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The Development of Cultural Adaptability Including Relevant Experiences and Perceptions of Traditional College Students: A Perspective from a Small, Private Liberal Arts University

Kerri A. Golden
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THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL ADAPTABILITY INCLUDING RELEVANT
EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL COLLEGE STUDENTS:
A PERSPECTIVE FROM A SMALL, PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Kerri A. Golden

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May 2010

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Title: The Development of Cultural Adaptability Including Relevant Experiences and Perceptions of Traditional College Students: A Perspective from a Small, Private Liberal Arts University

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The growth in technology and the global nature of business and work have created new challenges for higher education. Administrators from institutions around the country desire more international study by their faculty and students as well as more visitors and residents to the campus from countries abroad. Are college students prepared for the challenges of living with, learning about, relating to, and engaging in discussions with international students or faculty? What components of the rural, private college environment help students gain skills in cultural adaptability? This research study, utilizing focus groups of students in a qualitative case study design, was conducted to answer such questions.

Multiple theories were used as a foundation for this study, including Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development (1993), Astin's Student Involvement Theory (1984), and Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993). The focus group questions followed Astin's I-E-O Model (1970a, 1970b, 1991) as they related to significant input, experience, and output factors that in their perception affected the development of their own cultural adaptability.

The junior level student participants described numerous experiences to this effect, following Bloom's taxonomy (1954) of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The

students described changes in their knowledge that occurred through coursework in religion, ethics, language, and philosophy. They described effective learning techniques facilitated by talented faculty efficient in provoking debate or controversy about various topics relating to culture. The student participants emphasized skills learned through group activities; whether they were a part of leadership, student government, or resident assistant training. The presence of international students in the classroom as well as living in the residence halls had a profound impact on the student participants, helping to create positive attitudes toward others of a different culture. The responses by the students indicate that growth and development in cultural adaptability is a multi-faceted process that involves all levels of the university.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“To prepare students to compete, contribute and peacefully exist with diverse populations, universities must provide a more fully international education. And that will require some new approaches.”

Graham B. Spanier, President of The Pennsylvania State University

In an editorial published on Sunday, November 25, 2007 in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the current president of The Pennsylvania State University, Graham B. Spanier, spoke about the traditional use of study abroad and the recruitment of international students as a way to “internationalize” campuses across the country, as well as the need to infuse new methods to accomplish this urgent goal. Students must learn about global issues on many levels and develop the skills to interact successfully with those of another culture, and more schools, including The Pennsylvania State University, are working toward initiatives to both evaluate and implement greater international and global emphasis across the curriculum.

In *The World is Flat*, non-fiction author Tom Friedman (2005) describes the world as getting smaller and smaller as technology continues to influence nearly all aspects of daily living. His book makes the assertion that all members of our society must learn flexibility and adaptability to remain competitive. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) describes an ever-changing picture of Americans. Long dominated by those who are Caucasian, of European descent, and predominantly English-speaking, the latest numbers now include dramatic shifts in demographics to include 18% of Americans speaking another language, and the “White majority” becoming a cliché of

the past. In fact, the percentage of Americans who reported they spoke a language other than English grew 47% between the 1990 and 2000 census (Census, 2000).

Because of these factors, the abilities of individuals to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that differ across all cultures is increasing in all areas of work, including business, health care, and education. In turn, the discipline of education has received an increased opportunity to address diversity and cultural competence from K-12 and on to include higher education.

The American Council on Education (ACE) (2000) reported in its preliminary status on the *Internationalization of U.S. Higher Education*:

The picture that emerges, though incomplete, indicates that we have much work to do; few institutions have made a major effort to respond comprehensively to the demands of the new global order. The review suggests the need to collect more data . . . and the importance of moving quickly to improve the quality of international programs in U.S. undergraduate education.

The ACE report indicates that few students continue to study foreign language as a major even though enrollment in higher education institutions has dramatically increased since 1960. On a positive note, the number of students who choose to study abroad has gradually increased. The number of international scholars on U.S. campuses continues to increase as well, as foreign students travel to the United States for both undergraduate and graduate degrees (American Council on Education, 2000).

The American Council on Education acknowledges that gathering data on how institutions of higher education plan to improve students' ability to integrate and ultimately succeed in a global workforce are difficult. The problem appears to be in the

description of international curriculum, as institutions of higher education interpret this in many different ways. In its 2000 report, ACE recommends the definition of “international curriculum” to include courses with a primarily international focus. Under this description, those courses focusing on other subject matter, but with substantial international content would be defined as “internationally oriented” (ACE, 2000).

Both ACE (2000) and Clemens (2002) say that, although both the public and private university students are interested in international education initiatives, the degree of internationalization on U.S. college campuses is a source of concern. Ahead lay challenges that include staffing, funding, and support as well as lack of institutional policies regarding international programs.

As demonstrated by these national data, it is clear the demographics are changing both on today’s college campuses and in the workforce. It is imperative for U.S. institutions of higher education to respond to this challenge with clear, comprehensive, and measurable ways to assist students in developing both their personal and professional skills to manage this challenge successfully.

Statement of the Problem

In the higher education environment, continuous emphasis is being placed on coursework to enhance cultural competence. University campuses nationwide are seeking to “internationalize” their curricula (ACE, 2000) to enhance the students’ abilities in the global labor market. The question of “how to build cultural competence in our students” continues to be raised. With all of the possible interventions of coursework, study abroad, student development activities on campus, and more diverse faculty and student recruitment, limited research exists on how the context and

experiences in a small, private, liberal arts university affects the development of Cultural Adaptability in traditional university students.

Research Questions

1. How do traditional university students define Cultural Adaptability?
2. According to traditional university students, how does the context of the university setting influence the development of Cultural Adaptability?
3. According to traditional university students, what experiences, academic or otherwise, do students perceive as having the most influence on the development of their own Cultural Adaptability?
4. How do traditional university students describe their participation and educational effectiveness of activities designed to improve awareness and understanding of cultural and diversity issues?

Theoretical Perspectives

Student and Identity Development in Higher Education

Numerous perspectives were included as a basis for this research study, including student and identity development, cultural adaptability, multicultural education as well as the perspective from Saint Francis University. This University will be the location and focus of this research study.

The most comprehensive view of college student development included the important and widely recognized work of Chickering (1969), who built foundational knowledge of student, identity, and vocational development that will be discussed further. In terms of student development in the higher education setting, Chickering (1969)

established a theoretical model outlining significant development in identity. This model has withstood the years and continues to influence continuing research and practice in higher education in this area. More recent changes to Chickering's theory (Chickering, 1993) only support the continued application of his Seven Vectors of College Student Development to all students in higher education, including both traditional and non-traditional students. These seven vectors include: (a) developing competence; (b) managing emotions; (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence; (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships; (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose; and, (g) developing integrity. As directly related to this study, Chickering also asked relevant questions regarding multiculturalism in higher education curricula in a 1978 article, when he asked whether common experience could be as beneficial as actual courses for diversity included in the curriculum. Chickering's theory on student development is critical to the groundwork of this researcher's study.

Cultural Adaptability

Through the development of the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory, authors Kelley and Meyers (1995) described the development and history of research in the area of cultural adaptability. According to Kelley and Meyers, one of the challenges of cross-cultural research is differentiating between the terms cultural adjustment, cultural adaptation and cultural effectiveness (1995). Ruben and Kealy (1979) describe cultural adjustment as "the general psychological well-being, self satisfaction, contentment, comfort with and accommodation to a new environment after the initial perturbation which characterized culture shock have passed" (p. 21). Cultural adaptation, according to Kelly and Meyers (1995) tends to indicate a more long term process than adjustment and

not only involves psychological well-being, but also cognitive changes, social changes, and attitudinal changes.

Finally, cultural effectiveness was described best by Hannigan (1990) who defined this term as “the target behavior of persons working in other cultures” (p. 229). Hannigan also concluded that positive cultural effectiveness included skills such as cultural empathy, effective communication skills, the ability to form and maintain relationships, deal with stress and possess a nonjudgmental attitude (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). Each of these concepts was discussed as part of focus groups conducted with junior level students on the campus of Saint Francis University. Of the terms discussed above, the concept of cultural adaptation was the focus of this study.

Multicultural Education

In addition to the theoretical framework of student development, cultural competence, and adaptability much literature exists regarding multicultural education, and the present researcher discusses multiple principles in regard to this including; history, methods, and assessment of multicultural education specifically as it applies to higher education throughout Chapter II of this research project.

The beginnings of multicultural education date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s with scholars such as Williams (1882) and DuBois (1935). Reinvigorated by the civil rights movement, it further developed as a way to address racism in schools (Baker, 1973; Banks, 1981; Collnick & Chin, 1986; Gay, 1983; Grant, 1975; Sizemore, 1979). It has now expanded to include the movement that addresses issues including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language, and disability (Grant & Sleeter, 1986).

Stewart (2007), although oriented to multicultural education in the K-12 system, effectively describes the needs of all students in the United States, regardless of level of education in her recent article entitled *Becoming Citizens of the World*. In this article, Stewart describes the role of education in an international market, and her intentions get to the heart of the current issues that face higher education. She described graduates in today's society who must:

Sell to the world, buy from the world, work for international companies, manage employees from other cultures and countries, collaborate with people all over the world in joint ventures, compete with people on the other side of the world for jobs and markets, and tackle global problems. (p. 121)

Bennett (1993a, 1993b) developed a conceptual framework described as a Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This model describes students' experiences as a developmental process, as they progress first through stages of ethnocentrism on to ethnorelativism; a continuum from denial of difference to finally integration of difference. This developmental approach supports a progressive ability to accommodate cultural differences, and emphasizes subject components of culture. This model assumes a social construction of identity where students determine and interpret their own identity in relationship to others, but also learn through interaction with others that cultural differences are not a static concept (Bennett, 1993a, 1993b; Mahoney & Schamber, 2004).

Saint Francis University's Role in Internationalization and Multicultural Education

In 2006, Saint Francis University created a new institute called the Center for International Education and Outreach. The purpose was to bring together all programs on

campus with a study abroad component under one director for more comprehensive management and coordination. This initiative came as the university underwent significant changes in its administration as well as the revision of its long-standing mission statement. The new directive put forth by the president and Board of Trustees was that Saint Francis University would place importance on reaching out not just to those in the local community, but to a more international population.

The campus is situated in Loretto, Pennsylvania; a rural, agricultural area in West-Central Pennsylvania. Founded in 1847 by the (Roman Catholic) Franciscans of the Third Order Regular, Saint Francis has an average enrollment of 2,000 students per year, with 1,429 of those being undergraduate students and 1,143 on the graduate level (Saint Francis University Catalog, 2007). Of the students attending Saint Francis in 2006, 194 were self-identified as minority (189) or international (5). This would account for 9.3% of the overall student population. Saint Vincent College, a similar institution to Saint Francis, has a minority and international population of 6.2% (Saint Vincent College Catalog, 2007). However, Gannon University boasts an international population of students at 15% of their overall enrollment (Gannon University Catalog, 2007). Saint Francis University seems to fall somewhere in the middle of the other institutions of similar size and affiliation in regard to international and minority student populations.

An additional challenge for Saint Francis, not unlike many other universities, is the large number of students who indicate an interest in study abroad, compared to the few who actually study overseas. In a recent survey on study abroad, 64% of those surveyed indicated an interest in studying abroad in the future, however over the past 2 academic years (2005-2006, 2006-2007) an average of 90 students participated in various

study abroad programs, totaling only 4.3% of students. Although this is still above the national average according to the American Council on Education (2000), Saint Francis University would like to increase these numbers, and more importantly, assure that the students are prepared to participate in such endeavors.

In terms of coursework, all students at Saint Francis take specific courses in the General Education program, some of which are directly oriented toward development of values, skills, and knowledge of human and cultural diversity (Saint Francis University, 2007). All students are required to take a foreign language (or equivalent such as sign language, study abroad, or a culture and communication course) as well as other courses accounting for 56 credits, with only 12 of those credits with a cultural focus. Not only has the mission statement undergone changes, but the university is also revising the general education requirements and courses creating new objectives and methods of assessment. This speaks to the timeliness of this research, as the results could influence change in many avenues of the university curriculum.

Definition of Terms

Cultural adaptability. From research in developing the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), cultural adaptability can be described as being comprised of four components; emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). Further explanations for these components are included in the literature review.

Internationalization. “Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global

dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004).

Cultural adjustment. “The general psychological well-being, self satisfaction, contentment, comfort with and accommodation to a new environment after the initial perturbation which characterized culture shock have passed” (Ruben & Kealy, 1979, p. 21).

Cultural adaptation. Tends to indicate a more long term process than adjustment and not only involves psychological well-being, but also cognitive changes, social changes, and attitudinal changes (Kelley & Meyers, 1995).

Cultural effectiveness. Hannigan (1990) defines this term as “the target behavior of persons working in other cultures.” Hannigan also concludes that positive cultural effectiveness included skills such as cultural empathy, effective communication skills, ability to form and maintain relationships, deal with stress and a nonjudgmental attitude.

Multiculturalism. This term refers to understanding human differences and the recognition that individuals approach concepts from their own perspectives (Carley, 1987; Summerfield, 1997). The core concepts are respect for diversity and individual differences, which are seen as a source of strength and enrichment.

Traditional student. For the purposes of this study, a traditional student is defined as a student who enters college directly after high school, aged 18-20.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because very limited research has been done to determine if and how, over the course of a traditional college experience, students gain skills specifically in cultural adaptability. A solid base of knowledge exists that acknowledges

the tremendous amount of development that occurs in regard to identity and moral development, however, there is a gap in this knowledge in regard to how this assists students in their ability to interact with others from other cultures based upon psychological, cognitive, social, and attitudinal changes.

This is significant because the outcomes of this research suggest that cultural adaptability is positively affected by the overall university experience and not only by courses or activities designed to do so. Perhaps then more time and resources could be allotted to other activities such as development of, and participation in, study abroad; which has been shown to greatly enhance many aspects of the individual student, not just cultural adaptability. Lastly, additional efforts could be made to modify current methods of development instead of creating new methods.

It is thought that the focus group component of this research study could determine other factors such as roommate selection, fraternity or sorority participation, a specific interaction with a faculty member, or any number of other factors that may have contributed the most to the students' development of cultural adaptability. These data would be most useful to a university seeking to enhance its students' abilities to interact more effectively with those from other cultures.

It is then thought that the most significant contribution of this study would be to the body of literature on student development. These data collected from the focus group discussions lent some insight into what students perceive to be the most influential and effective experiences of this nature. It is also hoped that this study will add to the body of literature that exists on internationalization efforts in higher education. Informally, it is hoped that the data gleaned from this study will positively affect the curriculum at

Saint Francis University, including general education courses, student development, and professional programs.

Methods

This study was a case study design, focused on the campus of Saint Francis University. A qualitative case study design with focus groups was utilized for this study, supplemented by pre-existing data collected by other institutional offices. The focus group questions were tested prior to full implementation, in order to refine focus group questions. It was completed with students who were not included in the population to be studied.

Participants. Participants were chosen and placed in focus groups based upon several factors. First, they were all first-semester juniors, having completed many of the common requirements for all students. They also lived on campus for at least one semester, as research has suggested this is a major influence on student development. Participants also had completed the CCAI during freshman registration. The results of the CCAI for the Class of 2011 covered a range of scores from below the 1st percentile to above the 99th percentile for 18-22 year olds. Each incoming freshman student had equal opportunity to complete the survey. Although it was not required, 236 students completed the inventory.

Procedures. The student scores were separated into categories of low (1st-30th percentile), medium (40-70th percentile), and high (over 70th percentile). The researcher completed a stratified sample of students for selection into the focus groups, with each group being comprised of students with scores on the CCAI from each of the low, medium, and high groupings. This heterogeneous mix of students in each focus group

ensured a variety of experiences and abilities in regard to cultural adaptability. The focus group discussions were the heart of this research occurring with traditional Saint Francis students after their sophomore year was completed. At this time they had completed most of their general education requirements and not yet begun individual professional coursework.

The focus groups followed Astin's I-E-O theory (1970a, 1970b, 1991) of student development. Some of the questions that were discussed: (a) involvement with tasks, people, or activities that influenced the development of cultural adaptability; (b) the qualitative and quantitative features of the involvement/activity that led to changes in cultural adaptability; and, (c) their participation in and educational effectiveness of culture and diversity activities and their relationship to student involvement, learning, and change.

The researcher reviewed many of the general education courses the students had in common, and allowed the students to reflect on which, if any, of those courses enhanced their knowledge, skills, or attitudes regarding cross-cultural adaptability. The context of the focus groups helped students formulate additional factors or variables that affected their ability to interact with those of other cultures. It was thought by the researcher that many other experiences in the social context of the university setting could influence the development of these skills, and the students were given the opportunity to share those experiences. After the focus groups were completed, the researcher asked the focus group participants to once again complete the CCAI. This provided the researcher with quantitative support for the development of cultural adaptability over time.

Materials. The researcher utilized pre-existing data collected by the office of General Education, Center for International Education and Outreach, and Student Development. Because of consistent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2006) data indicating lower than average scores in the area of diversity and cultural competence, administrators and members of the General Education faculty decided to utilize a more sensitive assessment measure for diversity and cultural issues related to the university. In the fall of 2007 they implemented use of the CCAI.

The CCAI was developed by Kelley and Meyers (1995) to “provide information to an individual about his or her potential for cross-cultural effectiveness” (p. 2). It was designed to be culture-general, so it may be used with those of varying cultural backgrounds. The CCAI contains 50 self-scoring questions. Those completing the inventory circled their answers and then calculate their scores in four dimensions (Emotional Resilience, Flexibility/Openness, Perceptual Acuity, and Personal Autonomy). The profile contained in the paper version of the inventory displays the scores graphically, and showed how the scores compared to one another (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). The web-based version of this inventory did not provide the graphic representation, but generated a report summarizing the results, which could be forwarded to the participant.

The CCAI was developed to address several needs that had been expressed by both culturally diverse populations and those who train others to work with those populations. Those needs include: enhance understanding of the factors that influence cross-cultural effectiveness; increase self-awareness; improve skills in interacting with those from other cultures; to help decide whether to work in a culturally diverse environment; and, to

prepare an individual to enter another culture (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). As discussed previously, the American Council on Education feels strongly that students in higher education must be exposed to multicultural experiences and effectively adapt to this new trend in higher education, so the CCAI would be an appropriate measure to utilize with the student population at a small, private university.

In terms of validity, the CCAI has been widely tested and has strong face and content validity. Through the Cronbach's Alpha technique, the reliability of the four scales was tested. This statistical measure determined the four individual scales correlated to the overall score on the inventory. If a participant had a high score on one item in a particular scale, that person would tend to score high on other items on that scale. The Cronbach's value for Emotional Resilience (ER) was .82, for Flexibility/Openness (F/O) .80, for Perceptual Acuity (PAC) .78, and for Personal Autonomy (PA) .68. All values established were acceptable for this research study.

Limitations

A qualitative, case study design has several limitations. Qualitative designs can often carry a heavy burden of textual data that can be difficult to interpret and analyze. Case studies are limited in their ability to be generalized to other situations or institutions. Limitations also exist in the use of a focus group design, where limitations exist in recruiting participants and eliminating interviewer bias.

There were also limitations to the pre-existing data set that were utilized. Complete data sets on student programming and outcomes were not available, including exact figures on study abroad participation. The researcher assumed the participants understood the questions on the inventory, and there is no method to identify students

who did not. Those participants who completed the CCAI may have attempted to answer each question “correctly” instead of selecting the choice that best represents their performance or behavior.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The more we know about each other, the more we learn about each other, the more we engage on differences that we have between our societies and between our social systems and between our political points of view, the better off we are. The more dialogue we have at every level, and especially at the academic level, where opinion-makers are located . . . the better off we are.

Colin Powell, March 18, 2004

This literature review included three major areas, each of which was explored more in depth in order to provide a foundation for this research study. The purpose of this research was to gain more of an understanding of what the experiences and perceptions are concerning the development of cultural adaptability of traditional college students. The first section of this literature review explores internationalization efforts in higher education and includes both an historical and present day description, including factors that affect faculty and student participation in internationalization. Next, several conceptual models related to student development during the four-year college experience is discussed including work by Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1991, 2001) and Bennett (1999). These works provide the theoretical basis for this research, as well as support for the research methodology, which includes the use of focus groups. The last section includes a comprehensive look at cultural adaptability including its relationship to internationalization, global workforce trends, existing research on cultural adaptability, and an overview of the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory. Each section seeks to

support the focus of this research of what traditional college students perceive to be the most relevant experiences in terms of the development of cultural adaptability.

Internationalization in Higher Education

Historical Perspective

Knight (2004) provided a thorough definition of internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 11). This definition provides a strong foundation for a literature review based upon multicultural or intercultural initiatives in higher education (a term frequently used in the past) as well as international education initiatives in today’s terms.

The history of internationalization in the United States (U.S.) can be traced back nearly to the beginning of the establishment of this country. American policies on internationalization have varied. The earliest leadership of the U.S. first recommended isolation from other countries and the educational institution in the U.S. considered itself unique and dissimilar from other school systems across the globe (Guttek, 2006). Attitudes of Americans were later influenced by European immigration as millions of individuals between 1820 and 1860 settled in this country. Even with the “melting pot” of cultures and differences, the emphasis still remained on immigrants forming relationships between their ethnic culture and the new world. The importance remained on blending the new and the old, not necessarily pure expression of culture as known to the individual or group (Guttek, 1993). Weisberger (1971) insightfully pointed out that just as immigrant groups were seeking ways to mesh their own culture and beliefs with the new American lifestyle, they were in essence defining what “American” means.

The ends of World Wars I and II brought a resurgence of interest in international affairs through increased travels abroad and a new interdependence on other nations created by the conflicts of the time. These opportunities forced Americans to learn new languages and a new emphasis on international relations was born at American universities through new initiatives and endowments (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991). The creation of the Fulbright program in 1946 was a significant initiative from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, that offered opportunities for American scholars to conduct research, lecture, and/or consult with other scholars and institutions abroad. The creation of the Fulbright program began over 50 years of “fostered bilateral relationships in which other countries and governments work with the U.S. to set joint priorities and shape the program to meet shared needs” (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

The post-Cold War era brought increased interest in study abroad as the number of students traveling to countries outside the U.S. for study grew rapidly, with the exception of the Vietnam War era, with fewer students opting to study overseas. With the end of this era there was an increased comfort with international travel and this growth continued through the 1980s and 1990s. Unfortunately, as Mestenhauser (1998) pointed out, there was a lackluster effort put forth from higher education institutions to truly implement changes and movement toward internationalization. The changes made were merely superficial; perhaps recruiting more international students or faculty, or implementing small curricular changes. President Clinton advanced goals toward international education through the *International Education Policy*, which supported numerous objectives through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Post

Secondary Education. Some of these objectives included funds for international business training, international public policy, foreign language studies, and technological advancements (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

In summary, the literature supports a trend of some decline but simultaneous progress in efforts toward internationalization on university campuses. Ironically enough, it seems as though events with the most international influence provide the setbacks to progress, as demonstrated by the World Wars, Cold War, and Vietnam eras, and the conflict in Iraq. For example, initiatives such as the *Patriot Act* (H.R. 3162) placed greater restrictions on travel into the United States and placed limitations on persons applying for visas, affecting those both willing and able to come to this country. Future study will have to determine the overall effect of the current conflict and legislation on internationalization as it continues on in this present time. Considering our current status in this process of globalization, one must look to a discussion of present-day initiatives, models, and evidence of internationalization in higher education.

Internationalization in Higher Education: Present

Internationalization as a whole is having a universal impact every minute. Any literature search on this topic in the fields of business, education, human resources, technology, and many others reveals process changes in nearly all aspects of day-to-day living and work. A wide variety of literature reflects this impact as evidence was found from Algeria, West Africa, Japan, and the United Kingdom, and many other countries including the United States. This section of the literature review is focused on major effects of internationalization in higher education in the U.S., with a representative sample of relevant articles and evidence.

Internationalization efforts continue to be widespread in higher education. Some universities have adopted more comprehensive initiatives, including language from the top of command incorporated into the mission statements or visions of their institutions of higher education. Others have put forth efforts to incorporate more culturally relevant experiences both inside and outside the classroom related more to curriculum rather than those larger-scale approaches.

The Center for International Initiatives at ACE, a known and established source of leadership in the area of internationalization, recently held a symposium for members of the Internationalization Collaborative (2008) entitled “Faculty Engagement in Comprehensive Internationalization.” Patti McGill Peterson and David Ward, president of ACE, highlighted specific steps that institutions can take to create a supportive climate for internationalization and ensure that faculty members have opportunities to engage internationally. Some of these steps include: (1) having an institution-wide strategic plan for internationalization; (2) engaging departments and disciplines in shaping this institutional vision; and, (3) integrating study abroad, internships and co-curricular activities into the strategic plan (ACE, 2008).

In reviewing literature on current practices in internationalization initiatives, a rich amount of data and information were identified. At universities working toward goals of internationalization, it appears that numerous attempts have been made at all levels to incorporate more culturally relevant and appropriate objectives, and to increase students’ knowledge, skills, and understanding when working with or among diverse individuals or groups; therefore the evidence provides support to the ACE recommendations.

On a large scale, Michigan State University was recently recognized as being a model for successful internationalization at all levels. Initiatives at the university include a new college of international studies, rich foreign language coursework, leadership studies in international education, a pioneering global studies degree program, and creation of new internationally-themed positions on campus (Michigan State University, 2006).

A strong, mixed methods study by Mahoney and Schamber (2004) discussed the application of a Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity to an entire general education program, demonstrating that university students gain the most from programs when they participate or are exposed multiple times to varying experiences related to cultural competence.

At the curricular level, inclusion of international and/or multicultural objectives have been shown to have a positive effect on students in many ways. A longitudinal study by Brown (2005) demonstrated more positive attitudes and skills in multicultural perceptions, cross-cultural communication, and social justice cognizance in a service learning component designed to develop such skills. In a more non-traditional study, Staikidis (2006) discovered enhanced cultural inspiration and understanding in American students working with Mayan artists in art education courses. Other success has come in the form of case-based learning for understanding cross-cultural issues (Butler, Lee, & Tippins, 2006) in a teacher education curriculum.

Faculty and Student Participation in Internationalization Efforts

Of course, with change often comes resistance. Not everyone is willing to make curriculum changes to enhance the development of cross-cultural skills, or participate in internationalization efforts at their place of work. Several studies were reviewed that identified factors that may predict higher levels of faculty participation. First, a large study (n = 829) by Schwietz (2006) indicated faculty members with higher levels of international experiences at different levels had higher levels of involvement in internationalization efforts. In addition, faculty members who had more favorable attitudes and beliefs toward internationalization were also more likely to have greater involvement in internationalization efforts.

A study of factors that contribute to faculty incorporation of diversity-related course content (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006) revealed several significant factors. First, significant differences related to race and gender were established, as men and women of color were much more likely to incorporate diversity-related themes into their courses than White faculty of both genders. It should also be noted there was a much greater difference incorporating these elements between White men and men of color, versus White women and women of color.

Faculty members who agreed that their departments emphasized the importance of diversity in their field were also more likely to incorporate these themes. According to the authors, the most powerful predictor of faculty's likelihood to incorporate diversity-related content into their courses was participation in activities designed to promote sensitivity toward diversity issues (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006). It does seem that administrators who are willing to encourage and sponsor professional development

activities, encourage departmental adoption of diversity-related course content, and portray internationalization efforts in a positive light would assist in the faculty “buy in” needed to internationalize a curriculum or perhaps even an entire institution. To further that point Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005), leaders in student development research, noted schools who fall in the top 20 in the nation in terms of Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP), have integrated international experiences into the curriculum either through academic programs or foreign language study.

Study abroad. When considering student participation in internationalization efforts, study abroad might be the most well-known initiative thought to increase cultural competence in higher education today. The American Council on Education and the College Board recently released their 2008 report entitled *College-Bound Students’ Interests in Study Abroad and other International Learning Activities* (2008). The report indicated that 55% of college bound seniors in high school are certain or fairly certain they will participate in study abroad, 35% plan an international internship, and of those planning to study abroad, more than 70% plan to become proficient in a second language or, at minimum, know enough to interact with others in another country (ACE & The College Board, 2008). The report also indicated that students are coming from more diverse backgrounds and bring to college campuses a variety of international experiences. The results of this report are not substantially different from the same study conducted in 2000.

The largest disconnect is seen when the numbers of high school seniors interested in study abroad participation (more than 50%) were compared to data collected by National Associate of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA) now known as the Association

of International Educators. NAFSA consistently evaluates actual study abroad participation in higher education. Vermont, the state with the greatest number of students in study abroad programs stands at only 4.24% participation in the 2005-2006 school year (NAFSA, 2007). This is a very significant difference. Students identify cost and lack of proficiency in foreign language as the main reasons for not pursuing a study abroad experience (ACE & The College Board, 2008).

There is currently landmark legislation pending that would make study abroad participation the norm in all higher education institutions, instead of an opportunity to which seemingly very few students take advantage. The Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2007 (H.R. 1469, S. 991) is best described as a program that:

Would create an independent entity to administer a national study abroad program, taking a unique approach that would give the program the flexibility necessary to accomplish its ambitious mandate: that at least one million U.S. undergraduate students will study abroad annually in ten years' time, and that study abroad opportunities will become more diverse in terms of participants, fields of study, and destinations, especially in the developing world.

In addition to providing a pool of direct scholarships, the program would encourage higher education institutions to address the on-campus factors that most heavily impact study abroad participation – curriculum, faculty involvement, institutional leadership, programming – by making a commitment to institutional reform a prerequisite for access to federal funds. There is vast evidence to support effectiveness of study abroad programs that have grown in number over the past few decades. (NAFSA, 2007)

The Simon bill has received applause from parents, alumni, administrators, and faculty affiliated with institutions of higher education across the U.S., and will have a major effect on higher education in this country. It is presently before the full Senate for consideration.

Literature on the effectiveness of study abroad programs is abundant especially in the area of student development. Respected researchers in this area include Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). Their extensive review of the literature suggests that despite many variations in the type, location and duration of study abroad experiences, consistent increases are noted in students' intercultural awareness and tolerance and awareness of various international and cross-cultural issues. The authors acknowledge, however, that much of the research on study abroad has been small scale, and there is little empirical evidence that measures the long term effects of study abroad.

This section provided a glimpse into the history and present-day efforts to internationalize higher education in the United States. The next step in creating the foundation for this research study is to explore how today's college student develops in their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. If an institution of higher education is to work toward internationalization, the question begs to be asked, "How will the students respond?" "Will the efforts make a difference in terms of their preparation for the workforce?" The next section will explore various theories of student development as they relate to this research study.

Conceptual Models of Student Development

Conceptual models are necessary in research to both provide the theoretical basis for the research and identify gaps in previously conducted research. In this section,

various theories of student development in higher education will be discussed along with the connection between those conceptual models and the qualitative nature of this study. Numerous theories of student development were reviewed, all with a degree of relevance to this research study on cultural adaptability. The primary research question asks what students perceive to be the most significant experiences related to the development of cultural adaptability. Based upon this premise, the researcher hoped to uncover the developmental process that has taken place regarding this concept based on the following developmental theories.

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Psychosocial Development

One of the leading authors in the area of student development from the 1960s to nearly the present day is A. Chickering. His foundational research is considered critical in the field and his research provides strong evidence to support his theory of psychosocial development; this traditional theory continues to emerge in contemporary literature. Although it was not used for specific analysis for this research study, it had significant relevance as a background to evidence in the field of student development.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) described seven major developmental tasks to which students attend throughout the time they are a college student. The seven vectors include developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Although none of the seven vectors primarily target cultural adaptability, it could be considered a subset of developing mature interpersonal relationships. Chickering and Reisser (1993) describe this development of mature relationships as that which fosters understanding and acceptance

of differences as students encounter new social situations and new ideas, people, beliefs, and experiences. This theory provides support that interactions with others, challenges to pre-existing belief systems, and new interactions are part of a core developmental procedure that can be expected to exist in most traditional college students.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Bennett (1993a, 1993b) developed a conceptual framework described as a Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. This model describes students' experiences as a developmental process, as they progress first through stages of ethnocentrism on to ethnorelativism; a continuum from denial of difference to an eventual integration of difference. The continuum is further broken down to include the ethnocentric stages beginning with Denial of Difference, to Defense of Difference, to Minimization of Difference. The Ethnorelative scale begins with Acceptance of Difference, to Adaptation to Difference, and finally Integration of Difference (Bennett, 1993).

This developmental approach supports a progressive ability to accommodate cultural differences, and emphasizes subjective components of culture. This model assumes a social construction of identity where students determine and interpret their own identities in relationship to others, but also learn through interaction with others that cultural differences are not a static concept (Bennett, 1993a, 1993b; Mahoney & Schamber, 2004).

Bennett (1993a, 1993b) describes this process as unfolding and developing with each new experience and interaction that occurs. It could be expected that students begin college with a certain degree of ethnocentricity, and leave college after four years with, at

minimum, a developing sense of enthorelativism. Each student can be expected to develop these skills at a different rate based upon prior experiences, degree or level of engagement, and interest or positive feelings toward their own sense of development.

Astin's I-E-O Model and Theory of Development

Astin (1970, 1970b, 1991) proposed one of the first and more influential college impact models. His work was groundbreaking at the time and still holds a place as a foundation of current research on student development. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) effectively compare the I-E-O model to other models of college impact. They describe it as different from attempting to use theory to describe the how and why of student change; rather it is better described as sets of elements that contribute to college outcomes.

According to Astin (1970, 1970b, 1991) the first element is input, which includes the demographic characteristics of the students attending college. These include things such as gender, income, setting (rural or urban), academic, and family experiences. The second element is environment, which includes the full range of people, programs, policies, and experiences students encounter in college. The last element includes outcomes, which encompass students' knowledge, values, skills, behaviors, and attitudes as they exit college.

Astin's initial research found direct connections between the inputs and outcomes, however, indirect effects were found as students engaged in the multifaceted higher education environment on different levels. Studies involving this theoretical approach "attempt to explain the effects of environmental influences on student change or growth, focusing on factors over which college faculty and administrators have some programmatic and policy control" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005 p. 53).

Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education

Tying together the Developmental Model of Cultural Sensitivity and the I-E-O Model of Development is Student Involvement theory (Astin, 1984). Astin outlines five postulates that serve as the foundation for this theory. Postulate one describes involvement as the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. Either effort might be highly generalized or highly specific. The second postulate describes involvement on a continuum, whereas different students invest differing amounts of time and energy in a given object or opportunity. Postulate three describes involvement as having both quantitative and qualitative features. The fourth postulate makes an assertion that the “amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program” (Astin, 1984, p. 302). The final postulate states that the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the ability of that policy or practice to increase student involvement (Astin, 1984).

In all of the above conceptual theories, there are many similarities. All describe student development on a continuum, with influencing factors contributing to all stages of development, like an open-system. It is hoped that the research being conducted will contribute greater insight into all three theories relating to the development of cultural adaptability. By conducting focus groups as the primary research procedure, the researcher uncovered influencing input factors (Astin, 1984) as well as levels of ethnocentricity (Bennett, 1993a, 1993b) that the students can describe from their high school and beginning freshman year experience.

The focus groups also helped to uncover levels of involvement (Astin, 1984) over the first two years of college, influencing environmental factors (Astin, 1984), and unfolding levels of ethnocentricity with progress toward ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1993a, 1993b). The researcher hoped to connect the development of cultural adaptability to all of these factors through which to view the data from the focus groups.

Qualitative Research and Assessment in Student Development

In their updated anthology of research in higher education relating to student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) acknowledge that the literature reviewed through the 1990s through 2000 does reflect more varied methodology than their previous volume of research review with an increase in naturalistic, qualitative methodologies. Despite this, the majority of research conducted on student development remains quantitative in nature (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and the authors feel more diverse methodologies will provide a greater understanding of student development in college. This finding then supports the researcher's efforts to conduct a qualitative study in the area of student development and cultural adaptability to add to this body of knowledge.

In addition to this perspective, Skipper (2005) from the University of South Carolina, an institution well known for its leadership in student development research, discussed effective ways to assess student development in higher education. She described historical methodologies as those including many survey-type instruments, with many based upon other theories of student development. However, Skipper (2005) described a number of advantages to support the use of qualitative methodologies to assess student development in the higher education setting. In addition, she discussed

advantages to having students engage in formal and/or informal self-assessments to reflect upon “who they are, what they have done and why, and how they have changed- all powerful questions” (Skipper, 2005, p. 103). Students might conduct a self assessment during the context of observations, interviews, focus groups, or through the use of portfolios or journals.

The previous sections outlined a brief history of internationalization in higher education, the status of this process in today’s context, and comprehensive review of how college students develop. These elements set the stage for a review of cultural adaptability, the focus of this research study. This section focuses on defining cultural adaptability in the present day context, gaps in the research, and overview of the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory.

Cultural Adaptability

In 1998, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration launched the Mars Climate Orbiter, a spacecraft designed to orbit the Red Planet to study its climate. Two teams of engineers from separate countries worked tirelessly on the orbiter’s navigation software programs; however they used incompatible measurements, one in metric and one in English. Those leading the project did not double check whether the conversions had taken place, each team assumed their method to be correct. In late September 1999, the orbiter approached Mars 56 miles closer to the surface than it should have been, incinerating within a few minutes. In this case, each team was working under assumed norms and rules, and the mistakes cost NASA \$125 million (Center for Creative Leadership, 2003). What will be the future consequences of inadequate preparation, training, and use of culturally competent interactions?

Friedman's (2005) description of the world getting smaller and smaller as technology continues to influence nearly all aspects of daily living provided another perspective of competing cultures. His book, *The World is Flat*, provided not only the motivation behind this research study but also emphasized the important assertion that all members of our society must in turn learn flexibility, adaptability, and openness to the world around us to remain competitive. Each example described above involves cultural adaptability, the primary focus of this qualitative study. The researcher plans to explore influencing factors on the development of cultural adaptability in traditional college students.

The definition of cultural adaptation used for this study indicates a developmental process which is consistent with the other theoretical constructs that were discussed in the literature review. According to Kelly and Meyers (1995), cultural adaptation indicates a long-term process that is more comprehensive in nature than simple adjustment, and includes psychological well being, cognitive changes, social changes, and attitudinal changes.

Why the perceived urgency to develop cross-cultural skills? An interview with the CEOs of four major U.S. companies and the head of an international recruiting agency published in the *Harvard Business Review* (2003) revealed much common ground regarding globalization. They unanimously agreed that the shift from a local or national marketplace to a global marketplace is both irreversible and quickly gaining momentum (Green, Hassan Immelt, Marks, & Meiland, 2003). Although much was found in common between the executives, they also had a vast array of differences relating to how much or how little to hire foreign administrators within their management team,

maintaining cultural independence versus trying to “fit in” with local cultural norms, and whether the global leader must have prerequisite experiences living and working abroad (Green, et al., 2003). All signs point to more research needed in the area of preparing today’s college graduates for not only living and working in a global environment, but also learned leadership in a global environment.

Research on cultural adaptability. Although variability does exist in some of the design and methodologies used to study the phenomenon of cultural adaptability, many similarities exist as well. Many designs sought to use a pretest-posttest design with an instrument such as the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory attempting to validate the effectiveness of a program. Some of the programs studied included study abroad, missionary training, international internships, educational interventions, or the studies sought to validate the instrument with a particular population (Chang, 2004; Holder-Ballard 2007; Kraemer & Beckstead, 2003; Williams, 2005). Overall, the studies did not involve a large number of subjects and were mostly quantitative in nature, and most interventions were supported by the research conducted.

Cross cultural adaptability inventory. As the supplemental instrument used in this research study, the CCAI was developed around the concept of measuring cross-cultural effectiveness, and it reflects factors that are “consistently identified in the literature as being important for successful cross-cultural functioning” (Kelley & Meyers, 1995, p. 8). The intent of the CCAI is not necessarily to predict success or failure in a cross-cultural experience, but rather to highlight strengths and weakness in personal interactions that might exist or serve as a barrier to successful interactions. The CCAI was developed to reflect four major components: emotional resilience; flexibility and

openness; perceptual acuity and personal autonomy; each of which will be further explored.

Emotional resilience is directly related to the theory of “culture shock,” which carries with it some negative reaction to the new experience (Kohls, 2001). For an individual to be successful in a cross-cultural experience, one must have a degree of humility and be able to “bounce back” from frustrations or insecurity, where modulating and dealing with these emotions effectively is critical to the experience (Kelley & Meyers, 1995).

Flexibility and openness include the display of a non-judgmental attitude and flexible role behavior, which are major components of cross-cultural effectiveness (Hannigan, 1990). This means that those who have a natural sense of curiosity and a strong respect for others are then ready to listen to others, make friends, and try to understand other perspectives of the world.

Perceptual acuity is described as the expression of empathy in a cross-cultural interaction. It has been described as highly cognitive in nature, requiring skills to understand the fluidity of other cultures, and requiring the capacity to avoid negative assumptions based on perceptions of differences (Dinges, 1983). Another important factor in this component is communication competence, which emphasizes language proficiency and ability to comprehend social, verbal, and non-verbal cues.

Personal autonomy is best described as a sense of identity, and is necessary for not just successful interaction, but confident interaction. Hawes and Kealey (1981) as described by Kelley and Meyers (1995) explained that it is imperative that a person feel open to the experiences of a new culture without feeling threatened by the differences

noted and without desiring to leave behind one's own identity for another. Hannigan (1990) also pointed out that respect for the host culture is a major component of cross-cultural effectiveness.

The CCAI has been utilized effectively in hundreds of research studies. Review of the literature revealed use in the methodology of research with students and faculty in higher education, prospective employees, human resources, and business programs of study. It was a good fit as pre-existing, supplemental data that are quantitative in nature was added to this qualitative study for use by the focus groups. The subjects for this research study completed the CCAI at the beginning of their freshman year, with the understanding and consent that their scores may be utilized for future research. Those scores then determined the placement of students, based on their strengths and weaknesses, in focus groups for further study.

Summary

The intent of this literature review was to provide foundational knowledge for the completion of this research study. The extensive amount of literature reviewed revealed some missing data, which is that of the college students' perspective. Most of the research reviewed sought to quantify gains made in knowledge, skills, or attitudes as measured by an instrument. This research study sought to measure gains in cultural adaptability through the use of focus groups, and an instrument wherein the college student will have the opportunity to reflect upon his or her own experiences at a university with very little diversity or international emphasis at this point in time. It was expected the research would uncover themes in the student's development that related to

foundational theories of student development, of which cultural adaptability is not currently included.

Palomba and Banta (1999) strongly advocated for the use of performance-based assessments in student development research, which includes research that requires the student to generate their own response, rather than be provided with choices. These authors assert that these types of assessments provide greater insight into creativity and critical thinking than other survey or standardized instruments, thus creating support for the methodology being utilized for this research study.

It was hoped that this research will serve as a starting point for identifying strong experiences or significant events that affect the students at a small, private university and serve as a spring board for development of future efforts toward internationalization efforts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The American Council on Education (2006) acknowledges that gathering data on current and ongoing initiatives in higher education to improve students' ability to gain skills specifically in cultural competence are difficult to obtain. Perhaps of greater importance are not only the skills acquired, but students' ability to translate those skills into the workforce, leading to success working in a global society.

It is clear that that the demographics are changing on today's college campuses, providing administration and faculty with opportunities for curricular changes, program development, and culture reform. It is imperative that U.S. institutions of higher education respond to this challenge with clear, comprehensive, and measurable means of implementation and assessment.

Statement of the Problem

In the higher education environment, there is continuous emphasis on development of coursework which enhances cultural competence. University campuses nationwide are seeking to "internationalize" their curricula (ACE, 2006) to enhance the students' abilities to function in the global labor market. The question of "how to build cultural competence in our students" continues to be raised. With all of the possible interventions of academic curriculum, study abroad, student development activities on campus, and more diverse faculty and student recruitment, limited research exists on how students' experiences of the first and second year of college impact the development of cultural adaptability.

Rationale for Qualitative Case Study Design

Qualitative research captures a phenomenon in its natural setting and with fullness of context. By utilizing a qualitative approach the researcher was able to obtain pure and rich data. It is used to describe or explore reasons that a situation or phenomenon exists. Qualitative case study research according to Yin (2003) “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). In addition, Yin explained that the case study method is utilized when a researcher wants to include contextual conditions, and views such conditions as critical to the research (2003).

In their updated anthology of research in higher education relating to student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) acknowledge that the literature reviewed through the 1990s through 2000 does reflect more varied methodology than their previous volume of research review. Although the authors noted an increase in naturalistic, qualitative methodologies over the last decade, they found that the majority of research conducted on student development remains quantitative in nature (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This finding supports the researcher’s efforts to conduct a qualitative study in the area of student development and cultural adaptability to add to this body of knowledge.

Serotkin (2006) recently conducted a qualitative study on the campus of Saint Francis University, the institution involved in this proposed research, also using a case study design and also utilizing focus groups combined with pre-existing data relating to information literacy. This study was perceived in a positive light by those involved and yielded positive results and change in the area of curriculum and instruction. This speaks

to the culture on campus as one of support, openness to change, and timeliness of this research.

The research questions are best answered through a comprehensive qualitative approach because the researcher sought students' input on their previous experiences, perceptions, and descriptions relating to cultural adaptability; they answer the "how" of change. The research questions include:

1. How do traditional university students define Cultural Adaptability?
2. According to traditional university students, how does the context of the university setting influence the development of Cultural Adaptability?
3. According to traditional university students, what experiences, academic or otherwise, do students' perceive as having the most influence on the development of their own Cultural Adaptability?
4. How do traditional university students describe their participation in and educational effectiveness of activities designed to improve awareness and understanding of cultural and diversity issues?

It is acknowledged by the researcher that certain limitations existed by choosing a qualitative case study design. As focus groups were utilized, the possibility existed that bias may have been introduced by the researcher as interviewer, a threat to internal validity. In addition, case studies are limiting in terms of their ability to be generalized to other institutions or situations; a threat to external validity. Also a threat to external validity was the vast experiences students brought with them to the higher education context. The researcher argued the timeliness and relevance of this study in terms of

urgency and importance in the realm of higher education justifies the exploratory and descriptive nature of this research.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher for this study had a vested interest in the topic, thus assisting to support interviewer trustworthiness. In addition, the researcher had been actively involved in internationalization efforts within the university, and held a great interest in student development. The researcher has a background as an educator as well as clinician in health care, where constant interaction, education, and conversation are required. It is recognized that the researcher had some impact on the data and the way they are collected, and influencing factors included interviewing style and interpersonal skills, among others. Yin (2003) described several skills that are preferred in order for a case study researcher to be effective:

- A good case study investigator should be able to ask good questions and interpret the answers;
- An investigator should be a good listener, and not be trapped by his or her own ideologies or preconceptions;
- An investigator should be adaptive and flexible, so that newly encountered situations can be seen as opportunities, not threats;
- An investigator must have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, whether this is theoretical or policy orientation;
- A person should be unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory.

It was felt the researcher had both the knowledge and skills to ethically conduct this research study. The researcher had no preconceived notions as to what the results would indicate, and the qualitative nature of this study allowed the researcher to formulate a theory based on those results.

Institutional Setting for the Case Study

Saint Francis University is a small, rural, Catholic university sponsored by the Franciscans of the Third Order Regular. At the time of this research there were 1,429 undergraduate students, 1,143 graduate and continuing education students, with 80% of undergraduate students living on campus in residence halls (Saint Francis University, 2007). The student population at Saint Francis is overwhelmingly Caucasian with a current minority population of less than 5%.

This study was precipitated by a series of significant events that occurred on the campus over the past two years involving university program development, program assessment, and outcomes. First, in 2006, the president of the university created the Office of International Education and Outreach to assist in the coordination of the many separate study abroad programs on campus. This office was meant to centralize existing programs as well as to explore new options and possibilities for students to study, work, or experience mission trips abroad. With the new office came an extension of the university created in Ambialet, France, a centralized location where students of all majors could participate in various academic experiences; this extension was the first of its kind for Saint Francis University.

Most recently, the General Education program was reviewed by an external consultant who recognized that Saint Francis University has many needs in the area of

diversity education and multicultural awareness (General Education Outcomes Report, 2006). In addition, National Survey of Student Engagement data collected both in 2005 and 2007 indicated that Saint Francis University students are below the benchmark of other similar universities in their level of interaction and understanding of those of different economic, social, racial and/or ethnic backgrounds (NSSE Report, 2006).

All of these factors combined served the justification, timeliness, and importance of this research study. Saint Francis University is currently in the position of increasing international experiences and opportunities for its students, however it faces the challenge of preparing them to adapt and interact with those from other cultures.

Participants

The participants in this study were part of a non-probability, convenience sample of fifth semester students (first semester junior level students).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The participants for the focus groups met several criteria. First, they completed the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory at check-in their freshmen year, as their overall score on the CCAI assisted in focus group placement. The participants also completed at least 36 credits in the general education program and successfully completed all 12 Community Enrichment Series (CES) events during their freshman year. The Community Enrichment Series consisted of speakers, museum exhibits, guest lecturers, films, and other experiences identified by the Dean of General Education as meeting particular General Education objectives. Freshmen at Saint Francis University enroll in CORE 102 (fall semester) and CORE 103 (spring semester), and to pass the course the students must

participate in at least 6 CES events each semester. Attendance was tracked through the General Education office. Participation in these events ensured at least a portion of common experience on campus for each of the participants, helping to control internal validity.

After the overall sample population was identified, students were placed into focus groups. The researcher assembled students with CCAI scores of low, medium, and high nature in each of the focus groups, allowing for a heterogeneous mix of students. The low, medium, and high categories were simply based on percentiles. The low group were those students scoring at the 30th percentile or lower, the medium group was classified as those scoring between the 40th and 60th percentiles, and the high group were those students scoring at the 70th percentile and above.

The participants were selected based on the criteria previously identified, and placed in focus groups of up to 10 students per group. Students were individually contacted via campus mail and email and informed of the study, and were asked to participate. There were no incentives offered for participation except that food, drinks, and dessert were provided for the students during their focus group participation.

Participant Contact

Participants who met the selection criteria were contacted via campus email and informed of their eligibility. Consent forms were forwarded to the students who expressed an interest in participating (Appendix A), and personal contact via email was made with each student to determine which focus group was convenient for them to attend. The researcher allowed the participants to commit to the focus group most

convenient for them to attend, and without any intervention the participants in each were representative of each of the low, middle, and high scoring groups.

Procedures

Focus Groups

Focus groups serve an important role in many types of research, both as a qualitative research method and as a way to supplement quantitative data. Focus groups are effective when a researcher seeks to obtain a general background about a topic of interest, to generate further hypotheses about the topic area, and to learn how participants might talk about the phenomenon being studied (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of focus groups are the researcher's ability to ask follow-up questions, to clarify responses, to observe non-verbal behaviors, and obtain deep level meaning; and the recorded results from these sessions can be more easily interpreted at times than quantitative data. Stewart, et al. (2007) also describe limitations of focus groups that include: bias unknowingly introduced by the interviewer/researcher; lack of generalization of responses due to smaller sample sizes; and, difficulty managing a large quantity of data.

The primary method of data collection for this study was in the form of focus groups completed during the fall semester of participants' junior year. It was hoped a large enough sample of participants could be recruited and interviewed within this time frame, as extending the study into the spring semester of the junior year might bring additional influence and experiences that would affect the validity of the study. Although there were no incentives for participation, food and drinks were provided and the researcher described through the informed consent that there would likely be positive

gains to participation. The researcher chose this time to complete the study because the students had some similarity of experience with courses and expectations in their first two years; as the junior and senior level courses are more major-specific. In his influential and pivotal research in the field of student development during college, Chickering (1993) specifically described significant gains in specific areas of development during the third semester, so this study effectively captured significant experiences that occurred during this time frame.

The researcher was also interested in the students' experiences regarding the development of cultural adaptability and awareness during their general education courses, and it was feared that memories of their experiences had faded as the student progressed into the upper level courses.

Conducting the focus groups. Focus groups were scheduled on a variety of dates so that participants would be inconvenienced as minimally as possible. The researcher arrived early for the focus groups so as to set up the environment and be fully prepared for the interview. The researcher reviewed with the participants the purpose of the study, and reminded each participant of their ability to decline to answer a particular question, or to remove themselves from the focus group at any time without repercussion. The participants were informed that the focus groups were tape recorded and that the researcher would be taking field notes during the interviews to assist with interpretation of results. This was also included in the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A). The focus groups were expected to last approximately one hour.

Instrumentation. A test of the focus group and questions occurred with a group of sophomore level students that were not a part of the sample for the research study. The

researcher consulted with numerous experts on campus from the divisions of Student Development, General Education, International Education and Outreach, and Academic Affairs to review the focus group questions and provide the opportunity for those experts to offer feedback or suggestions. The questions were developed and based on a theoretical construct discussed in the following section. The researcher reviewed the focus group questions with a group similar to, but not part of, the sample population. This panel allowed the researcher to determine which questions would be most effective for the research study.

The researcher logistically had a sense of the benefits or limitations of the physical environment, time of day, and items and time required for the interview. Of utmost importance, the researcher established face and content validity of the instrument (focus group questions) and had the opportunity to add questions or modify previous questions for future focus groups.

Focus group questions. The questions asked during the focus groups (Appendix B) followed the theoretical approach to student change postulated by Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1991) in his I-E-O approach. In this approach to student change, the researcher based the questions for the focus groups on the postulates of this theory (previously explored) that include: (a) involvement with tasks, people, or activities that influenced the development of cultural adaptability; (b) the qualitative and quantitative features of the involvement/activity that led to changes in cultural adaptability; and, (c) the educational effectiveness of culture and diversity activities and their relationship to student involvement, learning, and change.

Additional focus questions attempted to uncover levels of ethnocentricity versus ethorelativism (Bennett, 1993) either pre-dating their college experience or developing as they continued the college experience. Additional questions explored if there was a relationship between involvement (Astin, 1984) and students' perceptions about their development of cultural adaptability. Finally, focus group questions probed deeper to inquire about how they would describe themselves, what they had done on campus, and how they had changed as a result of their experiences. The questions for the focus groups were developed by the researcher with expert input from an Associate Professor of Sociology with expertise in qualitative research as well as the Assistant Dean for Student Development.

The focus groups began with introductions (first name only) and with the researcher reminding the participants that, although the discussions were being tape recorded, there would not be a direct identifier between the participants and their individual comments. Each participant was given a name tag with a number on it, so they could be identified by the researcher via notes or to elaborate on a question. The researcher re-stated the purpose of the focus groups which was to discuss the development of cultural adaptability among students at Saint Francis University and then proceeded to ask the focus group questions (Appendix B).

1. How would you have described your definition of "culture" when you were a senior in high school?
2. How do you define culture today? What do you consider to be elements of culture? How has that definition changed since you came to Saint Francis?

3. Have you had opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with other people on campus with different views, beliefs, etc. then you?
4. How do you think our campus facilitates cultural understanding? Are those means effective?
5. What classroom experiences, if any, have influenced your understanding of what “culture” means?
6. Describe the most significant on campus cultural experiences you have had since coming to Saint Francis.
7. Describe the most significant off campus cultural experiences you have had since coming to Saint Francis.
8. Describe the one most significant experience of your college life that affected your views and/or attitudes about people different from yourself. What was the emotional catalyst to this change?
9. What does the term “*culturally adaptive*” mean to you?
10. Is there a person on campus who you would consider to be “culturally adaptive?” What are the characteristics of that person that would lead you to identify them as such?
11. Is there a particular place on campus that naturally encourages acceptance and understanding of people’s differences?
12. How confident are you about heading into a workforce that is considered “global,” where you may have daily interactions with someone who is located in another country, or your job requires travel abroad?

13. [Using a visual of Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity] Where would you place yourself on this continuum coming here as a freshman, and where would you place yourself today?

Use of Pre-Existing Data

Considering the results of the 2005 and 2007 NSSE indicating diversity and cultural awareness as areas needing improvement, the administration of Saint Francis University (including Student Development, General Education, Center for International Education and Outreach, and the Academic Affairs division) chose to administer the web-based Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley & Meyers, 1995) to the incoming freshmen as a way to collect different, and more specific data relating to diversity and cultural awareness.

The CCAI was chosen because it had been used extensively both in higher education as well as in the employment and human resources market to assess strengths and weaknesses in an individual's ability to relate to, communicate with, and ultimately interact in a meaningful way with those of different backgrounds. The CCAI is a 50 question self-scoring assessment using a Likert scale. Interpretation of the CCAI separates the participant's scores into four subcategories for: (a) personal autonomy; (b) perceptual acuity; (c) flexibility/openness; and, (d) emotional resilience. After receiving the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, this assessment, which has high reliability and validity was administered to 236 incoming freshmen in the fall of 2007, a large sample of the approximately 405 freshmen enrolled. There was a wide range of scores on the CCAI for incoming freshmen, including a range from below the 1st

percentile to over the 99th. The researcher placed students into the focus groups based on their scores on the CCAI.

The researcher had the participants complete the CCAI at the conclusion of the focus group. This allowed the researcher to measure the change in cultural adaptability over time.

As the administration is in full support of this researcher's interest in studying the student's experiences and perceptions regarding cultural adaptability, those in authority on the campus granted this researcher access to the data once collected, while maintaining confidentiality. The institution also granted permission for the researcher to administer the CCAI at the conclusion of the focus groups. These supplemental quantitative data were evaluated through descriptive statistics supporting the qualitative findings of the study. These statistics explained the demographic features of the student population as they entered the university, including mean scores for gender and major, and comparison of those scores against national means for this age category.

Data Analysis Procedures

According to Stewart, et al. (2007) the interpretation of data from a focus group requires a great deal of judgment and care. Once the focus groups were conducted, the researcher transcribed the tape into text. The researcher as interviewer also supplemented the transcript with any additional observational data obtained during the focus groups, including behaviors, gestures, and nonverbal communications. From this point, content analysis was performed, a technique fully described by Krippendorff (2004) as a technique to make "replicable and valid references from texts to the contexts of their use" (p. 18).

Content analysis focused on the presence or absence of an idea or concept, the frequency with which certain objects or descriptors were used, or the way certain persons or institutions were characterized. It was hoped the content of the focus groups would consistently place the development of cultural adaptability right along the continuum with other aspects of student development such as those noted by Chickering, Astin, and others. The researcher hopes to specifically use Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity as a guideline to best describe this development. The researcher coded the text from the focus groups into measurable units, based on category or themes, and created rules for categorization that were consistently followed. The researcher cut and pasted groups of text based upon Astin's I-E-O theory.

In addition to coding techniques, the researcher also utilized a data analysis software package called hyperRESEARCH (2009) to assist in the data analysis process. The transcripts from each focus group were copied and pasted into hyperRESEARCH which then generated a frequency report for each code that the researcher had entered. Therefore, the researcher was able to identify the themes most frequently occurring. In addition, all three focus groups were analyzed together and by using the autocode feature in hyperRESEARCH the software program was able to identify words that occurred frequently throughout all focus groups. Through this analysis, the researcher was able to identify emerging themes.

Methods of Verification

Triangulation of data. This research provides a comprehensive view of student development through the use of multiple measures. First, the qualitative approach of focus groups provided answers to the question of how any changes take place. The

quantitative approach utilized with pre-existing data, namely scores from the CCAI helped to justify this research study, and provide a filter through which data was sorted. The CCAI was also administered to the participants once the focus groups were completed. These data supplemented the study as they illustrated the gains made in cultural adaptability over time. The researcher also utilized institutional data to supplement the study from the offices of Student Development, General Education and International Education and Outreach including demographic information, study abroad data, utilization of university services, and participation in university sponsored events that promote enhanced cultural awareness, and information regarding courses designed to accommodate internationalization.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher applied for IRB approval after successfully proposing the topic for research study. It was felt there were minimal risks or threats to participating in this study for the participants. Once IRB approval was received, the researcher identified the target population for implementation.

Safeguards and Confidentiality of Data

Participation in the focus group was voluntary for any student who expressed interest. All participants received, read, and signed a consent form prior to their participation. Focus group summaries were made available to any participant who wanted to review them. If identifying information was revealed in the focus group and recorded, the researcher disassociated that information after transcription. All data will

be kept in a locked drawer and accessible only to the researcher for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

In their 1991 synthesis on change and development in the college student, Pascarella and Terenzini concluded that indeed, the college years are a time of broad growth. Students were found to have experienced change in many aspects including their cognitive and intellectual skills, their values, attitudes, and both psychosocial and moral development. The students who participated in one of the three focus groups for this study discussed many things that affected their growth and development. The focal point of discussion were factors that influenced the development cultural adaptability, however many other factors were discussed that blend cultural adaptability together with the other aspects of development of the college student.

The focus groups were conducted in a private conference room in the new DiSepio Institute for Rural Health and Wellness, a room that is comfortable and conducive to conversation. Nineteen students total participated in three separate focus groups that were designed to accommodate students with varying levels of cultural adaptability. This level was determined from their previous performance as freshman on the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory. All of the students were of junior status, traditional students, and had lived in the residence halls for at least one semester. The groups all included both males and females, however there were only three males total in the study, one in each focus group. The participants ranged in major from health sciences (including Physician Assistant, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Nursing) to Education (both Elementary and Secondary), Psychology, Biology, Business, Communications, History/Political Science, and English Literature/Philosophy. All of the

participants were Caucasian, which will be named as a weakness to this study. The students were willing to share in the discussion, although some required more direct questions than others. Most of the students were generally positive in their interactions, however none seemed shy in relaying the challenges of our university in terms of making our campus more international in nature. At times the students needed redirected back to the conversation or question at hand, however for the most part they were able to stay on task. The focus groups each lasted between one and one and a half hour.

This chapter describes the analysis of several components of this research study. First, descriptive statistics were utilized to establish the level of cultural adaptability as the participants entered Saint Francis University as freshmen compared to now, in their junior year. In 2007 this cohort of students completed the CCAI when entering as first-year students to the university. These scores were then compared to the follow up score on the CCAI completed at the conclusion of the focus group. Because of the limited number of participants, no inferential statistical measures were conducted. However, the quantitative measurement of cultural adaptability helps to triangulate the data to supplement the qualitative nature of this research.

Additionally, the use of a qualitative data analysis software program called hyperRESEARCH (2009) was utilized to code and analyze the transcripts from each of the focus groups conducted for this study. This software allowed for codes to be established and text to be categorized into these codes. Each focus group was analyzed separately, and there is a section in this chapter for each individual focus group. In addition, the focus groups were analyzed as a whole by the researcher to determine underlying themes that emerged from the dialogue. The results that emerged in the

context of Astin's I-E-O theory will be discussed within the analysis of each individual focus group, and independent themes that emerged will be clustered at the end of the chapter in the section entitled *Emerging Themes*.

Each focus group was structured based upon the focus group questions and Astin's I-E-O Model. Therefore, each focus group in this chapter will be described by the students' Input factors (I), the Environment, Experience and Involvement Factors (E), and finally the Outcome or Expectation factors (O). Instead of labeling each phase of this development as I, E, or an O, they are labeled using the language of today's college student as a series of status updates and text messages. The story of this research study thus unfolds like the journal of a student who began a process of development beginning the day he or she checked into the university.

Although my approved interview questions asked generally about input, environment, and outcome factors, the students' responses were able to be categorized into additional themes. These additional themes included the input factors of family, values and academic experiences prior to their college experience. The environment themes identified included the people, tasks, activities, and environment that influenced the development of cultural adaptability. Finally, the output (outcomes) factors include those things such as knowledge, skills, or attitudes changed or acquired, expectations of what skills are needed to be culturally adaptive, and finally changes in beliefs or values that the students expect to experience as they move (what they described as) on a continuum toward cultural adaptability in the remainder of their college experience and into the workforce.

*Descriptive Analysis of the
Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory Results*

As mentioned previously, the participants in this study completed the CCAI in the fall of 2007 as incoming freshmen. The pre- and post-test scores are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory Results

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-CCAI	19	234	15.96
Post-CCAI	19	236	17.19

Table 2 represents further breakdown of scores by subscale of the CCAI.

Table 2

Subscale Scores of the Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory Results

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test Emotional Resilience	81	8.75
Post-test Emotional Resilience	83	5.88
Pre-test Personal Autonomy	34	3.00
Post-test Personal Autonomy	34	7.58
Pre-test Perceptual Acuity	48	4.09
Post-test Perceptual Acuity	47	4.25
Pre-test Flexibility/Openness	69	5.43
Post-test Flexibility/Openness	70	8.14

Because of the limited number of participants, it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions from this data. As indicated, there is little measureable difference in pre- and post-test scores on the CCAI. It appears that a small increase in raw overall scores occurred as demonstrated by the mean, however as the standard deviation indicates the scores were somewhat volatile. When analyzed individually, there was one particular student whose raw CCAI sum score dropped 51 points from pre-test to post-test. His scores on the 4 subscales dropped by 18 points on the Emotional Resilience subscale, 3 points on the Personal Autonomy subscale, 9 points on the Perceptual Acuity subscale, and 19 on the Flexibility/Openness subscale. When reviewing my notes and demographic information, I was able to determine this particular student had studied abroad the summer after high school. So, perhaps his pre-test raw scores were so much higher because he had just returned from spending several months traveling abroad. Those scores then perhaps leveled out and dropped after the student returned to an environment that required less skill in cultural adaptability.

I had anticipated perhaps lower than average pre-test scores because of testing conditions at freshman check-in. At that point in time the students could have felt pressure to complete the CCAI in anticipation of and completing the check-in process. I did not anticipate a drop in post-test scores such as the one described above. In addition, only 42% of the students had an increase in pre- and post-test scores on the Personal Autonomy subscale and the same amount (42%) demonstrated gains on the Perceptual Acuity subscale.

On a more positive note, the majority of the students did in fact experience quantitative gains in cultural adaptability overall. Sixty-eight percent (13 of 19

participants) had an increase in their overall score. Fifty-seven percent demonstrated gains on both the Emotional Resilience subscale and Flexibility/Openness subscales. It should be noted that the authors of the CCAI noted that for this age group (18-22) the largest gains are typically seen in the subscale of Flexibility/Openness, so those results were consistent.

Another observation at the individual level is that there were three students who studied abroad while students at Saint Francis, with those experiences occurring within the past year. All three of those students experienced a rise in overall sum score on the CCAI, with improvements ranging from 3 points to 25 points.

As mentioned previously, because of the limited number of participants it is difficult to draw solid conclusions from these data. However, it could be suggested that the majority of students did in fact increase their skills in cultural adaptability overall and that perhaps participation in study abroad while a college student did have a positive impact on scores. The primary purpose of the inventory, however, served as a sorting mechanism for the organization of the focus groups.

Focus Group One

hyperRESEARCH Analysis

The transcript from the first focus group was coded into the categories of input, environment/experiences, and outcomes/output factors developed by Astin (1991). After coding was completed, a frequency report was generated by the software program to identify which themes were discussed most frequently in this focus group.

Based upon the analysis of hyperRESEARCH (2009), the most prevalent theme for this focus group was *People*. During the focus group the students were animated and

excited to talk about the events they attended with others, the people they met and shared experiences with, and the activities on campus that had impacted them. Based upon my experience conducting the focus group, indeed, this was a relevant and significant part of the students' formation of ideas regarding development of cultural adaptability. A more in depth description of the "people" factor will be discussed later in this section.

However, the students also spent some time discussing the other factors from the theoretical model; the input factors as well as the outcomes and expectations they hold for the future.

Status Update: I Made It! Off to Unpack

The students gathered for the first focus group seemed anxious to share their story. When asked about their ideas of culture before coming to college, several students took turns talking about what they "brought with them," so to speak, in terms of relating to others different than they. One of the participants felt her view was unchanged, but others felt their views about culture had in fact been changed since being a college student. She stated:

I don't think my ideas of culture have really changed since high school. I've always thought it was tradition, background, ethnicity, religion, gender. It is traditions that you hold and what you hold sacred, how you act, part of who you are. This holds true for me today.

However, the other students offered these comments:

I believe it is what society around you enforces on you, how you adapt to social means, how you behave in a certain manner. I understand that better now.

I used to believe culture was pretty much where you grew up, your background. Now my psychology classes have made me realize its more society based.

In high school I thought it was more where you lived, and now that I've had more experience I realize it has more to do with society and religion, and traditions.

In high school I never really viewed culture as the entire world, but here it encompasses students globally, and not just locally.

Based upon the whole, it seems as if the students had learned about cultural principles in secondary education. They had some predisposed ideas of how to define culture in general terms, however it seems as if they now view culture more "outside" of their immediate surroundings of their hometown and are able to use it to describe the world around them.

Providing a passage to the most significant part of this focus group discussion, one of the students offered that interaction with the international students on campus was an "eye opener" to how culture is global, not only local. Taking the lead from this student and side-stepping my focus group questions for a moment, I asked the group about the impact of the international students on campus. One student mentioned interaction with a student from France, and how she enjoyed interacting with this student. The participant indicated that she had learned a great deal about the French culture and that by interacting with this, and other international students, they have "opened her eyes" to how their everyday life is different from ours. Another student indicated several

interactions with other international students and that their willingness to share their culture is helpful to the American students. Yet another added this:

Sometimes when you get the study abroad programs you get a more global perspective, but here we have more residential international students and we get to see the whole nationality and how it plays into their culture. They have completely different traditions, different values and different customs that are brought to our local culture.

In this first focus group, five of the six participants acknowledged that they had had a meaningful interaction with someone from a different culture since being a student on campus.

My Life on Campus

So while it is clear interaction with international students was mentioned as a significant experience by the participants, the group offered many other experiences from their first two years on campus as meaningful and significant in terms of better understanding cultural issues and learning to be more culturally adaptive.

Txt Sent: Hi! Gr8 day 2day. Tell u more l8tr. As the most frequently discussed factor for this focus group, nearly all the students mentioned a particular person on campus who most facilitated or influenced their understanding of cultural issues and had the most impact on their own personal beliefs. The majority of the people most frequently mentioned were faculty who teach primarily in the general education program. Some of the comments from the students regarding faculty include these:

I know my freshman year I had a colloquium with a certain faculty from Art. I never had an art or history relating to art. He taught me how to think outside the

box which I never really did before. It showed me a different point of view . . . how to look for things when I'm reading, how to see things different. When I wrote Writing for a Discipline papers, I could apply what I did with him. Even reading my psychology books I can read them and think about them in a different way.

Another student added:

I think when it comes to a situation where you're dealing with someone you haven't met or don't know about their culture, I think of my Philosophy teacher. He presents two ideas that you wouldn't normally think of, especially when it comes to the ethics and beliefs of someone else. If I had a problem understanding someone else's thinking or perspective, I would go to him. He allows you to see from another person's perspective by asking questions.

Yet another student added this comment, regarding the same Philosophy faculty:

In my Existentialism course we had a lot of discussions and hearing about what other people have to say about different topics and their opinions really opened my eyes to the fact that not everyone shares the same belief or opinion. It is neat to listen to everyone's perspective.

Although faculty play a large role in the students' experiences in understanding culture, it is not always the faculty who have the greatest impact. One of the participants offered this narrative about a classmate. The depth to which she felt this change was apparent in her voice as she relayed this story, her voice varied in pitch, she used her hands in a very animated way, and for a moment her eyes looked as if they were filled

with tears. I made a comment in my notes that this was indeed a significant, heartfelt experience for this particular student:

There was a kid in my Philosophy class from West Africa. Immediately, and not just in trying to get past his accent and language, but just listening to his personal struggles in terms of civil war, it just completely reinvented my opinion of him as a person. Not knowing that information before, I didn't know a part of him that was so deep and then afterwards I was able to have more empathy and understand who he was as a person and his culture. It's reoccurring, and in each class. It's not always about his experiences, but he brings different sides to the conversation because he is from a different country that we could not normally think of. We are always focused on what is happening in the United States.

This narrative emphasizes to a great degree the importance of the people factor. Her experience with this student was one that included repeated exposure with a high degree of quality. She heard his personal experiences with civil war and the impact this had on his life. She used key words that signify a learning experience such as so deep, more empathy and understanding.

In a relatively homogenous campus setting such as Saint Francis University, it was not necessarily surprising that a certain amount of growth and development took place when one participant lived with a homosexual roommate. He made this statement about his experience:

The second semester of my freshman year I actually had a gay roommate. Then I pledged with him. To interact with him and see him as just another person was interesting and important for me.

Perhaps the most profound part of the above statement is that the student does not only acknowledge the positive growth and interest he had in his roommate, but he recognized it as “important.” Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) conducted a survey of 692 heterosexual students at small, liberal arts colleges. They found that positive personal contacts with gay, lesbian, and bisexual friends were more associated with positive attitudes toward these populations even when other variables were considered.

The Office of Student Life and the Office of Residence Life deserve credit for creating many of the significant experiences the students’ discussed throughout all focus groups. This particular focus group discussed the role of being a Resident Assistant (RA), and this theme will replay over and over as analysis of the focus groups continues through this chapter.

I’m actually a Resident Assistant and seeing every year how a floor is able to bond with each other, even though they come from different places comes to mind. We’ve had some international students on my floor, or people from small towns or big cities, liberals or conservative. All of them have to live together and be cohesive. I think that is really interesting to see. There are some people that don’t connect with the rest of the floor, but the majority do connect. Last year there was more disconnect, but I think it was because there were more juniors mixed with freshmen. I think the large age difference was the difference. The juniors already had their friends, whereas the freshmen were still trying to make friends. This year my floor is united and getting along.

This account demonstrates the significance of a shared experience with people as important in the lives of students as they grow and develop. It is also supported by strong

evidence as outlined by Astin (1993a). Students who are given the opportunity to socialize with others of a differing culture display increased knowledge and acceptance of others.

Status update: This assignment is a killer! For the purposes of this research study, the term task is used to describe an activity that requires some level of engagement by the student. This excludes such role-based experiences in general such as being an RA or participating in Greek life. A task would be an activity that requires anything from a simple verbal exchange to a service learning project completed with another student, to study abroad. It does not include activities that do not require engagement with others as part of the activity, such as reading a book, listening to a speaker, or watching a movie as a few examples. The importance of engagement was offered by several students.

I think that listening about something and not experiencing something can only go so far. You can hear about different cultures but until you experience it you don't really know what it's about. Being immersed into a culture is the best way to learn about it versus just having a speaker.

Supported by the literature review for this research, study abroad was mentioned in this focus group (as well as the other two groups) as having a significant impact on the student in terms of the development of cultural adaptability. Since beginning this study, interest in study abroad has increased significantly at Saint Francis University. The numbers give an excellent picture of where the study abroad programs have been in the past few years, and where they are quickly headed. In 2004, there was only one option for study abroad, which was a trip to Mexico. Thirty students participated in 2005 in this program, or approximately 2% of the undergraduate student population. In the academic

year 2007-2008, 138 students participated in programs in 10 different countries, or 9% of the undergraduate student population. In 2008-2009, 156 students registered to participate in programs located in 12 countries. So far this academic year, 169 are registered to participate so far and with this pace over 11% of the student population will study abroad in the academic year 2009-2010 (Center for International Outreach and Education, 2009). The jump in participation is astonishing in such a short amount of time, and can be contributed to more solid recruitment processes starting before freshmen even arrive on campus. The culture is not “if” one will participate in study abroad programs but rather “when” they would prefer to study abroad.

I do believe that study abroad is the best. Putting yourself in another culture where every day you see it, knowing what it’s like, you grasp it so much easier.

Watching a movie or reading a textbook just isn’t the same.

Another student added this comment regarding study abroad:

I did the study abroad program, and just going to another country and seeing how they live was amazing. Americans live so fast paced, we have a Walmart at every corner. People in other countries buy all their groceries in one day, but they have to go to three different stores to get what they need. They get all of their things fresh. They act so differently towards each other. They are so personable. They come up to you and talk, everyone was nice. Here, we have a bubble around us, like “don’t get in my personal space.” Culturally, seeing that you realize how different we are compared to everyone else.

The participants in the research study identified other tasks or activities as well that had a positive impact on the development of their cultural adaptability. These

included things such as attending a leadership conference, an off-campus job setting, or participation in a service learning project.

At the leadership conference through SGA there was a session that focused on diversity and how to accept diversity whether it's race, or ethnicity or whatever and deal with it in the workplace. It opened my mind to how we should look at other people and how we should treat them, where they are from and whether or not we should judge them based on that.

I work in a local mall at home and I interact with many international people. They are from Canada, Japan, places all over. I never realized what they bring from their own perspective cultures. I think in some ways I was more sheltered in high school and didn't know what cultural diversity was. Now coming here and being exposed to more diverse of a culture I have more open mind about it all.

Think?! You want me to think?! The students discussed other activities that affected development of cultural adaptability, however these did not necessarily require active engagement by the student other than listening or taking notes. They mentioned several courses such as Spanish for the Medical Professions, Intermediate French, and Sign Language where there was a significant amount of learning about the Spanish, French and deaf culture in addition to the language component. Watching the play "Metamorphosis" was mentioned as being an effective experience for one student, and yet another student mentioned the course on Contemporary Islam, where the student had to read several books and watched several movies that had an impact on her.

I asked the students to generalize the experiences they had while being a student at Saint Francis, and describe the characteristics of the activities that had the most impact on them. This student offered this description, and all of the other students agreed this was the most effective way for them to learn to be more culturally adaptive so far in their college experience.

I think it is definitely a personal relation to what you are talking about. To be honest, people aren't going to listen to anything they can read in a book. They want to hear something that brings their attention to "you," something they haven't seen or heard before that brings you closer to them. People want to know one another, they want to find out information. It's not like twenty questions, but people are curious. If it's personal it shows trust in each other.

One other student offered that more engagement with international students would be beneficial. She added that doing some kind of hands-on activity with them in class, or even playing a game together was helpful for her, and she felt would be a very effective activity for all students.

In general, focus group one spent the majority of the focus group discussing various experiences they had, most of which were on-campus and required a degree of engagement. The characteristics of several of those activities included thinking about things in a different way, interacting, or participating in discussion with someone with different views and then being required to listen to the perspective of the other. In the case of study abroad or living in the residence hall, being immersed in a culture is certainly an effective means to learn about it. I had never thought of living in the

residence hall or being an RA as a “mini” version of study abroad, however based upon this focus group as well as the other focus groups this was certainly significant.

Txt Sent: Meet me @ Gubbio after class. The students were asked to discuss relevant places on campus where they might feel more comfortable talking with or learning about other students. The purpose of asking this question was to determine if the classroom would be a preferred space, or another place on campus. In addition, the university has plans to renovate and/or build a new student union center, and I felt it was important to ask the students about preferred space. This group felt that any space that was open, informal, and not “busy” is the most comfortable. They mentioned Café Gubbio, our new coffeehouse, the current student union lounge, or possibly Torvian, our dining hall.

Global Citizen? Can I Get Back to You on That

The participants were asked what it means to be “culturally adaptive.” I asked them to picture the end of their college experience, and to tell me what that would look like in terms of their ability to live and work in a global society. I wanted them to define cultural adaptability in a way that would tell me the expected skills and abilities they would need to have to be successful. The participants described many characteristics which included things such as:

You can adapt or change to understand people’s beliefs. Instead of working with someone from a different part of the U.S., you work with someone from a different country. They speak differently, they do their everyday things differently, so how you adapt to that and respect their different ways of working and respect that makes you culturally adaptive.

I think that it is also part of society here in the United States as well.

Other people here try to push their beliefs and their culture on you, so you have to be adaptable to think about whether it's right or wrong for you personally and adjust to that.

I think that as a whole, Americans aren't really adaptable as other people. I think people come here and they can adapt rather well, they know English. But we don't make an effort to learn any other languages. I think I only had maybe 3 years of Spanish, but people in other countries spend their entire time in school learning another language.

I think not only just to respect and accept the other customs, but make an effort to know and learn about what they believe.

Certainly the theme to these responses is adaptation. The students described a process whereby one is required to take into account or learn about language or value differences, understand those differences, adjust and then react in a way that is supportive and functional. Their definition closely mirrors the definition of cultural adaptability used for this study, which tends to indicate a more long term process than adjustment and not only involves psychological well-being, but also cognitive changes, social changes, and attitudinal changes.

Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

After the focus group questions were completed, the participants were given a handout with a visual representation of Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. I asked the students to place themselves along the continuum, think about why they placed themselves at that particular point, and to talk about it with me. Up to this point, I felt the

students might place themselves between the middle and the higher end of the continuum for several reasons. The movement of the discussion seems to lean toward the students feeling “pretty good” about their level of cultural adaptability. The discussion was mostly positive in nature, and none of them had difficulty identifying learning experiences that had made an impact on them. Once our discussion took place, it was clear that the participants recognized and felt that they have much to learn.

They did place themselves all in the middle of the continuum, placed between ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism. Upon review of their comments regarding this continuum, it seems they were somewhat on target with this assessment, however as long as they were oriented to think more about themselves and their own needs Bennett’s (1993) model would place them between the lower and middle ends of the spectrum, toward ethnocentrism. The participants reflected more “knowledge seeking” behaviors, and they reported it is still “weird” sometimes to see cultural differences. As a whole, the participants are open to learning more about others. However, it was also interesting to hear from the following student that there was still an expectation that this international student should work more toward “integrating himself” which is more of an ethnocentric expectation.

I would say I am in the middle. I am somewhat more concerned about myself, but I do want to know about other people, their opinions, and what they think. Doing that helps you learn. Like that student from West Africa, I don’t feel any difference with him at all. I feel more accepting and interested, actually it makes me even more interested and more excited to learn more. There is an international student in my dorm. He never holds the door for anyone behind

him, he just lets it close. And I was really frustrated with that. I told my friend that I was frustrated because of that, and my friend reminded me that maybe it is a cultural difference. I sat down and thought about that, and I can't feel bad or angry with him, but maybe he doesn't know that people here get frustrated with that. That means I still have to learn more. But I also think he hasn't integrated himself fully yet either, and we should be patient with that.

[On the continuum I am] in the middle, I am definitely not fully integrated. I feel I have not been fully accepting of others' differences and I think it's just going to take me some time to open up to that part.

I would also say [on the continuum] I'm in the middle. I can accept the differences, but at the same time it's weird for me to see those differences.

In conclusion, when asked about their levels of confidence all of the participants in this focus group stated they were fairly confident that they would be able to live and work in a global society after graduation. Although they feel they have made significant progress since freshman year, they do recognize their final two years of college will bring them additional experience during internships, clinical rotations, and student teaching and they were open to what the next two years would bring.

Focus Group Two

The second focus group varied from the others because it was smaller in nature with only three participants. This allowed me to give more time for responses and the students offered more individually than the other two groups, which was a benefit to the study. This focus group talked a lot about opportunity, quality experiences, and recurring themes from the previous focus group such as being an RA and university courses that

had an impact on the development of their cultural adaptability. A new theme prevalent in this focus group was the impact of coming from a high school or area that was not especially diverse in terms of race or religion, and this theme will recur with the third focus group as well. This group also opened the discussion on the personal factors that have an effect on the development of cultural adaptability, which was a significant contribution overall to this study.

hyperRESEARCH Analysis

As conducted before, this focus group was also transcribed and coded and then exported into the hyperRESEARCH (2009) program for analysis. A frequency report was again generated, and it was determined that the most commonly occurring theme was regarding the expected outcomes and expectations of their development and their future regarding cultural adaptability. They mentioned many examples of what they envision for the future, and discussed how they would like to develop more cultural adaptability in their remaining two years of college.

Status Update: I Made It! Off to Unpack

The participants offered many relevant experiences from high school that painted a clear picture of what that first day at freshman orientation would have been like for them. I could visualize the students looking around at the others and immediately recognizing that indeed, I am “only one of many.” One student offered these comments regarding his appreciation for different “appearances.”

I went to a small high school where we graduated with only 68 people, so I think I have changed some. I went to a Catholic high school and we all wore uniforms.

Everyone was always dressed the same, and you don't want to judge people based on what they are wearing, but you come here and they might be a little weird to you, but if you get to know them, they can turn out to be nice. Someone could be just in jeans and a t-shirt, or in something different oddly or different, and be the nicest person you meet on campus. Someone else could be dressed up in a suit and be a real jerk. So learning to get to know people of different backgrounds and not necessarily judging people on what they look like, I feel like I've gotten better at that.

This particular student referenced the same lack of diversity, however she was insightful and acknowledged from the beginning of the focus group that she had a lot to learn.

I think that I have changed since high school. I came from a really big high school, over a class of 500. I can still count the number of African American students on one hand. It was not very diverse at all. I always thought I had accepting attitudes towards other cultures, but I feel like you can never truly accept it until you've traveled abroad or fully interacting or living with a host family. Even though I don't have any prejudices in my opinion, I could be better.

She added, "I think also people who come here from bigger cities are more accepting because they have been around more diverse people." The other student in the focus group had a different experience than the other two. He had in fact traveled abroad extensively the summer prior to starting at Saint Francis. It seems that this experience could have given him a "jump start" to developing the skills that will benefit him into college and beyond.

The summer after HS I did a lot of traveling in Europe and grew a lot from that. I stayed with host families and had to embed myself. I think because of that I have become more accepting of other people. I mean, in high school we were mostly white, middle and upper class individuals. You think you have a worldly view, you can be more accepting, but until you get thrown into a culture where people are the opposite of you, it's almost trial by fire. You learn what it is to be a minority because you are this ugly American, so you have to learn quickly.

My Life on Campus

All three of the participants acknowledged they had some type of meaningful interaction with someone of a different culture (however broadly they defined culture) since being a student at Saint Francis. Including those significant experiences, they mentioned numerous people on campus who had an impact on them in terms of understanding and modeling cultural adaptability.

Txt sent: Hi! Gr8 day 2day. Tell u more l8tr. Many of the same themes were discussed in this focus group as in the first regarding the people who influenced the students and their development. The experience of being an RA was discussed once again. One particular student offered these comments regarding his observations:

I was an RA for most of my sophomore year. I had kids from all over the place, NYC, kids from extremely rural areas. A kid was from Germany and lived with a girl from the inner city, this gave me an opportunity to see people interact with others from other places. Also, pledging a fraternity I got to become close with people from very different backgrounds. One of my best friends is from Philadelphia. A lot of the things from Philly he brings here with him and I'm

from such a rural area, so yes. I do feel like I've had the chance to interact with people who are different and have different lifestyles.

Another participant, also an RA, offered this story as a "WOW" moment for him:

When I was an RA last year, one of my residents came to talk to me. He was an African American, and he was only 18, and he told me about his daughter. It was a Wow moment for me. He still loves his daughter, but doesn't necessarily love the mother of the little girl, and he was still doing his sports and everything while caring for his daughter. It was a Wow moment for me, I mean I am kind of conservative but also he is a really nice guy, and I didn't know any of this about him. It was just kind of a Wow moment.

As in the first focus group, one of the male participants also lived with a homosexual roommate, emphasizing the significance of this experience but also to the importance of Residence Life in the development of the student.

I think that main thing that comes to mind is having a homosexual roommate. I don't want to say that I looked down upon it, but I don't necessarily agree with it and it is totally different from my lifestyle. Just talking with him, it was awkward at first, but now we're pretty good friends. We put aside our differences. He had problems with some people who he had come out to before so I understand how it was hard for him.

Further, the role of Student Life was also discussed, as the students talked extensively about freshman orientation. The freshman orientation program at Saint Francis University (SFU) occurs over four days, usually Thursday (move-in day) through Sunday. According to the Student Life office, Orientation is a "cram-course" for the

freshmen that includes days full of activities to teach the students about SFU, resources on campus, and “forced bonding” with one another with an overall emphasis on meeting new people and becoming accustomed to the campus. The Office of Student Life emphasizes making connections as an important part of these few days, as that has been shown to significantly contribute to retention of students. It is also important for the students to meet and talk with their respective academic departments and connect once again with their academic advisor. Considering the participants are now two years removed from Orientation, I think it is significant that they remember the impact of this experience now as juniors.

Freshmen orientation really does stick out. There are people in opposite majors that I would have never met that I still hang out with three years later. That was forced bonding, but good.

I agree with the things that he said. I’ve been involved with orientation for two years and it forces you to interact with people from small towns, big towns, or different countries. You learn what’s important to them, why they came here.

Freshmen orientation for sure (is significant). It gives you the opportunity, you might not find the most fun, but if nothing else the students get to know each other.

An interesting factor discussed in this focus group was regarding the general education classes at SFU. Whereas the first focus group identified specific faculty and courses that impacted them; this focus group spent more time discussing the “forced” aspect of these courses. For example, the students discussed the importance of having to

take general education courses with everyone; you do not get to choose who is in your class, and it is a mix of all majors.

In stuff like lab groups or group projects in a class, a lot of times when you're an underclassman you don't really know even half the people in your classes. It's like "forced bonding" but a lot of times you meet a lot of nice, smart people and sometimes you can pull friends or acquaintances out of it.

Based upon this student's comment, I asked the participants if being placed randomly in group projects is effective in getting to know other people, and the unanimous answer from all students was a resounding "YES!" They relayed that having to choose partners for projects is difficult if they do not know anyone, and they would likely gravitate toward a person you thought was more like you. The students shared as a group how effective it is to be placed with someone you do not know at all. Being forced into a group takes away the pressure of choosing, but also forces you to interact with someone you may never choose from a group. One student shared the experience of working in a group with unfamiliar people:

In my "Introduction to Medicine" course we had to be in a small group and we had to write a SOAP note. Now, we did get to form our own groups, but we didn't know one another at all. We had to form a team and complete a task. We were all working three or four days to figure out what was wrong with the patient. It was a very good team-building experience. I took it when I was a sophomore.

I think it also has to be a quality experience. I think if you do something memorable together, with someone else, if you really like the event, then you'll like the person you did it with. You'll want to get to know them more. Even if

you do something you don't necessarily like, like community service, you'll say hey, we did it together. A shared memory, if that makes sense.

This comment speaks to the quality of the experience, say, as opposed to simply being exposed over and over to a person or cultural concept.

Status update: This assignment is killer! The students discussed other activities that were effective tools in their development as well, many of which also required active engagement on the part of the student. Pledging a fraternity or sorority was mentioned, as well as other classroom activities.

I don't know if this is relevant, but in my Writing for a Discipline I had to interview a teacher and it was awkward. The first few weeks of class I didn't know anyone, and then I had to ask if I could interview someone. You don't know what to expect and you're scared of your professors. So, I think that helped me be more confident and less awkward to just go up and ask someone a question or approach a faculty member, someone you don't normally talk to.

Another offered this discussion-based activity from another course:

I had a Philosophy class where the professor would ask a question, and people would give answers and you would see a broad gamete of answers. Some people were of Christian faiths, others not. Sometimes the people of Christian faith answered similarly to each other, sometimes they were totally polar opposites. Sometimes someone of a different faith had an answer the same as someone of the Christian faith and people were surprised at that.

In this case, the student learned from conflict, which is another emergent theme that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Think?! You want me to think?! This group of participants mentioned several other types of activities either academic in nature or sponsored by the university that was a learning experience for them that did not require more active engagement. Community Enrichment Series events, or CES, was mentioned by two of the three students as a relevant and useful learning tool. All students at SFU are required to attend 12 events, usually completed in the freshman year, and usually split 6 and 6 over two semesters. These events meet certain general education objectives and might be a lecture, a movie, a speaker, an art exhibit, and so on.

Other courses mentioned included Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Biology as a courses that taught about illnesses from around the world, contributing to the students' greater knowledge of more global issues.

Txt sent: Meet me @ Gubbio after class. As the focus group went on, we discussed important places on campus that the students felt comfortable relating to others as described in the first focus group analysis. The students mentioned several of the places as the previous group including the current student lounge, Frankie's (a small dining area), or Café Gubbio. The Mall area was mentioned as (in nice weather) is a good place to walk, around, sit on a curb and just talk; it could be a serious discussion or just "getting to know someone." One student offered this useful suggestion for the campus:

I wish we had a better student union center. JFK is nice and all, but it's almost too open. What comes to mind is Penn State's Hub. It's much larger, but it almost seems like the space is sectioned off into much smaller areas where even if you're just sitting there studying by yourself you're in close quarters with other

people. I spent a lot of time there last year, in the Hub particularly. You would interact with people just because of the way it was set up. They just use the space in a more intuitive way for conversation.

It is hoped that the administration will take into account the student's space considerations as they seek to expand the campus, so that the students will have every opportunity to engage with one another.

Global Citizen? Can I Get Back to You on That

Once again, the participants were asked about their expectations. What are the characteristics of someone who is culturally adaptive? Where do the students place themselves on the continuum of intercultural sensitivity? The students used various descriptors to talk about the characteristics of people they view to be culturally adaptive.

This is an exchange among three students:

Cultural adaptability sounds like it would be adapting to my surroundings, the culture I am living in, perhaps after I leave a small campus like SFU, it is adapting to living in a large city. How well do I mesh with my surroundings? How well do I adapt to the people I have to coexist with?

Adding to that, taking away any preexisting bias or thoughts about that culture and not necessarily assimilating yourself into it, but rather being able to be accepting of the differences.

I agree with that. Also, being who you are and having the flexibility to live, exist and just do your own thing in another culture, and be able to interact with others. I would say that a lot of the students who have traveled abroad emulate this, or student leaders like SGA [Student Government Association]

president because they are used to relating to different types of people and people who have come from different backgrounds.

The students mentioned other figures they felt demonstrated characteristics of cultural adaptability. Just as the president of SGA was named, so was the President of the university, a particular Admissions representative and figures from Campus Ministry. What was interesting about the specific people mentioned is that the students did not indicate they spent time with these individuals to make that determination; it was perhaps made based upon their position or title only. The students mentioned how being culturally adaptive was likely a large part of the individuals' job description; having to interact daily with different types of people and work toward solutions for given circumstances.

The students continued to elaborate on the qualities needed to develop the skills necessary to adapt and be successful in a global society. This comment was insightful and well received by the others in the group:

To be honest I don't know. The biggest thing popping out in my mind is that there is only so much that money can buy in terms of books, speakers, or lounge areas. A lot of it comes down to students and their own willingness to get out there and meet different people. There is a lot of people set in their ways and have their group of friends. They might meet a few new people every school year but other than that you can't force someone to open themselves up, which may or may not hurt them later on in being able to adapt to a new culture or whatever.

Another responded with this comment:

I think of commuter students. I don't want to say they're bad at being involved. But they have their school work and other than that a lot of times they come to school and go back home. I am a commuter now, but I spend a lot of time with my brothers or in JFK with friends, or doing homework. I'm not going back to my house and hiding out there by myself. There's not a lot you can do to change the attitude of someone, you might be able to bring some things to campus to lure them in, but there's only so much you can do without the person being willing.

These comments speak to the individual responsibility of the student to open up and be willing to meet and get to know other students outside of their familiar "space," a concept that was first mentioned by this focus group, but continues as a theme into the third and final group.

In terms of confidence, two of the three participants mentioned they are "fairly confident" about heading into a global workforce, whereas the other student said she did not feel confident. The two males who said they were "fairly confident" added that the lack of diversity on campus has prevented their development in a certain capacity, however they both relayed successful experiences and interactions during their time on campus that made them feel as if they were on their way to being more culturally adaptive. It was the lone female in the group who relayed that she did not feel confident. Her honest reflection and self-assessment were appreciated, and the development she sees for herself in the future was recognized.

I don't really feel that confident right now. I do hope and foresee myself being more comfortable in two or three years. Just because right now I still haven't

gotten into my major, I don't have a car on campus so I don't go many places, I just foresee a lot of improvement in the future.

Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

Finally, after the focus group questions had all been asked, the group was given the visual handout of Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. I reviewed the Model with them and asked them to look at it, think about it for a moment, and then place themselves somewhere on the continuum. The students all placed themselves "somewhere in the middle," making comments such as:

I would probably say I'm somewhere in the middle. I can't say I'm oblivious to other cultures. I would still stop and look at someone walking by in a traditional African dress. I would definitely turn and look.

In response, another student added:

I would say somewhere in the middle as well. I feel like nobody's going to ever just be oblivious to things. I mean, if I saw someone in an African dress, it's something different than I am used to seeing and I would look. I believe no one is ever fully integrated, to me it's more of not letting something get in the way of getting to know a person.

I'd say I'm also in the middle. I think being on our college campus secludes us, once we're in the real world we'll see different ages, different types, not the same people we see every day. Once you're not on our college campus you could move more toward ethnorelativism.

Bennett (1993b) would argue that full integration is possible, that someone who has reached a level of ethnorelativism would not turn or even take notice of someone in a

traditional African dress, at least in the sense that it is “different.” This would indicate that the students may lack some insight into the possibilities of being culturally adaptive at an advanced level. At the same time, some of the participants did recognize the limitations of a small, rural campus with limited diversity and are looking forward to cultural development beyond the walls of Saint Francis University. The second focus group offered some of the same experiences as the first, but also offered new ideas or themes. Thus far it is clear that the first two years of college including Freshman Orientation, general education courses, and life in the residence halls play a significant role in the development of the student in terms of their ability to interact, engage, understand, and learn about people of different cultures.

Focus Group Three

Before this focus group even began, I knew it would be an adventure. Ten students had signed up for this session, so I knew that using my interviewing and mediation skills well would be of the utmost importance if we were going to keep our focus group under two hours. The participants all arrived and took a seat, and already there was a lot of chatter. Most of the participants knew one another. It turns out that most of them had a mutual exam the day before, so each had signed up for this session because it was after their exam was complete. They seemed anxious to get started and seemed more at ease than the other groups.

The focus group was exactly how I had anticipated it would be. One student in particular had a tendency to get way off topic, and it took a lot of work to redirect her back into our target conversation. The students also got caught up in a lot of conversation about food and language; discussing at length the use of the word “yinz” the

difference between “sweeper” and “vacuum” and whether “pigs in the blanket” were actually stuffed cabbage or small hot dogs wrapped in crescent rolls. Truth be told, I was exhausted with this focus group concluded. However, this group was special indeed. Aside from the talk about hot dogs and “Pittsburgh-ese” I found them to be extremely bright, very knowledgeable, and willing to communicate honestly with me about their experiences at Saint Francis. One student in particular was willing to go against the grain somewhat to challenge the others; she recognized that the discussion was mostly very positive, and she felt it was important to mention some of the weaknesses of SFU as well. I made it a point to be sure her voice was heard, even if it meant directing a question right to her.

In addition, during focus groups one and two I felt it was more “all eyes on me.” I felt those students looked more to me for direction and guidance and to move the conversation along. With this focus group I was much more of a facilitator, whereas the participants did most of the talking and I would merely change the question from time to time. It was clear that some of the narratives from the students are more directed toward one another in a conversation, instead of simply answering my question.

hyperRESEARCH Analysis

As in the case of the other focus groups, I transcribed this focus group and exported the text to hyperRESEARCH (2009). The most frequently occurring theme for this group was experiences related to several factors. These included background, or input factors; those things such as cultural experiences from high school or religion. Also mentioned significantly were the outcomes and expectations of these participants. They elaborated to a significant extent about their confidence, their progress, and what they

would like to see down the road. They also discussed many faces of people on campus that had a tremendous impact on the development of their cultural adaptability. The students mentioned many different examples of discussions from class and how these led to a much greater appreciation for different cultural issues, but also different opinions and points of view. The emergent theme for this focus group, however, was conflict. On multiple occasions the participants discussed classroom activities that challenged what they “knew” to be true because of their religious or political orientation. This theme came up over and over again as there was some conflict within the group, but also in regard to the type of activities that were the most effective in teaching the students about cultural differences.

Status Update: I Made It! Off to Unpack

As previously mentioned in the second focus group, this group also had a great deal of past experience in Catholic high schools. They all seemed to nod in agreement with each other, recognizing that each of their experience with cultural diversity was somewhat limited upon college entry. Most felt their idea of how to define culture had not really changed that much since high school, it merely broadened or expanded. They acknowledged they had in fact had significant experiences related to culture since coming to campus. The exchange between several of the students below describes this:

I went to a Catholic high school, so I really didn't think it would be that big of a change coming here. I only had 14 in my class and not very diverse, so coming here I think just seeing how big a role culture plays region to region is big. There are a lot of things just here in Loretto, that aren't the same as where I'm from.

I also came from a small Catholic high school with only 48 other people, but I was from a city. Coming from a place where everybody knew everyone else, we knew each other from the time we were born. We were not very diverse at all. It was hard to come here with people from all over the country and world, it was very different.

I went to a public high school and in tenth grade we had to take a cultures class. My idea from that point to here hasn't really changed.

I also came from a public high school from a small, very conservative area. So, here you get some of the diversity and differences, but some of the same beliefs. So my idea didn't change being here, but it broadened.

I'm from a small town but I'm not too far from the International City, they have a mixture of all kinds of countries, an international festival where all different cultures cook their favorite dishes and everyone gets to go. Coming here was a little different! I did notice the language differences. Also, the small town thing, it's pretty small here. My high school had over 1,000 students so it was smaller than this school but I think that SFU does do a pretty good job of getting people to know different cultures.

My Life on Campus

The participants discussing their experiences in and out of the classroom was the most animated part of the focus group. All were more than willing to open up and talk about faculty, their experience as an RA (a recurring theme) and assignments that made them examine their own skills in cultural adaptability.

Txt sent: Hi! Gr8 day 2day. Tell u more l8tr. When I asked the participants to reflect upon those people who affected them the most, several students did not mention one specific person. They had more general statements about differences they had experienced among themselves and other students. One student offered this with enthusiasm:

I enjoy the interactions I've had and the chances to learn new things. I like being able to understand someone when they are coming from a different area, city or country. I like to understand their background. I think I've been able to talk with many people with different lifestyles or backgrounds. It helps me understand someone I will meet in the workforce later on and help me adapt to any changes that do come. I have tried to make the most of my opportunities here. It's easy in your dorms, or in Torvian to sit with people you don't know. I like to talk to different people and take advantage. I mean, we're all in college, you have to take advantage! It can't be that weird! I wouldn't do that in McDonald's. But you can here.

Another student chimed in:

I found that one of the viewpoint differences here primarily was in political differences. I lived in St. Francis Hall which was very faith based, and more conservative. I'm just more liberal, and more democratic. Some were really gung ho and it was really scary and kind of intimidating and it was kind of a shock (others agreed in background).

Going off of what that student said, not just the politics part, but the religious part. Not all of us are Catholic, I mean I am, but not all of us are that

live there. But bonding with the girls there are going on the full campus retreat and spending the whole weekend together was incredible. We grew in our faith together, even though it's not the same faith, it's good to grow and throw away every different view that we had.

Most other students had valuable classroom experiences to share, including this narrative from one student:

I've had quite a few classes that are discussion based. Not with necessarily people from different countries or regions, but you find out how very different your views can be on certain things. Right now I'm in Moral Philosophy and we really get into some interesting discussions. I know what I believe or what I feel is right, but looking at it from someone else's viewpoint that I might have just written off, I find it very interesting to hear their opinion. In that class we also have to say "Why" we feel that way. So, as a class discussion, it has been helpful to find out and talk about other people's views.

As in the case of others, the sharing of personal experiences seem to have a positive effect on student's learning more about different cultures and differences:

What comes to mind for me because I'm in it is [the course] Personality. One of the things we talk about is socialization and family and how experiences form your personality. Today was a big discussion about our different family stories and how they have shaped us. You hear your fellow classmates share and you think "Wow, that's really cool." And it's fun to hear the faculty's stories too (all the students are laughing).

Another added:

My Philosophy professor totally gets you to believe one side, and then he teaches the exact opposite side. He's doesn't really teach culture, but he could. He would be a good professor to teach us about culture one way, but then make you think about it differently. You never know which side he is on, that's how he taught our Philosophy class.

I had a different faculty, and he loved to play devil's advocate. He loved to get both sides going.

I have the same faculty right now for Death and Dying. I wasn't sure what to expect. We're just getting to the point where we are looking at how different cultures and religions look at death. Okay this is what Buddhists think, then what Christians think.

As mentioned before, there were also several students in this focus group who were either currently an RA or had been (in their sophomore year). One participant commented on the effect of being an RA, and the others agreed wholeheartedly with her comment.

Being an RA really opens your eye, just the fact that you are living with different people. You really do see where they are coming from and what that is like. That has been the biggest eye opener for me. A floor of freshman girls can bring a lot! (everyone laughed and agreed).

As in previous groups, off-campus employment can have a solid influence on the development of cultural adaptability. This student had a job during breaks at home as a rehabilitation technician. The job of a rehabilitation technician is to transport patients

and help generally around a rehabilitation clinic, often in the company of physical, occupational, and speech therapists. She said this about her experience there:

Back home, I work as a rehab tech in a hospital. It is in International City where there are people from all over the world. I got to go around the hospital and shadow different therapists and witness everything. I got very comfortable talking to patients from different cultures, understand where they came from. I volunteered in my town outpatient clinic in high school, but didn't see as much diversity there. Freshman year here at St. Francis I got the job in inpatient and that's where I saw more diversity.

The last part of the discussion ended with a somewhat heated discussion about a faculty member who teaches Spanish, but I loved several things about this exchange. First, it gives a clear case for covering controversial topics as a medium to help students engage in the topic and learn, particularly when it comes to cultural issues. Second, I was sure that the students who had this class with this faculty would be able to carry the lesson of "there are always two sides" on to other areas of life and culture long after the semester is finished. Lastly, the exchange ended with an idea, which was to coordinate a tag-team course on culture that had everyone in agreement. The students are identified by number so that it is easier to follow the discussion. Read on:

Student #17: With Senora we also learned a lot about immigration because that is her passion. We learned a ton about that. Yeah, in the moment I learned a LOT. I took three years of Spanish in high school but I learned a lot more than I did in high school in these classes. Even with Spanish for the Medical Professions I still learned a ton.

Student #14: Going along with the immigration thing, I was in the same class (Mexico and the Mexicans) and it definitely hit me in class, especially with controversial topics. Even though with things not in your face, but maybe not until later but I did feel the change or remembered what I learned in class. Sometimes once I go back home, it feels different and I can really see the differences.

Student #17: When people would talk about certain things, like about immigration, or about illegal immigrants should get out of our country. But by taking Senora's class we learned so much information about things they do to help out country, not hurt. People don't understand what all they are doing, so when people are talking bad about an issue I get mad because people don't see there is another side. People are only on one side of an issue but don't know what the other side is.

Student #12: (voice raised somewhat, face a little bit reddened.) Yeah, but she is really hard core to one side. It's forced. Yes, I enjoyed it, but you have to admit she'll listen to the other side, but she won't stop until you see her side.

Student #14: But she'll get you thinking. I've had her twice. The first time I had her I thought I would hate it. The way she presents it though is really effective.

Student #17: I do think that Senora is awesome, but I think she should tag team a course. Maybe have Armando teach with her, he cooks for us all this delicious food! Have different professors teach different things about their own

culture and that type of thing. What a great idea! (At this point the entire group was laughing and nodding in agreement.)

What was terrific about this idea is that Armando is the head chef in the main dining hall. He is very well known to all the faculty, staff, and students and many people love his pleasant disposition and knowledge about foreign cuisine. I thought it was terrific that the students were able to think about faculty and staff together in this conversation. It was getting a little bit tense in the room with the discussion about this particular faculty, and the ending to this was the relief that everyone needed to relax again and keep going.

Lastly, Saint Francis employs a gentleman at the Ambialet, France campus who is responsible for helping the students who go to France adjust and explore the local area, as well as to travel beyond the boundaries of France. He was also named as someone who had a tremendous impact on a particular student who participated in study abroad.

Status update: This assignment is killer! In addition to the people who had a tremendous impact on the student participants, they also mentioned several class assignments or other engaging activities that affected the development of their own cultural adaptability. One student mentioned how learning about Mexican history was one thing, but learning about that culture really “came together” for her when she and her class for Explorations in the Arts had to put on a Mexican folk play for the local elementary school children.

Once mentioned in a previous focus group, another student mentioned Sign Language as being an active, engaging course. She said:

Not only did you have to learn about different cultural aspects, I thought it was awesome that we had the opportunity to go to different events and be more or less within the setting. We got to speak with people who are hard of hearing who were able to give us a different outlook.

Study abroad was also mentioned again as a significant impact experience, and others added the importance of experience as part of learning culture, not just lecture. This is reflected well in this participants' narrative about Writing for a Discipline.

In my writing class freshman year we had to pair up. The topics were all controversial, one person had to oppose and one person had to fight for it, and then you had to come together to write one paper. There were so many topics. My friend and I had cochlear implants, so it was nice to hear the deaf culture side of why it should not happen because I was oblivious to that. Other topics were gay marriage and genetically modified food. Topics I've never really been opened up to before. It was a nice way to see things differently.

The last significant activity that required active engagement mentioned by this group of participants was one that had not been mentioned previously. It was an overlooked cultural aspect that is prevalent in our rural area; that of the socioeconomically disadvantaged. This particular student worked in the Dorothy Day Center, a place on campus that services poor and needy families in the area with a food pantry and clothing. The Dorothy Day Center also collects and provides toys for local families during the holidays and gives Easter baskets with hygiene products in the spring. This particular student felt that seeing the different types of people who come to the

Center “was very important” for her in terms of the changes she felt in her own cultural adaptability.

Think?! You want me to think?! The participants in this focus group also mentioned other passive activities in which they were involved that had an impact on them. The students all acknowledged their overall knowledge about different cultures and cultural issues has increased overall since starting at Saint Francis through the freshman orientation program and through the general education courses that they took. They mentioned other courses, including one in the Education major:

In some of my education classes, when we write lesson plans, you have to plan and incorporate culture into each lesson plan. Some children may not like direct eye contact. You have to know and learn about the cultures of each of your students before you can effectively teach them.

Another mentioned her Occupational Therapy Seminar course:

In occupational therapy we have discussed looking at the patient’s background and what is individually important to them to help them. What’s important to them might not be important to you or vice-versa, so it’s important.

It is important to note that education about culture and cultural issues should not end after the general education component is completed. It is ultimately up to the faculty who teach courses in the major to be culturally competent themselves, and to pass that knowledge and understanding on to the students in their major.

The participants had a great deal to offer in terms of identifying the best overall learning experiences and the qualities of those experiences. As in other parts of the focus group, the underlying theme here is conflict, but of an internal nature. When I asked

what is most effective in teaching cultural differences and understanding, these three comments were made in succession by different students:

Well, for me its hearing something contradictory to what I currently think. I think “Why” is this contradictory to what I think?

Definitely being made to make the change to see the other side is what makes the difference. Something you have to force yourself to open up to, something different in order to see it. If you were forced to go to Torvian and sit with others it would really open you up.

For me religion was always tied to morality. But one of the first things my professor told us was try to separate our own personal beliefs and religion out of morality. I think that has been the most effective for me. Being forced to go outside your comfort zone and see things through a different lens.

After these comments, I asked the group if they agreed that controversial topics, those that create conflict either outside or inside, were effective and the answer again from this group was a resounding “YES!” In the words of Leadership author Peter Senge, “People don’t resist change, they resist being changed!” (2006). The students clearly remembered the times where they had been challenged to change, and those indeed were learning moments for them.

Txt sent: Meet me @ Gubbio after class. Having several current or former Resident Assistants in the group was significant. As soon as I asked the question about the campus environment, and what type of environment facilitates conversation, understanding, knowledge, they all immediately responded that life in the residence halls

is very significant. This student spoke for several of those who have worked in Residence Life:

There are several RA's in this room. I'd say dorm life is the best place to learn, both for the students that live there but for me too as an RA. It's funny to watch the interactions between people. My dorm is very diverse, some are from Africa, and Korea, and some from different races and I love to watch them interact and work things out with each other. Watching how the residents communicate with each other and realizing they have things in common is a neat thing to watch.

Another interesting factor that was brought up during discussion was the effect of the campus dining hall and the foods served from different parts of the world. The Dining Services department has gone through great lengths to re-create foods from the homelands of our international students. In all honesty, I never thought that would be a significant experience for the students, and I am not sure I could hide my surprise that it was mentioned as significant. Once it was brought up, I clarified with the students if in fact they noticed the different foods and made an effort to taste them. Unanimously, they all agreed. Not only did they agree, they responded with great enthusiasm! The efforts made by Armando and the dining staff have not gone unnoticed. In addition, this focus group also mentioned Café Gubbio as a place with a good environment for talking and getting to know others.

Global Citizen? Can I Get Back to You on That

The participants in focus group three had clear statements about their expectations for the future. How do they define cultural adaptability? What are the characteristics of a person who is culturally adaptive? They mentioned such factors as the ability to

cooperate regardless of the circumstances, being non-judgmental toward differences, having mutual respect for others, the ability to immerse yourself in another culture and adapt, and being able to have appreciation for differences in culture. One student described the experience as being like a “chameleon,” while another thought that it is not necessarily “blending in,” it is that you can simultaneously keep your own cultural identity while respecting and appreciating another.

This focus group brought out a new theme as they named certain personal qualities that must be present in order to learn about and accept other people who may have different cultural beliefs than they. They spoke as if a particular individual must have certain qualities in place before their cultural adaptability potential could be maximized. What I thought was interesting was that the students named certain characteristics they thought were important, however there was some recognition that they themselves may have some work to do toward this end goal. They discussed the importance of open-mindedness, desire, confidence, experience and knowledge. Although the other focus groups discussed these factors to a degree, the third group elaborated and focused more on this concept. This was an emergent theme for this focus group.

It [SFU] does offer a lot of student activities and organizations. The availability is there for students to be involved if they want to. I think it's huge to accent the fact that you have to want to. This room might be biased just because we all volunteered to help, because we want to be involved. But I think there are a large percentage of people who just stick to their own thing. Athletes, to use an example. You have to want to become involved. If you don't, everything can be

seen very differently. If someone stopped me to ask me questions about culture, versus stopping someone who does nothing, the perspective can be very different. See what I mean?

Everything is constant change. I think having open-mindedness is a factor, but I think nerves are still a factor for me. I still think this is a Catholic university that is predominately white which biases it in many ways. It tries to be open-minded but still pushes Catholic values. It will just be different out there.

I think a lot of it also depends on how you were raised and your family situations. What if you're raised to only see Catholic or with no religion at all? Or, I have Catholics, Baptists, and even Mennonites in my family. That opens you up, the way your parents bring you up to be. It's made me more open-minded and more culturally aware. I think it's a good thing. When you're in situations and you're going to be working in a hospital, I'm not going to be looking to see or note if they are male or female, black or white, it comes back to treating all with the same dignity and respect.

I agree with being open-minded. You can throw someone into study abroad but if they're not willing to be open, it won't make a difference. I think being here, or anywhere but my hometown has prepared me, along with other classes. I am a history/secondary education major so I feel prepared, but glad I have a couple more years. Me personally, I feel I am well on my way.

Their responses were pretty consistent; they feel they are open-minded enough to handle challenges as they come their way, they know they need a degree of confidence, however they also acknowledge they are still working toward being fully comfortable in

all interactions and environments. One student made a well-stated point when she said you could put every student in study abroad, but if that student is “not open or willing to change, adapt or learn it won’t make a bit of difference.”

I’m not used to this. After the previous discussion on personal qualities, one of the participants who could often effectively offer an alternate point of view made this comment:

This has all been really positive and everything, but to move to more the negative side of things, college can be very intimidating. I came here freshman year knowing no one. You can come and there are a large percentage of people here who come from surrounding areas. That initial first, not impression, but what happens initially carries through the years. I think there is a judgment placed on you. It is diverse for how small it is, but it could be more diverse. I think this environment can be intimidating where people don’t want to go outside with what they are comfortable with. In class you’ll do whatever you need to do. But taken out of the classroom, people will always go with what they know and what they are comfortable with.

Her point was well-received, as the other students in the group recognized that indeed there are a lot of students at SFU who come from local areas, and may come already having a group of friends. In the collective opinion of this group, that can be a weakness. They all felt that having to make a fresh start overall benefits the students’ ability to learn and adapt to change, as well as better understand cultural differences. Once again, freshman orientation was mentioned as a significant experience for the students to meet new people and extend oneself outside the domain of what is familiar.

Another student mentioned a personal challenge for her that was unique to all of the focus groups.

Both of my parents and other people in my family are deaf. They use sign language to communicate. From very early age I don't think I knew there was a deaf culture until maybe late high school, and definitely when I came here. People said "Oh that's interesting, that's different." To me, I always have one foot in the deaf world and one foot in the hearing world. I never realized that there are two different cultures. I think when I started talking about my family is when I started to see it was different than other people.

The participants in the focus groups spent a large amount of time talking about what they learned in college about other people, however this student learned a great deal about herself and found value in others who showed an interest and asked questions about her unique experience and culture.

Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

As in prior focus groups, the students were given a handout of the Model to review. I explained the Model to them, and asked them to think about it and then place themselves on the continuum. As in previous questions with this focus group, there was always a student who offered a different, or unique perspective. In the other groups, the students just simply placed themselves somewhere in the middle of the continuum, thinking they are more than ethnocentric, but recognizing they still needed to make progress to be considered a stage that is more ethnorelative. One student saw this continuum as an ever-changing and evolving process:

Personally I think we are always in all three of these phases. If you're met with something you're not comfortable with, you aren't sure about it, but as you experience it you move toward understanding. I don't think you're ever only in one at one time.

Another student again mentioned conflict, describing a pull to move back to self, what one already knows and with what they are familiar. I thought the word "stuck" was relevant and interesting here:

I would definitely say I'm in the middle. We've been away from home, you're starting to experience it, you still feel that pull backwards, but you're learning more ethnorelativism. I almost consider it stuck in the middle, being pulled both ways.

The other students in the group all placed themselves near the middle, again seeing some progress but recognizing there was still progress to be made.

Emergent Themes

Through the process of analyzing the transcript from the three focus groups, it became clear that several themes were emerging from the data. As I reviewed all three focus groups as a whole, I was able to use the autocode feature in hyperRESEARCH to help identify several emerging themes. This feature enabled me to enter a key word such as "faculty" or "religion," the number of words to consider before and after the phrase, and have it pulled from the transcript. I was then able to view the discussion based around a particular factor for all of the focus groups. The emerging themes identified included the Impact of Faith and Religion, Impact of the General Education program,

Impact of Student and Residence Life, Quality Learning Experiences and Individual Characteristics of the Student. Each of these themes are presented as follows.

Impact of Faith and Religion

In conducting the three focus groups, it became clear to me that the students were indeed a homogenous mix when it came to diversity in religious orientation. Nearly all the participants were Catholic and had also attended a Catholic high school. Overall, the participants recognized that in coming to Saint Francis they were continuing a tradition that was familiar to them. They recognized that the environment is one that emphasizes Christian values and I did sense that many of the participants held fast to some traditional and more conservative beliefs. For example, one of the male participants who lived with a homosexual roommate stated that this lifestyle was not something with which he necessarily agreed. In addition, the same student later mentioned a discussion with a resident on his floor who had a child out of marriage, and it was a huge moment for this student; it took him by surprise and it was a situation with which he was not familiar.

Other students commented that the campus is “too conservative,” and one student mentioned her experience coming from a more urban, liberal environment, and then living in a faith-based residence hall. It was a challenge for this student to live with other young women who had strong, conservative religious beliefs. In another example, the last focus group spent a large amount of time discussing family background, and how coming from a Catholic or very conservative family affected them deeply. As a group, they tried to determine whether coming from a background such as this made them more open to new ideas as a college student or whether they were more likely to simply

continue “what they know.” Although some students felt that Saint Francis University was diverse, others felt that it was not.

More generally, all three focus groups did recognize religion as a significant cultural factor. Each group discussed religion to a significant extent; most discussed religion as a foundation for their experience and beliefs as an input factor. In addition to mostly Catholic roots, the students mentioned courses in Islam, Philosophy, and Death and Dying that had an impact on them mostly because the courses challenged their beliefs as Catholics or Christians and helped them to learn more about other world religions.

Impact of the General Education Program

Choosing juniors for this study was intentional. There is a level of interest in assessing the effectiveness of the General Education program at Saint Francis University in terms of the students’ development of cultural adaptability. It was hoped that the student participants could lend insight into which courses are designed to develop those skills, the effectiveness of those courses, as well as any other relevant factors related to General Education as it undergoes revision.

All three focus groups discussed General Education courses extensively. The students were able to identify a broad range of courses they felt were effective in helping them develop skills in cultural adaptability which was a positive finding. Although they did identify specific faculty who were effective, they also discussed general topics that would likely be included in courses such as these. The courses mentioned included those in Religion (Contemporary Islam), Philosophy (Death and Dying, Moral Philosophy), Language (including Spanish, French and Sign), Art (History and Painting), Psychology (Personality), and English (Writing for a Discipline). By identifying such a broad range

of courses, I believe it demonstrates the students' broad definition of culture. They do not see the definition of culture as merely religion or "artsy" in nature. They see culture as that which encompasses themselves as the individual, the consideration of others' moral, ethical, and religious orientation, the ability to think outside the box and apply ideas universally, and the ability to compare and contrast differences between individuals and groups.

Impact of Student and Residence Life

Supporting the conclusions of many researchers (Astin, 1993c; Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Whitt, et al, 2001) the participants in all three focus groups discussed living in the residence halls as a significant contributor to the development of more accepting and open ideas regarding culture and diversity.

The residence halls provide an experience to live and share space with others. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) concluded that living on campus was the single most consistent within-college determinant of the impact of college. According to their analysis of related literature, they found that living on campus had positive impacts on cultural and intellectual values, development of more positive self-concepts, the liberalization of social, political, and religious values and attitudes, and the development of tolerance, empathy and ability to relate to others. This opportunity can almost be considered a smaller version of study abroad as mentioned previously in this chapter. The students all discussed the variety of interactions both living with as well as supervising a floor of students as an RA as being significant.

In the context of the focus groups, the participants mentioned living and interacting with international students, African American students as well as those of

different religions or political orientation. These descriptions support the previous statement that the students overall define culture very broadly, and demonstrates consistency with previous research on the impact of residence.

Being a resident assistant. Participants in all three focus groups discussed the experience of being an RA. I did not specifically recruit RAs to be in the research study, however there were a number of them who enrolled. In fact, in the last focus group 4 out of the 10 participants were RAs. Each individual who spoke about the impact of being an RA on their own cultural adaptability mentioned several factors to support this. The students mentioned the significance of watching a group of students on their floor bond with one another and watching those from different backgrounds including race, religion, political orientation, rural/urban, and socioeconomic status learn to live together, work together, and to communicate and cooperate. Each student who had been an RA also mentioned that he/she had received training through the Office of Residence Life on working with diverse individuals and overcoming his/her own cultural beliefs in order to better understand others, resolve conflict, and build morale. The students felt this training was very effective. The Office of Residence Life uses resources from Blimling (2003) for its RA training and follows a model similar to many other universities for selecting and training the Resident Assistant.

This finding was supported by previous research studying the benefits of being an RA. In a longitudinal study by Lillis and Schuh (1982), a number of former RAs were followed after graduation to gauge the long-term benefits of holding this position. The researchers found that in the workplace, former RAs continued to benefit from interpersonal and group skills learned. They also found that the longer the participant

was an RA, the more benefit was offered, and their research also found that females reported a greater impact of the RA experience than males.

Freshman orientation. The Office of Student Life coordinates the experience of freshman orientation. This program, offered to all incoming freshmen at Saint Francis, usually consists of four days of including move in, tours, team-building activities, and information sharing. Participants in all three focus groups mentioned that the activities offered during freshman orientation were effective in offering an opportunity to grow in cultural adaptability. The participants described scenarios where they were forced to talk to or complete an activity with someone they did not know. The other student could have been from another nation, race, or religion, and the participants felt this experience was critical to them. It was rather profound that the participants, now being juniors, remembered this experience and could reflect on it two years later as being one that had a deep impact on them.

Quality Learning Experiences: Active, Personal Engagement, and Conflict

The participants had the opportunity to discuss the qualities of the experiences that were the most influential on the development of their cultural adaptability. At times, they described activities or courses that were designed to do such things, however they also described daily interactions with faculty, staff, and other students who affected them.

There are several common qualities to those activities or experiences that had the most impact on the participants. Perhaps first and most importantly, active engagement was important for the activity. Whether it was a team-building project during freshman orientation, a class discussion, fraternity/sorority participation, service learning projects or a chance encounter with an international student, all of these activities require some

sort of engagement by the student. Although movies and speakers were discussed to a certain degree, the students described mostly active learning experiences to be the most effective. In addition, the students described interactions that involved personal qualities. They learned a great deal from hearing personal stories from people of different cultures. This includes the student from West Africa talking about civil war and strife as well as the faculty from psychology discussing her own family values and traditions. As one participant mentioned, “When it is something personal, you learn so much more. You pay so much more attention.”

Those experiences that included an element of conflict were also effective. When the students’ beliefs in their religion, politics, beliefs, or values regarding life and death issues, sexual orientation, or language were challenged, they were paying attention, learning, and growing from that discussion. Being in the minority was certainly a learning experience for students, such as in the case of study abroad. Study abroad encases all of the qualities above; active engagement and even immersion into a culture, personal experiences with others of another culture and conflict, whether it be internal or externally felt.

Characteristics of the Student

One participant offered an insightful comment when she said:

The biggest thing popping out in my mind is that there is only so much that money can buy in terms of books, speakers, or lounge areas. A lot of it comes down to students and their own willingness to get out there and meet different people.

This sentiment was echoed by all three focus groups as well. The participants all acknowledged and agreed that there is only so much a university can do to help students become more culturally adaptive. If a student is not open to the idea, or consistently interacts only with those familiar to them, their opportunity for skill development in cultural adaptability could be quite limited. This was intuitive on the part of the student participants and speaks to their ongoing development of self through this process. Based upon all of the data collected through this research process, a Proposed Model for the Development of Cultural Adaptability was developed (Appendix C).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

At the institutional level, one of the new objectives proposed for the General Education revision at Saint Francis University was developed specifically to address cultural diversity and the ability to successfully integrate it into effective communication and problem solving skills. The new objective states “this objective is for students to develop an understanding of the importance of human and cultural diversity as well as to integrate cultural experiences in the development of interdisciplinary dialogue and/or solutions to complex problems” (Proposed General Education Objectives, Feb 2009). The results of this research certainly speak to the movement toward this particular goal that is currently being proposed.

Chapter V addresses the results of this research as they relate to the four research questions developed for this study. It also includes the relationship of this research study and questions to Chickering’s Seven Vectors of Student Development (1993), Astin’s Student Involvement Theory (1984), and Bennett’s Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993). In addition, this chapter discusses implications, limitations, and conclusions that might be drawn from this research as well as future recommendations.

Addressing Research Question One

How do traditional university students define Cultural Adaptability? The participants in the focus groups offered many personal qualities and individual factors that define cultural adaptability. These factors were able to be categorized into

knowledge, skills, and attitudes as developed by Bloom (1956) as he described these three domains of educational learning activities.

Knowledge

According to the student participants, there is a certain amount of knowledge that one must have in order to be adaptable to other cultures. Knowing another language and knowing about their values and beliefs was addressed by many of the students. One student offered this narrative, which was echoed throughout all focus groups:

I think that as a whole, Americans aren't really as adaptable as other people. I think people come here and they can adapt rather well, they know English. But we don't make an effort to learn any other languages. I think I only had maybe three years of Spanish, but people in other countries spend their entire time in school learning another language. It is also important to make an effort to know and learn about what they believe and learn about their lifestyle.

Skills

The student participants also elaborated on the skills they thought were critical to be culturally adaptive. They mentioned "having the flexibility to live, exist, and just to your own thing in another culture, and be able to interact with others." Other skills they identified included "the ability to cooperate regardless of the environment or the viewpoint that you hold." The students also identified a skill that was identified as Ethnorelative in nature by Bennett (1993) which is to be able to immerse yourself in another country or culture and adapt to it, but be able to maintain your own cultural

identity at the same time. It is important to be able to compare another culture to your own and appreciate the differences.

Attitudes

Finally, the students offered their thoughts on the necessary attitudes that should exist in order to be more culturally adaptive. They mentioned things like “being able to take away any pre-existing bias or thoughts about that culture” and being “accepting of others” in general. They also mentioned being non-judgmental toward differences, and being genuinely interested in learning about others’ backgrounds. The students also discussed understanding and accepting different lifestyles, and having a positive attitude toward those you may interact with in the workforce. The student participants felt having a positive attitude toward changes that do come along can only help to facilitate more effective interactions. They felt that being able to make the most of opportunities as they present themselves in any environment is effective, and that mutual respect is critical.

When considering Bennett’s (1993) definition of Ethnorelativism and supporting definitions of cultural adaptability, the students were able to accurately describe the factors that contribute to it. Based upon the focus group discussions, the students learned the basics of cultural factors in secondary education, and had the opportunity to apply the knowledge they learned in many ways in the higher education environment. These factors are descriptions of the students’ expectations; a description of who they want to be and the skills they want to possess.

What about the students’ gains in cultural adaptability? The participants in the focus groups used terms to describe cultural adaptability that very closely followed the definition offered by Kelley and Meyers (1995). The definition used for this study

indicated a more long term process than simply adjustment, and not only involved psychological well-being, but also any cognitive changes, social changes, and attitudinal changes.

The students described psychological well-being a number of different ways. They spoke positively about feelings of curiosity, camaraderie, and comfort. Getting to know an international student in class or living with someone of a different race helped to eliminate the feelings of anxiety or pre-existing stereotypes. Being assigned a lab partner or another student with whom to complete a service learning project took away the choice of whether to interact with a student who is unfamiliar. The students also described other changes. Cognitive changes included a process of knowledge acquisition that expanded their repertoire of other languages, religions, and perspectives. Finally, social changes were described by the students that included meeting new people during freshman orientation with whom they continue to interact and making friends who come from an entirely different culture or background than they. The setting of the university and specific campus activities that led to this growth will be described further.

Addressing Research Question Two

According to traditional university students, how does the context of the university setting influence the development of Cultural Adaptability? What does the setting of a four-year liberal arts institution offer students in terms of opportunity? The first part of “context” that was directly addressed to the students was regarding the physical environment of the campus. As the university moves forward with its master plan for buildings on campus, on the list is the construction of a new student lounge area. There is interest in discovering the type of space that students feel most comfortable to

talk, work in small groups, and build relationships. The right space design could, in theory help with retention and help facilitate positive interactions among all students. The students were asked, “Are there places on campus that are more conducive than others to have quality discussions and interact comfortably with people of other cultures or backgrounds?”

The students discussed various places on campus including areas designed for student conversation including the dining hall, the coffee shop, the residence halls, and the grassy mall area that is central to the campus. Although one student did mention the pre-existing student lounge, it was discussed in all three focus groups and most students did not favor it because of its isolated location and “darkness.” Many students, in fact, noted that the poor lighting and “creepy” nature of the current lounge forced students to seek comfortable talking places elsewhere. One student described an effective physical space designed for conversation at another campus:

It’s much larger, but it almost seems like the space is sectioned off into much smaller areas where even if you’re just sitting there studying by yourself you’re in close quarters with other people. I spent a lot of time there last year, in the HUB particularly. You would interact with people just because of the way it was set up. They just use the space in a more intuitive way for conversation.

The residence halls were discussed several times throughout the focus groups, emphasizing the “forced” nature of living with others, using common bathroom areas, and the need to figure out a way to get along.

My dorm is very diverse, some are from Africa, and Korea, and some from different races and I love to watch them interact, work things out with each other.

How the residents communicate with each other and realizing they have things in common is a neat thing to watch.

Another student added:

I think it's a lot of give and take, and adjustment. College is a big adjustment.

People are looking to make friends. And as you see each other every day, even in the community bathroom, people are more open-minded.

Finally, this narrative from a different student mentions the rural and peaceful setting of the university and how that environment can help facilitate serious discussion:

I'd probably say the Mall area, of course when it's not terrible weather. A lot of times I will start a conversation and just as we're walking along, it's sort of nice being outside and being in nature and having the scenery that we do, when the weather is nice. I've had serious discussions before with other students, and walking around campus and stopping along the curb is a nice place-kind of private, but you can sit and have a conversation and feel comfortable.

Another part of the campus that was discussed as being a significant part of the environment in terms of understanding other cultures was the Dorothy Day Center (DDC). Three students separately mentioned the DDC as a place unique perhaps to Saint Francis University but effective in introducing students to those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Students who work or volunteer with the DDC often interact directly with local families, often with small children, who are in need of basic living supplies such as food, clothing, and hygiene products. The DDC also sponsors an angel tree during the Christmas season and the students who assist are able to deliver gifts and meet with these local families. For a university placed in a rural part of

Pennsylvania, this experience is indeed relevant to everyday life for the students who attend Saint Francis.

In addition to the physical context of Saint Francis University, the students were also asked to describe other factors in the general higher education environment that help students develop their skills in cultural adaptability. The classroom environment was discussed extensively as perhaps the primary tool for facilitating this type of learning. Courses that are primarily discussion based, or involve working on a common task or objective as a team, were identified as effective teaching and learning techniques. In his book *What the Best College Teachers Do*, Ken Bain (2004) described many ways in which the college professor might better engage the students in the classroom, and how to better facilitate the discussion that the students identified as so effective.

Addressing Research Question Three

According to traditional university students, what experiences, academic or otherwise, do students perceive as having the most influence on the development of their own cultural adaptability? This question gets to the heart of this research. Based upon the focus group discussions, the students spent a great deal of time describing the people, the tasks and activities that were effective to this end. This process of gaining knowledge, skills, and attitudes can be described as developmental, beginning the day the students walk in the door of the university.

Freshman orientation was discussed frequently as a means to facilitate friendship and team building, an experience that students did not forget about even two years later. This experience was the first of many “forced” occurrences where students are placed into groups, given a task, and must learn a way to communicate and cooperate with one

another. The students described this experience as one that helped them learn about many different types of people and their cultures.

After freshman orientation was completed, the students began their coursework in higher education. As in many four year institutions, the first two years are often spent taking numerous general education courses common to all students. Again, the students felt that being forced into small groups to complete class assignments was an effective tool to get to know different people, often of very different backgrounds. Having in-class discussions about controversial topics, or having to present two sides to any issue were described as being very effective and useful to the students. In addition, international student presence appears to be a significant factor in students' development of skills in cultural adaptability, and having faculty who can effectively and creatively facilitate international student contributions is also an important part of this equation.

During the freshman year, students are mandated to complete six Community Enrichment Series (CES) events both in the fall and spring semesters. These events may be a lecture or guest speaker, a retreat, a film, a museum exhibit, etc. The events are related to the general education objectives currently in place at the university. The student participants in the focus groups all named CES events as an effective tool to learn about other cultures.

Once the freshman year is complete, the students seem to have some knowledge of different cultures and have had at least some opportunity to grow. They then have additional opportunities in their second year to develop other skills and attitudes through activities such as Greek life participation or becoming a Resident Assistant. There were no students who only discussed one way of learning about other cultures. All of the

participants in the focus groups described a multi-faceted approach in which the student is exposed at many levels including classroom, service opportunities, Student, Residence and Greek Life, and opportunities for casual conversation in the dining hall or coffee house.

Addressing Research Question Four

How do traditional university students describe their participation in and educational effectiveness of activities designed to improve awareness and understanding of cultural and diversity issues? Having university objectives to facilitate knowledge of diversity and cultural issues implies that numerous learning opportunities are developed specifically to meet this objective. That is indeed the case at Saint Francis University. As previously mentioned, CES events are developed to meet these needs and the student participants described these events as effective, especially when the following criteria are met:

I think it is definitely a personal relation to what you are talking about. To be honest, people aren't going to listen to anything they can read in a book. They want to hear something that brings their attention to "you," and something they haven't seen or heard before that brings you closer to "them." People want to know one another, they want to find out information. It doesn't have to be twenty questions, but people are curious. If it's personal it shows trust in each other.

In addition, Dining Services has made an effort to prepare and serve foods native to other countries, including the countries represented by the international student population on campus. Students in two of the three focus groups recognized this effort,

found it to be a fun and useful way to allow the students to experience a small aspect of another country.

Service learning activities, as required by the RLST 205 course on Faith and Franciscanism and many other student organizations, were also mentioned as an effective way to learn more about one another. With the exception of the DDC, most of the students felt that it was completing the service with another student that was effective, not necessarily the task at hand. One student said “even in doing something you don’t necessarily care for, like community service, you’ll say hey! We did it together. A shared memory, if that makes sense.”

Other effective activities that were described by the students included diversity training sessions offered as part of Resident Assistant training or as part of the Student Government Association. In addition, the full-campus retreat for students living in the faith-based residence hall was discussed at length by several students in one focus group as being a major part of learning about one another and developing stronger relationships. Both of these programs are designed to give students hands-on activities in order to build stronger relationships, learn more about each other, and develop cross-cultural skills.

The Office of Multicultural-International Student Services coordinates programs and services that seek to enhance cross-cultural engagement and a diverse educational experience for all students. Those in this office provide academic, social, and personal development for minority and international students, and coordinate the Multicultural Awareness Society (MAS). The MAS and Associate Dean for Students present programs, lead workshops, and have discussions on diversity topics. The students in the focus groups were aware of these programs and acknowledged the efforts of those who

coordinate, however none of the participants had ever been to one of the voluntary programs.

Overall the student participants recognized and acknowledged the activities designed by the university to increase their awareness and understanding of diversity and cultural issues. In terms of participation, CES events, the training sessions for both members of the Student Government Association and Resident Assistants, and service learning activities related to specific courses are all required. The students were consistent in that when they are forced to participate in a certain activity or program they are able to see the benefit and enjoy it. When the program is optional, the students are likely to not attend.

Relationship to Theory Base

Chickering's Seven Vectors of Student Development

The Seven Vectors are best described as “major highways for journeying toward individuation--the discovery and refinement of one’s unique way of being and also toward communication with other individuals and groups, including the larger national and global society” (Chickering & Reisser, p. 35). Identity development plays a central role in this theory, and this research study parallels Chickering’s theory on several levels.

First, this research is perhaps most closely linked to Chickering’s fourth vector, which is entitled Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships. The definition of this vector reflects the view that student’s interactions with peers provide significant and powerful learning experiences and help shape the emerging sense of self. “Maturing interpersonal relationships reflect an increasing awareness of and openness to differences in ideas, people, backgrounds, and values” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 48). Indeed,

the focus group discussions were focused around the many types of interactions with peers both inside and outside the classroom and the manner in which these interactions affected the students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward those with cultural differences.

In addition to the fourth vector, a relationship to the fifth vector could also be established. This vector is entitled Establishing Identity. Chickering and Reisser (1993) described this pivotal vector as one in which the student develops a sense of self in a context shaped by historical factors, social, and cultural conditions and issues stemming from family and ethnic heritage. These were best described in this study as input factors that contributed greatly to the students' ability to recognize the importance of their individual background and family experience. Growth and learning were described when the student participants were faced with an interaction or situation in which historical experience either fit or conflicted with it. This had a significant effect on their developing sense of self, as described in the focus groups.

In addition to the Seven Vectors, Chickering and Reisser (1993) offered seven areas of influence where universities can encourage student development in relationship to the vectors. Several of these areas of influence were reflected in the background and foundation for this study, as well as during focus group discussions. First, Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested clarity in institutional objectives. This suggestion could be considered a primary consideration for this study, as the most recent Middle States Evaluation Report (2007) suggested the university had more work to do to incorporate more diversity and cultural issues into the general education program. In addition, the

general education program is currently under revision, including the objective to address diversity and cultural issues.

Second, Chickering and Reisser (1993) recommended teaching that is flexible, varied in instructional styles and modes, and encouraged active student engagement in learning. This principle was reiterated time and time again during the focus group discussions. The students' recognized the classroom situations in which they learned the most and described them as active, with lively discussion and conflict.

Having significant interpersonal exchanges with diverse individuals was also offered as a meaningful way to develop identity, and was also discussed during the focus groups. When the students had the opportunity to interact with international students or diverse individuals in the residence hall, they were able to take that experience and learn from it.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory

Whereas Astin's I-E-O model was more of a description of factors placed on the student during their experience in the four year setting, Astin's Student Involvement Theory (1984) described the student's own role in this developmental process. According to Astin (1984), "the quality and quantity of the student's involvement will influence the amount of student learning and development" (p. 297) and is directly related to the amount of energy invested by the individual student. This concept was emphasized to a degree that was not expected in this research study. The student participants elaborated time and time again about the personal factors that needed to be in place before growth and development could occur, with time and effort being described in a number of ways

by the student participants. One student offered this comment during the second focus group:

The biggest thing popping out in my mind is that there is only so much that money can buy in terms of books, speakers, or lounge areas. A lot of it comes down to students and their own willingness to get out there and meet different people. There is a lot of people set in their ways and have their group of friends. They might meet a few new people every school year but other than that you can't force someone to open themselves up, which may or may not hurt them later on in being able to adapt to a new culture or whatever.

Astin (1984) also added that the extent to which a student may be involved in educational development might be affected by how involved they are with family, friends, outside employment, etc. Although no commuter students were involved in this study, one student offered his perception about commuters:

I think of commuter students. I don't want to say they're bad at being involved, but they have their school work and other than that a lot of times they come to school and go back home. I am a commuter now, but I spend a lot of time with my brothers or in JFK with friends, or doing homework. I'm not going back to my house and hiding out there by myself. There's not a lot you can do to change the attitude of someone, you might be able to bring some things to campus to lure them in, but there's only so much you can do without the person being willing.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory (1984) also focused more on the motivation and behavior of the individual student. These factors were applicable during the focus group discussions, and in turn contribute to the significance of this study.

Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

The both practical and developmental nature of this theory provided an excellent foundation for this research study as well. In addition to creating a visual continuum of Experience of Difference from a stage of Ethnocentricity to a stage of Ethnorelativism, Bennett (1993) included in his model samples of what learners might say during each stage, ideas to challenge and support learners at each stage, and examples of stage-appropriate intercultural skills.

Each participant in the focus groups was given a visual model of and was asked to review Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Figure 1).

Again, Bennett's model is a continuum ranging from an Ethnocentric stage (including Denial, then Defense, then Minimization of Difference) on in development to an Ethnorelative stage (Acceptance, to Adaptation, and finally Integration). After a description of the model, the participants were asked to consider their placement on the continuum. The majority of the students placed themselves in the Acceptance stage. This is the beginning phase of a move toward Ethnorelative behaviors. According to Bennett (1993) individuals who are in the Acceptance stage recognize and appreciate cultural differences in behavior and values. Based upon the analysis of the transcript from the focus groups, this assessment is accurate. Although there were several comments made by students that suggest a much more Ethnocentric attitude, the majority of the students appear to be moving into a more Ethnorelative stage as they grow and develop in college.

The affective quality for this Acceptance stage is "Curiosity," which was described in many ways in the context of the focus groups. For example, the participants

Development of Intercultural Sensitivity

Experience of Difference

Denial	Defense	Minimization	Acceptance	Adaptation	Integration
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Ethnocentric					Ethnorelative
Stages					Stages

© Milton Bennett

Figure 1. Bennett's Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.

wanted to know more about the personal stories of those from different cultures. So much in fact, that it was identified as an emerging theme in this study. One student discussed that he would still turn his head if someone walked past him in a traditional African dress, not because he thought it was “weird” but because it was just “different,” suggesting that he would want to know more about it and reflecting a curiosity about cultural differences. The participants spent a great deal of time discussing the learning process in their academic courses, where learning about different perspectives on religion or other cultural factors was significant to them, satisfying their curious nature.

There were also several comments made by individual participants that suggested a more Ethnocentric position. On Bennett’s continuum, the final stage of Ethnocentrism is Minimization of Difference. In this phase, recognition and acceptance of superficial cultural differences is emphasized. One student in particular struggled with the differences in regional food from her hometown, and language variances such as “vacuum” and “sweeper.” A different student could not wait to tell her mother that other students put French fries on their salads. One remark was made that would be considered Defense of Difference, including a student getting angry at an international student for his lack of “manners” in holding the door for others. Students who reflect Defense of Difference often experience anxiety and impatience, which are feelings that were reflected, although infrequently, during the focus group discussions. Perhaps the most positive aspect of this analysis is that all students identified that they have “work to do” to become more culturally adaptive. One student from the second focus group offered this:

I think being on our college campus secludes us, once we're in the real world we'll see different ages of people, different types of people, not the same people we see every day. Once you're not on our college campus you could move more toward ethnorelativism.

In support, another student offered this thought:

I still think this is a Catholic university that is predominately white which biases it in many ways. It tries to be open-minded but still pushes Catholic values. It will just be different out there.

Another student who identified a struggle with her own skills in cultural adaptability said this:

I don't really feel that confident right now. I do hope and foresee myself being more comfortable in two or three years. Just because right now I still haven't gotten into my major, I don't have a car on campus so I don't go many places, I just foresee a lot of improvement in the future.

These remarks suggest that the students as a whole have an accurate self-assessment of their skills in cultural adaptability. They did not over-emphasize their abilities and identify themselves as Adaptive, nor did they describe any situations or experiences that would place them in a phase of Denial of Difference. Perhaps most importantly, when their narratives are placed next to Bennett's continuum from an objective and evidence-based standpoint their assessment is indeed accurate.

Conclusions

There are number of conclusions that might be drawn from this study. First, over the course of their first two years the student participants increased their knowledge about

different cultures. They were able to verbalize examples of this over and over during the focus group discussions. They made gains in their ability to communicate and interact with diverse individuals, and grew in their knowledge of self, including recognizing more about their own culture and background and how it influenced their decisions and interactions with others. With the majority of the participants coming from a small Catholic high school experience, it is not surprising that many felt Saint Francis to be a “pretty diverse” campus. The setting of this campus allowed them to develop in significant ways, even though the campus itself is not representative of the diversity that will be found outside their college environment. It is difficult to say if the setting of Saint Francis allowed them the safety and security to explore, discuss, and develop at a comfortable pace, or if the private and rural nature of the campus actually stifled what could have been even more growth and development.

The context of the higher education environment had a large-scale effect on the cultural adaptability skills of the student participants. They were able to identify specific faculty, staff, and administrators who emulated the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to promote positive cross-cultural interactions. They were also able to identify specific courses designed to increase their knowledge and experience in recognizing and discussing cultural issues. All of the focus groups mentioned powerful learning activities such as specific classroom assignments that created internal or external conflict, or a Student Life activity such as freshman orientation as influential on their development. They also reiterated the impact of living in the residence halls as well as the presence of international students both in the residence hall and classroom. As independent and self-autonomous we like to think of today’s college student, a solid conclusion can be reached

that mandating attendance or participation in certain activities is beneficial to help our students become more culturally adaptive. When forced to work with another student on a classroom assignment or attend diversity training to become an RA or member of Student Government, the students are able to appreciate the programs and benefit from them.

An individual campus environment can also have a positive or negative effect on students' ability to find safe, comfortable spaces in which to talk, share ideas and learn more about one another. The students identified quality spaces such as those where coffee or food is available and seating is comfortable and set in small areas. The unique setting of Saint Francis also offers the natural environment of the outdoors as a calming and peaceful scene to walk and talk about important things. Having a clinic or community outreach center on campus helps students to interact with individuals or families from the surrounding areas, giving them more exposure and experience in working with diverse individuals. Based upon the focus group discussions it is recommended that any campus consider students' opinions when designing new spaces such as dining or lounge areas as the students had fairly strong opinions as to what spaces are or are not conducive to discussion or getting to know others.

The students in this research study seemed to have an accurate opinion of their own skills and ability to interact in a cross-cultural exchange. They were able to recognize in what ways they have grown and significant experiences that changed their thoughts or opinions, however overall the students felt they had some work to do. A few felt relieved that they had at least two more years to develop their skills. All of the students said they are "fairly confident" to head into a global workforce and to be

considered a global citizen, but again realizing they have not yet “seen it all.” Perhaps the most insightful part of the discussion with the students was that they recognized the importance of the motivation and intention of the individual student. Many noted that the ability to interact with others of a different culture comes from the knowledge about other cultures, the desire to learn more about others, and the confidence to step “outside the box” and get to know others.

Implications

Study Abroad Considerations

The research is clear regarding the benefits of study abroad experiences for college students, and these outcomes were reinforced by this research study. Student immersion in another culture is an effective way to improve skills in cultural adaptability. National data suggests that 50% percent of graduating high school seniors have an interest in studying abroad (ACE, 2008), yet the number of students who actually travel abroad average around 4% nationally (NAFSA, 2007). Saint Francis has managed to bring the average percentage from 4% five years ago to 11% for this current academic year. A major implication of this research is that continued development and participation in study abroad activities is critical to Saint Francis University. Strong presence and involvement by the Office of International Study and Outreach is recommended as the culture shift continues toward study abroad being an expectation for all students.

International and Minority Student Considerations

Related to study abroad and international experiences, the university should continue its work to bring more international students to Saint Francis University to live and study. Although some conversations have taken place to reserve several crucial places in popular and competitive professional programs (such as in the health sciences) for international students, no policy or action has taken place to this effect. The presence of international students on campus has deeply affected the traditional American student at Saint Francis and efforts should continue to recruit motivated, quality students from abroad. In addition, additional resources should be allocated as needed to be sure the international students are supported academically and socially. In addition to international students, efforts should continue to recruit motivated, quality students of a minority nature. The participants in this research study discussed the positive effect of minority students in the residence halls and being a part of Greek life in terms of developing more positive attitudes toward diverse individuals and gaining skills in cultural adaptability. Their increased presence on the campus would benefit all.

Classroom Considerations

Although no formal Center for Teaching Excellence exists on campus, the university should consider creating such a network for faculty. Based upon the feedback and discussions during the focus groups, the students treasured faculty with effective teaching techniques. The students mentioned interactive and engaged classroom discussions with the faculty playing the “devil’s advocate” or leading the students to one side and then taking the other. Some faculty were able to help facilitate international student presence in the classroom by giving these students an opportunity to talk about

their native countries and challenges. The student participants in this research study could not emphasize enough the effectiveness of having such students in the classroom along with a faculty who could facilitate their presence.

Universities have long struggled with recruiting faculty based upon credentials and expertise and not necessarily on their effective use of pedagogy. The university should continue to recruit faculty who are highly qualified in their area of study, however a Center for Teaching Excellence could help provide the support in the classroom that affect the students in such a significant way. Additional reading resources, workshops, speakers or teaching evaluations could help stimulate discussion and spark renewed interest in helping students learn in the most effective way possible. Continued development of assignments that challenge the students' current beliefs, create controversy, and stimulate classroom discussion should be strongly encouraged, along with faculty who have the mechanics, practice, and feedback to carry them out.

Programming on Diversity

In their anthology on research related to student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that many of the experiences that maximize the impact of college depend to a certain extent on the characteristics of the students who engage in them. They noted that students who are most likely to engage and participate in diversity experiences during college are also more likely to be open to diversity at the time they enter college. As described, an overall theme to the focus groups was that the activities and programs designed to help foster healthy cross-cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes were effective. However, the experience was limited to those activities and programs that were mandatory for the students to attend. Because of the critical nature of

the first year, it should be a consideration that continued offerings of CES events and other classroom activities related to culture and diversity be available and mandatory for the students their freshman year.

Residence Life Considerations

The results of this research adds to the body of knowledge on the impact of living in the residence halls. The student participants across all three focus groups discussed the experience of living in a residence hall with people of different cultural backgrounds. Being forced to communicate about issues and share the community bathroom helped to establish a strong start in developing skills in cultural adaptability. In addition to living in the residence halls, becoming a Resident Assistant certainly was established as an emergent theme for this study. The training received was effective, according to those who participated and should continue. Any additional resources or training would certainly be helpful to those who interact daily with students in the residence halls, working to solve problems and facilitate healthy relationships between peers.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this research. First and foremost, as in the case of many qualitative studies that involve a single case design of a university campus, the ability to generalize the results of this study to other institutions of higher education is limited. Although results may be replicated in small, private, or religiously affiliated schools, this research was conducted at a single site and therefore limited in nature. In addition, the students who volunteered to participate in the focus groups could limit the generalization of the findings to all students. With the large number of Resident

Assistants who volunteered to participate it could be suggested that the study attracted students with leadership potential who had an interest in the study and its outcomes.

Again, because of the qualitative nature of this study, a limited number of participants were able to be recruited for this study. Nineteen students were successfully recruited, which provided a significant amount of qualitative data, but a limited amount of quantitative data in terms of pre- and post-test scores on the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory. Although descriptive analysis of the data was possible, higher level statistics were not able to be utilized to help establish significance. Another limitation of this research is that no minority or international students participated in the research study. The input from these populations would have been very useful and would have offered a unique perspective.

Recommendations for Future Research

In completing this study, several recommendations for future research could be suggested. As mentioned before as a limitation to this study, the perspective of both the minority and international student population would be perhaps the first and most important recommendation for the future. Their input and participation could help identify clear areas of need to help develop cultural adaptability skills for all students. In addition to minority and international students, the perspective of commuter (non-resident), non-traditional students, students at two year colleges, and students in larger public universities would also be helpful to include in future research.

Other suggested research could include taking a closer look at the implications and benefits of study abroad. Although the short term benefits are well established, more long term research is needed to determine how study abroad assists individuals in the

workplace and beyond, well after graduation from college. Based upon the one particular student who had a significant drop on the CCAI after high score initially, perhaps having students wait until their junior or senior year to study abroad could have more benefit than encouraging earlier participation. This recommendation is based only upon one student's experience, so no conclusions should be drawn. However it does illuminate certain questions that could be considered for future research.

Finally, Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric once said, "Globalization has changed us into a company that searches the world, not just to sell or to source, but to find intellectual capital-the world's best talents and greatest ideas." Will the students at our universities be chosen as the best and brightest in the world? Do our institutions of higher education do their very best to implement and evaluate those programs that are meant to provide our students the skills they need to be identified as intellectual capital in a global society? Among the skills students require most are those skills that allow them to communicate, cooperate, and succeed in cross-cultural engagements and experiences. Every institution of higher education should recognize this as not just a relevant issue, but rather a critical issue to address on campuses across the country.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Being a member of the Saint Francis University community, you know that in the recent past our university has taken steps to enhance its international programs. We now have a campus site in Ambialet, France, and our spring break and summer trips to places such as Honduras, Italy and London have been very successful. As a researcher, I am interested in knowing how our university is preparing our students to interact with those of different cultures around the world. My name is Kerri Golden, and I am currently an Assistant Professor in the Occupational Therapy department. I am conducting a research study on the development of Cultural Adaptability in students who attend Saint Francis. I would like to talk with students in the format of a focus group to ask how confident you feel heading into a workforce considered “global” and the development or change that has occurred since your freshman year in this regard.

You are being invited to participate in this research study. You are eligible to participate because you are a junior-level student at Saint Francis University, are a traditional-age student, and have lived on campus. You also completed the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory when you checked into campus in the fall of 2007. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to determine how the development of cultural adaptability occurred as a result of your student experience at Saint Francis. Please note that *participation or non-participation will not affect your status as a student in any course now or in the future*. If you have completed this consent form you are indicating willingness to participate in a focus group to be held in the JFK Lounge (or similar location) at a date and time that will be convenient for you. To begin, you will be asked to complete a very simple demographic form to collect some basic data about you. After that, the researcher will conduct the focus group. At the conclusion of the focus group you will be asked to complete the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), a 50 item questionnaire that you would have completed when you entered Saint Francis University as a freshman. Your total commitment to this research will not exceed 2 hours. If you would like to add anything to the discussion once the focus group is concluded, you are free to contact the researcher to do so. It is also possible that the researcher may contact you if any follow-up or clarification is needed.

You may find the learning experience enjoyable and the information may be enlightening to you as you will have the opportunity to discuss matters relating to culture, globalization and your experiences as Saint Francis University. The information gained from this study may help the faculty and administration understand what academic, social and other experiences at Saint Francis contribute to your development as a student in matters related to culture.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or Saint Francis University. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and your confidentiality will be maintained at all times. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the researcher. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and will have no bearing on your academic standing or services you receive from the University. The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity

will be kept strictly confidential. The focus groups will be tape recorded in order to analyze the content of them, but will be kept under lock and key until 3 years post-study, at which point they will be destroyed.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and drop off in 206 Raymond as soon as possible.

The researcher is currently a student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania as well as a faculty member at Saint Francis University.

Contact Information:

Researcher: Kerri A. Golden
Assistant Professor, Dept of Occupational Therapy
Leadership Studies
206 Raymond Hall
Loretto, PA 15940

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Cathy Kaufman
Professor, Administration and
126 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached _____

Best days and times to reach you _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date

Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Questions

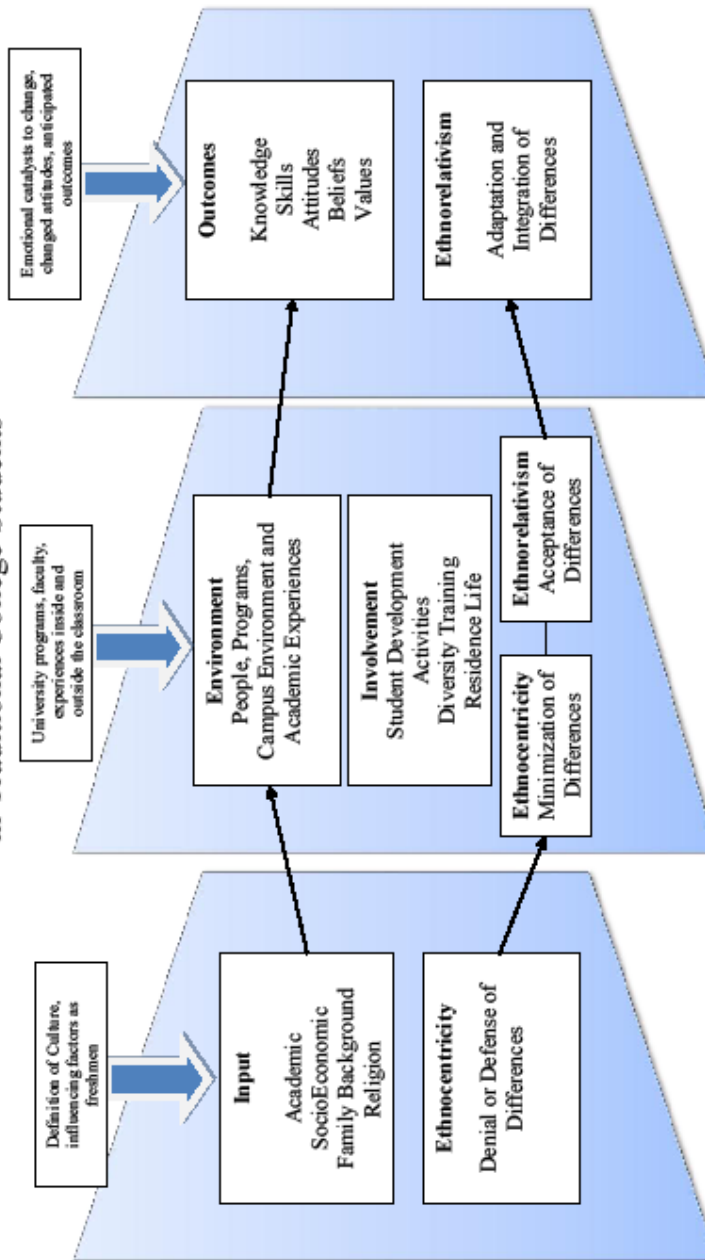
Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe your definition of culture when you were a senior in high school?
2. How do you define culture today? What do you consider to be elements of culture?
 - a. How has that definition changed since you came to Saint Francis?
3. Have you had opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with other people on campus with different views, beliefs, etc. than you?
4. How do you think our campus facilitates cultural understanding?
 - a. Are those means effective?
5. What *classroom* experiences, if any, have influenced your understanding of what “culture” means?
6. Describe the most significant *on campus* cultural experiences you have had since coming to Saint Francis.
7. Describe the most significant *off campus* cultural experiences you have had since coming to Saint Francis.
8. Describe the one *most significant* experience of your college life that affected your views and/or attitudes about people different from yourself.
9. What does the term “*culturally adaptive*” mean to you?
10. Is there a person on campus who you would consider to be “culturally adaptive?” What are the characteristics of that person that would lead you to identify them as such?
11. Is there a particular place on campus that naturally encourages acceptance and understanding of people’s differences?
12. How confident are you about heading into a workforce that is considered “global,” where you may have daily interactions with someone who is located in another country, or your job requires travel abroad?
13. [Using a visual of Bennett’s Model of Intercultural Sensitivity] Where would you place yourself on this continuum coming here as a freshman, and where would you place yourself today?

APPENDIX C

Proposed Model of the Development of Cultural Adaptability in the Traditional College Student

A Proposed Model of the Development of Cultural Adaptability in Traditional College Students



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