “professional, friendly, accurate, responsive, or thorough”. Five participants specifically describe the experience as “helpful”. Two participants noted that the contact with the office was minimal, and one did not answer the question. Question seven was not applicable to this program because it was designed to assess foreign language improvement. Question eight referred to the strengths and weaknesses of the program personnel. Seven students answered the question; five of them included positive comments regarding the program director and program assistant; one of them specifically commented in the “helpfulness, patience, and understanding” of the host faculty and students; and one student referred to needing more information during the orientation process regarding “the dress code and exit fee.”

Question four assessed how well the program structure, staff, and location helped the participants understand the host culture. Eight of the students described how well the program delivered “a useful immersion experience” and two students referred to the pre-departure orientation asking for more information regarding cultural issues. Examples of

these quotes include: “Would have like more information whether brochure or website for detailed cultural experience (ex. History of counseling/mental health in Honduras,” “Extremely well. I felt as one with the people and immersed in their culture,” “Everyday was a new adventure, we witnessed culture at every opportunity. From visiting the towns to stepping inside of the home of a local,” “Very, very well. The planning behind the scene that took place, exceeded all of my expectations. This program must become permanent.”

When describing the best aspects of the experience, six of the participants mentioned the relationships, three mentioned the immersion, two referred to the overall learning, and one mentioned the personal and professional impact. In regards to the least valuable aspect, six of the students implied that nothing was considered least valuable, and four of them each mentioned one of the following: amount of shopping and social events time, planning at times, language barriers, and the variety of level of engagement and experience among the participants. Finally, the answers to the last question of the evaluation form “additional comments and/or advice?” provided mostly compliments to the program and the leadership. One of the students described the overall program as “An absolutely amazing life-changing experience.” Suggestions included (a) including air fare in the program cost, (b) addressing student engagement with the participants, and (c) adding more service learning activities to the program.

### **Journal Entries**

Critical reflection has been associated with effective learning, cultural competence, and social responsibility. Reflective activities have been intentionally included in most study

abroad programs (Cordero et al., 2009; Fairchild et al., 2012; Jaoko, 2010; McDowell, et al., 2012; West-Olatunji et al., 2011). The 2012 program to Honduras included on-site group reflection meetings that allowed the participants to share, debrief, and ask questions. Students were also required to complete daily journals to promote self-reflection and awareness. Students were given prompts related to their daily activities to aid the process. Four of those journal entries were selected for analysis in the present study (see Appendix B for the journal entry prompts). The analysis was conducted in stages. First the data were organized for analysis purposes, changing original names to pseudonyms. The entire data was then read to gain an overview of the information; notes were taken separately to capture the process, the researcher's thoughts and reactions, and possible information for adding to the results and discussion sections. The initial codes and themes emerged freely from the data (Cresswell, 2013) and are presented on Table A.3 (see Appendix A).

### **Expectations Journal**

The first journal prompt was requested prior to departure. Students were asked to reflect on their expectations and goals for the experience. Students discussed five major themes in their first journal: expectations, goals, preparation for travel, feelings, and first time experiences. Overall, students expected a positive experience; but, they also expected it to be challenging. They expected learning, growth, cultural knowledge, and interactions as a result of the program, and also expected to be and feel outside their comfort zone, to experience a language barrier, and to be forced to pay close attention to non-verbal communications.

**Expectations.** Frank wrote “I expect this study abroad experience in Honduras to be unforgettable and a huge catalyst for personal, cultural, and professional growth,” Laila said “I expected the experience to be challenging but positive,” and Elroi mentioned “My expectations and goals for this study abroad experience are ones that will surely stimulate and challenge me mentally, while at the same time, challenging me to venture outside of my individual and professional comfort zones, broadening my multicultural perspectives.”

**Goals.** Some students also shared their goals. They talked about improving their cultural competence, sharing the experience back in the U.S., learning about the culture, and making an impact. Cloe mentioned “I plan to learn about the Honduran culture and meet some of the students. I would like to learn how I might be able to bridge the gap between the Honduran culture and the American culture in relation to counselor education.” Meanwhile, Hannah’s said “I am hoping to learn more about the African diaspora in Honduras, about the systems/institutions in Honduras and how it affects their natives, and learning about various challenges seen in the Counseling field,” and Annie described her goals as “I would like to achieve a greater appreciation for everything that I have in my life as well as a more culturally diverse viewpoint that I can share with my peers when I return. I would also like to be able to make some type of impact on at least one person’s life while in Honduras through our service project before the trips ends.”

**Preparation.** To prepare for the experience some students searched for information about the country and culture on their own and tried to keep a positive attitude. However, some students were less prepared and did not search for any information. Annie said “I have

been preparing for this trip by researching some of the different destinations we will be visiting while in Honduras, so that I will have a better idea of what to expect,” Hannah mentioned “I feel that I am preparing for this experience by keeping an open mind and also being eager to learn,” and Laila said “I have prepared for the study abroad through directly communicating with others as well as interacting with information.” On the other hand, Cloe stated “I don't think I really did anything to prepare for this trip. I feel like there really wasn't anything for me to do to prepare because I didn't know what to expect.”

**Feelings.** Students mentioned feeling anxious, excited, nervous, tired, nerve wracked, and looking forward to the experience. For instance, Hannah said “I am very excited to begin this experience, and I have great expectations in regards to this program,” Mary stated, “I am excited to start this adventure!,” Chris shared, “I am very excited to experience the Honduran culture,” and Cloe revealed, “At this time I'm not excited to fly, but I look forward to visiting Honduras.”

**First time experiences.** Some of the students also shared that this was their first study abroad experience, their first international flight, and or even their very first flight. For example, Kayla stated “Traveling to Honduras is not just my first international experience, but it is also my first flight experience. I am extremely excited about this opportunity and I am very anxious to board the plane with other members of the group!” while Elroi mentioned “My expectations and goals for this study abroad experience are high, as this will be my first time studying abroad.”

### **First Impressions Journal**

The purpose of the second journal was to capture the students' first impressions of the country. The group arrived on a Sunday afternoon and they were picked up by the program assistant and one of the school counseling faculty members in Honduras. The group was brought to the hotel and got settled. They had time to relax and unpacked followed by their first group meeting that included topics of safety, orientation, next day activities, and general discussion of first impressions. The day ended with a welcome dinner with traditional Honduran food and a welcome message by the owners of the hotel, which is a family owned business.

Participants' reflection on their first day in Honduras centered on: (a) feelings, (b) observations and differences, (c) personal reflections, (d) first thoughts about Honduras, and (e) expectations for the program.

**Feelings.** Participants feelings were mentioned in every journal entry. The narratives moved from emotion to emotion according to the part of the day that students were sharing. The list of emotions went from "excited" to "nerve wracking" and continue to a longer list including: "surprised, amazed, happy, exhausted, anxious, eager, looking forward, thankful, nervous, vulnerable, relieved, calm, at ease, comfortable, and safe". Annie began her reflection with "My first day in Honduras was very exciting. I have never been out of the country so arriving at the airport and going through customs was a little nerve racking." Kayla said, "I have been overly excited about this program ever since I applied for it back in January! I did not sleep very much last night because I kept waking up in fear of

oversleeping. When I arrived at the airport this morning I had no idea what to expect since it was my first time flying. I watched others ahead of me to determine what to do. Once we boarded the plane I thought take off would never come. I was so anxious for the plane to take off and to me it seemed like an eternity before it finally did. I was extremely thrilled once we finally went up in the air. It was such a wonderful experience.”

**Observations and differences.** The second theme of this journal emphasized the students’ observations during their first day and their comparisons to their reference point of the U.S. Students observed things like roads, buildings, houses, the airport, security guards, yellow busses, as well as how people drove, signs of poverty, the process of customs to enter the country, street vendors, drivers honking, and people walking on the streets. They reflected on how people were greeting their family and friends in the airport just as in the U.S., they noticed U.S. brands of food chains and businesses, they mentioned seeing the same type of cars than in the U.S., and how tips and currency were different in Honduras. Chris mentioned, “I knew that Honduras is a rather poor, developing nation, and I expected to see rundown homes and buildings but was quite surprised that the first thing i saw as we landed was the Church's chicken sign! As well as all the other U.S. brands and companies. I was just amazed at how much of our culture has infiltrated other countries for better or worse.” Cloe described her ride to the hotel as follow “On the way to the hotel I noticed that a lot of the Hondurans walked, the drivers are very aggressive and honking their horns, and they have yellow buses like we do. I noticed that they had a lot of street vendors selling things like fruit, and they have many billboards just like we do in the U.S. I noticed that they

drive the same types of cars that we drive in the U.S. The taxis all appeared to look the same, and they stood out like our taxis in the states.”

**Personal reflections.** Students also took time to reflect on what this first day meant for them. Statements varied greatly and they seemed to reflect students’ previous experiences and development. Some reflections related to observations such as poverty and safety. Others were more oriented to how they felt, such as being a minority, flying for the first time, trying to take everything in, and feeling like they were visiting a relative. They also focused on preparing themselves for the experience; they talked about being aware, mindful of being out of their comfort zone, and asked for help when needed. Deeper reflections lead to statements regarding culture, stereotypes, mental health, and social justice. Annie shared, “Coming into a country where I do not speak the language and I am considered the strange person was a new experience, I am not used to being the minority.” Elroi said “As we gathered for dinner on the rooftop, the night scene of the neighborhoods in the countryside well-lighted with the street lights was truly beautiful, breath-taking. This type of picture is one that is reserved for movies and television and to get it for this economically-starved country clearly says that all cultures have plenty in common, one just needs to venture outside the walls of the U.S. to see and experience it.” Kayla specifically reflected on safety, “I think it was great to talk about safety and precautions today. Although we are here to learn and have a good time, we also have to be mindful that we are away from our comfort zone and we will stand out in the crowd.”

**First thoughts about Honduras.** Students also used statements to describe their impressions about Honduras. They described Honduras and Tegucigalpa as beautiful; they mentioned the scenery and their view of the city as beautiful, peaceful, and breathtaking; and, as the researcher had expected, they mentioned the people of Honduras. They talked about how nice and helpful people were; they described them as generous, attentive, warm, and friendly. Annie said, “So far I think Honduras is beautiful.” Mary mentioned “Tegucigalpa is a beautiful city with lush mountains peppered by colorful buildings.” Chris expressed “... I also saw a lot of history and richness in many of the older buildings and structures. I felt like they told a story about Honduran culture and history. The view of the mountains from the plane and then from our hotel was amazingly beautiful and peaceful. I felt very comfortable and at ease. I knew then that my decision to come was absolutely right!” Kayla said “I was pleased with today’s events. I truly enjoyed my first glimpse of Honduras and I am looking forward to the next twelve days!”

**Expectations for the program.** Finally, some of the students mentioned their specific expectations for the trip including: to learn, to experience, and to grow. Some mentioned improving with stereotypes and learning to go with the flow. Annie closed her journal with “I can’t wait to experience all it [Honduras] has to offer and learn as many new things as possible!” Elroi described his expectations with the following statement “[...] I will continue to grow personally, professionally, and more importantly, compassionately in my sincere desires to help them be successful in any capacity my interactions may warrant. I have 12 days left, I am looking forward to what each one will bring, and I will get better with

my stereotypes, prejudices, and my perceived jealous tendencies, for this is the nature of my study abroad experience.” Hannah said “I really appreciate the culture of being person-centered here where it is custom to be more dependent on others where relationship really matters. This is one of the qualities that I really admire and what draws me to the Latin American cultures and I am just excited to learn the Honduran way. My main emotion is just being eager and open to the experience to come, and realizing to just go with the flow of things and to really enjoy and grow from this experience.”

### **Letter to Yourself Journal**

On the seventh day of being in Honduras the students were asked to write a letter to themselves as a reflection. At that time, among many other things, they had interacted with faculty and students from the host institution, had visited two other campuses and three different schools, and had walked in the rain forest. They were enjoying their time in the Caribbean beach at the time of the assignment. Students received a copy of their letter during the debriefing meeting back in the U.S. and served as a tool for further reflection.

Students committed to the idea of writing to themselves. They described the highlights of the trip up to that point; they shared their reflections and goals; and they mentioned their thoughts about Honduras, the experience, and the differences with the United States. They also took time to describe their perceptions of how the program had and would impact their personal and professional lives. Some of the students even wrote specific messages as reminders of who they were and what they had learned.

**Highlights.** They were three major highlights described by the students: the people they met and the relationships they built, the events that happened during the trip, and what they had experienced. Students mentioned the importance of getting to know the people, they referred to the exchange of knowledge and ideas, and they also mention their experience with the Garífunas in Roatán. They also mentioned other events that cause an impact such as the campus visits, the ride across country, and the rainforest hike. Students also reflected on their opportunity to see things that others won't and to experience a different culture.

Annie said, "I have experienced so many new things on this trip and seen things that many people will not have the opportunity to see. Being able to experience a different culture in the way I have has been amazing." Cloe said to herself, "The Honduran people have shown you what it means to be unified, warm, loving, and serving." Elroi described one of his highlights as "Having nightly dinner on the rooftop and looking out and seeing the city streetlights in the night lighting up the night is a very beautiful scene. As I recall my visit to L.A., their streetlights light up the night in the same manners, yet when the sunrises the daylight reveals two totally different worlds, polar opposites." And Hannah mentioned "Some of the highlights during your trip to Honduras is learning more about Latin America and getting to learn culture specific ties to Honduras, meeting such amazing, ambitious Honduran students such as [Sam] and [Joe] and many more, and being able to experience aspects of the educational system in Honduras."

**Reflections.** Students seemed impacted by the socioeconomics of the country and how people react and live despite the lack of material resources. They talked about people

looking happy, how they kept smiling and projected serenity. They also described life lessons such as looking at the bigger picture in life, being appreciative of what we have, and how important it is to enjoy life. Annie for example said, “It is very eye opening to see how many people live here with so little and our so happy. It makes you realize how little the materialistic things really mean and you should just enjoy life and go with whatever situation you are in.” And Mary reminded herself “I know that you know this, but remember how hard most people Honduras have to work for what they have and the kindness you were shown despite those struggles.”

Student also mentioned a couple of statements related to culture. Annie noticed the value of relationships in the Honduran culture, “I love just being out and around the people here. There is a different energy that the people give off here, it feels more alive. The people here care more about relationships where we get so caught up in the little, less important things at home.” And Chris reflected on how the language proficiency level should not be perceived as a sign of intelligence mark “I would like to advocate more for minority populations especially the Hispanic population because I feel they are really misunderstood. Most people equate not being able to speak English as a sign of stupidity or lack of intelligence, which is quite narrow minded and ignorant. Providing opportunities to show everyone that these minority groups have a great sense of mastery at many of the same things other groups are capable of will strengthen the minority group and help others to understand and accept them.”

Half way through the trip, students continued to notice differences between the United States and Honduras. As in previous journals, they mentioned things like people walking outside, roads, drivers and stop signs, public bathrooms lacking of toilet paper, and not being able to drink tap water. However, they also mentioned how things that are taken for granted in the U.S. are scarce in Honduras; they discussed the poverty of the country, the lack of opportunities and resources, as well as the safety issues that affect the freedom of people. Chris summarized their thoughts as, “The people I have met both from Honduras and the US have had a profound impact on me and my life. To see so much strength and positivity from our Honduran peers is inspiring! Many of the things that we take for granted in the US are scarce here. Having to deal with a dangerous city, poor living conditions and accessibility, low income, and lack of support from the government day in and day out can wear on a person. Yet they flip all that adversity and transform it into motivation and positive growth. They have given me a new view of the world and on what is truly important in life.”

Despite of the socioeconomic issues, students described Honduras as beautiful and the study abroad experience as life changing, inspiring, eye opener, and once in a life time. Elroi said, “The experiences that have brought me to the brink of an emotional meltdown have been the bus rides to the northern cities and then doing the tours through the neighborhoods on Roatán island. Each opportunity to see this beautiful countryside has also brought the varied levels of poverty in the cities and along the roadsides. The houses, the people, the images, the faces have had a profound effect on me that will require lots of time

for me to process and reprocess.” Annie mentioned, “Seeing the country is amazing it is so beautiful here, even the places that our full of poverty and our not "nice" by most standards.”

**Personal impact.** The reflections deepened to discuss the impact of the experiences in the students’ personal life. Students mentioned personal changes such as being more open and more adaptable. They mentioned having a new view of the world, have experienced deep emotions, and have learned about themselves. They perceive the experience as having a profound effect and the change as permanent. Chris said, “This journey to Honduras has been a life changing experience. Much more than I had expected and more than I could have asked for.” Cloe mentioned, “I am so proud that you decided to experience kayaking last weekend. Again that was something that you did to push yourself out of your comfort zone. After these experiences you should feel like there is no limit to what you can do. The only person from stopping you from doing things are you. It's time for you to get out of your own way and continue to live life to the fullest.”

Kayla described many of her first time experiences, “This experience has brought up a lot of “firsts” for you. You took your first flight, you are experiencing your first international trip, this is the first time you have had to put tissue in the trash rather than in the toilet, the first time you have not been able to pick up your cell phone and make a call whenever you want to, the first time you really thought about just eating what you are given rather than complaining, and the first time you have ever felt rich. This experience has definitely been an eye opener personally because you know that you are blessed, but you have taken on a whole new idea of what that means [...] You may not have everything that

you want, but you certainly have more than what you need. Sometimes you take these things for granted, but when you have a chance to live in a place where people do not have access to the things that you do, you will think twice before you start complaining about something.”

**Professional impact.** Regarding professional impact, students mentioned the opportunity to relate the experiences to their life back in the U.S. They felt more able to help the Latin American community in Raleigh, to relate to people from Central America in the U.S., and to students seeking study abroad opportunities. They also referred to taking back the knowledge, connecting and relating to the work place, and applying personal learning to work settings. Annie mentioned, “From this trip I will be able to relate more to people that I am counseling in the future that come from the Central American region. North Carolina is full of people who have immigrated from this part of the world, being able to be exposed to their culture and a similar experience to where they may have come from will help me to relate to them and their experiences better.”

Cloe was able to relate a personal experience to her future career plans, “You faced many challenges, and you pushed yourself out of your comfort zone. I am so proud that you completed your hiking trip in the rainforest with your peers. I know that there were several times that you wanted to give up, but continued on to the end. That was such an enlightening experience for you that you would not have received if you would have given up. For that reason I am so proud of you, and I am excited for your future clients that will be successful in change because you didn't give up on them when they wanted to give up on themselves.”

Statements regarding cultural competence and social justice were also included in their journals. Students expressed the importance of becoming culturally competent and gaining a deeper understanding of self and others. They also emphasized the need to think about culture when working with clients. Furthermore, they expressed their desired to become advocates and help strengthen minority groups in the U.S. Elroi said “I am even wondering if I will ever be the same again when it comes to dealing, helping and working with oppressed, deprived, marginalized, and poverty-class of individuals. This entire experience has revealed an even more caring side that speaks to the often overlooked classes of people. I hope to work harder and be true champion for change and social justice.”

Cloe reflected, “Before you got here you used to be frustrated when you came into contact with a person who could not speak English. Let's turn the tables and think about how bad you felt because you could not speak the primary language. Remember how patient the Honduran people were with you, and tried to communicate with you no matter what. When you get back home I challenge you to increase your Spanish speaking skills, and find ways that you can help the Latin American community in Raleigh. Now that you have been exposed to the culture and some of the issues that are present, I will hold you accountable to advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.”

Kayla said, “Professionally, you are becoming more multiculturally competent. You are learning to think outside of the box. You understand that people are different and you need to think about culture when working with clients. You know what it is like to not have anyone understand what you are saying, so you will take language barriers into consideration

a lot more now. You recognize your duty as a counselor to be accessible, understanding, empathetic, and exhibit unconditional positive regard. I hope that you will continue to learn about other cultures and embrace the opportunities that you are given.”

**Goals and messages to themselves.** Students also talked about their goals and to put in writing specific messages for themselves. They expressed their desire to continue learning, challenging themselves, and returning to Honduras if they have the opportunity. They displayed messages of self-assurance and reminders of their commitment to the experience, the profession, the society, and to themselves.

Elroi mentioned, “Personally, I will make a commitment to continue a line of communication with my new friends, peers, and professional colleagues here in Honduras. [...] I will make a commitment to look to establish a line of communication with Spanish/Hispanic population in the Chapel Hill/Raleigh/Durham area.” Cloe wrote to herself, “I am so pleased to learn of the person you are becoming, and the experiences that will help you to become a competent counselor. I hope that you remember all that you have learned here in Honduras, and continue to strive for excellence and greatness in your life. I love you more than anything or anyone.”

Laila said, “When you walk away from this experience, not only will you have learned how to better manage being a part of a group but you will have new people added to your family. With those additions you will have both great responsibility and greater resources. Make the most of them. Challenge yourself to remain open-minded and be humble enough to correct when you are not. Let this be the turning point you need.” And Mary

mentioned, “I hope you are proud of yourself to engaging I this experience. I hope you can maintain the calm stance you took on the trip that helped you enjoy the experience while your normal comfort limits were being challenged. I hope you continue to take opportunities like this to learn and grow.”

### **Final Thoughts Journal**

One of the final assignments the students were assigned as part of the program was writing a final reflection of the experience. The group had three weeks upon return to the United States to submit their reflections. All reflections were due before the debriefing meeting to allow further discussion on that day. Unfortunately two of the students were not able to complete this assignment due to personal reasons, Mary and Cloe. The analysis of this particular journal represents the reflection of six of the eight participants in the study. Students described their overall experience, their thoughts regarding cultural competence, their perspectives on social justice, and events that they found meaningful. They also presented some of their self-reflections resulted from the experience, as well as some reflective comparisons between the U.S. and Honduras, and the relevance of the program in their personal and professional life.

**Overall experience.** Students described the overall experience as positive and growth fostering. They also discussed being completely immersed in the culture, having the opportunity to meet people and established relationships, and acquiring knowledge about the country and the culture. They also mentioned the length of the program and some of the lessons they learned through their time in Honduras. Annie for example, described the

experience as follows: “Taking part in the Study Abroad trip to Honduras was a life changing experience. Very few people have the opportunity to not only travel to a foreign country but to be completely immersed in the culture and able to get a true sense of how life is in that foreign country. Most people that travel sight see and do not get to be surrounded by native people that help them get the full experience like we did. [...] I now have a connection with Honduras and a special love for the country that will stay with me forever.”

Elroi mentioned, “Honduras was all that I had hoped it would be and so much more [...] The Honduras experience provided me several opportunities for personal and professional collaborations to occur. I have been able to create and establish several professional networks with multiple colleagues at UPNFM. [...] The experience itself allowed me to meet and bond with so many people in so many roles and capacities.”

Chris said, “All in all, I have learned to love deeper; to form deeper bonds with others and to strengthen the ones I have made. I feel that I am continuing to learn more and more as I process all that I have experienced during my time in Honduras. This excites me because my goal for this trip was to participate in a life changing experience that would have endless implications for growth and development. I attained this goal.”

Hannah and Annie talked specifically about the program length. Annie mentioned, “The only thing I wish differently about the trip is that it could have lasted a little longer.” Hannah said, “It was a short period of time but it delivered such a long lasting learning experience which made every single second worth it. Laila emphasized the people in

Honduras stating, “In response to the warm reception I received from the people of Honduras at every turn, I will indeed look at it as my home.”

Kayla “Going to Honduras gave me my first international experience as well as my first flight experience and I thoroughly enjoyed it! Not only did I learn a lot about the country of Honduras and its culture, but I also learned a lot about myself. [...] I was extremely grateful for the manner in which I was treated during my visit to Honduras. I did not feel like a tourist or stranger at all. The faculty and students embraced us and went above and beyond to make sure that we felt at home.”

**Cultural competence.** Students were asked to reflect on their multicultural competence. Student journals portrayed awareness about themselves and others; their acquired knowledge especially regarding the culture, the country, and new information related to the counseling field. They also shared some of their own beliefs and experiences during their time in Honduras. Hannah said, “To be able to deliver and promote healthy and beneficial services as a Counselor educator then we must be aware of our biases, values, and more to prevent them from doing harm to our clients as we work with them. This study abroad experienced broadens my horizon in allowing me to understand and truly absorb the meaning of multicultural awareness in every sense which I understand is an everlasting and very active process.”

Chris expressed, “I did my homework on the Honduran culture and the country reading books and articles and I did see some of the things that I read. However, I learned so much more about the people, each individual one by sharing and interacting with them. And

that is the distinction and that is what we miss as counselors. Maybe having some knowledge on the country or culture gets your foot in the door and breaks some of that cultural indifference. However, to develop rapport and a strong therapeutic relationship we need to connect with that person and see how their perspective of their culture has influenced them. What it all boils down to is to be open and flexible to each and every client and to not make assumptions. We are not counseling a whole country we are working with one individual who has lived and experienced that country.”

Elroi shared, “The Honduras experience provided a space, an environment, for me to examine my multicultural competences with regards to dealing with the emotional, social/personal, and professional aspects of the barriers and fears I often put in place when multicultural implications arise. The study abroad/summer school experience in Honduras was indeed an experience that forced me to examine deep within myself the stereotypes and prejudices I had towards native Spanish speakers, the Hispanic population. I reemerged from the experience with a totally new outlook on life with regards to the socioeconomic statutes that exist here in America compared to what exists in Honduras.”

Kayla mentioned, “After traveling to Honduras, I am definitely learning to think outside of the box. I understand that people are different and you need to consider cultural differences when working with clients who are not of the same background as you. Even if a client is from the same background, it is important to listen to what they are saying rather than make assumptions. I know what it is like to not have anyone understand what you are saying, so I will take language barriers into consideration a lot more now. I recognize my

duty as a counselor to be accessible, understanding, empathetic, and exhibit unconditional positive regard. I hope that I will continue to learn about other cultures and embrace the opportunities that I am given.”

Laila mentioned the impact of context on mental health, “As a result of this cultural immersion experience, I believe I am better able to understand the impact context has surrounding mental health enabling me to share greater empathy for multicultural clients. I realize my perspective and view of mental health is reflective of the contexts I have experienced and know that outside of the Eurocentric view are more collectivistic and more relational orientations. As a result of this study abroad program, I have an enhanced ability to recognize when cultural differences are the undercurrent of motivations equipping me to look at my clients problems from their perspective.”

**Social justice.** Students were able to relate their experiences in Honduras not only to cultural competence but also to social justice. Elroi explained, “The Honduras experience gave me a new perspective on how I will approach my work in every aspect, especially when working with individuals and populations that are often marginalized. I also have refined my professional passions as they pertain to hands-on work with populations that are underrepresented. The Honduras experience affected my professional focus to where I am even more committed to providing much needed health, human, and social services to populations that are considered underrepresented and marginalized.” He also mentioned the importance of collaborative efforts to support social justice, “Overall, the Honduras experience helped me realize that it does take a “network” of professionals to work towards

social justice on an international scale. All ethnic groups with like minds and common goals can make a difference. Ethnic groups that are often oppressed, underrepresented, and marginalized have the most at stake and must have the loudest voices.”

Hannah and Kayla also referred to social justice. Hannah said, “This experience has only fueled my passions to gain similar experiences in other countries, to stay committed to advocacy/social justice, and to remain aware about being open to learn about those whom are different from me.” And Kayla stated, “This cultural immersion experience has made me even more inclined to advocate for the social justice and equal rights of all people.”

Laila mentioned, “I want my relationship to Honduras to be more than impersonal politicking or empty diplomacy. As a result, I believe the appropriate response is to accept my responsibility to Honduras to evaluate what contributions I can make and to look at when I can return. I see Honduras using school counseling as a precipice to advocate for better mental health which may allow other Central American countries to self-identify their greatest mental health struggles and develop strategize to resolve them.”

**Events.** Students mentioned some of the events that occurred during their time in Honduras that have an impact on them. The events mentioned in the last journal included: (a) bus ride to the north of the country, (b) counseling conference, (c) guest speaker from the U.S. embassy in Honduras, (d) site visits to schools, college campuses, and different regions of the country, (e) the service learning project, and (e) the dissemination project.

Elroi mentioned the bus ride and the conference. About the bus ride he mentioned, “The round trip bus ride to Roatán allowed up close viewing of how the natives of Honduras

lived daily, to me the most intimate part of the experience because it weighed heavily on my multicultural awareness. The bus ride through both the beautiful country side and the visual images of poverty was one that bonded me to the environment.” He also described the conference as a multicultural experience “The entire experience of the conference from the opening acknowledgement of our presence in their country on their campus, to the closing ceremony with the gifts and certificates, to the dance celebration which was the most multicultural experience I ever had in my life.”

Hannah shared about her presentation during the counseling conference, “During my presentation I was able to engage the students of the university in a conversation about their culture, fighting for basic rights, and poverty/advocacy. I learned from the students that they felt that the growth of their country is stifled and out of their control due to their government’s control. They shared with me that they have subsequently become advocates in their field to fight not only for their profession within their country but also to advocate for the disadvantaged that they work with as well (ethnic minorities, women, etc.). I found that conversation in addition to what I was able to observe to be very fulfilling and fueled my passion even the more on the importance of advocacy and social justice as Counselor educator.”

Kayla described the site visits to the different college campuses, “Visiting the universities was definitely a treat for me because I am in the College Counseling & Student Development Track of the Counselor Education Program [...]. I definitely wanted to learn about the structure of the universities in comparison to [the U.S.], as well as the similarities

and difference in student life. Across all the campuses, you could see and feel the love and dedication that the students had for their programs, as well as the dedication of the faculty to servicing the students. Being dedicated is definitely something I will keep in mind as I began my professional career.” Kayla also mentioned her participation in the learning service project, “Another one of my most meaningful moments was the service learning project. I feel that my participation with the service learning project gave me the opportunity to have a closer connection to the students, show my gratitude to the university, and I also think that I can use this experience to foster future community service projects [...]”

Laila mentioned her dissemination project as a tool to share her knowledge and experience with others, “It is my intent that as a result of my dissemination project school counselors will be able to facilitate greater racial and ethnical identity development among their students enabling greater resilience against challenges to self-concept and the possibility for greater academic achievement. May my greater self-awareness, self-fulfillment, and self-discovery be the seeds that grow into the same for others.”

**Self-reflections.** Students also shared self-reflections that aroused from their experience. Elroi expressed his thoughts about interactions in Honduras, “Arriving in Honduras, I had no idea what to expect from a country where the native language is Spanish. As an African-American, a Black man, I had no idea what awaited me in terms of receptions and welcomes as I would extend the hand for friendship and professional colleague building and bonding. The natives of the country welcomed us at each stop and each location that we would visit. It would be these interactions that would allow such a deep emotional

connection to occur and at the same time, set the tone for a true multicultural experience.”

Annie also shared her self-realization in terms of future interactions, “The way I was treated has made me rethink how I interact with those who are “foreign” at home.”

Chris expressed his feelings about Honduras, “To paint the true picture of a country and culture that is mostly misunderstood. A country that helped me define who I really am. I call it a diamond in the rough with the rough being all the negative and misguided preconceived notions that conceal this beautiful country. I could have let these faulty beliefs hold me back. I sure heard plenty of them. “Hondurans don’t like Americans.” “It’s not safe.” And my favorite, “What could you possibly learn from them?” My response, I have learned everything that was missing in my life. I am glad I didn’t take these remarks as truth because then I would have never made the friends I have made and grown to be the person I am today both personally and professionally.”

Kayla mentioned, “I also have a greater appreciation for what I have. I may not have everything that I want, but I certainly have more than what I need. Sometimes I take these things for granted, but after having a chance to live in a place where people do not have access to the things that I do, I will certainly think twice before I start complaining about something.”

**Reflective comparison.** Students were able to make comparisons between life in the U.S. and life in Honduras. They discussed their thoughts regarding language barriers, the value of experiential learning, traveling with an educational purpose, difference in the

perception of time, college life, technology use and access, and the availability of opportunities.

Annie shared her thoughts regarding language differences, “Going into the experience not speaking Spanish I wasn’t sure how I would communicate with the people in Honduras or how accepting they would be of someone that was so different from them. What I learned is I wasn’t that different from them. The hospitality, kindness, and willingness to go out of their way to make communication possible shocked me. At home if you come into the situation and do not speak English most people turn the other way, and do not give a second thought to helping that person that is struggling and is not from here. The people I met in Honduras would be apologetic that their English was not good, when I was the foreigner who had the responsibility to learn Spanish. They all went out of their way to figure out a way to talk with us and make us comfortable in the situation. The way I was treated has made me rethink how I interact with those who are “foreign” at home.”

Annie also mentioned the value of experiential learning and Elroi the value of traveling with an educational purpose. Annie said, “I feel that I was able to learn more about life, culture, and build strong relationships in that two-week period than I could ever have learned sitting in a class for an entire semester.” And Elroi mentioned, “I had never traveled outside of the U.S. except for vacations and leisure trips, and these particular sheltered tourist opportunities did not provide anywhere near such an indescribable educational opportunity as Honduras.”

Kayla mentioned the difference on the perception of time, “I have a new level of patience. Everything did not start and end on time like we are accustomed to in America but that was one thing that made my experience so much more worthwhile. People in Honduras are free spirited and they seize the moment.”

Kayla was very interested in the college life of Honduran students in comparison to the college experience in the U.S. “It was interesting to see that Honduran students and American students face many of the same challenges— adjusting to the academic rigor of college, balancing school work and a job, choosing the right major. Although college tuition in Honduras is much less than tuition in America, those students who cannot afford to pay tuition do not have the option of student loans from the government or a bank like students in America do. As a future academic advisor, I want to be able to understand the circumstances surrounding students’ academic challenges. With students often having to pay for their education it is certainly understandable why they may have to delay entering college directly from high school. I think that it is important to have support groups and student activities geared toward non traditional students as well.”

Laila on the other hand was interested in technology use and access, “When looking at my special interest in learning technologies and integrating them in my program experience I found that in general there were very few limitations in technology compared to home. Technology was available in Honduras, just not as widespread and/or not as reliable as I am used to. When I attended Linda’s presentation [during the counseling conference], the round table participants expressed the same concerns educators in the United States have;

mainly, that students misuse technology in the classroom. It seemed as if the round table participants felt misunderstood. That because technology is not widespread that someone how they are archaic, when in fact they know the importance of technology. I suggested applying some solutions to previous gaps in technology where communities and groups pool their resources and work together to acquire cell phones, cars, television, radio, and railroads. The last time I traveled predated several forms of technology used on this trip. As a result, I was taken aback by how Google Translate was used by our hosts as well as myself to bridge the English to Spanish language gap.”

Elroi also mention the availability of opportunities, “I realize that I am considered a minority here in the U.S. but at the same time I am afforded opportunities to better my life, my living conditions. Individuals in Honduras are not provided with tools to emerge from their socioeconomic status. Seeing fruit, ceramics, and stacked piles of wood as the daily way to make a living wage really made me see all the people in the U.S. take for granted.”

**Relevance.** Students’ statements portrayed the importance of the experience for their personal and professional lives. Annie mentioned, “Learning about the Latin American Culture is important living in North Carolina, and going into the counseling field because of how many Latin Americans live in the area. I felt it was important to go on this trip for that reason. Being able to not only see the culture and way of life in Honduras, but to be able to talk and interact with the local people taught me a lot about the culture.”

Chris mentioned, “There is a tremendous amount you can learn from each and everyone person; even about yourself. I have a strong desire to emulate the qualities and

characteristics of my Honduran peers because I have felt the power it can have on others. The significance of relationships and making a connection with others is an area that I want to become better at. The most profound quality we can offer our clients is the relationship.”

Elroi said, “I know [sic] see why so many students return from study abroad opportunities a truly changed individual, ready to take on bigger and meaningful purposes in life.” He also stated, “People shape culture, cultures shape people. Cultural, Ethnic, and Racial barriers must transcend globally diverse populations to affect change. As counselors, we all must become and remain multicultural competent, for the world is changing culturally for the greater good. Diversity is paramount and crossing cultural, national, and international borders will only make for meaningful engagements and collaborations among truly diverse colleagues.”

Kayla added, “As a future college counselor, being multiculturally competent will be very important. Students will be from a variety of different backgrounds and I will need to be able to establish rapport with them. I hope to make each and every student feel comfortable. I want to show the utmost respect and show students that I am trustworthy. We cannot get ahead if we are narrow-minded and judgmental.”

Annie also mentioned the relevance of the visit for the hosts, “I had numerous people tell me they were so happy we were in their country because they have a bad reputation around the world because of how the news portrays them. I have told everyone how amazing the trip was and especially the people!”

### Follow Up Survey

A follow up survey (see Appendix C) was sent electronically to all the students who participated in the 2012 study abroad program to Honduras. Students received a formal invitation and the link to the survey. After reading the informed consent and agreeing to participate in the study students received access to the survey questions. The survey was sent on December 8, 2013 approximately 17 months upon return from Honduras on May 25, 2012. The survey consisted on nine demographic questions and five open ended questions related to the experience during and after the program. Table A.1 (see Appendix A) presents a summary of the students' responses to the demographic questions, a comprehensive description of each student can be found in chapter three under *participants*. The open ended questions respond to the research questions of the study. No space or time limitation was given to fill out the survey. Table A.4 (see Appendix A) summarized the codes and themes emerged from the survey data.

**Experience Question One: What are the most powerful learning experiences, if any, that you remember from your study abroad program to Honduras?**

The question what are the most powerful learning experiences was intentionally very broad in order to give the students the opportunity to remember the experience as a whole and make the decision about what elements of the program would qualify as powerful learning experiences from their perspective. Interestingly, students identified as powerful learning experiences different elements of the program ranging, from the overall program to what they learned and experienced through their time in Honduras, the people they interacted

and made connections with, their self-reflections, the language barriers, the immersion experience itself, and their ability to relate to the Hispanic population in the U.S. Students mentioned in their narratives a couple of the activities conducted during the time in Honduras, including the counseling conference and the visit to Roatán. However, what they learned and experienced, and the connections they made were the elements that they considered the most powerful learning experience of the program.

**Overall experience.** Elroi described the overall experience as powerful, “The entire experience was powerful and has remained with me, being incorporated into my professional working role as an academic advisor. The out-of-class learning that occurred will never be matched by any in-class course.[...] I looked forward to each day and wished that the days would somehow go on non-stop.”

**Lessons learned and experiences.** In terms of learning lessons and experiences, Annie mentioned “gaining a better understanding of the Honduran culture.” Hannah said “I learned that Latin America has great disparities in class which primarily affects people of color which was evident in Honduras which has developed into a research interest of mine. I also learned that there are more similarities than differences in the Counseling program when compared to US based Counseling programs.” Elroi expressed “The planning that went into the entire Study Abroad trip ahead of us arriving and the actual trips, events, and educational opportunities that occurred during the trip were extremely powerful in terms of a multicultural experience. The 2 instructors for the Study Abroad made sure that a learning

experience was incorporated in each activity, this is what made the entire time in Honduras powerful.”

**People.** Most of the students talked about their interactions as the powerful learning experiences. Chris said, “To observe and interact with people who deal with copious amounts of adversity daily and to see how they react and function. Very eye opening and growth inducing. I encourage and like to think that I promote these type of qualities with my patients in my profession.” Elroi mentioned “The individuals at the University that embraced us and showed us such a wonderful time made the most powerful and lasting impact. The time and energy they gave to our cohort for the trip made a very powerful statement.” Laila expressed “The most powerful learning experiences were from the personal interactions and casual conversations with classmates and the general population in unplanned and unstructured situations.” Mary mentioned “I enjoyed [...] making personal connections with other counseling students, professionals and instructors.” And Kayla shared “I was so humbled by the Honduran people. They were some of the friendliest people I have ever met. I remember the last night of our trip I broke down and cried because I was so sad to be leaving all of the wonderful people I met.”

Kayla also shared her experience during the counseling conference “Being able to present at as well as sit in on conference sessions was also very enlightening. It was one of several opportunities to collaborate with the Honduran students. We learned so much from each other, and our education systems seemed just as similar to one another as they were

different.” Mary mentioned “I enjoyed visiting different school settings in Tegucigalpa, being on Roatán and experiencing the culture there...”

**Self-reflections.** Regarding self-reflections, Annie mentioned “it allowed me to learn about myself and learn about how I adapt to new experiences and environments.” Chris said “Perspective was a significant factor in my study abroad experience.” Kayla expressed “I am very thankful for everything that I have but traveling to Honduras truly made me even more thankful. Everyone I came in contact with wore a smile on their faces. They may not have everything but they are very appreciative for everything they have and they did not complain.”

**Language barriers.** Cloe and Hannah talked about language. Cloe said, “I am not fluent in Spanish, so I felt out of place. It made me think of all of the Spanish-speaking people that come to the U.S. that are not fluent in English. At times it was very frustrating and discouraging.” Hannah mentioned as a powerful learning experience, “The power of communication and the barrier that is created when there is a language barrier.”

**Immersion experience.** Chris described the immersion as a powerful learning, “Both being a foreigner and minority in a different country with different laws, ways of living, and basically a different culture but seeing locals partake in their country.”

**Relate to the U.S. population.** Annie specifically described as being powerful the ability to relate to the Hispanic population in the U.S. after her study abroad experience in Honduras, “I have used that understanding [about Honduras] to be able to relate to my hispanic students/ clients. Although all the Latin American countries cultures are different,

experiencing the Honduran culture allows me to relate and understand a student/clients experiences from a similar culture.”

**Experience Question Two: Please share the story of what has happened since you came back from Honduras?**

Students shared their stories, focusing on what they deemed important. They wrote about their studies and work, described sharing their study abroad experience with others, mentioned their self-reflections about what they learned and experienced their perceptions in regards to their cultural competence development, their greater interest in traveling, and the people they interacted with during the program.

**Studies and work.** Annie shared “Since returning from Honduras I started my college counseling program. I am now interning with Student Support Services. [...] I will be graduating in May.” Mary said, “I begun training to become a supervisor and be able to provide clinical supervision to students and other mental health professionals.” And Hannah mentioned, “I started to work with Spanish speaking families doing part-time Opt which has given great, relatable experience.”

**Sharing the experience.** Sharing their experience with others seemed important for the students. Annie mentioned, “I have used and shared my learning experiences from studying abroad in almost every class I have taken. I have also shared my experiences with students at my internship who may be considering studying abroad, or as a way to connect with a student who comes from a culture similar to Honduras.” Elroi shared, “I share my experience and story every opportunity that I get and I even seek to create opportunities to

share my experience. I work in an advising capacity at a university and when my students see the pictures in my office that detail my trip, I cannot stop talking about the whole study abroad experience that has broadened my entire perspective on the value of being a multicultural competent counselor.” Laila expressed, “I have expanded on the research I did to prepare my presentation at the conference. In addition, I have advanced that research as well as the dissemination project in my coursework.”

**Cultural competence.** In terms of cultural competence, Chris shared “I feel I have more depth and competence in my ability to work with people of all different types of cultures not only Hispanic. My confidence in my abilities as a counselor have also increased by incorporating what I observed and learned from my experience in Honduras.” Cloe mentioned, “I have been more sensitive to those whose primary language is not English, and I try to help as much as I can.” And Elroi disclosed, “Being immersed in the country of Honduras for 13 days was an opportunity that has reshaped the way I view and interact with individuals from that region and more importantly, the Hispanic/Spanish community as a whole in this country.”

**Self-reflections.** Students also reflected on other aspects of the program. Chris expressed “[...] I feel personally I have grown see the world differently. Overall I feel it has influenced me significantly for the better in many facets of my life.” Laila mentioned, “I had more reverse culture shock since I returned from Honduras than from any of my other travel. This was primarily due to being immersed in a different language and not being in close proximity to other program participants.”

**Travel.** Kayla shared “I definitely have the travel bug although I have not had an opportunity to travel abroad again yet. I definitely want to continue traveling to other countries as soon as my finances permit.”

**People.** Interactions appeared of high importance for the students; apart from describing their interactions with others while sharing their experience back in the U.S. Laila also mentioned continuing in communication with other program participants and students from Honduras “I have kept in contact with several program participants as well as my classmates in Honduras. I continue to try to work with them to advance the mental health infrastructure in Honduras and multicultural competence of counseling professionals in the U.S.” Kayla also shared an unexpected loss that caused the participants to communicate with one another and with me to offer condolences to the UPNFM counseling community, “Sadly since my trip to Honduras, one of the students I met there passed away and I was so torn about this. She was truly a great person and I am glad that I had an opportunity to meet her and have her share her country with me.”

**Experience Question Three: How did the study abroad program to Honduras influence what you think about the world and about yourself?**

Students’ statements reflected on changes resulting from their experience in Honduras. They discussed changes in their awareness about the world, their social justice engagement, and their new perceptions of the world and self.

**Awareness.** Annie mentioned the value of hospitality, “The trip made me much more conscious about students who may be studying abroad in the United States. I make more of

an effort to be hospitable with these students because I have experienced how welcoming the students in Honduras were and how helpful that was.” Cloe perceived a difference between the U.S. culture and others in terms of values, “made me realize that the values of Americans are poor whereas other cultures whether have more or less still find value in family and friendship over material possessions.” And Elroi focused on cultural competence, “It has made me see the value of desiring to stay multiculturally educated and aware of the constantly changing demographics in America and in the counseling profession. It has made me see the value of being bilingual.”

Kayla mentioned the disparity of opportunities in the world, “opened my eyes that there is such a big gap in opportunities across countries in finance, education, food, water, shelter, etc. Most of the things that I never have to think twice about there are people in Honduras who do not have access to the necessary daily survival tools.” Laila and Mary referred to the counseling profession. Laila said, “I can see how language and literacy impact my clients and those in my community.” Mary expressed, “I was comforted in many ways to see that the helping professions in the two countries are more similar than they are different. The same is true for people. Having a new international experience was great for remembering those facts.”

**Perception of the world.** Chris shared becoming more open through the experience, “my view of the world has become more open and accepting. [...] I feel compelled to do more to influence others and ultimately the world.” Elroi mentioned, “It has made me see the value of people and communication skills all over the world.”

**Social justice.** Hannah centered her response on social justice and advocacy, “I want to learn more about the issues of poverty and want to work to address them. I also want to fight against the poverty and oppression that people of color face in Latin America, including Honduras. I don't know how to approach just yet but it is a passion and interest.”

**Perception of self.** Students described what they learned and how those learning experiences affected them. Annie mentioned being more open minded, eager to learn, and passionate about social equality, “I am also more open minded with cultures and passionate about learning more about these cultures. I am also more passionate about social equality.” Chris mentioned having a broader view of himself and others, “My observations and experiences in Honduras have broaden my sense of not only the world but people and myself.” Cloe mentioned the value of life and resources, “It made me value my life and the resources I have access to a lot more.” And Laila wrote about her responsibility as a member of a group “I am aware of my responsibility when working in a group.”

Kayla expressed her self-discovery regarding adaptability “I learned that I am very good at adapting to change. I had never even been on a plane before, let alone gone out of the country prior to my Honduras study abroad experience.” And Elroi elaborated on being thankful, eager to learn, and able to embrace challenges “It has reinforced that no matter what successes I achieve in my life, I am thankful and seek to extend my help and services to all humans regardless of any prejudices I may have towards an individual. It has made me see the value of being well educated about other Races and Ethnic groups to be an effective

counselor. It has made me embrace the challenges of language barriers and smile while working through to solutions.”

**Experience Question Four: Please describe any impact that the study abroad experience in Honduras has had in your life (personally and professionally)?**

Answers to this question focused primarily on people, self-reflections, cultural competence development, and new interests as result of their study abroad experience.

**Personally.** Students centered on how they perceived and interacted with others. Elroi disclosed, “I have embraced and made extra efforts to offer assistance to individuals of other cultures that previously I might have not wanted an exchange.” Hannah said, “Awareness, yearning for more cross-cultural interaction.” Kayla reflected, “Traveling to Honduras has personally impacted me because I was able to take my first trip abroad and meet some really amazing people.” And Mary shared “Personally I am very honored to have made connections with people in Honduras, although the distance makes it hard to stay in contact. [...] I was very saddened to hear of the passing of one of students we met with whom I had spent a lot of time and felt a connection to. All of these experiences underscores the feeling of connection I made with the people I met while traveling in Honduras.”

In Addition to discussing interactions with others, students also made references to social justice, personal goals, and self-reflections. Annie declared, “I am more likely to take a stand when I see injustice or prejudice now, than before the trip.” Chris shared his goal, “My passion both professionally and personally is to encounter and facilitate resilience and growth both in myself and others.” Cloe mentioned “I now view situations with a bigger picture.”

Elroi shared, “The experience has made me better personally by forcing me to grow and think differently about individuals from other countries who arrive here in the U.S. and desire to be treated normal, as any other individual citizen of this country.” Mary shared, “Because of my age and being an alumni rather than a counseling student resulted in me having somewhat unique experience in our study abroad trip. I learned to be more flexible in my thinking and in my expectations for others [...]” Laila mentioned language proficiency, “I am more confident in the usage of my Spanish and will continue to work to improve my fluency.”

**Professionally.** Students referred to the study abroad experience as professionally impactful by describing what they had learned, how it had influenced their cultural competence development, awareness, and interactions, and how it had inspired new professional interests. Chris and Elroi for example talked about what they have learned. Chris said, “I feel this experience has aided in my understanding of the human experience and how we adapt and grow.” Elroi mentioned “The study abroad experience has had an impact in my life personally and professionally by showing me the value of embracing every opportunity to experience a multicultural exchange with an individual of another race, another culture as an educational and learning opportunity.”

Regarding cultural competence development, Kayla said, “Professionally I have become more culturally competent and feel that I can work in and adapt to a wide range of settings.” Laila shared, “I apply my new perspective on the world and myself in my coursework and current practice.” Elroi mentioned “The study abroad experience allows me

to comfortably look at other races and cultures with a new and "focused" multicultural lens. The experience has made me a better professional in my advising abilities." Mary mentioned the relationship with her clients, "Having a personal experience with Honduras has helped me feel more connected to my clients in a real way." And she also described the program as an experiential lesson "[An] experiential lesson in "meeting people where they are", which can be directly related to my work both with clients and with counseling students and other counselors."

More specifically Annie and Cloe alluded to their awareness. Annie mentioned "[the experience] made me more aware of the needs of people who may immigrate to the United States or come to study." Cloe shared "I remind myself daily that my life and my contributions to this world are not just for me." Mary on the other hand described interactions she has had upon return, first with Hondurans in North Carolina, "Being able to speak to Hondurans in North Carolina about my experiences in Honduras has been very meaningful and I feel has added legitimacy to my work with the Spanish speaking community," and second, with one of the school counseling students in Honduras "I was able to collaborate with one of the [Honduran] students on a conference presentation I gave in February following our trip, which was very fulfilling experience."

Annie and Laila referred to new interest arose from the experience. Annie said, "desire to travel and learn. I am constantly looking for trips similar to the study abroad in Honduras and ways to travel to new places, volunteer my services, and learn about cultures."

And Laila expressed, “I felt very accepted in Honduras and will consider working there professionally.”

**Experience Question Five: Anything else about your study abroad experience you would like to add?**

Students utilized this space to share their overall impressions of the program and recommending it to others. Overall they described the experience as “influential, great, true multicultural educational, and memorable”. They referred to the time being too short, the importance of the interactions that they had, some of the experiences they lived, and even the desire to continue traveling. In addition, Laila shared a suggestion and Mary some of her challenges.

**Suggestions and challenges.** Laila suggested “I would like to have had discussions about the work I produced through the study abroad and recommendations on how to improve my cultural competency.” And Mary shared her challenges of having more experience as an alumnus than the rest of the group, “It was challenging for me being the only working professional in our group, and also a more mature (read, older) participant in our group. I felt that my expectations for a level of professionalism and capacity or interest for self-reflection may have exceeded the group's ability level, leaving me to adjust and adapt. In some ways it was helpful in that I felt free to make my own meaning out of our experiences while in Honduras.”

**Recommendations.** Annie and Elroi specifically recommended this type of experience to others. Annie said, “I advocate to everyone that a trip like this is life changing

and I highly recommend this kind of experience to everyone.” Elroi stated, “Each counselor in the Program should be provided an opportunity to be immersed in a wonderful country with such beautiful and welcoming people.”

**Impressions of the overall experience.** Annie and Chris described the experience as influential. Annie said, “My experience studying abroad in Honduras was the most influential learning experience I have had, both academically and personally.” Chris explained, “The experiences that were the most influential were the subtle and menial interactions and situations with both locals and fellow students and teachers.” Cloe simply said, “It was a great experience.”

Kayla stated, “This experience is definitely one of the most memorable things I've ever done! I had such a great time. I learned, I taught, I laughed, I cried, I met amazing people, ate amazing food, saw beautiful places, and saw places that broke my heart. 13 days was definitely not long enough! I would love to go back to Honduras again as well as travel to other countries. I hope that this study abroad experience was just the first of many to come!”

Elroi shared, “The study abroad experience was an educational opportunity that seeming is interwoven into my everyday life. I look to highlight and acknowledge to individuals the experience in Honduras. On occasion, I discuss how the professional at each location we visited went above and beyond to make us feel welcomed in their surroundings. I discuss how everywhere we traveled the "locals" had smiles on their faces no matter what circumstances they might have been confronted with in their life. I talk about the bus ride

through the country to Roatan Island which showed the beautiful countryside. I talk about the bonding among the group that occurred during the study abroad trip. [...] This was a true multicultural educational experience that I wished could have continued for more than 13 days, especially with the 2 instructors who put so much effort and energy in the trip. Without the instructors caring deeply for the class, this trip would not have been one of the highlights of my entire life. An excellent work well done by all in the entire process.”

### **Word Frequency**

Word frequency per journal entry and survey responses was determined using the web-based visualization tool, Wordle ([www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)). Wordle is an open access free tool that generates word clouds of large amounts of written data, highlighting the words that more frequently appear on the text entered. In this study, Wordle was used as a supplementary research tool. According to McNaught and Lam (2010) the produced images or word clouds when using Wordle can be useful research tools in educational research. Word clouds aid the researcher to quickly visualize initial patterns in the text.

Five word clouds were created related to the data sources in this study: expectations, first impressions, letter to yourself, final reflection, and follow up survey (Figures H.1, H.2, H.3, H.4, and H.5) and one more as an overall image of the data (Figure H.6). Data were entered in Wordle before initiating the coding process of the data analysis. The resulting word clouds are merely an objective count of the words in the text. However, when comparing the highlighted words in the clouds with the resulting themes and codes from the data, similarities of information can be seen. It is also important to mention that data were

entered on Wordle as plain text without titles and with a standard format of Times New Roman font, 12 on size, and single space. Figures H.1 through H.6 are located in appendix H.

For the expectation cloud, out of 3,071 words, the most frequent words included: Honduras, experience, excited, culture, Spanish, goals, personal, professional, expectations, study, and abroad. For the first impressions cloud, with 3,023 words, the most repeated words were: Honduras, first, hotel, country, experience, people, airport, see, noticed, felt, impressions, things, realized, surprised, culture, group, far, beautiful, new, help, different, buildings, language, and learn. The letter to yourself cloud, with 4,759 words, emphasized: people, experience, Honduras, able, know, life, learning, work, different, want, time, knowledge, proud, hope, continue, help, counselor, culture, opportunity, professional, home, remember, others, first, life, and see. For the final reflection, with 6,821 words, the most used words included: Honduras, experience, multicultural, people, culture, able, time, learned, students, like, work, see, first, professional, America, world, understand, life, counselor, think, knowledge, different, find, better, important, and program. Finally, the most used words, out of 2,908, for the follow up survey included: Honduras, experience, study, powerful, abroad, people, trip, work, world, different, life, opportunity, see, learning, great, value, different, study, cultures, feel, learned, and country. Figure H.6 presents the word cloud resulting from entering the entire data set. From a total of 20,582 words, the three most frequently used words were Honduras, experience, and people.

The five word clouds provided the first visualization of the data for the study and an objective count of the students' most-used words. The visualizations also helped in the initial

reading of the data providing initial patterns. When compared to the rest of the data analyzed, the patterns visualized in the word clouds seemed to validate the findings. Patterns found through Wordle reflected the aspects that students emphasized throughout the data including: the country, the culture, the experiences, the people, and the profession. Students also highlighted their feelings, knowledge, impressions, and personal and professional impact.

### **Answering Research Questions**

After assessing the word frequency and analyzing each data source independently, the data were analyzed collectively based on the research questions of the study. Every question was answered considering the data as a whole, presenting a more comprehensive description of the case under study.

#### **Research Question One**

How did the 2012 study abroad program Counselor Education in Honduras support the cultural competence development of the counselor education participants?

In order to answer the first question of the study, it was necessary to revisit the meaning of cultural competence based on the theoretical framework selected for this study. According to Sue and Sue (2003), cultural competence is an active, developmental and ongoing process where helping professionals seek to become aware of themselves and others, to acquire knowledge, and to practice appropriate strategies and skills to work with culturally diverse populations. RCT, the second theoretical framework of the study, stated that the goal of development is to increase relational competence. Relational competence involves the willingness to be vulnerable, being open to mutual learning, being conscious of the impact

that we have in others, and being able to choose mutuality and in-depth relationships (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

Based on these frameworks, the 2012 study abroad program Counselor Education in Honduras supported the cultural competence development of the counselor education participants by: (a) promoting awareness of self and others, (b) offering an opportunity to acquire knowledge about Honduras as a country and culture, (c) providing opportunities to reflect about the counseling field, (d) promoting growth-fostering relationships, (e) stimulating reflections about social justice and advocacy.

**Promoting awareness.** The program promoted awareness through the reflection process initiated before departing to Honduras and continued throughout and upon return. Throughout the data students presented strong reflections about themselves and about others. They reflected awareness of their feelings, their privilege, their changes, and what they learned as a result of the experience. They mentioned being outside their comfort zone, the need to work on stereotypes and prejudices, and their new discoveries about themselves. In terms of the awareness of others, they discussed their thoughts about the culture and the people, they mentioned how they were treated while in Honduras and how that made them feel, they discussed similarities and differences between Honduras and the U.S., and they also reflect on how their behaviors and interaction may affect others.

Hannah shared a story that truly speak of awareness of self and others, “One example that stuck out to me the most that shamed me to the point where I became emotional stemmed from our discussion with the US visa agent Spector. He spoke about the importance

of humbling ourselves to the country that we find ourselves in, and to do this in a way to foster an appreciation and true understanding of that culture's norms. He spoke about how we needed to remove our ideals and expectations of how things should be as an American to fully get the whole experience when visiting another country. This invoked feelings in me that caused me to reflect about my previous travel [...] there was a time that I carried myself as an ungrateful and ignorant American because things were not up to my standard. This in return resulted causing the person that I was around to become offended and very embarrassed of their home and of their culture. I remembered feeling somewhat guilty of my actions [...] but I did not understand the magnitude of my actions until I went to Honduras and heard Spector speak, and then heard accounts from Honduran students telling their feelings when visitors treated them less than. Applying this to my passion and professional interests, I realized that if I consider myself to be better than or find difficulties in trying to connect with those different from me then I can cause great harm as a helping professional.”

**Offering opportunities to acquire knowledge.** Through the immersion experience, the interactions, and the activities on the trip students were able to acquire knowledge regarding the country, the culture, the educational system, and the counseling profession. Students gained knowledge through observation, reflection, experience, and traditional learning methods such as lectures and presentations. The site visits, guest speakers, and the counseling conference were especially important for knowledge acquisition.

Annie mentioned, “Learning about the Latin American Culture is important living in North Carolina, and going into the counseling field because of how many Latin Americans

live in the area. I felt it was important to go on this trip for that reason. Being able to not only see the culture and way of life in Honduras, but to be able to talk and interact with the local people taught me a lot about the culture. There are small things that I noticed, like the importance of relationships compared to in America, and having the Counselor at the American school tell us about the struggles they face with students cheating because they look at it as helping their friend. I think these things along with the numerous other things I learned will relay over into my life at home, on a personal level and will help significantly on a professional level. I now feel like I have a better understanding of what is important in this culture, how people interact together and the struggles that people in this region of the world face. Going on this trip gave me a new respect for this culture as well as empathy for the situations that some of these people live in. When I enter the counseling field as a professional I think this experience will allow me to relate to my client on a level that I would not have been able to relate before.”

**Providing opportunities for reflection about the counseling field.** Even though the program was not designed for counseling practice and skill development, the reflection process and observations allowed the students to make connection between their experience, their future career, and their role as counselors.

Chris shared, “We are not counseling a whole country we are working with one individual who has lived and experienced that country. Maybe having some knowledge on the country or culture gets your foot in the door and breaks some of that cultural indifference. However, to develop rapport and a strong therapeutic relationship we need to connect with

that person and see how their perspective of their culture has influenced them. What it all boils down to is to be open and flexible to each and every client and to not make assumptions. There is a tremendous amount you can learn from each and everyone person; even about yourself [...]

The significance of relationships and making a connection with others is an area that I want to become better at. The most profound quality we can offer our clients is the relationship. This connection is the foundation of any progress we can hope to make with our clients.”

**Promoting growth-fostering relationships.** Having opportunities to interact with one another and with the locals was particularly important in the program. Faculty and students from the host institution in Honduras were involved in all the major activities of the group. The participants had opportunities to interact with Honduras in a variety of environments both formally and informally. These interactions seemed to have impacted the participants. The main theme reflected throughout the data was the relationships built during the program. Students reflected on how people impacted them, what they learn through the relationships built, and how these connections may impact their future interactions with others personally and professionally. They also expressed their desire to continue developing the relationships and seek opportunities to develop new ones.

Chris mentioned, “To paint the true picture of a country and culture that is mostly misunderstood. A country that helped me define who I really am. I call it a diamond in the rough with the rough being all the negative and misguided preconceived notions that conceal

this beautiful country. I could have let these faulty beliefs hold me back. I sure heard plenty of them. “Hondurans don’t like Americans.” “It’s not safe.” And my favorite, “What could you possibly learn from them?” My response, I have learned everything that was missing in my life. I am glad I didn’t take these remarks as truth because then I would have never made the friends I have made and grown to be the person I am today both personally and professionally.” He later also said “I have a strong desire to emulate the qualities and characteristics of my Honduran peers because I have felt the power it can have on others.”

Mary expressed, “Self-reflection is key to culturally appropriate service provision of any kind. Keeping an eye on your interactions with people and ensuring that people feel engaged and supported is so important. Clinically, I have not seen anything similar to [my work site in the U.S.] in Honduras, but that was also not the purpose of this trip. Yours was a broader mission, to gain on-the-ground experience in the country and “fortalacer empatia” [strengthen empathy] between our two cultures as [one of the school counseling Honduran students] said on your walk in La Tigra. I know that you know this, but remember how hard most people Honduras have to work for what they have and the kindness you were shown despite those struggles. Don’t get discouraged due to lack of change and obstacles within complex family situations and community systems. Just being available, attentive and professional is the best first step.”

**Stimulating reflections about social justice and advocacy.** The program included various activities to promote reflection regarding social justice and advocacy. The on-site trip to the northern cities of the country allowed the students to see more of the reality of the

country and meet more Hondurans. The counseling conference offered opportunities for the students to share, listen, and interact with others discussing topics of mental health and counseling. Students also had the opportunity to participate on a service learning project working with their Honduran peers on a mental health fair for the host university community. Events, reflections, and interactions resulted in strong statements about social justice and advocacy throughout the data.

Elroi expressed, “Coming here to Honduras, I did not know I would be able to immerse myself fully into the experience. Somehow, I found an inlet and a groove and never looked back, which allowed me to be truly me during this time. For some odd reason, I thought I was going to have to be some other personality to fit into the group but that has not been the case. I discovered that being me was all I can be. Through this process of discovery on this trip, I see that my compassion side drives me. I see that I care immensely about marginalized people and people who suffer without having a voice. I have been a champion for social justice in the past but this experience has made me want to move that agenda to the forefront and shed light on bigger issues, on a more international scale and level.”

Cloe mentioned, “I want you to remember how frustrated you were when you could not communicate with the Honduran students. Before you got here you used to be frustrated when you came into contact with a person who could not speak English. Let's turn the tables and think about how bad you felt because you could not speak the primary language. Remember how patient the Honduran people were with you, and tried to communicate with

you no matter what. When you get back home I challenge you to increase your Spanish speaking skills, and find ways that you can help the Latin American community in Raleigh. Now that you have been exposed to the culture and some of the issues that are present, I will hold you accountable to advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves.”

### **Research Question Two**

What powerful learning experiences of the study abroad program have been assigned more meaning by the participants?

When explicitly asked what were the most powerful learning experiences, if any, that participants remembered from the program, students described the overall experience, the lessons learned and what they experienced, people and connections, self-reflections, language barriers, the immersion experience, and being able to relate the Hispanic population in the U.S. It should be noted that all the students answered the question identifying what they considered powerful learning experiences. Apart from the answers to the survey questions, the journals also presented elements of the program that students found meaningful and important to include in their narratives. Participants described some of the events, images of what they saw, and some self-realizations that were particularly impactful for them. They all seemed to have identified people, what they learned, and their reflections as powerful learning experiences. However, it is important to notice that each participant focused on different events, experiences, or perspectives of the programs, and even when they referred to the same element the reason behind their choice was very particular to their personal life and background.

Laila mentioned when responding to the survey, “The most powerful learning experiences were from the personal interactions and casual conversations with classmates and the general population in unplanned and unstructured situations.”

Cloe said in her letter to herself, “There is a lot that you have seen that should change how you think and act permanently. [...] You faced many challenges, and you pushed yourself out of your comfort zone. I am so proud that you completed your hiking trip in the rainforest with your peers. I know that there were several times that you wanted to give up, but continued on to the end. That was such an enlightening experience for you that you would not have received if you would have given up. [...] I am so proud that you decided to experience kayaking last weekend. Again that was something that you did to push yourself out of your comfort zone. After these experiences you should feel like there is no limit to what you can do. The only person stopping you from doing things are you.”

### **Research Question Three**

How did the short-term study abroad program influence the perception of participants regarding their cultural identity?

According to Baruth and Manning (2007), cultural identity can be defined as “one’s cultural identification – the distinguishing character or personality of an individual and her or his self-perception as a cultural being, as well as beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews” (p. 34).

The program gave the students the opportunity to be immersed in a culture different from their own and relate to others from different cultures and backgrounds. From the very first journal students reflected on their cultural identity throughout the experience. They

alluded to how they looked at and struggled with the concept of being considered part of the minority or majority group in the U.S. and how they felt in Honduras. They referred to their stereotypes and preconceptions of what Honduras would be and what it actually was for them. The data as a whole were heavily influenced by their cultural identity and their perceptions of themselves and others, so it was the experience. The diversity of the experience was noticeable within the group of participants and the people they interacted with. Variations in gender, age, work/study emphasis, experience, developmental stage, and backgrounds influenced the interactions and reflections of each participant.

Annie's and Elroi's statements capture the essence of how the program influenced cultural identity. Annie expressed, "Before going on the trip I liked to think of myself, as being open minded empathetic, and kind to others. I had never been put in a position where I was on the other side and was the minority who didn't speak the language or know the customs. I didn't realize what those people at home must feel like on a daily basis. I think being put in the position of being the person that was different from everyone else was a humbling experience that I will always remember and try to apply to my daily life as well as professionally. In America I am part of the majority, I have all the opportunities in the world and I have never experienced a feeling of discrimination. I realized on this trip how much I take for granted that so many other people are not fortunate enough to have. I expect many of these things because that is what I am accustomed to; I have now realized how lucky I am."

Elroi shared, "The experience took me completely out of my American comfort zone and placed me in front of a true window looking into not only another culture but immersed

totally in another culture within their native country. I experienced true and genuine feelings of compassion from all the Honduras individuals that I met and had contact with the entire time. I felt for the first time in my life, as an English speaking Black man, what it was like to be a true minority in a foreign country. I had never traveled outside of the U.S. except for vacations and leisure trips, and these particular sheltered tourist opportunities did not provide anywhere near such an indescribable educational opportunity as Honduras.”

#### **Research Question Four**

How did the study abroad program impact the participants’ perception of themselves and their professional career upon return?

Research question four focused on what has happened since the program ended; therefore, responses were provided on the follow up survey data. Personally, students shared their reflections about what they learned about themselves, their desire to continue traveling and learning, and their thoughts about the value of relationships. They considered themselves more open, with a broader view of the world, and even more able to interact with people that they have not interacted with prior to the experience. Professionally, students perceived themselves as more culturally competent. They expressed their eagerness to share their experience with others, their desire to advocate for Honduras and the Latin American populations in the U.S., and how the experience has helped them to relate with others personally and professionally.

Laila mentioned, “I felt very accepted in Honduras and will consider working there professionally. I am more confident in the usage of my Spanish and will continue to work to

improve my fluency. I apply my new perspective on the world and myself in my coursework and current practice.”

Mary shared, “Having a personal experience with Honduras has helped me feel more connected to my clients in a real way. Being able to speak to Hondurans in North Carolina about my experiences in Honduras has been very meaningful and I feel has added legitimacy to my work with the Spanish speaking community. Personally I am very honored to have made connections with people in Honduras, although the distance makes it hard to stay in contact. I was able to collaborate with one of the [Honduran students] on a conference presentation I gave in February following our trip, which was very fulfilling experience. I was very saddened to hear of the passing of one of students we met [Honduran students] with whom I had spent a lot of time and felt a connection to. All of these experiences underscores the feeling of connection I made with the people I met while traveling in Honduras.”

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

This chapter provides a summary of findings from the study in relation to prior research and conceptual framework of cultural competence. The chapter concludes with implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research and practice. The purpose of this case study was to acquire an in-depth understanding of the study abroad experience for a sample of counselor education students. Three sources of information were analyzed to accomplish that goal: (a) extant journal entries, (b) extant documentation, and (c) a follow up survey of eight counselor education students who engaged in a study abroad program in Honduras in 2012.

Four research questions guided the study: (a) How did the 2012 study abroad program Counselor Education in Honduras support the cultural competence development of the counselor education participants? (b) What powerful learning experiences of the study abroad program have been assigned more meaning by the participants? (c) How did the short-term study abroad program influence the perception of participants regarding their cultural identity? (d) How did the study abroad program impact the participants' perception of themselves and their professional career upon return?

### **Integration of Study Results and Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence (Sue, 2001), the Relational Cultural Theory (West, 200), related literature, and previous research on international education, study abroad, international counseling, and cultural competence. Five major themes arose when relating the findings

with the theoretical framework: (a) the value of exposure through cultural immersion, (b) the influence of study abroad experiences on cultural competence development, (c) the relevance of growth fostering relationships, (d) the applicability of RCT tenants to international counseling, and (d) the potential impact of study abroad experiences on social justice and advocacy attitudes.

### **The Power of Exposure: A True Cultural Immersion Experience**

Cultural immersions provide opportunities for exposure through lived experiences (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009), increase understanding of diverse communities, promote self-awareness, and reduce bias (Alexander et al., 2005; Canfield et al., 2009; DeRicco & Sciarra, 2005). Cultural immersions have also been found useful as a training tool for counselor educators. In this study, having the opportunity to be truly immersed in the culture, being exposed to a new environment and to different groups of people, allowed students the opportunity to grow personally and professional. Students were able to observe, reflect, interact, and learn from one another, from their Honduran peers, from faculty members, and from other locals that they were able to meet during their time in Honduras.

The nature of the experience promoted peer learning from the very first day. Comments like Mary's are proof of that process "I had observed certain behaviors during lunch between our group members and the staff that had caused me to pause and reflect on this idea of relationship. I was uncomfortable with the way some people were ordering from the serving staff as if in a typical restaurant setting." Students learned from their

conversations and interactions; but they also learned through observing and being exposed to others.

Having the opportunity to be exposed to different situations, environments, and people seem to be overlooked in the literature. When cultural competence is discussed, being aware of ones' self and others is always mentioned; however, identifying how that goal may be accomplished is not always clear. Cultural immersions may be used as a door for stepping outside of one's comfort zone and be exposed to a different view of the world. Being exposed was one of the elements the students were extremely aware of during their time in Honduras. For example, Elroi mentioned, "The experience took me completely out of my American comfort zone and placed me in front of a true window looking into not only another culture but immersed totally in another culture."

Exposure, observation, and relationships seem to have had a profound impact on the students. Students' reflections portrayed movement from basic observations to deeper meaning and development. For instance, even though all the participants mentioned observing the obvious signs of poverty in the country, by the end of the experience students were able to discuss cultural aspects of the country, make comparison between the U.S. and Honduras, and describe characteristics of the Honduran people they had met. Annie said on her seventh day in Honduras, "Seeing the country is amazing it is so beautiful here, even the places that [are] full of poverty and [are] not "nice" by most standards." It is also important to notice that students have had certain level of exposure via previous travels. They had seen or heard how the world portrayed Honduras and the culture. This macro-level of exposure to

how others label a person, a group, an identity, a country has an important impact on creating and maintaining misconceptions and racist attitudes. Purposeful exposure such as cultural immersion experience may serve to help students acquire a more realistic view of the world (Mindrup, Spray, & Lamberghini-West, 2011; Thompson, & Neville, 1999). Exposure should be considered the first step towards cultural competence development.

### **Cultural Competence Development**

Study abroad experiences, when well designed, may significantly influence cultural competence development (Jaoko, 2010). The 2012 study abroad program Counselor Education in Honduras can be considered a well-designed program. The program included basic documentation regarding the purpose and the process followed, as well as the teaching and evaluation strategies utilized. The program was aligned with goals of the counselor education program, the institution, and the profession (see Table A.5 in Appendix A). The program also followed all the requirements of the Study Abroad Office. In addition, the program also incorporated the basic standards of quality (see Table A.6 in Appendix A) proposed by The Forum of Education Abroad (2009). More importantly, the overall experience was highly rated by the participants and described as life changing. One of the students wrote in the anonymous evaluation form, “This trip has changed my life forever and given me a very important appreciation not only for Honduran culture but for all other minority population living in under privilege communities.”

Every participant seemed to have lived the study abroad experience differently. This may be due to the diversity of the group and various levels of development. Each student

focused on particular events, relationships, or lessons learned throughout the program. It is certain that we learn from one another, we grow together, and every meaningful relationship changes something in us; but, it is also true that no matter how much we change and how much we learn we will always see the world through our personal lenses. Embracing the reality of who we are may help us understand others better. Counselor educators should aim to help students get to know themselves as well as cleaning and sharpening their personal lenses to have a clearer view of the world.

The following quotes are proof of how the personal lenses influenced the experience: Hannah said, “I learned that Latin America has great disparities in class which primarily affects people of color” a conclusion that has been reached about a country were according to the World Bank 60% of the population lives below the national poverty line without discrimination of skin color (<http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras>). Annie stated, “Coming into a country where I do not speak the language and I am considered the strange person was a new experience, I am not use to being the minority.” Students referred to themselves as a minority in Honduras regardless their own identity, their citizenship or their privileges; students related being a minority to speaking a different language and being new at that specific location.

The findings however, represent student development. There was a change in the thinking process of the participants, particularly regarding awareness. Reflections moved from simple observations such as what Chris mentioned in his first impressions journal, “The view of the mountains from the plane and then from our hotel was amazingly beautiful and

peaceful” or Kayla’s statement, “Landing in Tegucigalpa, I was surprised that some of the first restaurants I saw were ones that were quite familiar to me, such as Burger King and Church’s Chicken” to more experiential and critical thinking statements such as Elroi’s, “The study abroad experience has had an impact in my life personally and professionally by showing me the value of embracing every opportunity to experience a multicultural exchange with an individual of another race, another culture as an educational and learning opportunity.”

Culturally competent counselors are actively involved in the process of becoming self-aware, understanding the worldviews of others, and developing and practicing appropriate interventions. Therefore, cultural competence centers on the development of awareness, knowledge and skills (Sue, & Sue, 2003). The study abroad program was designed to support that process. Findings highlight reflections on awareness and knowledge acquisition about the culture and the country. The participants’ perceptions about others, about themselves, and about what they are capable of seem to have changed as a result of the experience. Even though the program was not focused on counseling skill development, students were also able to relate their experiences to the counseling setting. Some students were even able to utilize what they learned in the work place. Mary shared, “Being able to speak to Hondurans in North Carolina about my experiences in Honduras has been very meaningful and I feel has added legitimacy to my work with the Spanish speaking community.”

The findings correspond to previous research in the counseling field, suggesting that short term study abroad programs can increase cultural counseling competencies, especially in regards to self-awareness, self-confidence, cultural and global awareness, and commitment to social justice (Fawcett et al., 2010; Jaoko, 2010; McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2010). Results from the follow up survey also suggest an over-time influence of the program in the personal and professional lives of the participants. These findings aligned with previous findings suggesting lifelong impact on students (Jurgens, & McAuliffe, 2004).

### **Growth-Fostering Relationships: A RCT Framework**

The major theme that arose from the data was people. Students observed, interacted, and built relationships with one another and with the people of Honduras. Students described Hondurans as “happy, friendly, strong, positive, and kind.” More than describing Honduras, students talked about their interactions and the relationships they built through the program. Kayla said, “I was so humbled by the Honduran people. They were some of the [friendliest] people I have ever met. I remember the last night of our trip I broke down and cried because I was so sad to be leaving all of the wonderful people I met.”

Relationships are the core components of the Relational Cultural Theory. RCT emphasizes not just any type of relationships but strong, healthy, equalitarian, growth fostering relationships that support the well-being of all people (Comstock, et al., 2008). RCT proposes that people develop through connections, and that psychological growth is characterized by relationship complexity. Mutual empathy, authenticity, relational images,

and growth fostering relationships are four of the key constructs of the theory that became alive through the data in the present study (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

Through the data, students expressed the value of relationships, the impact they have on one's self, and what the relationships formed in Honduras meant for them. Laila mentioned, "The more to get to know [...] people the more wisdom you have about yourself. [...] When you walk away from this experience, not only will you have learned how to better manage being a part of a group but you will have new people added to your family. With those additions you will have both great responsibility and greater resources. Make the most of them."

Students described not only their overall experience with others in Honduras, but, they specifically mentioned people by name and their relationships. Mary expressed, "I was very saddened to hear of the passing of one of students we met [Honduran student name] with whom I had spent a lot of time and felt a connection to. All of these experiences underscores the feeling of connection I made with the people I met while traveling in Honduras." She also mentioned "I am very honored to have made connections with people in Honduras, although the distance makes it hard to stay in contact. I was able to collaborate with one of the [Honduran student name] on a conference presentation I gave in February following our trip, which was very fulfilling experience."

Students were also able to make connections and reflect on future relationships. Annie said, "This trip has also made me more aware of the needs of people who may immigrate to the United States or come to study. I am more likely to take a stand when I see

injustice or prejudice now, than before the trip.” Quotes like this one constitute an example of the support that RCT aims to offer in developing resilience, relational competence, and empowerment to individuals and communities (Duffey & Somody, 2011).

RCT describes relationships that go beyond basic interactions. RCT promotes relationships where every member learns and grows; strong connections that result in a greater sense of growth and motivate each person to develop similar connections with others (Duffey & Somody, 2010). Students’ narratives alluded to these types of relationships and their impact. Statements referred to what the students learned from their Honduran peers and what that meant for them Chris mentioned, “I have a strong desire to emulate the qualities and characteristics of my Honduran peers because I have felt the power it can have on others.” He also shared, “I could have let these faulty beliefs hold me back. I sure heard plenty of them. Hondurans don’t like Americans. It’s not safe. And my favorite, What could you possibly learn from them? My response, I have learned everything that was missing in my life.” Students also mentioned what the Honduran peers expressed regarding the visit giving an example of the impact of growth-fostering relationships. Annie shared, “I had numerous people tell me they were so happy we were in their country because they have a bad reputation around the world because of how the news portrays them. I have told everyone how amazing the trip was and especially the people!”

### **A Change of Heart: Promoting Social Justice**

Commitment to social justice is one of the ultimate goals in the process of cultural competence development. Multicultural counseling competency should be based on social

justice constructs that seek to provide equal access, inclusiveness, and barrier-free mental health services (Sue, 2001). RCT also provides a social justice lens aimed at offering support in developing resilience, relational competence, and empowerment to individuals and communities (Duffey & Somody, 2011). Training and exposure through cultural immersion programs may serve as powerful tools to move from a condescending privileged view of the world to building understanding, growth fostering, action driven relationships (Comstock, et al., 2008; Duffey & Somody, 2011; Pope-Davis et al., 2009; Sue, 2001). The narratives of the students supported the cultural development process that happened through the program even within such a short period of time.

By the end of the program, students were able to reflect not only on the classification of “minority” or “majority” within the United States context but were also able to see their own lives, their privileges, their opportunities, and their social responsibility. Students mentioned taking things for granted and they called out to their inner self to be open to others and assume an active role in serving others. Cloe wrote to herself, “stop looking at yourself but start thinking about how you can serve [...]. I will hold you accountable to advocate for those who are unable to advocate for themselves [...]. This experience has only fueled my passions to gain similar experiences in other countries, to stay committed to advocacy/social justice, and to remain aware about being open to learn about those whom are different from me.”

### **Relational Cultural Theory: New Frontiers for International Counseling**

The Multidimensional Model of Cultural Competence has been identified as an important foundation in developing international counseling competence in terms of awareness, knowledge, and skills (Ng, Choudhuri, Noonan, & Ceballos, 2012). However, focusing on relationship building appeared to be just as important. In this program in particular, the relationship between the researcher and both institutions, the willingness of both institutions to develop a relationship with one another, and all the relationships developed as a result of the program were the foundation for a strong and successful program.

The latest definition of internationalization in the counseling profession includes three constructs: (a) professional multidimensional collaboration, (b) equal partnerships, and (c) culturally respectful interactions (Ng & Noonan, 2012). Acknowledging the importance of relationships in the human life and the type of relationship needed to support growth, the Relational Cultural Theory provides a theoretical framework that seems to fit cross-cultural interactions locally and it may also be of great value at the international level. In the present study abroad, examples of important interactions were constantly presented in the data. Participants' interactions with one another, with the locals, and with their family and friends back home were highlighted through the data. Interactions among faculty members from both countries in addition to the institutional interactions were instrumental to the program success. The relationships built were also a foundation for new relationships and commitments. One of the accomplishments resulted from those relationships and initiatives

was the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the UPNFM and NBCC-I in 2013.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of the study are presented as considerations for future research and as a foundation for improvement. This study was limited by the number of participants, the qualitative case study research approach, and the type of data collected.

### **Participants**

The sample of the study was limited to the participants of 2012 study abroad program to Honduras. From the 11 students, 10 were in counselor education programs, and eight agreed to participate in the study. The group was very diverse in terms of age, background, experiences, and ethnicity which made the data richer; and more difficult to analyze. Assessment of the developmental base line of the group was not conducted and therefore identifying group change in cultural competence development was more complex.

### **Research Approach**

Qualitative research is not centered on the generalizability of the findings. Rather, it seeks for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). However, the inability to generalize may be considered a limitation. More specifically to the research approach, Creswell (2013) described the identification of the case as a potential challenge in qualitative case study. The case was constrained by being one study abroad program conducted for the first time in a specific geographical location. In that sense the case was very specific and results may have varied according to the maturity of the program, the location, and the

expertise of the researcher. On the other hand, the case was easily delineated as a result of those restrictions.

### **Data**

The bigger challenge in this case study was the selection of the data for analysis. Even after selecting the data sources to be considered in the analysis according to the purpose of the study, the volume and richness of the data was complex and required more time to analyze than expected. The closeness of the researcher to the program, the participants, and data may have also presented more challenges during the analysis process. To facilitate separation of the researcher from the data, a written follow up survey was conducted. The survey data provided responses to the research questions; however, it did not allow further exploration.

The time when data collection was conducted may also represent a limitation of the study. Invitations to participate in the study and complete the survey were sent in December; the beginning of the holiday season may have prevented the students from elaborating in their responses to the survey and limited their time allocated for that purpose. Despite this limitation, when contrasting all the available data, the results appeared to be aligned with each other. Member checking also gave participants the opportunity to review the findings and add anything they considered relevant. In addition, two of the participants did not complete a final reflection journal which reduced the analysis of that particular journal to six participants rather than eight. The rest of the journals and the survey were completed by the eight students.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings suggested implications for participants, for counselor education training programs, and for the counseling field.

#### **Participants**

The value of exposure, awareness, knowledge acquisition, and social justice interests were important findings from the study. However, in order to move from reflection to action personal commitment is indispensable. Short immersion experiences like the one lived in Honduras are extremely relevant to initiate a process of cultural development; unfortunately, it is not enough to support a continuous process of development and training necessary to incorporate the knowledge and experience into the professional settings. Each student is called upon to seek support in processing their reflections and new knowledge, to establish new networks to pursue their goals, and to search for new opportunities to continue their learning and development process. Culturally competent professionals are those committed and actively involved in becoming self-aware, aware of others, and prepared to utilize appropriate interventions with diverse populations (Sue & Sue, 2003).

#### **Training Programs**

The literature clearly presents the following important related ideas: the importance of counselors becoming culturally competent in order to respond to the needs of a diverse-interconnected world (Kirmayer, 2012); the need for counseling students to be prepared to work with diverse populations (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002); the responsibility of training programs to nurture a global perspective (Leung, 2003) and promote cultural competence

development (Jurgens & McAuliffe, 2004); the call from the profession's leaders to create opportunities for students to develop their cultural competence (Wilson & Taylor, 2013); and the potential impact of short term cultural immersion programs in increasing multicultural counseling competence (Fawcett et al., 2010).

In addition, the literature also emphasizes that programs must be well designed to impact student development (Jaoko, 2010). Special attention should be given to the process of program development, evaluation, and implementation to accomplish the goals of the programs. The findings of the present study particularly emphasize the need for a more elaborate pre-departure orientation, more reflection time on site, extended debriefing and follow up opportunities upon return, and the value of identifying the developmental base line for the students in order to assess readiness or individual needs and goals, and assess changes during the study abroad experience.

Additionally, incorporating a native person from the host country in the development of the program may have an important impact in the quality and success of the program. However, including a native person in the organization is not always possible, but having an international perspective in the leadership of the program may also make a difference. Ideally, at least one person from the visiting culture and one from the host culture should be leading the experience so that different views and perspectives are included throughout the process. Having that type of partnership in the leadership of the program, in addition to, establishing growth-fostering relationships throughout the experience, may be imperative for

the program's success and to the process of internationalization and cultural competence development of all involved.

### **Counseling Profession**

The commitment, success, and sustainability of the process of internationalization in the counseling profession can only be ensured through establishing egalitarian growth-fostering relationships. Exposure, cultural competence, and relationship building are critical locally and globally. Commitment to the partners, to one's self, and to the profession may be a contributing factors in supporting new generations of global citizens. Assessing the value to the Relational Counseling Theory and the applicability of the theory to international context may enrich the international efforts of collaborations across nations, through equal partnerships, to advance the practice of counseling as a worldwide profession, and promote mental health wellness around the world (Ng & Noonan, 2012).

The importance of developing international counseling competencies in addition to the fundamental multicultural counseling competencies should be promoted. It is important to recognize the difference in working with diverse populations in the same country versus working with populations from different contexts under an international umbrella. This differentiation is even more important when students or professionals plan to travel to different geographical locations. There are several competencies regarding attitudes, knowledge, and skills that students and professionals who want to get involved in international work should acquire. Some of those competencies may also be useful in working with international students. The present study revealed how the personal lenses will

always be part of new experiences. Developing competencies related to metacognitions, tolerance for ambiguity, relational resilience, and relational competence may enhance the process of international counseling.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The present study made a contribution to the knowledge about study abroad within the counseling profession (Wilson & Taylor, 2013). Further research is needed in the area of international counseling and cultural competence development in order to answer questions such as: what is the meaning of international counseling for counselors around the world? How do international relationships develop? What are the characteristics of successful international partnerships? And what is the impact of international programs for the host institutions. The study also presented some evidence about the impact of the study abroad experience over a short duration of time. More research is needed to assess longer lasting effects and applicability to counseling settings especially in working with diverse populations.

Skill development remains an important area of possibilities for future research seeking for strategies to measure change not only on perceptions of self and others, knowledge acquisition, and awareness; but, also in assessing impact of cultural immersion experiences on counseling skills. How can study abroad programs impact counseling skills? How do local immersion experiences impact cultural competence? Does multicultural counseling competence improve through cultural immersion experiences?

Additionally, future research may include quantitative or mixed method approaches, multi-sites, or multiple case studies to assess in more detail the impact of study abroad programs on the cultural counseling development of counselors in training. Additional exploration may also shed light on the impact of study abroad program for the host culture, particularly if cultural competence is also one of the host institution's goals.

Adding a quantitative component to assess cultural competence development may support the identification of the developmental base line and the developmental process of the participants throughout the experience. Analyzing the data across individual participants may also help in the assessment of the developmental process. The corresponding process of development experienced by the leading faculty participants may also be the focus of future research. Research in areas such as the use of Relational Cultural Theory at the international level, the meaning of indigenization and westernization in the counseling profession, and cultural competency development for interdisciplinary programs may also make contributions to the knowledge base.

### **Conclusion**

An international perspective on counselling is gained not only through research, shared collaborations, attending conferences, reading literature, or even working with people from diverse backgrounds. It is often through travel to foreign lands (which may be within your own country) that you are changed irrevocably and permanently as a result of what you encountered and what you learned (Kotler, 2003, p. 209).

Traveling outside of our comfort zone it is certainly an impactful journey. Leung (2003) declared that the process of internationalization is not an easy journey, yet it is worth travelling. Upholding how the study abroad program impacted the cultural competence development of the students and having the honor to read their reflections and the messages they sent to themselves was indeed a transformative experience. Recognizing how deeply students were able to feel, reflect, relate, and connect opened the doors insights about the value of cultural immersion experiences in counselor education. Offering others the opportunity to read quotes such as Kayla's "I learned, I taught, I laughed, I cried, I met amazing people, ate amazing food, saw beautiful places, and saw places that broke my heart" may evoke the desire to live similar experiences and to learn from others who have different perspectives of the world.

Study abroad programs may be essential tools to support the process of internationalization. Well-designed programs may contribute to cultural competence development, promote better understanding among nations, and provide opportunities to establish growth-fostering relationships and initiatives of mutual collaboration. Incorporating intentional strategies to learn and reflect about counseling in other parts of the world may also be the key to promoting the indigenization of the profession and nurturing a global perspective at the same time. Recognizing that every relationship and every experience have the potential of transforming us, respecting the capability of each individual to learn and grow, and acknowledging every person's right to allow transformation in their lives, may

change the fear that western cultures have expressed regarding imposing their values and beliefs on other cultures.

Developing programs that transcend the simple observation of exotic places, the desperate desire to save others, or the idea of teaching others the best way of doing things, may allow us to reach a deeper and more meaningful experience; an opportunity to provide a true transformative travel experience (Kottler, 2003). Study abroad programs provide a relatively safe opportunity for exposure, immersion, and relationship building that may not be possible otherwise. This study revealed the potential of study abroad programs in the process of cultural competence development. It provided insights about the experiences that were considered powerful learning by the participants and the influence of the program on the participants' perceptions of their cultural identity. The findings also described changes in participants' perceptions of themselves and their professional careers upon returning to the U.S. The data provided a detailed and rich description of the case under study, its context, and its impact on the participants.

Chris's description captured the value of the experience and the impact for the counseling profession, "I did my homework on the Honduran culture and the country reading books and articles and I did see some of the things that I read. However, I learned so much more about the people, each individual one by sharing and interacting with them. And that is the distinction and that is what we miss as counselors. We are not counseling a whole country we are working with one individual who has lived and experienced that country. Maybe having some knowledge on the country or culture gets your foot in the door and

breaks some of that cultural indifference. However, to develop rapport and a strong therapeutic relationship we need to connect with that person and see how their perspective of their culture has influenced them. What it all boils down to is to be open and flexible to each and every client and to not make assumptions. There is a tremendous amount you can learn from each and everyone person; even about yourself.”

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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Tables

Table A.1

### *Participants Demographics*

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Program	Student status	Working	Place of work	Previous study abroad experience	Travel after the program
Laila	1980 (32 in 2012)	African American / black	F	School	Student	YES	Full time elementary intern (paid)	Yes (Scotland less than 1 month)	Yes courses in art history
Annie	1989 (23 in 2012)	White	F	College	Student	YES	College	NO	Yes Leisure
Hannah	1984 (28 in 2012)	African American	F	CMH	Alumnus (2011)	YES	College (community health)	NO	NO
Mary	1978 (34 in 2012)	Caucasian	F	CMH	Alumnus (2008)	YES	Mental health agency	NO	NO
Kayla	1987 (25 in 2012)	African American	F	College	Alumnus (2013 - student in 2012)	YES	No in the field	NO	NO
Elroi	1966 (46 in 2012)	Black	M	CMH	Student	YES	College	NO	NO
Chris	1987 (25 in 2012)	Caucasian	M	CMH	Alumnus (2013 - student in 2012)	YES	Addiction hospital	NO	NO
Cloe	1985 (27 in 2012)	African American	F	CMH	Alumnus (2012)	YES		NO	YES

Table A.2

*Trustworthiness Strategies*

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Internal validity or credibility	Congruency between the findings and reality; understanding the perspectives of those involved, studying the complexity of human behavior in context, and presenting a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher position</li> <li>• Peer review (doctoral committee)</li> <li>• Triangulation of multiple sources of information (crystallization)</li> <li>• Every source of information will be analyzed independently first and then checked against each other</li> <li>• Member checking</li> </ul>
Reliability or consistency	Consistency or dependability of the results in relation to the collected data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researcher position</li> <li>• Peer examination</li> <li>• Triangulation</li> </ul>
External validity or transferability	Learning driven from the analysis and the transferability of the knowledge to different situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich, thick description of the study</li> </ul>

Table A.3

*Summary Data Analysis of Journal Entries*

<b>Data</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Main Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Expectations Journal	First journal requested previous departure to Honduras.	<p>Expectations</p> <p>Goals</p> <p>Preparation for travel</p> <p>Feelings</p> <p>First time experiences</p>	<p>Students expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive experience</li> <li>- Challenging experience</li> <li>- Learn</li> <li>- Growth</li> <li>- Cultural knowledge</li> <li>- Interactions</li> <li>- Be and feel outside comfort zone</li> <li>- Experience language barrier</li> <li>- Be force to pay attention to non-verbal communications</li> </ul> <p>Goals included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improving cultural competence</li> <li>- Sharing the experience back in the U.S.</li> <li>- Learn about the culture</li> <li>- Make an impact</li> </ul> <p>To prepare for the trip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some students search for information about the country and culture on their own and try to keep a positive attitude</li> <li>- Other students did not search for any information previous traveling</li> </ul> <p>Students mentioned feeling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anxious</li> <li>- Excited</li> <li>- Nervous</li> <li>- Tired</li> <li>- Nerve wracking</li> <li>- Looking forward to the experience</li> </ul> <p>For some students this was their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First study abroad experience</li> <li>- Their first international flight, or</li> <li>- First flight</li> </ul>

Table A.3 (Cont.)

First impressions journal	Journal requested on the first day in Honduras (Arrival, transfer to the hotel, first group meeting, and welcome dinner)	Feelings	<p>Students expressed a great variety of emotions according to the time in the day that they were describing on their reflection. Feelings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excited</li> <li>- Nerve wracking</li> <li>- Surprised</li> <li>- Amazed</li> <li>- Happy</li> <li>- Exhausted</li> <li>- Anxious</li> <li>- Eager</li> <li>- Looking forward</li> <li>- Thankful</li> <li>- Nervous</li> <li>- Vulnerable</li> <li>- Relieved</li> <li>- Calm</li> <li>- At ease</li> <li>- Comfortable</li> <li>- Safe</li> </ul>
		Observations and differences between Honduras and the U.S.	<p>First observations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First site observations such as roads, buildings, houses, airport, security guards, yellow busses</li> <li>- Closer observations included how people drove, signs of poverty, the process of customs to enter the country, street vendors, drivers honking, and people walking on the streets</li> <li>- Students noticed some similarities and differences between Honduras and the U.S. including family and friends greeting in the airport just as in the U.S., U.S. brands of food chains and businesses, same type of cars as in the U.S., and differences on tips and currency</li> </ul>
		Personal reflections	<p>Students reflect on what this first day meant for them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflections related to observations such as poverty and safety.</li> <li>- Reflections oriented to how they felt such as feeling like a minority in a foreign country, flying for the first time, trying to take everything in, feeling like they were visiting a relative.</li> <li>- They also focused on preparing themselves for the experience: they talked about being aware, mindful of being out of their comfort zone, and asking for help when needed.</li> <li>- Deeper reflections lead to statements regarding culture, stereotypes, mental health, and social justice</li> </ul>

Table A.3 (Cont.)

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		First thoughts about Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They described Honduras and Tegucigalpa as beautiful</li> <li>- They mentioned the scenery and their view of the city as beautiful, peaceful, and breathtaking</li> <li>- And they also mentioned the people. They talked about how nice and helpful people were; they described them as generous, attentive, warm, and friendly</li> </ul>
		Expectations for the program	<p>Some students mention specific expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn</li> <li>- Experience</li> <li>- Grow</li> <li>- Getting better with own stereotypes</li> <li>- Learning to go with the flow</li> </ul>
Letter to Yourself	Journal requested on the seventh day of the trip (half way through the experience)	Highlights	<p>Students listed as highlights of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People and relationships</li> <li>- Events that happened on the trip (Hotel roof top view, Garífunas in Roatán, campus visits, driving to the north of the country, rain forest hike, school visits, Roatán city tour)</li> <li>- Experience (See what others won't have the opportunity to, experience a different culture, learned about the culture)</li> </ul>
		Reflections	<p>Students reflected about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty and resources (How people react and live despite the lack of resources, things taken for granted, distinction between needs and wants, people use the resources they had, Hondurans portrayed serenity)</li> <li>- Life lessons (look at the bigger picture, appreciate what we have, importance of enjoying life, the more we know about others the more we know about ourselves, people have a profound impact on self)</li> <li>- Cultural reflections (value of relationships, language proficiency should not be consider a reflection of intelligence)</li> <li>- Differences between Honduras and the U.S. (Apart from mere observations they also mentioned how things that are taken for granted in the U.S. are scarce in Honduras, poverty, lack of opportunities and resources, safety issues that affect the freedom of people)</li> <li>- About Honduras (they described the country as beautiful and poor)</li> <li>- About the study abroad experience (life changing, inspiring, eye opener, and once in a life time)</li> </ul>

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Table A.3 (Cont.)

		Personal impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal changes (more open and more adaptable)</li> <li>- New view of the world</li> <li>- Experienced deep emotions</li> <li>- Learned about self</li> <li>- Perceived the experience as having a profound effect</li> <li>- Perceived change as permanent</li> <li>- Many first time experiences</li> <li>- Reflection about taking things for granted</li> </ul>
		Professional impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Able to relate the experience to the U.S.</li> <li>- Social justice (Advocate for minorities in the U.S., working with oppressed individuals, goal of making a difference)</li> <li>- Cultural competence (it helped in becoming multicultural competent, thinking outside the box, considering language and cultural differences, deeper understanding of self and others, assume responsibility as counselors)</li> </ul>
		Goals and messages to themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Messages of self-assurance and self-encouragement</li> <li>- Goals of immersing themselves in the experience, remember what they learned, continue to learn, to connect with others, and use what they learned</li> </ul>
Final Reflection	The final reflection of the program was due three weeks upon return from Honduras	Overall experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive and growth fostering experience</li> <li>- Completely immerse</li> <li>- Length of the experience (short but meaningful)</li> <li>- People and relationships (how the group was received by people in Honduras, networks, opportunities for future collaborations, interactions, and established relationships)</li> <li>- Culture and country (connection with Honduras and new perspective about the culture and country)</li> <li>- Lessons learned (value relationships, first time experiences, think outside the box)</li> </ul>
		Cultural Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student journals portrayed awareness about themselves and others; their acquired knowledge especially regarding the culture, the country, and new information related to the counseling field. They also shared some of their own beliefs and experiences during their time in Honduras.</li> </ul>
		Social justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of advocacy in the counseling field</li> <li>- Value and interest in advocacy and social justice</li> <li>- Importance of social justice nationally and internationally</li> <li>- Interest to continue the relationship with Honduras</li> </ul>

Table A.3 (Cont.)

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Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Counseling conference</li> <li>- Guest speaker from the U.S. embassy in Honduras</li> <li>- Site visit to schools, college campuses, and different regions of the country</li> <li>- Service learning project</li> <li>- Dissemination project</li> </ul>
Self-reflections	<p>Reflections about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interactions and how they were received in Honduras</li> <li>- Self-awareness and self-realization regarding future interactions with others culturally different</li> <li>- Feelings and thoughts about Honduras</li> <li>- Taking things for granted</li> </ul>
Reflective comparison	<p>Students reflected on difference between Honduras and the U.S. and regarding the program itself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language barriers</li> <li>- Value of experiential learning (study abroad) compared to traditional in classroom learning</li> <li>- Traveling for educational purposes rather than for vacation</li> <li>- Difference on perception of time among both cultures</li> <li>- College life differences</li> <li>- Technology use and access</li> <li>- Availability of opportunities for people</li> </ul>
Relevance	<p>The program was considered relevant by the students. They reflected on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of the experience personally and professionally</li> <li>- Knowledge acquired about the culture and the country</li> <li>- Relevant experience in the counseling field</li> <li>- Help to relate to people from similar background and culture in the U.S.</li> <li>- Able to share the experience with others</li> <li>- Support cultural competence development</li> <li>- Enhanced abilities</li> <li>- Desire to learn and help</li> </ul>

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Table A.4

*Summary Data Analysis of Survey Open Ended Questions*

<b>Data</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Main Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Experience Question 1	What are the most powerful learning experiences, if any, that you remember from your study abroad program to Honduras?	Overall program Learned and experienced People Self-reflections experiencing the language barriers Immersion Being able to relate to the Hispanic population in the U.S.	
Experience Question 2	Please share the story of what has happened since you came back from Honduras?	Shared what has happened in their studies and/or work Opportunities to share the experience with others Perceived improvement on their cultural competence Self-reflections arose from the experience Desire to continue traveling People, importance of interactions and continuing the relationships	
Experiences Question 3	How did the study abroad program to Honduras influence what you think about the world and about yourself?	Awareness  Perception of the world  Social justice  Perception of self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Value of hospitality</li> <li>- Perceived difference between the U.S. culture and others in terms of values</li> <li>- Cultural competence</li> <li>- Disparity of opportunities in the world</li> <li>- Counseling profession.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More open</li> <li>- Value of people and communication skills all over the world</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desire to learn more and work for advocacy and social justice</li> </ul> <p>Students described What they learned and how those learning experiences affected them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have a broader view of self and others</li> <li>- Value of life and resources</li> <li>- Responsibility as a member of a group</li> <li>- Self-discovery regarding adaptability</li> <li>- Being thankful, eager to learn, and able to embrace challenges</li> </ul>

Table A.4 (Cont.)

Experiences Question 4	Personally	Students centered on: - How they perceived and interact with others - Social justice references - Personal goals - Self-reflections	
	Professionally	Students referred to the study abroad experience as professional impactful by describing: - Lessons learned - Influenced on cultural competence development - Influenced on awareness - Interactions - Inspired new professional interests.	
Experiences Question 5	Anything else about your study abroad experience you would like to add?	Impressions of the overall experience	Students discussed: - They described the experience as influential, great, true multicultural, Educational, and memorable - Time was short - Importance of people and interactions - Lived experiences - Desire to continue traveling
		Suggestions and challenges	- Recommendation to have more discussions on site regarding the assignments and cultural competence - Challenges on integration and interaction within the group due to the diverse characteristics
		Recommendations	- Students recommended this type of program to others

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Table A.5

*Program Objectives Compared to University and CACREP Standards*

<b>Program Objectives</b>	<b>Course Objectives</b>	<b>Lead Serve</b>	<b>CACREP 2009 standards</b>
Education 1: Provide learning experiences that contribute to the development of cultural competencies in counseling (Course objectives 3, 4)	1. Understand multicultural and pluristic trends within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally (II.G.2.a / LEADSERVE 4)	LEADSERVE 2: Educate with content-specific strategies. A candidate acquires and uses the unique pedagogy or content-specific strategies including appropriate technology related to a particular professional role	2. Social and cultural diversity: studies that provide an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society, including all of the following
Education 2: Experience different methods of planning, teaching and evaluation (Course objective 1)	2. Participate in experiential activities designed to explore attitudes, beliefs, and understandings, and acculturative experiences to cultivate students' understanding of self and culturally diverse clients (II.G.2.b / LEADSERVE 4)	LEADSERVE 4: Demonstrate understanding of the education context: Necessary to effective practice is an understanding of the culture of the school, the larger educational environment and the society in which the educational institution exists	II G.2.a Multicultural and pluralistic trends, including characteristics and concerns within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally
Education 3: Acquire knowledge about the counseling field, approaches and practice from an international perspective (Course objectives 1, 2, 3)	3. Demonstrate and explain multicultural theories of counseling, identity development, ethics and social justice (II.G.2.c / LEADSERVE 2 and 8)	LEADSERVE 8: Values of diversity: Those who complete the programs understand the needs and conditions of all learners and school personnel including being sensitive to cultural, economic, developmental, ethnic, racial, gender, religious, and sexual orientation differences	II G.2.b. Attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences, including specific experiential learning activities designed to foster students' understanding of self and culturally diverse clients

Table A.5 (Cont.)

Research 1: Promote networking and exchange of knowledge and resources (Course objectives 1, 2, 4)	4. Understand and demonstrate counselors' roles in developing cultural self-awareness, promoting cultural social justice, advocacy and conflict resolution, and other culturally supportive behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind, or body (II.G.2.e / LEADESERVE 2, 4 and 8)	II G.2.c. Theories of multicultural counseling, identity development, and social justice
Research 2: Provide research and dissemination opportunities for novice investigators (Course objectives 1, 4)	5. Understand the critical need as counselors' to eliminate biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (II.G.2.f / LEADSERVE 4 and 8)	II G.2.d. Individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies
Service 1: Promote self-awareness about the reality of developing countries, their needs and social battles (Course objectives 2, 5)		II G. 2. e. Counselors' roles in developing cultural self-awareness, promoting cultural social justice, advocacy and conflict resolution, and other culturally supported behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind, or body
Service 2: Develop outreach projects that will impact underprivileged populations (Course objectives 2, 3, 5)		II G. 2. f. Counselors' roles in eliminating biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination.

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Table A.6

*Standards of Good Practice Applied to the 2012 Short Term Study Abroad Program*

<b>Standards of good practice for short-term education abroad programs</b>	<b>Program indicators</b>
1. Mission, Objectives and Purpose: The program relates to the education abroad mission of the organization and has well-defined academic and/or experiential objectives	The program has a statement of purpose and a set of objectives aligned to the institutional mission and policies, are clearly defined, and are appropriate to the chosen site
2. Student Learning and Development: The program is reviewed in the light of its stated educational purpose for fostering student learning and development	The program provided opportunities designed to promote student development and cultural competence development. It was specifically design for the counseling field and incorporated clear objectives and evaluation strategies
3. Academic Framework (for programs offering credit): The organization maintains clearly stated and publicly available policies on academic matters related to education abroad	The program offered 3 credits to students and 45 CEUs to alumni. It was institutionally approved and supported. Institutional policies are publicly display by the Study Abroad Office and the specific academic requirements for the course are presented in the program syllabus
4. Extra-Academic Framework: The organization maintains clearly stated policies on non-academic matters related to the educational experience abroad	The time spent traveling on-site was planned in advance and had specific purpose
5. Preparation for the Learning Environment Abroad: The program or its sponsoring institution provides advising and orientation support that is consistent with the program's mission and the needs of its students	The program included a pre-departure orientation, the program director and program assistant we with the group for the duration of the trip, and on-site faculty and peers were also available for the students. Most importantly, group reflection meetings were built through the 13 days on-site. The program also included a debriefing meeting back in the U.S.
6. Student Selection and Code of Conduct: The program maintains, and makes publicly accessible, its commitment to fair and appropriate policies regarding student selection and conduct	Selection process followed institutional regulations and was clearly display during the application process. The university included a session about student conduct during the required general orientation time

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Table A.6 (Cont.)

7. Organizational and Program Resources: The program has adequate financial and personnel resources	Finances and personnel were adequate to the program and the field. Coordination with the host institution and logistic we carefully throughout
8. Health, Safety, and Security: The program has established and continuously maintains effective health, safety, security and risk management policies, procedures and faculty/staff training	The program followed all the safety procedures institutionally required and establish preventive measures. The group also had adequate insurance coverage and were provided with emergency contact information
9. Ethics and Integrity: The program is organized in conformity with ethical principles and practices by using the Forum's Code of Ethics for Education Abroad as a guide. In particular, the elements below are especially important to short term programs, but the full Code of Ethics should be reviewed	The program was overseeing by the university's study abroad office that pay close attention to standards of quality

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Table A.7

*Program Evaluation Rating Table*

<b>Materials and services</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>
General publicity materials (brochures, etc)	6	3	1		
Pre-departure orientation and materials	6	3		1	
Travel information and/or arrangements	7	2	1		
Assistance with housing, homestays, and meals	9				1
On-site academic counseling and informal support	5	2	2		
Explanation on safety procedures upon arrival	6	3	1		
Housing provided (if applicable)	9	1			
Facilities	7	2	1		

### **Appendix B: Journal Prompts**

1. Reflect about your expectations and goals for this experience. How do you expect this experience to be, how are you preparing for it and what do you plan to achieve?
2. Take your time to reflect on all your experiences in this first day of our adventure. Talk about your emotions, thoughts and cultural differences in your journey, and describe your first impressions of Honduras.
3. We have experienced a lot in a very short time. Please write yourself a letter overviewing (in as much detail as might be helpful to you and in your own style) the experiences we've had/your personal experiences. What have some of your highlights been? What are some key things you have learned about yourself? What are some impacts on your personal and/or professional development?
4. Reflect upon your experience addressing your multicultural awareness, knowledge, and how these will improve your multicultural competence (how will this awareness and knowledge influence your skills, what will you do to build on your knowledge in practice). Keep your response to a maximum of 5 pages in length (double space), adhere to APA, 6th ed., and limit grammatical and spelling errors.

### Appendix C: Survey

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. The purpose of this study is to gain better understanding of your experience in the 2012 study abroad program to Honduras and to shed light improvements for future programs. Please take your time to remember your experience and share your story. Your name will be changed to a pseudonym by the principal investigator to provide confidentiality. The principal investigator will analyze the data collected and presented to her research committee at North Carolina State University for quality and ethical assurance. You will be presented with some demographic questions in addition to five questions regarding your experience.

If you have any questions, please contact the principal investigator Syntia Santos at (919) 264 0520 or at [sdsantos@ncsu.edu](mailto:sdsantos@ncsu.edu). Once again thank you for your willingness to help.

#### Demographic questions:

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Gender: (Select one and fill in the circle)
  - Male
  - Female
5. Program: (Select one and fill in the circle)
  - School Counseling
  - College Counseling
  - Clinical Mental Health Counseling
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Current status in your program: (Select one)
  - Student
  - Alumnus. When did you graduate? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you currently working? (Select one)
- No
  - Yes. Where? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Have you traveled after your study abroad program to Honduras? (Select one)
- No
  - Yes
9. If you responded yes to the previous question, where did you travel to and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

**Experience questions:**

Thinking back in your experiences with the study abroad program to Honduras and since then, please answer the following questions (*Note. the questions will be answered electronically and without restrictions of space for the participants*).

1. What are the most powerful learning experiences, if any, that you remember from your study abroad program to Honduras?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please share the story of what has happened since you came back from Honduras?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. How did the study abroad program to Honduras influence what you think about the world and about yourself?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Please describe any impact that the study abroad experience in Honduras has had in your life (personally and professionally)?

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5. Anything else about your study abroad experience you would like to add?

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## Appendix D: Study Abroad Program Syllabus



**LEAD** and **SERVE** constitute the conceptual framework for all programs for professional educators in the College of Education at NC State. They are the touchstones that assure that our students graduate with the following:

- ❖ **LEAD:** four forms of knowledge; general pedagogy, content-specific pedagogical strategies, content or discipline knowledge as well as knowledge of the content of education, including foundations, historical perspectives and school settings.
- ❖ **SERVE:** elements that show the range of skills and dispositions developed in our candidates; scholarly, ethical, reflective, valuing diversity and experienced in practical application of knowledge.

### Course Information

**Course Prefix and Title:** ECD 620 (master’s level) or ECD 820 (doctoral level) Special Topics: Counselor Education in Honduras.

**Course Catalog Description:** The course constitutes a comprehensive cultural immersion experience that promotes self awareness, mutual understanding and reflection. It provides a multi-lens view of the counseling field in terms of diversity, cultural and social differences, knowledge, and practice. It will enable students to explore the counseling profession in a different context (Honduras); become exposed to a population (most likely) different than their own; and get involved in a variety of learning experiences such as presentations, panels, conference, site visits, and exchange activities with Honduran students and faculty.

**Number of credits:** 3

**Date Syllabus was Revised:** (by course action)

**Course Prerequisites/Co-requisites:** None

**Meeting time:** Summer 2012, May 12<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>

**Class location:** UPNFM - Honduras

**Instructor Information:**

Name: Sylvia Nassar-McMillan

Email: [Sylvia\\_nassarmc@ncsu.edu](mailto:Sylvia_nassarmc@ncsu.edu)

Office location: POE 520

Office phone and/or other contact information: 919-515-6363

Office Hours: By appointment.

**Teaching Assistant Information:**

Name: Syntia D. Santos

Email: [sdsantos@ncsu.edu](mailto:sdsantos@ncsu.edu)

Phone number: 919 264 0520

Office Hours: By appointment.

**Required Course Materials:** Readings will be available on electronic version through NCSU moodle site.

**Recommended Text**

There is no required reading, but students are encouraged to explore the following:

Gerstein, L. H., AEgisttir, S., Alvin Leung, S., & Norsworthy, K. L. (2009). *International Handbook of Cross-Cultural Counseling: Cultural Assumptions and Practices Worldwide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Salazar, C. F. (2009). *Group Work Experts Share Their Favorite Multicultural Activities: A Guide to Diversity-Competent Choosing, Planning, Conducting, and Processing*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Specialists in Group Work.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Understand multicultural and pluristic trends within and among diverse groups nationally and internationally (II.G.2.a / LEADSERVE 4)
2. Participate in experiential activities designed to explore attitudes, beliefs, and understandings, and acculturative experiences to cultivate students' understanding

of self and culturally diverse clients (II.G.2.b / LEADSERVE 4)

3. Demonstrate and explain multicultural theories of counseling, identity development, ethics and social justice (II.G.2.c / LEADSERVE 2 and 8)
4. Understand and demonstrate counselors' roles in developing cultural self-awareness, promoting cultural social justice, advocacy and conflict resolution, and other culturally supportive behaviors that promote optimal wellness and growth of the human spirit, mind, or body (II.G.2.e / LEADSERVE 2, 4 and 8)
5. Understand the critical need as counselors' to eliminate biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination (II.G.2.f / LEADSERVE 4 and 8)

### **Teaching strategies:**

The primary focus of this class is on experiential learning through collaboration and consultation. The experiential nature of the class will require examining attitudes, perceptions, and behavior in a small group following larger activities with Honduran University students and faculty. Prior to departure, students will be assigned readings to prepare for their experiential activities, attend group discussions online and orientation session.

During the thirteen-days onsite course, students will: visit undergraduate and master's counseling classes, participate in small group discussions, visit university centers and campuses (in different regions of the country), city tours with Honduran University students, one-on-one interviews, cooperative learning groups, attend presentations by guest speakers, attend to the Annual Counseling Conference, and assist faculty with presentations for Honduran University. In addition, students will attend an orientation session and a follow up session. Students will be required to attend all activities. Group discussions will involve sharing of personal reactions, thoughts, and feelings about current experiences, cultural differences, implications for the counseling profession and application in the U.S. setting.

At the end of the course, discussions will be held separately with faculty and students to reflect on experience and to plan for future interactions. A follow up session will be held at NC State for debriefing and to discuss dissemination strategies.

**Course requirements:****ATTENDANCE POLICY/COURSE PARTICIPATION**

Due to the purpose of this class and the interactive nature of this experience, attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all scheduled group sessions and activities, and complete all course assignments. Failure to attend any part of the course will have an adverse effect on student grades, including possible failure. While life happens and emergency situations involving illness and family will be exempt from this, the student is forewarned that any conflicts should be resolved so that all activities and groups will be attended. Students are expected to notify the instructor of their absence prior to group meeting/activity and to act in a professional manner during all interactions with Honduran University students, faculty, and staff.

**Major Assignments/Projects:****REFLECTIVE JOURNALS** (II.G.2.a,b,c,d,e,f.)

Students will complete a brief (1 page) daily reaction/reflection from of their experiences. Students will be graded on adherence to length, addressing course objectives and content, clarity of thought, and genuineness of personal reactions.

**GROUP MEETINGS** (II.G.2.a,b,c,d,e,f.)

The program director and/or the program assistant will facilitate small group processing of daily experiences. Students will share their specific experiences about how they contribute to their awareness and knowledge in a new cultural context. These discussions will help facilitate and process written reflections.

**FINAL REFLECTION PAPER** (II.G.2.a,b,c,d,e,f.)

Reflection upon their experience addressing their multicultural awareness, knowledge, and how these will improve their multicultural competence (how will this awareness and knowledge influence your skills, what will you do to build on your knowledge in practice). Students are asked to keep their responses to a maximum of 5 pages in length (double space), adhere to APA, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., and limit grammatical and spelling errors.

**OUTREACH PROJECT** (II.G.2.a,b,c,d,e,f.)

Students will plan and conduct an outreach activity, in conjunction to Honduran students, to serve underprivileged populations in the country. Experiences will be shared through a group discussion by the end of the day.

### **DISSEMINATION PROJECT** (II.G.2.a,b,c,d,e,f.)

Students will be asked to develop a dissemination strategy to share the experience of the program with others (Eg. Videos, pictures, newsletter, presentations, etc.). Students will complete their assignment upon return to the United States as they share their experiences in their home institution.

### **CONFERENCE PROPOSAL** (II.G.2.a,b,c,d,e,f.)

Students must submit a proposal to present in the 2012 Counseling Conference in Honduras. Students may choose any available format (educational session, round tables or poster presentation) and may also team up to present a topic or professional experience.

### **Evaluation:**

Attendance and Course Participation	50%
Reflective Journals (daily Diary), 15 total (due weekly including one before the trip and one after)	10%
Experiential Group Meetings (daily meetings)	10%
Final Reflection Paper	8%
Outreach Project	8%
Dissemination Project	8%
Conference Proposal	6%

Note: Participation includes attending class and joining in class discussions. The course will be taken as pass/fail, rather than letter graded. Students will be able to count their course as an elective, upon respective Advisor's approval.

### **Agenda:**

Day	Topic	Activities	Assignments Due
Orientation session	Multicultural Counseling competencies	- Material discussion - Pre-departure preparation - Travel arrangements and indications	Assigned readings
Day 1	Cultural Introduction and organization	- Arrival and accommodation arrangements - Welcome activities	Daily reflections

Day 2	Honduras, UPNFM and Counseling in Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dedicated to getting to know the host institution and start the discussion regarding Counseling in Honduras</li> <li>- University tour</li> <li>- Presentations and class discussions</li> </ul> <p>It will include the study of the Counseling program in Honduras, its history and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outreach project preparation</li> </ul>	<p>Daily reflections and group discussions</p> <p>Outreach project preparation</p>
Day 3	Honduras history and culture Relationship between Honduras and The United States of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural visit to the Museum of National Identity</li> <li>- Visit to “The American Corner” presentations from the American Embassy in Honduras</li> </ul>	Daily reflections and group discussions
Day 4	Education System and the Role of Counselors in Honduras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It will focus on the education system in Honduras and the delivery of counseling services</li> <li>- Site visits to schools and counseling centers in the city</li> </ul>	Daily reflections and group discussions
Day 5	Multicultural considerations in career development and exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seventh day the group will travel to San Pedro Sula to visit the UPNFM Campus, where they will meet with faculty and students in the program</li> </ul>	<p>Daily reflections and group discussions</p> <p>Presentation on American culture to UPNFM – SPS Campus students y faculty</p>
Day 6	Position of Honduras in the world, relations and influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sixth and Seventh days the group will travel to the Caribbean Cost and explore the cultural difference within the country (Reflections on minority groups in Honduras – indigenous groups and African descendants)</li> </ul>	Daily reflections and group discussions
Day 7	Minorities: challenges, opportunities, differences, counseling and ethical implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Half of the day will be travel time, where the students will have the opportunity to see the country site of Honduras and reflect on the cultural differences (From San Pedro Sula to La Ceiba and from La Ceiba to</li> </ul>	Daily reflections and group discussions

		Roatan Island)  - Both days will include visits to the most important cultural sites and time of reflection and learning activities in relation to cross-cultural counseling	
Day 8	Self-reflection on cultural differences	- Travel day back to the capital	Daily reflections and group discussions
Day 9	Social justice and counseling advocacy	- Morning rest after the trip - Conduct outreach projects with the help of their Honduran peers in different social services organizations. - The day will end with a meeting to share their experiences of the process.	Daily reflections and group discussions  Outreach project
Day 10	The Counseling profession in Honduras	- Morning conference preparation - Participation in the Annual Counseling Conference in Honduras	Daily reflections and group discussions  Participation and presentations in the conference
Day 11	The Counseling profession in Honduras	- Participation in the Annual Counseling Conference in Honduras	Daily reflections and group discussions  Participation and presentations in the conference
Day 12	Evaluation and final processing	- Evaluation and closure of the experience - Honduran faculty and students will join the group in this process. The farewell will take place at a nearby town called Valle de Angeles (35 minutes outside the city) where the group can share and reflect	Daily reflections, group discussions and evaluation
Day 13	Travel day	Travel day Departure	
Day 14	Follow up session	- Reflection and evaluation - Dissemination - Personal impact and future plans	Final report, experiential reflections and dissemination project

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

A complete list of reminders for the beginning of the semester can be found at

[http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/academic\\_regulations/beg\\_of\\_semester.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/academic_regulations/beg_of_semester.html)

University policy dictates that the following be included in the course syllabus:

Students are bound by the academic integrity policy as stated in the code of student conduct. Therefore, students are required to uphold the university pledge of honor and exercise honesty in completing any assignment. See the website for a full explanation:

[http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/student\\_services/student\\_discipline/POL11.35.1.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/student_services/student_discipline/POL11.35.1.php)

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653.

[http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm\\_action/dss/](http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/) For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see

[http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic\\_affairs/courses\\_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php)

Help for taking and passing PRAXIS I and II is available in the College of Education Learning Technology Resource Center located in room 400 of Poe Hall. PRAXIS registration information, study guides, etc. are found at [www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis) Information on CED Teacher Education is found at <http://ced.ncsu.edu/teachered>

The College of Education's Conceptual Framework may be found in its entirety at [http://ced.ncsu.edu/about/conceptual\\_framework.htm](http://ced.ncsu.edu/about/conceptual_framework.htm)

\* Underlined items are required in listed order. Once program assessments are in place, objectives and other relevant course outcomes should not be changed without reviewing the impact on program outcomes and candidate assessments. Syllabus changes that required a course action should include course action approval date.

## **Appendix E: Statement of Purpose**

### **Counselor Education in Honduras: A Cultural Immersion Experience**

#### **FACULTY LEAD STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM**

#### **HONDURAS PROPOSAL**

##### **Statement of Purpose**

Aligned with the College of Education and the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Counselor Education mission statements, the program “Counselor Education in Honduras: A Cultural Immersion Experience” aims to provide learning opportunities to prepare professionals in their role of educators, leaders, and advocates for social justice. The program constitutes a comprehensive cultural immersion experience that promotes self awareness, mutual understanding and reflection beyond traditional pedagogical methods currently employed in the Counselor Education Program. It provides a multi-lens view of the counseling field in terms of diversity, cultural and social differences, knowledge, and practice. Hence, the objectives of the program spotlight the three major components of higher education; education, research, and service.

##### Education

1. Provide learning experiences that contribute to the development of cultural competencies in counseling.
2. Experience different methods of planning, teaching and evaluation.
3. Acquire knowledge about the counseling field, approaches and practice from an international perspective.

##### Research

4. Promote networking and exchange of knowledge and resources.
5. Provide research and dissemination opportunities for novice investigators.

##### Service

6. Promote self-awareness about the reality of developing countries, their needs and social battles.
7. Develop outreach projects that will impact underprivileged populations.

### Appendix F: Study Abroad Program Itinerary

Sunday May 13 <sup>th</sup>	Monday May 14 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday May 15 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday May 16 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday May 17 <sup>th</sup>	Friday May 18 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday May 19 <sup>th</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrival by 4:00pm</li> <li>• Orientation session 5:00 – 6:00pm</li> <li>• Welcome dinner 6:30pm</li> </ul> <p>Note: All days in TGU stay at Apart Hotel Ros <a href="http://www.aparthotelros.hn/">http://www.aparthotelros.hn/</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University tour</li> <li>• Welcome program</li> <li>• Lunch</li> <li>• Educational sessions</li> <li>• Meeting with UPN students/classes</li> <li>• Dinner</li> <li>• Debriefing session (held at the hotel conference room after diner)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural activity Museum of National Identity</li> <li>• Educational Sessions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- USA embassy guess speaker</li> <li>- Education USA Melissa Zelaya</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Back to UPN by 5:00pm</li> <li>• Diner</li> <li>• Debriefing session (held at the hotel conference room after diner)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visits (School, college and community counseling services)</li> <li>• Lunch</li> <li>• Site visits</li> <li>• Educational session</li> <li>• Diner</li> <li>• Debriefing session (held at the hotel conference room after diner)</li> </ul>	<p>Travel to SPS (depart not later than 8:00am arrive by noon)</p> <p>Campus San Pedro Sula – School Counseling program</p> <p>Note: Stay at Hotel Villa Nuria <a href="http://www.aparthotelvillanuria.com/index.php?lang=english">http://www.aparthotelvillanuria.com/index.php?lang=english</a></p>	<p>Travel to La Ceiba (depart not later than 8:00am arrive by noon)</p> <p>Campus La Ceiba</p> <p>Travel to Roatan by ferry at 4:00PM</p> <p>Tourism and diversity in Honduras</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion and debriefing sessions</li> </ul> <p>Note: Stay in the Hotel Henry Morgan <a href="http://www.hmresorts.com/henrymorgan/?lang=en">http://www.hmresorts.com/henrymorgan/?lang=en</a></p>	<p>Roatan</p> <p>Tourism and diversity in Honduras</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion and debriefing sessions</li> </ul> <p>Note: Stay at Henry Morgan Hotel</p>
Sunday May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Monday May 21 <sup>st</sup>	Tuesday May 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Wednesday May 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Thursday May 24 <sup>th</sup>	Friday May 25 <sup>th</sup>	
<p>Travel day Back to Tegucigalpa</p> <p>Note: Ferry to La Ceiba and bus to TGU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning rest</li> <li>• Afternoon service project</li> <li>• Diner</li> <li>• Debriefing session (held at the hotel conference room after diner)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning conference preparation</li> <li>• Half day Conference               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inauguration</li> <li>- Keynote speaker</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dinner reception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conference through the day</li> <li>• Diner back at the hotel</li> <li>• Debriefing session (held at the hotel conference room after diner)</li> </ul>	<p>Farewell Meetings, evaluation,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diner</li> <li>• Debriefing session (held at the hotel conference room after diner)</li> </ul>	<p>Departure day</p>	

## Appendix G: Program Evaluation Instrument Sample

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

STUDY ABROAD  
choose your destination

### Faculty-Led & Group Programs: Program Evaluation

Please note that this form is designed for use by participants on all faculty-led and group programs administered through the NC State Study Abroad Office. Therefore, there may be questions that do not apply to your particular experience.

Please be candid! **None of your responses on this evaluation will in any way affect your grades or credit.** Your thoughtful responses will assist us in improving our study abroad programs.

1. Location of Program: Honduras
2. Program Dates: May 13 2012 to May 25 2012
3. Please rate the following materials and services provided by your program:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A
General publicity materials (brochures, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-departure orientation and materials	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel information and/or arrangements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance with housing, homestays, and meals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On-site academic counseling and informal support	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explanation of safety procedures upon arrival	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing Provided (if applicable)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please comment on particular strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the above that you feel merit further elaboration.

Encouraged feedback and was understanding of questions interest, or concerns. Very accommodating.

4. How well did the program structure, staff, and location help you participate in and/or understand the host culture?

Extremely well. I felt as one with the people and immersed in their culture.

5. Were you the victim of a crime or experience any other safety incident while abroad? If yes, please provide details below.

Not at all

Please turn over

6. Describe your experience with the Study Abroad Office.

Limited but when I had a question or concern they were very helpful.

7. Foreign language programs only: How well did the program facilitate improvement of language skills?

8. If applicable, please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of other program personnel (program director, assistant, graduate assistant, etc.)

All the host students and professors were always there to help or translate. Very patient and understanding.

9. What was the best aspect of the experience?

The relationships.

10. What was the least valuable aspect of the experience?

11. Taking all aspects into account, how would you rate the program?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
poor excellent

12. Would you recommend this program to other students? Why or why not?

Yes because it facilitates growth and understanding personally and professionally in a very brief amount of time.

13. Additional comments and/or advice?

Do it again!

**Appendix H: Figures**











