

Final Project: Cultural Immersion

This assignment has been revised to accommodate social distancing standards during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cultural Competence is an essential aspect of counselor training. In order to begin to understand a culture, it is essential to have sustained interaction with the culture. For the final project for this course, each student will actively investigate multicultural issues by gaining exposure to a cultural group that is qualitatively different from their own, thereby increasing their knowledge of and sensitivity toward members of another culture.

To complete this project successfully, students will need to work on it throughout the entire 5-week semester. As part of the project, each student will select a culture different from their own and will participate in at least three distinct experiences to learn about the cultural group.

1. **One activity must be observational.** Examples of observational activities include: (a) taking a virtual tour of a museum or monument pertinent to the cultural group of study; (b) watching a documentary (not a fictional movie) that describes the culture or cultural group; and (c) attending a virtual religious service to learn of the group's religious practices and beliefs, among others.
2. **One activity must be participatory.** Examples of participatory activities include: (a) learning the cultural group's language (apps that offer free lessons include DuoLingo, Memrise, HelloTalk, Babbel, and MosaLingua); (b) learning a traditional dance pertinent to the group's culture (TikTok and YouTube are good sources for dance lessons); and (c) cooking one of the cultural group's native/authentic meals, among others.
3. **One activity must be relational and include dialogue with a member of the cultural group.** Relational activities can include: (a) interacting with a pen pal who belongs to the cultural group (examples of online platforms that offer these services include InterPals, Conversation Exchange, My Language Exchange [offers great language lessons and conversational activities for pen pals to do together], Penpal World [offers very strong guidelines for personal boundaries among users], and Global Penfriends); and (b) engaging a local member of the cultural group in a dialogue, among others. For this component of the assignment, the student needs to gather information about the lived experience of the other person in a way that is conversational, not in a way that resembles an interview. The dialogue should be a two-way conversation that results in the exchange of information about cultural experiences. This dialogue can happen over time or in a single meeting, but the student must decide beforehand which strategy she/he/zi will use. A list of questions is included at the end of this document to help guide the dialogue. However, students may add to these questions or include impromptu questions when engaging in their dialogues.

When considering cultural groups for the project, students are encouraged to consider groups that differ from their own not only in terms of obvious characteristics (e.g., race, religion, language), but also in terms of lifestyle (e.g., swingers, migrant workers, members of the homeless population). The purpose is for students to challenge themselves to interact **appropriately** with members from a different culture.



For the final product, students will create a blog using a free site like Wix.com. An example is provided for students here:

<https://shannonwilliamsipc.wixsite.com/soul-solutions>

The blog needs to comprise five (5) pages:

- 1. Home page** - On this page, clearly identify the population that you studied, how this population is different from you, and what your perceptions of this group were at the outset of this assignment. The description of differences should include both the obvious (visible differences, etc.) and the not so obvious (sexual orientation, etc.). Your perceptions of this group should include information about what you were told about this group as you were growing up, any beliefs/perceptions/assumptions you had about this group, your past sources of information about this group, and the reasons you were interested in learning about this group. You must make a case for how this cultural group is different from your own and why you anticipated this experience to be challenging for you. This page needs to include 3-5 full paragraphs.
- 2. Observational Activity** - On this page, describe the observational activity that you chose to complete, as well as your reactions to it. Include visual elements to add appeal. Refer to the example provided above for a list of questions to address. (You can give the page a different name, but you must include this information on it.) This page needs to include 3-5 full paragraphs.
- 3. Participatory Activity** - On this page, describe your participatory activity(ies) for this part of the assignment, as well as your reactions to it. Include visual elements to add appeal. Refer to the example provided above for a list of questions to address. (You can give the page a different name, but you must include this information on it.) This page needs to include 3-5 full paragraphs.
- 4. Relational Activity** - Who did you talk with to complete this portion of the assignment? How did you carry out the dialogue? Refer to the example provided above for a list of questions to address on this page. Include visual elements to add appeal. If you include an image/video of the person with whom you talked, then you can only do so if you obtained written consent from that person (which must be uploaded with the assignment). (You can give the page a different name, but you must include this information on it.) This page needs to include a minimum of 5 paragraphs.
- 5. Reactions** - This page should incorporate your reflections, experiences, what you learned about the group, what you learned about yourself, and how your perceptions of this group have changed over time. You should incorporate any research that you have done about counseling this population into this page of your blog. Include references at the bottom of your blog post. (You can give the page a different name, but you must include this information on it.) This page must include at least 5 full paragraphs.

Give your blog a catchy title.

When you submit the assignment to Blackboard, you will submit only the link to your blog page.



Dialogue Questions

The following are questions that can be used to guide your cultural dialogue. While you will want to obtain information about all of these questions, keep in mind that it should be more of a *dialogue* than an interview.

Suggested Cultural Immersion Questions:

1. Describe a typical family composition within your culture (size, relationships among relatives).
2. What are the authority structure and the roles of family members in this culture?
3. What is the nature of male/female relationships within this culture?
4. How are the elderly perceived?
5. What are the attitudes toward marriage and family life?
6. How are children viewed in this culture? Their roles?
7. What are the common attitudes toward work and career? Is there a pattern to career choices?
8. What are prevalent attitudes toward education?
9. What role does religion play in the culture?
10. What are the intergenerational issues of families in this culture?
11. Discuss adjustments to living in the U.S. and differences for 1st, 2nd and subsequent generations.
12. What are the cultural strengths for coping and adjusting in the past? In the present?
13. How are conflicts and disagreements resolved between members of the culture?
14. What other cultural groups are least & most respected? Why?
15. What thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and/or values are most important to this culture?
16. What historical dates, beliefs, attitudes are most important in this culture?
17. Are bi-ethnic, biracial, bi-religious marriages/partnerships common? How are such relationships viewed?
18. Is there another culture that they always seem to have difficult with? What is the nature of the difficulty?
19. Are there ways this culture is discriminated against? What ways? Have they had such experiences?
20. How does this culture group define success?
21. How do you align with the traditions and expectations of your culture?
22. Are there cultural expectations you would rather do without?
23. What are the strengths in your culture that you would not give up?

Questions adapted, in part from: McGrath, J.A. & Axelson, P. (1993). *Accessing Awareness & Developing Knowledge: Foundations for Skills in a Multicultural Society*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.