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Editor

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Journal Description

International Research and Review is the official journal of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. It is a multidisciplinary journal whose primary objectives are to: (1) recognize, disseminate and share the scholarship of our members with the global academic community; (2) provide a forum for the advancement of academic inquiry and dialogue among all members and stakeholders; and (3) cultivate support for international education among campus leadership by working with university administrators to expand the support for international education among campus leaders.

The IRR is a peer-reviewed electronic journal providing a forum for scholars and educators to engage in a multi-disciplinary exchange of ideas, to address topics of mutual concern, and to advocate for policies that enhance the international dimension of higher education. Articles should focus on studies and systematic analyses that employ qualitative, quantitative, a mixture of both methods, and theoretical methodologies from an international scope. Both pedagogical and andragogical perspectives in teaching and learning are welcome.

The IRR reaches out to an audience involved in matters touching all areas of international education, including theoretical, empirical, and normative concerns and concepts as well as practices. It includes stakeholders, practitioners, advocates, as well as faculty, independent researchers, staff, and administrators of programs and institutions engaged in the field. The editors welcome manuscripts addressing the following concerns:

> *International studies and perspectives*
> *Review of current literature pertaining to international studies*
> *Initiatives and impacts in international education exchange*
> *International program development at American colleges and universities*
> *Internationalizing of curricula: policies, programs, practices, and impacts*
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> *Comparative international education issues*
> *Curriculum development in area studies*
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> *Other related topics*

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All manuscripts will be forwarded to the editor for initial review of their relevance of theme, significance, and over-all quality. Manuscripts which fit the aim and scope of the Journal, and are of sufficient quality, will then be forwarded to two anonymous reviewers. At the end of the review process, authors will be notified of any comments reviewers have made, including a recommendation regarding whether to accept, revise and resubmit, or reject the paper.

Publication Frequency
The *International Research and Review* is currently published once per year, twice as needed. The *Proceedings of Phi Beta Delta* will be a separate publication of Phi Beta Delta but, it will be included as a separate attached publication at the end of the IRR. The Proceedings will include conference papers, speeches, commentary, and other information particular to the Society and international education.

Open Access Policy
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International Research and Review is the official journal of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. It is a multidisciplinary journal that (1) welcomes submission of manuscripts reflecting research representing *all areas of study* that promote the international and global dimensions of institutional programs (including policy, practice, and debates) and individual experience of engaging in international education; (2) welcomes articles on current issues of the day regarding international

education: the practice, curriculum, institutional issues, faculty and administration management, and cultural aspects; and (3) welcomes book reviews and reviews or critiques of current literature.

The increasing interest in international opportunities and promotion of scholarship in this shrinking world create new challenges. The purpose of *International Research and Review* is to contribute and engage in the conversation related to the broad frames of international education, internationalization, and international scholars. It is hoped that the Phi Beta Delta annual conference will provide an environment where students, staff, faculty and interested groups can highlight their scholarship in these areas. The conference also serves as a forum for acquiring new ideas, conceptualizations, best practices, as well as discussion on these and other issues of international education.

Research articles may employ qualitative, quantitative, plural (mixed-methods), and theoretical methodologies from an international scope. Both pedagogical and andragogical perspectives on the international experience of teaching, learning, and cross-cultural interchange are welcome. It is recommended that manuscripts be submitted with less than 10,000 words. Articles should use the bibliographic and formatting standards found in the **APA 6th edition (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition).**

Authors whose articles are accepted for publication are required to ensure that their data are fully accessible. Authors of quantitative, empirical articles must make their data available for replication purposes. A statement of how that is done must appear in the first footnote of the article. Required material would include all data, specialized computer programs, program recodes, and an explanatory file describing what is included and how to reproduce the published results. The IRR is published once a year on-line by Phi Beta Delta, Honor Society of International Scholars: http://www.phibetadelta.org/.

Please send your submissions to the Director of Publications at: ms@smitheeassociates.com.

Submission Preparation Checklist

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all of the following items. Submissions may be returned to authors who do not adhere to these requirements.
1. The submission has not been previously published, nor is it currently being reviewed or under consideration for publication by another journal.
2. The submission file is in Microsoft Word or WordPerfect document file format.
3. All URL addresses in the text are activated and ready to click.
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5. The text adheres to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements of the APA, 6th edition. **(Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition).**

Your submission should contain the following:
- Name, institute affiliation, mailing address, and email address for all authors
- Paper title
- Abstract
- Keywords
- Introduction
- Body of paper
- Tables, figures, etc. included within the body of the paper in appropriate locations. (if applicable)
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- References
- Brief bio of each author (one paragraph, no more than 100 words)

Nota bene: Below are some particular issues authors should attend to:
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A Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol: Petit Goâve, Haiti

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Abstract

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

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

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

Overview of Cultural Immersion Programs

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

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

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

The Haitian Context

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

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

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

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

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

Components of a Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol

The cultural immersion protocol presented in this paper includes:

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

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

(c) both country national and visiting faculty, staff, and/or students participate in said activities, which

(d) take place within the geographical boundaries of the target country and (e) are guided by mutually beneficial goals,

(f) tied to a collaborative relationship with a non-governmental organization within the host country, and

(g) complimented by enrollment in a semester-long course related to the target country,

(h) for the purposes of increasing cultural competency in a trauma-impacted community.

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

Chart 1

Culturally Competent Immersion Protocol

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. ***Experience in the country***. According to Doyle, Helms and Westrup (2004), faculty members also benefit from international exposure. Of the four course instructors, all had international exposure, but only one (our consultant) had ever been to Haiti.

2. ***Mental preparedness***. According to Cordero and Rodriguez (2009), faculty should be prepared to effectively manage student biases and *'isms*, some of which will unfold on an immersion experience. However, it is difficult to process one's reactions to a new experience while simultaneously helping students process their reactions to novel stimuli. Thus, the faculty who had never visited Haiti went first, which helped them process reactions to visual information, buffer a first experience in a new country, and unpack implicit preconceptions.

3. ***Accurate information***. The pre-trip allowed the faculty to provide first-hand and accurate information to students and the Office of International Education and Programs about what to expect on a first trip to the country.

4. ***Safety analysis***. As in many study abroad programs, safety was a priority (Johns & Thompson, 2010). Prou and Okeefe (2005) discuss issues of risk, responsibility, and accountability when taking students abroad to Caribbean countries. Most study abroad programs or cultural immersion courses have a U.S. Department of State green light to visit. At the time of our faculty-only pre-trip, concerns about cholera, political instability, and crime continued to proliferate the news, and consequently, the minds of students and their loved ones. Simultaneous university and parental concerns about liability and needs to ensure safety were high. Financial support provided to the teaching faculty to have a pre-trip experiences allowed first-hand evaluation of our intended worksite, security measures, and transportation as well as the process of entry into and exit from the country. Importantly, it also allowed our in-country community liaisons to become acquainted with us and reaffirm our mutual goals and objectives.

5. ***Accommodations analysis***. A quick review of travel into, out of, and inside the country helped inform the needs we had as well as examine how and what could be done to accommodate student needs. At the time of our immersion, federal regulations regarding accommodations for students with disabilities did not include extraterritorial applications for a study abroad experience, but our Haitian colleagues were as invested in our success as we were in theirs. Thus, between the time of our pre-trip in early November and the time our students arrived in early January, a ramp was created by country nationals to facilitate mobility, thus ensuring accessibility at the housing site for all of our students.

6. ***Community needs assessment***. During the pre-trip, we observed the community library lacked books and needed painting. Students thus arranged to donate books or paint the library as part of a service component in their experience. Additionally, the topics our students originally chose as workshops were changed to meet the community's specific requests. The community wanted workshops in meditation, leadership, technology, English, dance, drums, coping resources, and general information about mental health.

7. ***Grounds Inspection/change of location***. Lowe et al. (2008) and Streets (2011a) discuss the challenges and rewards of attracting students to emerging countries for the purpose of increasing global awareness. One challenge was changing the worksite. Our original location for the immersion experience was intended to be Cap-Haïtien, Haiti. However, due to the political climate, rapidly changing community needs, professional readiness of the students, and concerns about safety and risk factors, especially regarding a recent eruption of cholera in the area, we began to look at alternative locations. Dr. Guerda Nicolas, a co-author on this paper, recommended the relocation of our program from Cap-Haïtien to Petit Goâve, Haiti.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1

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

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

Table 1 continued

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2

Survey Questions and Responses by Cultural Immersion Students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

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

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

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

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

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

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Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Spain:
An Overview of the Accreditation System

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Abstract

Accreditation has become an important issue in Spain. This paper presents an overview of Spain's accreditation system; a system which is relatively new and has evolved rapidly, fostered by legislative mandates which established accreditation bodies to regulate the quality of higher education institutions. One of the initial challenges faced by accrediting agencies and universities in Spain was the need for a national curricular reform to transform the degree offerings across the country to match with the new European degree system. Discussion about the emergence of the accreditation system and the experiences of accreditors and academics during the nationwide curricular reform are included.

Keywords: Accreditation; accrediting agencies; quality assurance; curricular reform; higher education; Europe; Spain

Quality assurance has become a very important matter for higher education institutions in Spain. The increased pressure for accountability and the need for reliable methods to determine higher education quality are among the factors that propelled the establishment of accreditation agencies in the country. Legislation mandating the creation of a national accreditation and evaluation agency was fundamental to the emergence and adoption of quality frameworks and quality standards. The Bologna Process has resulted in the formation of the European Higher Education Area, EHEA, prompted to some extent the development of accreditation bodies and implementation of accreditation processes in Spain.

For the benefit of the readers who are not familiar with the Bologna Process, I insert here a brief summary, which I have discussed in previous publications. In 1999, in a meeting at the University of Bologna, ministers of education from 29 European countries signed the *Bologna Declaration* making a commitment to transform, through cooperation, an archaic assortment of universities (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Higher education systems across Europe were incompatible; degrees awarded were not equivalent; time to degree completion varied from country to country; there was no common or compatible system of credits; the differences made mobility difficult; quality assurance methods were needed; and there were many other issues derived from historical and national factors (Ríos, 2011). The implementation of the Bologna Process has had an unprecedented impact on European higher education; Spain was one of the original signers in Bologna. Specific objectives included: adopting comparable degrees across Europe; implementation of a credit system to permit transferability; embracing equivalent methods and criteria for quality assurance; facilitating international mobility for students,

faculty, researchers, and university administrators (EU Rectors & CRE, 2000, p. 4). A major accomplishment was the negotiation, development, and adoption of the European standards and processes for quality assurance. For the tenth anniversary of the *Bologna Declaration*, there were 47 participating countries; a new declaration covering the decade 2010 to 2020 was signed, and the name of European Higher Education Area, EHEA, was officially adopted (Budapest-Vienna Declaration, 2010, para. 1).

Higher Education institutions in Spain have experienced major transformations and challenges in the last decade, in the process of aligning their programs and degree offerings to the standards of the European Higher Education Area. Meeting the criteria established by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and assuring the quality of the professoriate has become central to the work of national and regional accrediting agencies in the country. Universities across Spain have been subjected to external demands for accountability and have had to demonstrate that they meet quality indicators. The emphasis of the discussion in this study is on the existing quality assurance agencies in the different regions of the country and the extensive curricular reform that has been accomplished by universities across the country. The findings of this research are certainly relevant for international cooperation and partnerships as well as for practitioners in the field of international higher education interested in establishing exchange programs with universities in Spain.

Scholarship on Higher Education Quality in Europe and Spain

Higher education institutions around the world have been faced with unprecedented demands for accountability. External quality assurance organizations, dedicated to establishing standards or criteria to evaluate higher education institutions, have emerged across the globe. Determining the quality of higher education institutions has become the topic of a considerable number of scholarly articles and research papers. In Europe, the scholarship related to higher education quality became important with the advent of the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area. Parallel to the proliferation of books, journal articles, and other publications on the subject, there has been a worldwide growth in the number of conferences, symposiums, forums and other events related to higher education quality. Review of the literature on higher education quality shows that many of the publications are produced by the organizations in charge of determining the quality of higher education systems. Some of the matters covered in the literature include: assessment and learning outcomes (ENQA, 2005; Adamson, *et al.*, 2010; Kallioinen, 2010; Nair, 2013; Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, Shavelson & Kuhn, 2015); lifelong learning (Kehm & Lischka, 2001; European Commission, 2008; ESU, 2010b); accountability (King, 2007; Rosa & Teixeira, 2014; Raban & Cairns, 2015); quality in teaching and learning (Leitner, 1998; Požarnik, 2009; Kehm, 2010; Nen, 2014; international cooperation (Nyborg, 2003; Sursock & Smidt, 2010; ESU, 2010a; Papatsiba, 2014); student involvement (Bateson, & Taylor, 2004; Berlin ESIB, 2007; Pabian & Minksova, 2011); internal and external quality assurance (Raban, 2007; Kehm, 2010; Blackstock, 2012; Eaton, 2013);

mobility (Zgaga, 2006; Brus & Scholz, 2007; Wächter, 2013; Behle, 2014); and transparency (Costes, *et al*., 2010; Garben, 2010; Westerheijden, 2014).

Quality assurance in higher education in Spain is addressed in a number of recent scholarly publications. Most of the themes covered in these publications are similar to those addressed in the literature of quality assurance for other European countries. Subjects such as assessment of student learning outcomes (Martín, 2006; Pierce & Robisco, 2010; Ion & Cano, 2011; Duque, L.C., Duque, J.C. & Suriñach, 2013; Lopez-Pastor, Pintor, Muros & Webb, 2013; Ramos, *et al.*, 2015); accountability (Fernandez, 1997; Jimenez, M. P., 2007; Marti, Puertas & Calafat, 2014; Arribas & Martínez, 2015); competencies and labor market demands (Ion & Cano, 2011; 2012; Lafuente, Martinez, Palacio-Massotti & Pardinas, 2012; Gonzalez, Arquero & Hassall, 2014); internationalization and mobility (Rodríguez, M.J., 2011); educational reform (Pinto, 2010; Cruz-Castro & Sanz-Menéndez, 2015); and the quality of the professoriate (Jimenez & Palmero, 2007; Pozo, Bretones, Martos & Alonso, 2011; Trullen & Rodriguez, S., 2013; Hernández-Pina, 2014) are frequently addressed in the literature.

A frequent theme in scholarly publications about the quality of higher education in Spain is the influence of financial aspects (Pérez, 2004; Fernandez & Vaquero, 2005; Jimenez, M.P., 2007; Hernández & Pérez, 2010). The recent national economic crisis in Spain has limited some of the financial resources available to higher education institutions; therefore, this is a recurrent theme in the literature.

The struggle to determine and improve the quality of its university system is not exclusive of Spain. As mentioned above; this trend can be seen in most European countries and has been a central part of the recent changes promoted by the European Higher Education Area. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education published, in 2005, the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ENQA, 2005). The European ministers of education adopted these standards during the Bologna Process summit held in Bergen, Norway in 2005 (Bergen Communiqué, 2005).

Scope and Limitations

The scope of this paper is limited to the analysis of the accreditation system that regulates higher education institutions in Spain, with the objective of providing an overview of the recognized accrediting bodies that determine institutional quality in the country and on the work of these agencies with higher education institutions in the extensive national curricular reform. The discussion presented here is based on field research conducted in Spain; visits to a dozen universities; interviews with university administrators, faculty members, and accreditors; and review of selected documents published by accrediting agencies, universities, and other key stakeholders. Only public universities were included in the interviews. Due to the purpose and scope of the paper, I set limits to the aspects covered. I focus on portraying an overview of Spain's quality assurance system for higher education, discussing the scope of responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved in the determination and improvement of the quality of higher education institutions in Spain. The study examines: the responsibilities of the external quality

assurance agencies, the roles of national and regional organizations, and the changes that have occurred at the university level as a result of the adaptation to the European Higher Education Area, including the national curricular reform.

This article will not address specific indicators of quality or details of the processes for quality assurance at the institutional level. I have set limits to the sources reviewed, as the abundance of reports produced by accreditors and institutions is vast. The interviews held in Spain were mostly in Spanish, in which I am fluent. While most of the accrediting bodies provided responses and documentation in Spanish or in English translations, some of the responses and documents analyzed were written in the regional languages spoken in Spain. I translated some of the original documents and statements from *Spanish*, *Català, Valencià, Galego,* and *Euskara*; I have proficiency in Spanish, but while not fully proficient in the other regional languages of Spain, I was able to analyze the material, and I assume the responsibility for the translations.

Methods and Procedures

In addition to the extensive review of literature, the research approach selected for this study is qualitative, and includes document analysis and interviews. During the process of research, sources of information not originally contemplated were identified.

In preparation for this study, requests for interviews and for access to relevant accreditation documents were made to the national accreditation agency in Spain, *Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación* (ANECA)*,* and to a number of universities in different regions of the country. Accreditors and quality experts in higher education in Spain were consulted for assistance in selecting the institutions to be visited. Contacts were made with the responsible persons at the institutions and a schedule for visits and interviews was established. Letters requesting interviews and including sample questions were sent to selected participants, including accreditors, higher education institutions, and recognized experts in quality issues in higher education in the country. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were scheduled and were conducted in the field. Interviews took place at the participant universities or in the accreditor's offices.

The documents analyzed include relevant legislation impacting higher education accreditation; the published and disseminated standards, policies, and procedures of accrediting agencies; institutional self-studies, strategic plans, assessment plans, internal policies and procedures; and a myriad of documents developed by the institutions. In addition, relevant documents were obtained from the Ministry of Education.

Official documents containing policies and procedures are important research data. Creswell (2008) considers that documents can provide significant and valuable data for a researcher: "these sources provide valuable information in helping researchers understand central phenomena in qualitative studies" Creswell (2008, p. 230, para. 5). As Best & Kahn (1989) indicated: "Documents are an important source of data. … [W]hen document analysis is used as descriptive research, current documents and issues are the foci. The analysis is concerned with the exploration of the status of some phenomenon at a particular time or its development over a

period of time" (Best and Kahn, 1989, p. 90, para. 3). Also, according to Best and Khan: "Content or document analysis... is helpful in evaluating or explaining social or educational practices" (Best and Kahn, 1989, p. 92, para. 1).

Important additional sources of information about the status of accreditation in Spain were discovered as a result of contacts established. A number of documents and studies of the status of accreditation in some of the regions were obtained and analyzed as well.

For this research, interviews were an important source for understanding the matter under study. Creswell (2008) affirms that during an interview, "the interviewer has better control over the types of information received, because the interviewer can ask specific questions to elicit this information" (Creswell, 2008, p. 226, para. 2). According to Merriam (1998), interviews are an important source of qualitative data. Interviews are considered by Best & Kahn (1989) to have some advantages in qualitative research as they allow participants to expand in the description of the phenomena under study. Best and Kahn have indicated that it is generally easier for people to have a conversation and give oral answers than to prepare written responses: "The interview is often superior to other data-gathering devices. One reason is that people are usually more willing to talk than to write" (Best & Kahn, 1989, p. 201, para. 2).

Interview protocols were specially designed for this particular study. The participants in the interviews conducted for this research were accreditation officials, university administrators, faculty members, and university students. They were willing to answer questions and capable of communicating and discussing accreditation issues. Creswell (2008) has indicated that "One-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably" (Creswell, 2008, p. 226, para. 5).

Who Controls Higher Education in Spain?

The government involvement and governance of higher education institutions in Spain is quite different from the model we are used to in the U.S. The control of higher education in Spain also has distinctive features from other countries in the European Higher Education Area.

There are multiple players exerting external control over universities in Spain. The central government of the country has an authority over what happens in higher education. Spain's national government exerts control over universities through legislative acts and nationwide laws that affect universities across the country. Legislative acts and royal decrees are signed by the king. There have been a number of parliamentary resolutions passed in the last decade regarding higher education. As does other European countries, Spain has a Ministry of Education; the full name of Spain's ministry is "Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport" (*Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deporte*). The ministry has specific responsibilities concerning the country's higher education system. The control of the higher education system in the nation is vested in the Minister of Education. Under the minister of education there is a Secretariat of Education (*Secretaría de Estado de Educación, Formación Profesional y Universidades*) and a General Secretariat for Universities (*Secretaría General de*

Universidades); each of these entities has its respective officers and specific responsibilities regarding higher education institutions.

Spain has 17 *Comunidades Autónomas or* autonomous communities, which have specific powers under the law regarding their local universities. Governments in these autonomous communities have also a stake in higher education. Given that autonomous communities provide funding for public higher education, regional governments also have authority over their institutions. Regional parliaments enact laws concerning the universities in their area. The scope of government control varies from region to region, but regional governments have substantial responsibilities for the quality of the universities and can be involved in different ways, for example, creating new programs, eliminating programs, or deciding to support specific research or innovations. In some instances, these responsibilities are delegated to a regional minister in charge of higher education in the specific region of the country. Universities also have an internal structure of governance and are usually led by a *Rector* who holds a post similar to that of our university presidents.

There is a legal framework within which universities in Spain operate. While this paper does not intend to cover in detail how the legal framework has evolved, it is necessary to mention the legislation controlling higher education. Spain's higher education law is referred to as *Ley Orgánica de Universidades* (LOU)*, which can be translated as "Organic Law of Universities" (LOU, 2001). In 2001 the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I, signed this national law that regulates the university system. The acronym used for the legislation is LOU/2001.

The LOU was amended and became *Ley Orgánica de Universidades Modificada, LOMLOU,* or in my translation: "Law of Universities Modified" (LOMLOU, 2007). The amendments to the law took place in 2007 and the amended law is known as LOMLOU/2007. I will use these acronyms, LOU/2001 and LOMLOU/2007, to refer to these laws hereafter.

The policy-making organism issuing nationwide policies affecting higher education is a joint council that includes the nation's Minister of Education and the ministers in charge of higher education from the autonomous communities across the country. This policy-making organism is named *Conferencia General de Política Universitaria.* For the purpose of this paper I will refer to this council as "University Policymaking General Conference of Ministers" [Author's translation].

In addition to the council mentioned above, there is a council formed mostly of university administrators called *Consejo de Universidades* or, in English "Council of Universities" [Author's translation]. The "Council of Universities" is an advisory body and includes university presidents or *rectores* from both public and private universities as well as the nation's Minister of Education. The organic higher education laws LOU/2001 and LOMLOU/2007 specify the responsibilities of this council.

The national councils "Council of Universities" and "University Policymaking General Conference of Ministers" discussed above are part of the overall organization and governance of the higher education system in Spain. There are a number of additional bodies at the local,

regional, and national levels, involved in the regulatory aspects of higher education institutions. The internal governance and policies of each university create another layer of authority.

When this research was conducted, the Spanish higher education system included 50 public universities and 29 private higher education institutions. The number of public universities continues to be the same at the time of preparing this paper. There are now 33 private higher education institutions. As previously mentioned, private universities were not included in the interviews leading to this paper. Most of the public universities (48 of the 50) are funded from the autonomous communities where they are physically located. Only two public higher education institutions depend primarily on the Ministry of Education for funding (Pérez, 2004, p. 307, para. 3).

Overview of Quality Assurance Agencies in Spain

Legislation LOU/2001 mandated the establishment of mechanisms of external quality assurance. The law specifically mandates the creation of a national accreditation agency and delineates its charter. LOU/2001, Title V states that the agency will be named *Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación* (ANECA)*,* which can be translated as National Agency for the Evaluation of Quality and Accreditation. The legislation has given ANECA the charge of guaranteeing the quality of the country's University System (LOU, 2001).

During my research, I visited the headquarters of ANECA in Madrid, and had the opportunity to conduct interviews. The agency has a very detailed action plan and multiple programs to assess quality. In order to ensure the quality of the whole system of higher education in Spain, ANECA coordinates with the regional accrediting agencies the processes of accreditation, evaluation, and certification. As the national accrediting agency, the functions and responsibilities of ANECA cover all universities across Spain.

The 17 autonomous communities are Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castille and León, Castille-La Mancha, Catalonia, Extremadura, Galicia, La Rioja, Madrid, Murcia, Navarre, and Valencia. Some of these communities have created their own "regional" quality assurance organizations. At the time of conducting this study, 10 of the autonomous communities had their own agency to monitor the quality of the universities in their own region. The universities located in autonomous communities that had not formed their own accreditation organization reported directly to ANECA.

According to ANECA's charter and bylaws, as an umbrella organization, the agency has the responsibility to coordinate and cooperate with the external quality assurance organizations established in the autonomous communities. The parameters for the cooperative work between ANECA and the regional agencies are delineated in LOMLOU/2007 and reflected in ANECA's bylaws (ANECA Bylaws, 2013, Art. 7, p.4). ANECA has the responsibility for assuring the quality of not only university degrees nationwide, but also those degrees offered or awarded by Spanish universities in foreign countries (ANECA Bylaws, 2013, Art.1.3, p.1). The mission statement of ANECA indicates that ensuring the quality of the higher education system in the

country is its main responsibility, and that the agency strives for fostering the improvement of all the Spanish universities. ANECA summarizes its mission and charter as follows: "To promote quality assurance (QA) in the system of higher education in Spain together with its continuous improvement and enhancement, through guidance and orientation, evaluation, certification and accreditation, thereby contributing to the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area and accountability to society" (ANECA, 2015b, para. 2) [English in the original].

ANECA officials interviewed for this study indicated that the agency strives to conduct its work with transparency, independence and objectivity. They define the organization as an agency dedicated to serving the society. It was mentioned that the agency is committed to the European standards for Quality in Higher Education (personal communication).

ANECA holds membership in several European and international quality assurance organizations. In 2003 ANECA became one of the founding members of the European Consortium for Accreditation, ECA. In the same year ANECA became a member of the accreditation organization *Red Iberoamericana para el Aseguramiento de la Calidad en la Educación Superior, RIACES,* which includes quality assurance agencies from the Iberic peninsula (Spain and Portugal) and Latin America. ANECA is a founding member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA, and has gained membership in the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, INQAAHE (ANECA, 2015a).

In the course of this research, an unexpected finding was to notice the linguistic diversity across the country; and to what extent the regional languages in Spain continue to be used for official documents and research. Accrediting agencies in the regions where a language other than Spanish is the official language have prepared materials and documentation in the language of their region. It was interesting to notice how proud the autonomous communities are of their regional languages and their efforts for preserving the linguistic richness of the country.

The ten regional quality assurance agencies are listed in **Table 1**. The names of the accrediting agencies are listed in English, followed by their actual names in the language of their regions (Spanish, Català, Valencià, Galego, or Euskara) and their acronyms.

Table 1

Regional Accrediting Agencies in Spain

1. Agency for Quality Assurance in the Galician University System, *Axencia para a Calidade do Sistema Universitario de Galicia, ACSUG*
2. Agency for Quality of the Basque University System, *Euskal Unibertsitate Sistemaren Kalitate Agentzia, UNIBASQ*
3. Agency for University Quality and Prospective Aragon, *Agencia de Calidad y Prospectiva Universitaria de Aragón, ACPUA*
4. Agency for University Quality Assurance of the Balearic Islands, *L'Agència de Qualitat Universitària de les Illes Balears, AQUIB*
5. Andalusian Agency of Knowledge - Direction of Evaluation and Accreditation, *Agencia Andaluza del Conocimiento - Dirección de Evaluación y Acreditación, AAC-DEVA*
6. Canarian Agency for University Quality and Educational Evaluation, *Agencia Canaria de Calidad Universitaria y Evaluación Educativa, ACCUEE*
7. Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency, *Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari AQU Catalunya*
8. Madrid Knowledge Foundation, *Fundación para el Conocimiento Madri+d, FCM* [The plus sign "+" is part of the official name]
9. Quality Assurance Agency for the University System in Castille & León, *Agencia para la Calidad del Sistema Universitario de Castilla y León, CSUCYL*
10. Valencian Agency for Evaluation and Prospective, *Agència Valenciana d'Avaluació i Prospectiva, AVAP*

During the interview, ANECA officials explained the work of the agency in coordinating and collaborating with the ten quality assurance agencies in the autonomous communities. While the regional agencies are responsible to ensure quality in the university system in their particular region, national legislation has determined the extent of the "shared" responsibilities of the regional agencies and ANECA. As I have mentioned before, the relations between ANECA and the regional accreditation agencies are regulated by the Organic Laws LOU/2001 and LOMLOU/2007. As noted above, the regional governments have also enacted laws concerning the higher education institutions in their own regions (LOU, 2001; LOMLOU, 2007).

Accrediting agencies in the autonomous communities have to respond to regional and national legislation. Regional agencies have competency over the evaluation, accreditation, and certification of higher education quality in their own regions, within the limitations that the laws (LOU/2001 and LOMLOU/2007) impose. During the interviews conducted, I found that some of the responsibilities of ANECA, the national agency, and the regional agencies overlap. The answers that I received indicate that there is, to some extent, a sharing of duties. However, the evaluation of academic personnel and the determination of faculty qualifications is under the responsibility of ANECA, mandated by a royal decree issued in October 2007 (Real Decreto, 2007). ANECA has formed committees or panels of experts in the different disciplines and has specific procedures for the evaluation of academics. In addition to evaluation by ANECA, academic personnel are also evaluated by some of the regional accreditors.

There have been legal challenges to the mandate of the evaluation of faculty by ANECA. Some academics consider the standards of some regional agencies to be higher and stricter than ANECA's standards. However, the Spanish Supreme Court *(Tribunal Constitucional)* has asserted that the evaluation of professors made by ANECA has validity across the country (Álvarez & Vallespín, 2014). A deeper discussion about evaluation of faculty is outside the scope of this paper.

There are significant differences among the accrediting agencies in Spain. ANECA is certainly different because of its national charge and its coordinating responsibilities for the overall quality assurance system of the country. The regional accrediting agencies present striking differences among themselves. These differences are based on several factors, including the number of institutions in each region, the funding provided by the local governments, the priorities of the region, the political environment, the location, and cultural factors such as language. A few examples follow to give a sense of the differences.

The number of universities under the responsibility of each regional accrediting agency varies from as low as one institution to more than a dozen universities. Comparing the number of higher education institutions under the responsibility of each agency, I found cases such as *AQUIB*, the agency for University Quality Assurance of the Balearic Islands, where there is only one university, in contrast with the quality assurance agency for the community of Madrid, *FCM,* where there are at least 15 higher education institutions.

As mentioned before, the regional government in the autonomous communities has regulatory jurisdiction over its universities, except in matters explicit in the Organic Laws LOU/2001 and LOMLOU/2007. Accrediting agencies and public universities in the autonomous communities receive funding from the local government and are supported in many ways by regional authorities. Therefore, the quality assurance agencies established by the autonomous communities have dissimilar resources. The internal organization and number of staff varies depending of the number of institutions under their responsibility.

Given that Spain's accrediting agencies operate within the overall framework of the European Higher Education Area, EHEA, the agencies have taken measures to maintain independent judgments in their processes and decision making. The adopted *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* include a standard requiring independence: "3.3 Independence - Standard: Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence" (ESG, 2015, p. 18, para. 7) [English in the original].

Spain's accrediting agencies place emphasis on their independent status in their publications and reports. All the agencies have regulations and procedures to ensure independent judgment in evaluation and accreditation decisions. Some agencies have some additional financial sources or their own budgets and capital resources. The agencies generally are governed by a board of directors or board of trustees. These boards usually include representatives from the universities, the government, and the community.

In comparison with the accreditation processes that I have previously studied in Latin-America and the U.S., I found that there is more government involvement in processes of quality assurance in Spain. Quality assurance agencies seem to strive to maintain transparency and independence from the government; however, organic laws such as LOU/2001 and LOMLOU/2007 and laws passed by the governments of the autonomous communities set parameters for government involvement. This is a political matter and universities and accrediting agency officials have to operate within the legal framework. The independence of the agencies from the government is a matter that raises questions and deserves further study. During the interviews, I perceived some uneasiness in answering questions about this issue. The statement by Eaton (2013) regarding the increased government involvement in the U.S. accreditation is certainly applicable to Spain: "[A]ccreditation is increasingly government-controlled, serving more and more as an instrument of government policy and making accreditors, increasingly, actors in the political world …" (Eaton, 2013, p. 1, para. 1).

Some regional agencies have achieved international recognition and are members of European or international quality organizations, while others remain local. For example, the quality assurance agencies in the regions of Cataluña (AQU), Andalusia (AAC-DEVA), Galicia (ACSUG), Castilla y León (ACSUCYL), Basque Country (UNIBASQ), and Madrid (FCM) have gained membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA. ANECA, the national accreditor, is also a member of ENQA (ENQA, 2015).

In another example, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, INQAAHE, a worldwide quality assurance organization, has included as full members the regional agencies of Andalusia (AAC-DEVA), Basque Country (UNIBASQ), and Cataluña (AQU). ANECA is also a full member of INQAAHE (INQAAHE, 2015).

Several of the accrediting agencies in the autonomous communities are recognized by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, EQAR, including: Cataluña (AQU), Andalusia (AAC-DEVA), Galicia (ACSUG), Castilla y León (ACSUCYL), Basque Country (UNIBASQ), and Madrid (FCM). This European registry includes higher education accrediting agencies that have embraced European quality assurance principles and demonstrated satisfactory compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. Spain's national accreditor ANECA is also recognized by EQAR (EQAR, 2015).

Most regional agencies were founded between 2001 and 2005, after LOU/2001 was passed. An exception is the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency, AQU, which was the first quality assurance agency in Spain, and which has existed even before the Bologna Process started in Europe. The agency was formed as a consortium for the quality of the university system in 1996 and subsequently modified its name to the current *AQU Catalunya* (AQU, 2015).

Quality assurance agencies have formed a national collaborative organization that includes regional accrediting agencies and the national agency, ANECA. This organization has been named: Spanish Network of University Quality Agencies *(Red Española de Agencias de Calidad Universitaria, REACU).* The creation of REACU took place in 2006 during a meeting of

agencies representatives in Tordesillas, Valladolid. The need of collaboration and mutual recognition was central to the formation of REACU. Universities in Spain were experiencing unprecedented changes as a result of the adoption of the European framework of comparable degrees and the European standards and processes for quality assurance. The Bologna Process and the national organic law, LOU/2001, had prompted an extensive curricular reform. Quality assurance agencies had to synchronize their processes and ensure that institutions under their responsibility met the challenges faced (ACSUCYL, 2006).

In its charter document the objectives of REACU are stated as follows: "REACU's main goals include promoting cooperation amongst Spanish university quality assurance agencies and contributing to creating the conditions for the mutual recognition of decisions.… and will act as a forum in which to put forward and develop standards, procedures and guidelines …" (REACU Charter, 2006, para. 4). [English in the original] This organization of quality assurance agencies, REACU, continues to play an important collaborative role as it includes representation of the regional accrediting agencies (ACSUCYL, 2006).

There are other influential organizations, such as the *Conference of University Presidents* (*Conferencia de Rectores de Universidades Españolas, CRUE),* which has just changed its brand to *"CRUE Universidades Españolas."* This association, formed by the university presidents, represents all higher education institutions in the country, public and private, and its general assembly includes the 76 university presidents in the country. The CRUE states that its role is to be the voice of the Spanish universities at the national and international levels. The CRUE is the representative of the academic community in dealings with the central government, the Ministry of Education, or national accreditors. The organization coordinates actions related to higher education policies and the shared interests of the Spanish university system. During my research I found that the CRUE brings an academic viewpoint to the national discussions; this is an association of universities supporting common goals. As a clarification, the CRUE is not the same organism as the "Council of Universities" discussed above, which also includes university presidents (CRUE, 2015).

Changes as a Result of Accreditation

In the midst of the Bologna Process and the implementation of a national accreditation, university administrators and the professoriate across Spain were faced with significant challenges. Important institutional and program changes have occurred since the adoption of the European framework of comparable degrees and the European standards and processes for quality assurance. An extensive curricular reform and emphasis on improving teaching and assessing learning outcomes have been part of the transformation.

The government initiative "University Strategy 2015" *(Estrategia Universidad 2015)* was launched in 2010 as a national strategic plan to be accomplished by the year 2015. One of its objectives was to modernize the Spanish higher education system. Universities were required to adapt their curricula and programs to be compatible with the European Higher Education Area. Universities had a time frame to make major adaptations and change their degree offerings to the

three-cycle curricular reform that had been adopted in most European countries (ESTR, 2010, p. 23). In the process of re-designing their degrees, universities had to make major changes "in terms of governance, financial structure, employability, strategic campus aggregations …" (ESTR, 2010, p. 23, para. 2). [English in the original] Higher education institutions were prompted to "offer comparable, flexible, diversified teaching that encourages mobility and life-long learning, that is cross-disciplinary and directly linked to the needs of society, and that prepares the students for the specific job market they face" (ESTR, 2010, p. 23 para. 2). [English in the original]

During the interviews I held in universities in different regions of Spain, I found that faculty and administrators had spent significant time and resources in accomplishing the curricular reform necessary to be compatible with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). A significant number of the degree offerings had been transformed to harmonize with the rest of Europe. Old degrees were being phased out to accommodate students who were in the process of completion. Universities established quality control measures and continued working with accrediting agencies in the numerous required processes. An overall sense of satisfaction with these accomplishments was reflected in the comments of university administrators and faculty members, especially the ones who had significant involvement in the process of curricular reform.

In 2012 ANECA, in collaboration with regional accreditors, issued a report stating that in just three years, universities across the country had transformed thousands of official degrees and adapted them to the European framework: *"Fruto del enorme trabajo de las instituciones de educación superior, en apenas tres años se ha concentrado la rápida renovación del diseño de varios miles de títulos oficiales, con el propósito de adaptarlos al nuevo marco europeo de enseñanza superior"* (ICU, 2012, p.7, para. 2).

The ANECA report also states that by the end of 2012, universities had nearly six thousand new degree titles adapted to the European framework, which had received favorable verification by the agency. Most of the degrees were new undergraduate and Master degrees. The agency report disclosed that new doctorate degrees were in the process of development: *"Así, al cierre de 2012, el conjunto de las universidades españolas cuentan con cerca de seis mil nuevos títulos con informe favorable para la verificación. A dichos títulos, fundamentalmente de grado y de máster, se prevé se añadan nuevos títulos de doctorado en un número importante"* (ICU, 2012, p.8, para. 1).

In its report of the status of universities in 2014, ANECA indicated that, since 2011, about two thousand new Masters and undergraduate degrees, and more than a thousand new doctorate degrees, had been developed in accordance with the European framework (ICU, 2014, pp. 15-16). ANECA recognized the hard work of universities and accrediting agencies in accomplishing this massive curricular reform (ICU, 2014, p. 16).

In my visits to different universities I found that several had created posts and committees dedicated to work on quality assurance or to work on documenting compliance with national or regional accreditation requirements. All academics, administrators, and faculty interviewed were

aware of the accreditation agencies and had been involved in some way in the curricular reform or in committees working on some facet of accreditation. I also found in the course of the interviews that administrators and faculty were, in general, proud of the achieved accomplishments in matters of meeting accreditation requirements. Some academic participants explained that, during the process, it was not always easy to keep up with their regular teaching and research responsibilities and to find time to work on multiple committees and prepare accreditation documents. There were a few who had some complaints about the never ending paper work and excessive documentation, or who referred to the process as very bureaucratic.

Most students seemed satisfied with the recent curricular changes and with the new degree structures and study cycles that have been designed to align across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The students interviewed were not aware of ANECA or the regional agency in charge of their university.

Comments from university administrators indicated that accreditation demands and processes had caused increased faculty involvement and teamwork. Some professors who used to work in isolation became more engaged and collaborative. Among academics, there was a sense of pride in the new degree offerings, and most agreed that the new degree offerings being implemented responded to the needs of society. Some academics indicated that the new curricula prepared their students better for the demands of the European employment market.

Despite the multiple challenges presented in a nation-wide establishment of an accreditation system and curricular reform, Spain's higher education system has achieved important results and has changed significantly. Universities across the country have now more than eight thousand new degree offerings that have received favorable accreditation reviews (ICU, 2014, p. 16). This research demonstrates the resilience and engagement of the professoriate and university administrators across Spain who had spent substantial time, beyond their regular responsibilities, working in many committees, councils, and task forces making sure that their institutions met the European Higher Education Area quality standards.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

The preceding pages present some of the complexities of the quality assurance system in Spain and the agencies in charge of the accreditation of higher education institutions. There are intrinsic differences in how the process of quality assurance emerged in Spain compared to how voluntary institutional accreditation was developed and functions in the U.S. While the aim of accrediting agencies worldwide is basically the same, bringing quality to higher education, the efforts for quality assurance in Spain and in particular the overall curricular reform that took place in a restricted time framework were worthy of study. The experiences and the coordinated work of universities in Spain offer lessons for universities in different settings, and provide ideas for further research questions, as there are many issues to explore.

Academics such as myself, who have been involved for years in curricular design and program development, appreciate the difficulties involved in changing the curricula, not only of a program, degree, or department, but of all the universities in a country simultaneously, which

seems like an unachievable task. The many hours of negotiation and compromise that we spend when modifying a degree plan, discussing which courses are more needed and which courses should be eliminated, have to be multiplied many times to produce all the curricular changes that the professoriate in Spain achieved. As I analyze the information retrieved from documents and interviews, it is clear that the legislatures, laws, ministers, and accrediting agencies created the authority for accomplishing the changes. However, the actual implementation of accreditation criteria and curricular reform was achieved at the institutions of higher education. University officials led the effort at the campus level, but it was the professoriate, the faculty, and staff members who did the field work and were able to achieve the transformation of the Spanish higher education system.

Higher education institutions in Spain have aligned their degrees and credit system to the European Higher Education Area. The adoption of the European standards for quality assurance has made universities in Spain even more open than before to international collaboration and partnerships, as international mobility is encouraged in the standards. Understanding the accreditation system currently in place in Spain, and the accreditation status of universities and programs, can be helpful for American universities and practitioners in the field of international higher education when selecting sites for exchange programs and in the process of making decisions on partnerships with universities in Spain.

In the course of this research, it was fascinating to find how regional languages continue to be central to the identity of the different regions of Spain. I had expected to have to translate material just from Spanish; instead, I found that languages such as Català, Valencià, Galego, and Euskara were used in their particular regions. The cultural diversity across Spain and among the autonomous communities would be an interesting area for future research. Another research question could be determining to what extent the decision of the regional governments to have their own accrediting body was influenced by regional pride.

Among the issues that deserve further study are the recent growth of the number of private higher institutions in Spain, their accreditation status, and internal quality assurance processes. Private universities were not included in the present study, and their proliferation brings up questions that should be studied.

Given that there is an emergence of online courses and programs in Spain, further research is needed to study the quality of online offerings across the Spanish higher education system and the approaches of accrediting agencies in the evaluation of online offerings.

A study of the academic profession in Spain is necessary. There are many issues about the faculty in Spain that would be important to study, such as professional motivations, gender issues, qualifications, workload, compensation, ranks, and academic freedom. An analysis of the results of the evaluation of academics by ANECA deserves further research.

Finally, I believe that a comparative study of the accreditation system in Spain with accreditation systems of other countries would be an interesting research project.

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Lessons Learned from Implementing an Intercultural Communication Training Program for Pre-Departure Expatriates

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Abstract

Expatriate preparation is an ever growing area of interest in a globalized economy sharing a globalized workforce. For decades, scholars have sought methods for best preparing expatriates for host culture experiences. Research has revealed an array of factors leading to intercultural readiness success which has led to the creation of various assessments and training programs. Many of these programs offer strong returns on investment for governmental, private, and missions organizations that regularly send people abroad. However, even in the presence of research-based expatriate preparation programs, the expatriate failure rate still reaches nearly 65 percent. There seems to be a disconnect between even a high quality expatriate preparation program and the corresponding experience, revealing that even the best programs can fail to adequately prepare expatriates for an abroad experience. After a decade of studying and teaching intercultural communication, plus years of training pre-departure expatriates, the author offers a culmination of insight into potential issues that can arise in providing effective intercultural readiness training. Following examinations into the areas of trainee accountability, time required for growth, and trust between trainer and trainee, suggestions are provided for the implementation of an international travel preparation program that produces expatriates ready to face the challenges of life abroad.

Keywords: Expatriate preparation; intercultural communication readiness and assessment

Seeking and preparing globally adept expatriates continues to be a challenge for both intercultural communication scholars and private, public, and non-profit practitioners. Decades of research and practice have led scholars to develop a vast array of scales aimed at assisting organizations in selecting the right candidate for expatriate work. Across the U.S., colleges and universities offer undergraduate and graduate programs in global awareness, taking to heart a National Education Association (2012, p. 5) report's claim that "if today's students want to compete in this global society, … they must also be proficient communicators."

Colleges, universities, researchers, and private entities are therefore staged to prepare leaders in this globalizing economy (Knight, 1994; Krell, 2005; Thomas & Inkson, 2004; Yan, Zhu, & Hall, 2002) and research continues to expand our understanding of what it takes to improve intercultural communication competence (Arasaratnam, 2015; Jackson, 2015; Martin, 2015; Kim, 2015).

    Despite the initiatives toward global education and expatriate preparation in post-secondary education and professional consulting firms, reports indicate student deficiencies in global awareness and preparedness (American Council on Education, 2000; Siaya & Hayward, 2001). While more than 80 percent of private and public, for-profit as well as non-profit, organizations send employees abroad for assignments, making investments of $300,000 to $1,000,000 in each expatriate (Black & Gregersen, 1999), there remains an expatriate attrition rate of up to 65 percent across for-profit business sectors (Dodd, 2007; Harris, Moran, & Moran, 2004). This extraordinary rate of failure can be traced to a variety of sources, and it is not the purpose of this paper to pinpoint any one source. Instead, this paper seeks to reveal recurring themes associated with expatriate failure related to the pre-departure training process, as gleaned from the author's decade of studying and teaching intercultural communication, as well as years of training pre-departure expatriates.

    A direct correlation between strong research and training programs and the outcome of well prepared and successful expatriate candidates is lacking. Proficient intercultural communication effectiveness training is essential in developing expatriate intercultural communication competence (Seidel, 1981). The process of preparing candidates for expatriate success can take many forms (Abe, 1980), including training that focuses on both intercultural behavior and communication (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Gardner, 1952; Hammer *et al.*, 1978; Nishida, 1985; Ruben, 1976; Ruben and Kealey, 1979; Guthrie, 1975; Pedersen, 1983; Triandis, 1980; Wallace and Atkins, 1961; Chen, 1989; Bochner and Kelly, 1974; Cupach and Imahori, 1993).

    While there exist many available and reliable research-based expatriate assessments and training programs (i.e. Peterson's Cultural Awareness Test & Tucker's Survey of Expatriate Training and Development), there must be an existing disconnect among the assessment, training, and departure/experiences to account for such a high rate of failure. Given this disconnect, a discussion regarding effective training practices seems in order. Therefore, it is to address this gap that this paper seeks to offer experienced insight and advice regarding potential issues that can arise in providing effective intercultural readiness training. Webster (2015) defines *expatriate* as one who lives outside his or her home country and/or denounces patriotism to this home country. However, this paper will utilize Vance's (2005) definition of *expatriate* as anyone who travels outside his or her home culture, and this term is used most commonly herein in reference to short-term missionaries traveling abroad.

    Dodd's (2007; 2013) Go Culture Assessment (GCA) and corresponding training modules are the expatriate readiness tools I typically use when training pre-departure candidates. Administered as an online pre and posttest through a pass code system, the GCA has been used in studies with expatriates and students going to 30 countries. The Cronbach reliability is 0.92 and the predictive validity across 12 studies ranges from multiple correlations of .62 to .86 (Dodd, 2007; Velten, J. (2015). As indicated above, the GCA has been tested in numerous research studies (30 countries and 3,000 participants) (also see Dodd, Winegeart, & Lytle 2008; Hooker & Dodd, 2009; Dodd, 2010; Dodd, 2012; Velten, J. & Dodd, C.H. (2015). This paper is not intended to promote any commercial product. Instead, the above reliability data for the GCA

is provided to show that no matter how effective the research-based expatriate assessment, if the training is not conducted proficiently, the opportunity to enhance trainee experiences abroad can sometimes be lost.

Among the various research-based expatriate assessment and training programs, including the *GCA*, there are challenges in the implementation process due to a number of factors including funding, scheduling, optimal learning environments and perceptions of trainees regarding the importance of pre-departure training. The three overarching challenges that seem to affect program outcomes the most are: trainee accountability, amount of time in training, and the level of trust between trainer and trainee. In the remainder of the manuscript, I will discuss these issues, offer examples, and provide possible solutions to help minimize these challenges.

Expatriate Pre-Departure Training Challenges and Solutions

When implementing a program designed to prepare expatriates for host culture experiences, trainers want to first select the research-based assessment and training module that is most relevant to the particular context of the experience at hand (i.e. missions, business, foreign affairs). Such programs are designed to assist sending organizations with tools for selecting and/or preparing the best candidates for experiences abroad. If administered correctly, these programs can yield dividends for both the sending organization and the expatriate (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Shay & Tracey, 1997). There seem, however, to be recurring themes regarding the success of such programs that is unrelated to the quality of the program itself. Instead, the simple factors noted above, as enacted during training, seem to influence the success rate of an expatriate preparation program. Below is an explanation of these three factors, examples, and suggestions on how to prepare and adjust for these challenges. To maintain confidentiality, all names have been changed.

Challenge #1: Trainee Accountability
One might assume that all who register for expatriate preparation training would come fully prepared to engage in the process of learning and implementing new skill sets. Surprisingly, this is not always the case. Even in situations where the trainee expresses a strong interest in the abroad experience, full interest in a preparatory program and confidence in its legitimacy is not a guarantee.

For example, Jennifer was an upper-division student at a prestigious private university in the southwestern United States who planned to participate in a six-week Christian mission effort in a Latin American country. She placed well in many of the GCA factor areas, but her pre-test revealed particular growth areas that the trainers began addressing in our first of three one-on-one training sessions over the course of a semester. It became troublingly evident to me upon our first interaction, through her verbal and nonverbal communication, that she assumed there was nothing I could teach her; possibly due to her lack of confidence in such preparation programs,

her lack of confidence in me as the trainer, or perhaps the simple assumption that, at 21 years of age, she had garnered enough life experience to warrant an easy transition to any host culture.

Nonetheless, each time we met, we discussed her growth areas, including possible reasons for lower scores in particular factors leading to intercultural communication success. We also talked about tangible steps she could take to help her become more ready for departure regarding these growth areas. She sat and listened, slumped in her chair with her arms crossed. Weeks passed between our sessions, but I reached out to her via email to confirm her efforts in reaching goals we had set, to which she never replied.

Not surprisingly, each time we met and I asked how she was performing regarding her strategy of improvement, she shrugged and said she had not got around to it. This model persisted up until her time of departure. To be specific, both her pre-immersion test and post-immersion test revealed a likelihood of intercultural challenges in working with authority figures, especially males.

Through her disclosures, she revealed that this was a challenge for her, which was already somewhat evident in the way she seemed to disregard the things I was telling her. Her lack of interest in the intercultural readiness training persisted, her deadline for departure growing closer and closer while she showed little improvement in her potential level of success in a male-dominated culture.

Unsurprisingly, post-hoc third party analysis completed by her international host revealed significant issues related to her willingness to follow instructions and cultural norms, especially when those directions came from men. She was assigned the role of working with a youth group while living with the youth minister and his family. His comments revealed that she became romantically involved with an older gentleman who sometimes helped out with the youth group. Due to this man's undesirable past, the youth minister asked Jennifer to refrain from showing affection to this man while with the youth group due to cultural expectations and the negative influence it might have on the young adults. Jennifer disregarded his request and became upset that he would even make such a suggestion.

These types of situations are probably more common than we realize, but in this case, there was clear evidence, based on the pre-test and post-test assessments, that this student was going to struggle within a specific aspect of life abroad. After hours of training and reaffirmation of skills-development, she refrained from putting in the effort to improve her likelihood of success. It is evident from this case that Jennifer felt no obligation to take the training seriously, but Jennifer's is not an isolated case.

Brooke also planned to conduct Christian mission work in a Latin American country and completed the same one-on-one sessions as Jennifer. However, Brooke confirmed her pre-test concern that she had great uncertainty and anxiety about what was to be expected of her while abroad. Starting with our first training session, in an effort to help ease this tension and help her prepare for the abroad experience, I recommended she contact her international host and ask about her expected responsibilities. Session after session, she would confess that she had not contacted the host and ultimately went, unprepared, into what would become a horrible

experience for her. Soon after meeting her international host, she learned that her role would be to work in the city alleys on a daily basis, talking to the young female prostitutes and drug addicts. This came as a complete shock and greatly disturbed this unprepared expatriate, leading her to have unforgettably negative experiences. Had she contacted the host prior to departure, she could have learned of her potential responsibility and either prepared for it or asked for another assignment.

In both of these cases, the pre and posttest assessment was sound and the training offered was research based, but due to the trainees' lack of accountability during the training, their experiences abroad were negative. Herein, we see that a strong, research based assessment and corresponding training module do not automatically equal a successful expatriate experience, but that the trainee must be fully engaged in the training process to garner the greatest benefit.

To increase trainee accountability, I began requiring each trainee I work with to maintain a journal documenting his or her specific areas of growth, notes related to these areas from our discussions, a plan of action to improve post-test scores in these areas, and an accounting of what the trainee actually did to improve training. Regular review of these journals by the trainer encourages trainees to maintain records of the directions they have followed, and it increases the likelihood that they will act when provided with sound pre-departure advice. A second suggestion to increase trainee accountability can work especially well in a professional consulting situation where the trainer is paid to provide expatriate pre-departure training: the collection of an additional deposit from trainees or their funding organization (i.e. place of employment) that will be returned upon the successful completion of the training program can drive trainees to fulfill requests more readily.

Challenge #2: Amount of Time in Training

The second challenge that has been continually evident in pre-departure training lies in the amount of time allotted to affect change. Intercultural readiness requires hours and hours of assessment, self-reflection, training, and real effort on the part of the trainee. It remains to be seen just how many hours of training are required to affect sufficient levels of change in a person's ability to thrive in a host culture, but from my experience, expatriates often wait until the last few months prior to departure to begin preparations, which often simply does not leave them long enough to prepare effectively.

There is wide variation in terms of accepted wisdom and training recommendations for how much time is enough. The commonly allotted three months of pre-departure preparation falls well below Colgate-Palmolive's widely successful expatriate readiness program recommendation of six to eighteen months prior to departure (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Some skills development processes take up to 40 hours of face-to-face training, which does not include out-of-class time where learned skills are practiced or tasks are performed to increase function or task readiness (Allington, 2011). TED Talk speaker and author Josh Kaufman (2013) claims optimistially that any new skill can be learned in only 20 hours, while for decades people have

accepted the common rule that it takes ten thousand hours to completely master a new skill (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993; Gladwell, 2008).

This wide variance in expectations regarding time allotted to training should lead intercultural communication scholars to test how much preparation time is required for most pre-departure expatriates to garner the necessary skills to perform proficiently in a host culture. As such a test has not yet been created or conducted., it is from my experience that I claim that a preparation term of a few months, involving three to five individual or group sessions and a common preparation model, is simply not enough time to affect substantive intercultural readiness. Below, I provide a few examples as evidence to substantiate this claim.

Nate was a 20-year-old college senior at a prestigious private university. He successfully completed nearly three years of college away from his parents and chose to participate in a Honduran summer mission. Nate's GCA pretest revealed many areas of strength, but a few troubling growth areas, including a very low score in his family accommodation. After our initial conversation regarding his results, Nate revealed he felt confident in his ability to perform well in this expatriate experience, but that his step-mother was manipulating him and his father in an effort to keep Nate from going abroad. He went on to explain that ever since his dad had married this woman, she had been verbally abusive to him and his siblings and that her presence still weighed heavily on him as an adult.

In situations such as this, I am always quick to remind trainees that I am not a counselor. It is important in intercultural readiness training to not step outside the roles of educators and scholars to provide counseling advice, even when we think we have a great idea to share. Instead, our role is to advise counseling as a method of alleviating whatever pressure that, if not properly addressed, may greatly increase an expatriate's likelihood of intercultural failure. With his permission, I helped Nate get set up at the university counseling center for a trial session.

At our next appointed time to meet, Nate came with a much more positive outlook on his summer missions situation. His counselor had provided him some great tools to reevaluate his relationship with his step-mother and communicate more effectively with her regarding his goals. She began to support Nate's goal, and the next step was to invite her to campus for a group counseling session. Things were going well, but the end of the semester was drawing close and the time for Nate to travel to Honduras was fast approaching. Nate failed to attend our last training session, and I was unable to reach him for quite some time, but soon learned from the international host in Honduras that Nate had never arrived. Months later Nate communicated via email that his step-mother had relapsed into a position of verbal abuse and laying guilt on Nate for wanting to go, leading him to abandon his ambitions to travel abroad.

Other examples of time-constraint in pre-departure intercultural communication training include assisting candidates in: becoming less rigid in their time orientation (helping candidates become more flexible in their daily routines through less reliance on a daily planner), becoming more socially accepting of others (showing candidates that they can initiate and maintain a relationship with someone much different than themselves), helping family members reframe the way they think of dangerous mission work (for example, serving sex-trafficking victims in Eastern

Europe), generating situations that boost his or her confidence in successfully navigating the newness of an abroad experience (providing scenarios for candidates that help them grow more sure of their abilities), and other family-related issues related to financial connectedness and responsibility, to name a few. Some candidates make substantive strides toward positive adjustments in pre-departure deficits, yet fail to experience the host culture. I am convinced that if given enough time, many candidates for expatriate experiences would garner greater short and long-term results while in the host culture. It is, therefore, paramount that intercultural readiness trainers appreciate the extended amounts of time that might be needed to truly prepare expatriates for separation from their home and acculturation into a host culture.

Challenge #3: Level of Trust between Trainer and Trainee

The third and final challenge this paper aims to address is the level of trust between the trainer and trainee. Decades of research regarding the importance of the interpersonal relationship between counselor and client have been affirmed by Lambert and Barley (2001), noting that the relationship factor is the most important aspect in affecting positive outcomes for clients. Similarly, it is essential that intercultural trainers and trainees develop a relationship of trust in order to increase the likelihood of trainee receptiveness and overall intercultural readiness and success abroad. There have been cases in my experience wherein I knew that if I had a better relationship with a trainee, that his or her outcome would have been more positive.

For example, while providing pre-departure training for a group of upper-division missions students in one-on-one sessions, half of the missions class was randomly assigned to me for additional training while the other half received only the course preparation. The course was taught by two seasoned missionaries who had traveled extensively and had years of experience performing missions at various locations abroad. It became apparent that students were drawn more to their instructors' directions than to the research-based training module I offered. At first, this frustrated me, but soon I accepted the reality that these students had no prior experience with me and only met with me a handful of times, so of course it made sense if they would place more trust in the information gleaned through their stronger relationship.

To these students, I was merely a researcher who wanted to assess them, offer tips, and then assess them again. Because of our lack of interpersonal relationship building, these students were much more likely, according to Lambert and Barley, to trust and follow the instructions of the teachers whom they meet multiple times weekly and trusted. In many of these cases, based on their low pre-test GCA score in task experience, students expressed concerns of uncertainty regarding the ambiguity of their tasks in the host culture. No matter how many times I recommended contacting their hosts to learn more about their expected responsibilities, though, the students did not do so until one of the class instructors made the same suggestion.

Ian, as one example, was an international student who felt overly confident in his ability to travel and thrive in host cultures due to his past travel experiences. He was uncertain about what was to be expected of him while in the host culture, and this uncertainty led to heightened anxiety during the pre-departure stages. In an effort to help him feel better equipped for the

experience, I advised him to contact his international host, yet session after session he provided reasons as to why he had not gotten around to making this contact. Subsequently, his anxiety persisted until the missions' instructors advised the same course of action. Due to his relationship with and trust of these two individuals, he quickly contacted his international host and began to feel better, even excited, about what was going to be his responsibility while in the host culture.

Ian is just one of many examples from my experience in training expatriates for intercultural experiences where trainees can be seen reasonably lacking confidence in research-based programs, provided by a stranger, while they accept and act upon suggestions of trusted professors and mentors. In training for expatriate experiences, trainees seem to echo Lambert and Barley's understanding of the importance of interpersonal relationship in the trainer-trainee roles. However, it is not always logistically possible for the intercultural readiness trainer to be someone whom all trainees know, respect, and trust prior to the training process.

Therefore, we must find expedited ways of bridging this interpersonal relationship gap so as to foster an environment in which trainees will be quick to listen and follow instructions. Suggestions on how to build this rapport as an outsider are for the trainer to discuss his or her professional experience in the field, past travel experience, training experience and success stories, and mention his or her level of education and research related to the subject matter. Another method of creating an optimal learning atmosphere, where candidate learning is likely to increase, is to use teacher immediacy behaviors. Knowing the candidate's name and providing other welcoming verbal and nonverbal communication patterns can greatly increase a candidate's learning (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001) and decrease their levels of anxiety (Velten, 2012) with the trainer. Whatever specific tactics are chosen, it seems imperative that practitioners work purposefully to build rapport with trainees prior to the actual training process if we want to capture the greatest return on pre-departure training investments.

Summary and Recommendations for Practice

Evidence points to the substantive positive changes in expatriate preparedness due to participation in a legitimate, research-based pre-departure training program (see Dodd, Lytle, & Winegeart, 2008. Velten, J. (2015); Velten, J. & Dodd, C.H. (2015). Years of experience in training expatriates for host cultures experiences have shown me that intercultural communication readiness programs are only as good as their implementation. It is apparent that successful implementation must include measures to ensure trainee accountability, a sufficient amount of time for the satisfactory resolution of pre-departure issues, and an opportunity to develop a relationship of trust between the trainer and trainee. My experiential knowledge in these areas comes from years of making the same mistakes until I realized that I was seeing recurring issues hinder the process of expatriate preparation. Through the implementation of trainee journals, allotting ample time to affect change, and working to develop rapport between trainer and trainee, I have begun seeing improved results, and predict that other practitioners will

likewise begin to better enjoy the fruits of their dedicated efforts to improve expatriate experiences.

For example, I now offer expatriate training as a part of an upper-division Intercultural Communication course at the university where I teach. Some, but not all, of these students know me prior to their enrollment in the course, yet I utilize weekly class meetings to increase interpersonal bonds that allow me to more effectively reach these students who are just getting to know me. This longer-term interpersonal interaction should increase the amount of trust students place in me as their teacher, but further research is needed to discover any correlation between teacher-student relationship and the effectiveness of expatriate training. Such tactics, coupled with a strong, research-based intercultural readiness assessment and training program, should assist in the implementation of a successful expatriate preparation program.

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All for One and One for All:
ISSS Offices Connecting with Academic Departments for the Benefit of Everyone[1]

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Background

The goals of this partnership were to explore various aspects of communication and connectivity between the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) offices and academic departments of higher education institutions, in an effort to better support all parties involved. In examining this topic, we offer ideas and discuss examples of how each of our institutions focuses on proactive communication, instead of falling into a pattern of reactive communication.

For the purposes of this presentation, we viewed reactive communication as taking place after an issue has occurred, possibly due to poor information sharing, miscommunication, and/or lack of awareness. Reactive communication is more likely to lead to hectic processing, confusing conversations, mixed advice reaching the student, and, sometimes, is done too late to solve a problem. Proactive communication and collaboration, on the other hand, aims to prepare faculty, staff, and students with the knowledge and resources to be successful in working with one another. In alleviating some of the last minute stress, rushed processing, and time spent to make corrections, proactive communication can help students avoid problems with their status and build camaraderie among staff and faculty. Ultimately, proactive communication minimizes the hardship for all involved and helps to better address students' needs.

It was greatly beneficial to explore this topic with the combined perspectives of different size institutions, and from both the ISSS office and academic advisor perspectives. At North Carolina State University, students have the experience of a large public institution with ten different colleges, including multiple departments housed in each. The ISSS office consists of a team of seven full-time advisors and two program staff who support over 4,000 international students and scholars from over 120 different countries. Coming from a very different perspective, Elon University is a small, private institution with six different colleges. The ISSS

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[1] This article is the result of a presentation at the NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Region VII conference, October 2015.

office—one full-time advisor and one part-time advisor—supports 120 international students from over 45 different countries. We found it to be a worthwhile effort to build relationships between the ISSS office and academic departments at each type of institution.

Why is it important to discuss this collaboration?

Using the African proverb: *it takes a village (to see our efforts realized)*, at the root of this discussion lies the predominant focus of all faculty and staff involved, providing holistic advising and support to our international students. In order to do so, we must understand each other's roles and not only be knowledgeable of each perspective, but also work to help each other achieve the ultimate outcome of supporting student success. As student services staff, we recognize that teamwork is necessary to provide the best support possible to our students. Strong collaboration between ISSS and academic departments, especially in a decentralized institution, is vital to meeting students' needs.

Additionally, the ISSS office benefits from this collaboration by being able to confirm academic information, including any changes in academic policies, which can minimize avoidable immigration issues (such as enrollment problems). It is imperative to establish the correct academic advising contacts on one's campus, and to use multiple methods of communication to keep information flowing freely between the ISSS office and academic departments. Simultaneously, the academic departments can avoid unnecessary paperwork (such as schedule revision forms), feel more comfortable working with international students, understand the work of the ISSS office, and in turn, develop helpful contacts in the ISSS office should any questions arise.

Throughout our discussion, we addressed the **what**, the **how** and the **when** of effective communication practices between offices. This discourse has just begun to explore effective communication techniques, and was intended to leave room for continued learning and information sharing. In the final section on challenges and future outlooks, we discuss additional topics and questions that arose throughout the presentation.

What topics should be communicated?

It is important to evaluate what information your ISSS office currently communicates, and what it hopes to communicate, with academic departments and advisors on your campus. We found that the topics each of our ISSS offices work to communicate fall into the following categories:

- Information about the population of international students on campus
- Basic visa requirements and a general overview of the initial immigration/visa process
- Cultural differences and cross-cultural communication tips
- Day-to-day experiences of the international student vs. those of domestic students
- ISSS office processes, procedures, and events

Information about the International Student Population. Having a general overview of the international student population provides an important context for academic departments to

understand the bigger picture of international students and their presence at the university. For example: What percentage of the total student population is represented by international students? What is the undergraduate vs. graduate breakdown? What are the home countries of the students? What are international students studying? This basic information sets the stage for why the conversation about international students is important and emphasizes the impact the international population has on campus.

In addition to providing contextual information, it is also beneficial to highlight academic achievements of the international student population, the unique skills background and experiences that each student brings, and international students' contributions to the dynamic culture of a university. As international educators we know the value of internationalizing our campuses and it is important to share that with the rest of the university.

Visa Requirements & Immigration Process. While ISSS office staff may routinely use terms and acronyms such as "RCL" (Reduced Course Load), "CPT" (Curricular Practical Training) and many more in regard to international students, the processes related to these terms may be unfamiliar to individuals in academic departments. Providing an explanation about enrollment requirements (full-time enrollment, limited online [DE] courses, and RCL options) will ultimately assist the academic advisors especially during the registration period of the semester. In addition, it is helpful for academic departments/advisors to be familiar with the work restrictions and options for international students when discussing internships or on-campus assistantships. The idea is not for academic advisors to be experts in immigration, but instead to have a basic understanding so they may be able to flag situations that endanger the student's legal immigration status in the U.S. Advanced communication will encourage a proactive approach as opposed to a stressful, reactive situation.

It is also helpful to provide academic departments some insight into the challenging process of obtaining a student visa. Sharing this background information will help foster an appreciation for the students' dedication in merely arriving to the U.S. to study. It has the potential to help academic departments gain insight into why international students ask many questions, as well as why they greatly prioritize their academic success and want to quickly address any related problems that could impede that success.

Cultural Differences & Cross-cultural Communication Tips. Some faculty and staff members of your institution's community may be well versed in cross-cultural communication, while others are not. Just as ISSS offices help prepare students to not only adjust to, but to thrive within the culture of U.S. Higher Education, ISSS teams can also provide guidance to the greater university community about cultural differences and effective communication tips. In doing so, it is important to not over generalize but to point out some common communication styles, and the challenges and benefits of cultural differences when advising international students. As a side note, these effective communication tips can also be applied to advising *all* students, not just international students. As a basic example, encourage faculty and staff to take a second look at their email communications to international students. Are they using slang that may be

unfamiliar to students? How direct or indirect are their messages? Some simple cross-cultural communication training can go a long way in fostering understanding on our campus.

Day-to-day Experiences of International Students vs. Domestic Students. A large part of the U.S. international student experience is the opportunity to be immersed in the American culture. Part of that immersion includes establishing independence, overcoming the challenges of cultural adaptation, and discovering what it is to navigate the ambiguity of a high degree of unfamiliarity. Simultaneously, as a higher education institution, it is the responsibility of the university community to understand how it can cultivate a globally-aware community. Creating a globally-aware campus involves learning about the international student experience and ways to support them. Insight into what may seem like minor pieces of information such as the time it takes to study or process information for an exam, visa regulations surrounding professional opportunities (ex: internships, on-campus employment), and the foresight required in planning to travel (study abroad, vacations, etc.), has the potential to transform the international student experience.

ISSS Office Processes, Procedures, and Events.

Many of the initial enrollment processes of the ISSS office involve collaboration with the student's academic department. Making information such as required departmental forms, estimated processing times, and responsibilities of the academic department and advisors, readily available, will help the departments feel knowledgeable of their role (and vice versa) in the process. It will also breed confidence about how to guide the students regarding information an advisor may not have otherwise been able to provide. It is important for us all to recognize what we do not know, and being able to access the resources necessary to fill that void. By supporting academic advisors with the knowledge of how your ISSS office works (appointments, walk-ins, deadlines, advisor roles, etc.), everyone can feel confident in knowing how students can obtain accurate information.

Information should be shared about opportunities for members of the university community to engage with the ISSS office and, most importantly, with the international students. The interactions between the ISSS office and academic departments should exceed those that are solely administrative in nature. Providing opportunities for the campus community to interact with the ISSS office and international student population in cultural programs, orientations, and other social and academic settings helps demonstrate a vested interest in everyone involved, and can establish a strong foundation for future interactions.

How can ISSS offices best communicate with academic departments?

Newsletters & Listservs. Based on our experiences at NC State University and Elon University, we have found it very helpful to connect with academic departments through regular newsletters and listserv announcements. NC State University has implemented a quarterly newsletter, distributed directly to individuals who ISSS identifies as direct academic partners, as well as to their advisors' campus listserv which anyone on campus can elect to join. The

newsletter is used to showcase programs and information about the international student population, as well as to spotlight individual student accomplishments.

An ISSS office can use their available campus listserv(s) to broadcast key deadlines and other critical information such as the international student orientation schedule, registration information and enrollment reminders as they relate to international students. Additionally, the listserv is a great venue through which to announce special ISSS events and functions, and, in some cases, invite individuals from academic departments to attend. Through the Office of Leadership and Professional Development at Elon University, the ISSS office holds programs about best practices in working with the international student population. These programs are announced via the campus-wide Faculty and Staff listserv.

Faculty and Staff Trainings. Are there any training platforms that already exist on your campus? Part of successfully connecting with departments is by taking advantage of meetings and events already in place so as not to reinvent the wheel or ask for additional time from your colleagues' already hectic schedules. An example of this type of program at NC State is its Advisor Development Institute (ADI). Administered by Academic Advising Services office, ADI offers faculty and staff a chance to develop their advising knowledge and demonstrate their commitment to quality advising at NC State. ADI workshops conducted throughout the academic year focus on components of effective advising and other related issues. Roundtable discussions are convened on time sensitive or critical issues like a change in academic policy; topic sessions are delivered on more specialized issues like advising international students. NC State's ISSS office has partnered with Academic Advising Services to create and deliver ADI topic sessions, roughly one to two times per year. NC State's Office of Faculty Development (OFD) offers professional development opportunities targeted specifically for faculty as well. ISSS has partnered with OFD to deliver sessions on working with international students; these sessions have also been open to all academic advisors. At Elon University, teams such as the Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning (CATL) and the Leadership and Professional Development Office host workshops to support staff in their learning and development. Your university may have "lunch and learn" or other types of trainings where the ISSS office can connect with academic departments.

Another option is for the ISSS office to host special training sessions pertaining to specific needs and interests. When implementing an event like this, it is important to make it interesting and practical for your audience (make sure there are clearly communicated goals), that it is aligned with the academic calendar, and that students are involved, when appropriate, to speak to their first-hand experience and have a voice at these meetings.

While creating and hosting training events, members of the ISSS office should also make a habit of being actively involved in other professional development opportunities on campus. Attending workshops hosted by other colleagues will build rapport and encourage networking, as well as demonstrate that you are interested in the work of their offices. It is also another opportunity to make sure international issues are part of the campus conversation. It keeps the lines of communication open between the rest of campus and the ISSS office.

Online Learning Platforms. Platforms such as Blackboard or Moodle may be used to communicate with not only students, but faculty and staff as well. Elon University has made use of Moodle to create a global community group that is divided into sub-groups including faculty and staff, dual citizens, F/J student visa holders, and others. It is used for general announcements, important updates, and to highlight upcoming programs (i.e. drop-in advising hours, immigration updates, etc.).

Meetings & Events. From large-scale International Student Orientations to medium and small encounters such as departmental staff meetings and one-on-one discussions, a variety of meetings and events can provide a wonderful opportunity for ISSS offices to engage with academic departments. Throughout events such as orientations, there is a great opening to be inclusive of faculty and staff by inviting them to social gatherings and including sessions that they can present based on area of expertise (cultural adjustments, English writing, etc.). On the other hand, one-on-one meetings demonstrate the importance that the ISSS office places on building relationships with specific departments and individuals. A one-on-one meeting can allow ISSS to tailor the information delivered for that particular department and may allow opportunities for more questions to be asked. Taking the time to build community among the faculty and staff is essential to learning from and trusting one another.

While it is sometimes necessary to focus on the agenda of your university's ISSS office in sharing certain information with the campus community, it is important to remember to give back along the way. Though time is scarce, it is a wise investment to visit academic departments for reasons other than bestowing knowledge or needing information. By contributing your knowledge, skills, and support to other offices without any specific returns involved, you are taking important time to get to know your colleagues, and to demonstrate interest in and attention to their work as much as you are asking for their interest in and attention to your own.

When is it helpful to communicate?

As we all know, there is an overwhelming amount of information communicated on a daily basis. Many emails that we receive, despite creative subject lines, frequent reminders, and even our intention to respond, become lost in the shuffle. As such, being purposeful with timing in communication becomes even more integral to its success. Taking the time to be mindful of others' calendars, working to make your messages succinct and clear, and having consistent outreach overtime will have great returns on the time you invested in composing and planning your communication.

ISSS offices can take advantage of already marketed causes like International Education Week (IEW) in November. Prior to international students arriving to campus and classes starting, the ISSS office should take the opportunity to provide information that will be extremely helpful to academic departments as they prepare for the semester, such as enrollment numbers. Also, before, during and after important events like International Student Orientation, ISSS offices should announce the event to academic departments and specific members of the campus community. Prepare everyone with the international orientation schedule, send an update mid-

way with how things are going, and follow up with a brief summary and 'thank you' to all who participated. Taking into account timelines for registration, drop/add dates, and OPT season when it comes to supporting academic advisors can help show respect and encourage fluid communication.

Challenges and Future Outlooks

A worthwhile effort does not come without its challenges. When working to establish a successful relationship between the ISSS office and academic departments, there may be difficulty achieving buy-in from all of the stakeholders. As we mentioned in the beginning, it takes a village. With different approaches to advising and conflicting schedules, it can be difficult to engage multiple members of the university community and get everyone on the same page. Maneuvering through these differences will take time, planning, patience, persistence, and, most of all, creativity.

A necessary aspect of a successful relationship is a two-way information flow. Keeping lines of communication open and clear within one office can be problematic enough. Communication between offices has its added complications, which is all the more reason for these offices to be as available and responsive to one another as possible. As advisors, it can be difficult to find any extra time in our schedules, especially enough to plan out communication efforts or training sessions. However, we have found that it is a very smart investment of our time. In the long run, connecting and communicating with academic departments proactively saves us a lot of time (and headaches!).

As with implementing any new approach to a partnership, assessing its impact is important in evaluating what is working and what is not. Are the newsletters being read (thoroughly)? Is it worth it to hold certain workshops? Is our communication well-received? Clear outcomes for some of these questions can be very elusive, and creating a plan for collecting some type of feedback may prove to be troublesome. Sometimes, simply collecting the number of attendees to a workshop, the number of "opens" for a newsletter, and/or verbal feedback from colleagues can be a good place to start.

As we work to strengthen the relationships between ISSS and the academic departments at each of our institutions, we are left with many questions: What are some of the successes and challenges of other universities? Are there other methods to use in building a relationship between academic departments and ISSS? Are there other members of the university community who should be equally involved? While we continue to explore best practices and to improve upon what, how and when our ISSS office communicates with academic departments, we look forward to being proactive in diversifying our communication styles and working as a team to achieve better outcomes for our students.