A Five-Year Retrospective Analysis of Student Learning in a University Diversity Course

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This paper reports the results of a qualitative study of seven students from the United States who completed a diversity-oriented university course with us in Spain in the summer of 2003. Analysis of student work and interviews conducted five years after the course provides insight into student' most significant learning experiences.

STUDENTS' LONG-TERM RESPONSE TO A UNIVERSITY DIVERSITY COURSE

A common goal of university education is to prepare students for today's culturally diverse world (Ference, 2006; He & Cooper, 2009). Accordingly, students need to develop cultural knowledge and awareness (Hopkins-Gillispie, 2009). Cultural immersion experiences are one way to support this objective. Despite recent interest in educating immigrant students (Olmedo & Harbon, 2010) and contentions that international experiences best foster understanding of cultural difference (Marx & Moss, 2011), university programs have incorporated a range of local through international experiences to help students become more culturally competent.

To become more culturally sensitive students and advocates for social justice, it is important to step outside of one's comfort zone and experience what it feels like to be the "other" (Hopkins-Gillispie, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011; Woodward-Young, 2008). Marx and Moss (2011) hold, "It is the feeling of not fitting into the dominant culture that creates the need for pre-service teachers to examine and consider the ways culture influences school contexts and interpersonal relationships" (p. 44). Cross-cultural experiences in university courses, from classroom simulations to more authentic local through international experiences–along with structured self-reflection–are commonly recommended to facilitate this professional growth (e.g., Ference, 2006; He & Cooper, 2009; Hopkins-Gillispie, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011). Field experiences are given high priority (e.g., He & Cooper, 2009). Ference (2006) asserts, "There is no substitute for experience in multicultural teacher education" (p. 12). However, the challenge is to find effective ways to incorporate reflective cultural experiences into university education (He & Cooper, 2009).

Marx and Moss (2011) note that research on study-abroad courses is limited because we as a field often do not know the long term impact of such courses on student learning. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to report the results of a qualitative study of seven undergraduate and graduate students from the United States who completed a diversity-oriented university course with us (the authors) in Spain

during the summer of 2003. This study is unique, however, because we engaged in follow up interviews with all of the students from the course five years after their course experience. Analysis of student work, including written reflections, and interviews conducted five years after the course provide insight into students' retrospective reflections on course content and experiences. The following research questions guided this investigation: What did course participants learn about cultural difference during a university diversity course? How did students describe various course-related experiences about issues of diversity five years after course completion?

BACKGROUND

We establish a conceptual context for our study by reviewing related literature that coalesces around three themes: scholarship on the purpose and types of cross-cultural experiences, student response to cross-cultural experiences, and characteristics of effective cross-cultural experiences. After reviewing relevant literature on cross-cultural experiences and discussing how our study relates to other work in the field, we introduce the theoretical lens–embodied cognition–that we use to frame and interpret our work.

Purpose and Types of Cross-Cultural Experiences
According to Marx and Moss (2011), "Teacher educators must challenge pre-service teachers' ethnocentric worldviews and prepare them to teach culturally diverse student populations" (p. 36). To achieve this important goal, both pre-service and in-service teachers must develop knowledge and awareness of cultural and linguistic similarities and differences, as well as empathy, flexibility, and adaptability founded on venturing beyond one's comfort zone to experience feelings of "otherness" and communicative frustration (Keengwe, 2010; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010; Santamaría, Santamaría, & Fletcher, 2009; Sharplin, 2010; Woodward-Young, 2008). Cross-cultural experiences can help develop this important foundation and afford students an opportunity to apply classroom learning (Keengwe, 2010; Sharplin, 2010). Some promote the specific importance of raising global intercultural awareness by providing international immersion experiences, such as study-abroad programs, that can build broader insights than domestic experiences alone (Marx & Moss, 2011; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010).

Efforts to provide prospective and practicing teachers with cross-cultural experiences intended to enhance professional ability to work with diverse students range from classroom simulations to local or international immersion experiences. Although the "gold standard" seems to be immersion experiences, in-class cross-cultural simulations may also help students gain insight and sensitivity into cultural difference. Woodward-Young (2008) uses a nonverbal simulation game called the Dot Game, which she says results in a powerful, transformational experience that helps participants understand outsider status and discrimination. This is one of many in-class simulations among classics such as BaFá BaFá (Simulation Training Systems: www.simulationtrainingsystems.com). Progressing farther along the continuum toward more authentic cross-cultural experiences is working or conversing one-on-one for an extended period of time with students whose backgrounds differ from one's own (e.g., Conner, 2010; He & Cooper, 2009; Keengwe, 2010). Finally, immersion experiences involve participation in an unfamiliar cultural setting that can be domestic or international, short-term or long-term, and of varying degrees of intensity and comfort. Wiest (1998), for example, had students individually complete a local experience of at least one hour in a setting where they were cultural outsiders. Lengthier domestic and international cross-cultural experiences, some of which involve living with a local host family, range from several days to several months and include such experiences as classroom observation and teaching, university study abroad, and seminars on relevant topics or presentations by "locals" (Brock et al., 2006; Ference, 2006; Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Marx & Moss, 2011; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010; Santamaría et al., 2009; Sharplin, 2010).

Student Response to Cross-Cultural Experiences
Interviews, observations, surveys, and reflective writing have been used to investigate the influence of various types of cross-cultural experiences. Results show that before participants embarked upon cross-

cultural experiences, many displayed lack of knowledge of and experience with other cultures, as well as apprehension, anxiety, and fear (Conner, 2010; Ference, 2006; He & Cooper, 2009; Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Keengwe, 2010; Owen, 2010; Santamaría et al., 2009; Wiest, 1998). They experienced uncertainty about what to expect and made assumptions about what they would face (He & Cooper, 2009; Keengwe, 2010). They worried about the effects of poverty, such as the availability of instructional resources, as well as proper protocols for their own behavior (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Keengwe, 2010). They anticipated possible hostility, aggression, and even violence (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Santamaría et al., 2009). Further, Owen (2010) notes, "Some had little or no understanding of their need to see the world from another perspective" (p. 18).

During cross-cultural field experiences, participants have been shown to exhibit culture shock and feelings of displacement and outsider status, resulting in some discomfort (Brock et al., 2006; Ference, 2006; Keengwe, 2010; Wiest, 1998). They tend to gain insight into their own stereotypes and biases (Keengwe, 2010). However, the experience helps them move beyond awareness; they develop greater intercultural knowledge and understanding, as well as improved attitudes and beliefs, such as less negative stereotype- or fear-based perspectives and greater acceptance of and respect for the students, families, and teachers with whom they come into contact (Conner, 2010; Ference, 2006; He & Cooper, 2009; Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Keengwe, 2010; Marx & Moss, 2011; Santamaría et al., 2009; Sharplin, 2010; Wiest, 1998). For example, 24 pre-service and credentialed teachers in a month-long, study-abroad program in Mexico progressed from initial journal entries that tended to be negative and focused on superficial descriptors (e.g., physical features of the country) to more positive descriptions addressing more substantive characteristics of people and culture (Santamaría et al., 2009). Others in urban settings expressed surprise to see a rich learning environment (e.g., dedicated staff and available resources) and strong intellectual potential in students (Conner, 2010; Kambutu & Thompson, 2005).

Participants in these cross-cultural experiences gained confidence in their ability to teach in a culturally different environment and better understanding that culture provides an important context for learning (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Sharplin, 2010). They developed greater acceptance of and sensitivity to marginalized and disadvantaged students, better instructional skills, and enhanced knowledge of how to connect with students' families (Brock et al., 2006; Ference, 2006; Keengwe, 2010; Santamaría et al., 2009; Wiest, 1998). Further, they reported greater inclination to want to reach out to and help marginalized students and schools (Ference, 2006; Santamaría et al., 2009; Woodward-Young, 2008).

Despite the largely favorable results of participating in a cross-cultural experience, some participants display ethnocentricity by evaluating what they see in relation to their own cultural background or exhibiting an "us-them" perspective by, for example, seeing themselves–but not their American Indian hosts–as Americans or talking of "regular/normal" schools in comparison with their host sites (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Santamaría et al., 2009). Others consider their placement school to be atypical of such schools (e.g., urban) in general (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005). Kambutu and Thompson (2005) concluded from their research that participants who had some previous experience with cultural differences in schools seemed to gain the most by being able to build from that experience.

Effective Cross-Cultural Experiences

Maximally effective cross-cultural experiences include a number of key elements. One is first-hand experience with a context in which a participant is the "cultural other" and experiences some cognitive dissonance (Connor, 2010; Ference, 2006; He & Cooper, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011; Wiest, 1998). In other words, it is an "inside-out" versus "outside-in" experience, the latter involving more removed experiences such as use of articles and films (Woodward-Young, 2008). Ference (2006) recommends experiences that take place in rural locations where students have personal contact with local people. Before participating in cross-cultural experiences, which should be carefully planned in advance to promote desired educational outcomes, students should have some type of explicit cultural diversity training (Ference, 2006; Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Keengwe, 2010).

An essential aspect of an effective cross-cultural experience is critical self-reflection, which might be guided to some degree (Connor, 2010; Ference, 2006; He & Cooper, 2009; Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Marx & Moss, 2011; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010; Wiest, 1998). This element includes explicit individual reflections and group discussions that take place during and after the experience and address personal cultural learning as well as connections to future students and classrooms. Participants should be provided appropriate support and guidance in a safe setting to process their cultural experiences (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Marx & Moss, 2011). To some degree structural supports for making sense of cultural content are already in place when immersed in an unfamiliar culture where "the desired cultural knowledge, skills and dispositions are in practice" (Kambutu & Thompson, 2005, p. 8). Nevertheless, students need someone who can translate local culture (Marx & Moss, 2011) and "home culture 'anchors' such as the security of small groups and a professor who will be there to guide reflections" (Ference, 2006, p. 23). This support is not intended to alleviate culture shock but rather to use it as a springboard to develop greater cultural competence and sensitivity, which includes analyzing similarities and differences among cultural groups (Kose & Lim, 2010; Marx & Moss, 2011). Finally, efforts to develop intercultural knowledge and awareness should include multiple and varied structured experiences over time to avoid an artificial short-term episode (Keengwe, 2010; Kose & Lim, 2010; Owen, 2010; Sharplin, 2010; Wiest, 1998).

Our work relates to the body of diversity-related scholarship in several ways. First, it supports the general call for more research to understand how cross-cultural experiences shape and influence students' understanding of issues of diversity (e.g., Marx & Moss, 2011). Second, like other university educators who have conducted cross-cultural immersion experiences, we built critical reflection into the cross-cultural experiences we designed for our students. However, our work adds several unique perspectives to the body of work pertaining to cross-cultural courses and experiences. For example, while many scholars have studied student response to cross-cultural experiences before, during, and after the experience (e.g., Kambutu & Thompson, 2005; Marx & Moss, 2011), we did not find studies that examined student response five years after the experience had ended. In our work, we re-connected with all of the students in our course five years after they engaged in the cross-cultural course/experience with us. Finally, our work draws on a unique theoretical lens (i.e., the work on embodied cognition) to sort out and sort through our students' retrospective perspectives on their cross-cultural course and experiences.

THEORETICAL LENS: EMBODIED COGNITION

We investigated participants' mediated meaning-making experiences about cultural and linguistic diversity in the 2003 diversity course they took with us. We structured the course so that students physically engaged in culturally and linguistically diverse experiences (i.e., they participated in a cultural immersion experience in the U. S. before living in Spain for a month). They then critically reflected on those experiences. We thus frame and interpret our work from an embodied cognition perspective (e.g., Johnson, 2007). The work pertaining to embodied cognition reflects the age-old dilemma about relationships between mind and body. As far back as the Greeks and Romans, scholars have argued that rational thought is "head knowledge" that should be separated from feelings and emotions (Marrone, 1990).

Current scholars argue that meaningful knowledge cannot be separated from embodied experience. Recent work in cognitive science and psycholinguistics reveals important links between mental images and motor processes (e.g., Gibbs, Beitel, Harrington, & Sanders, 1994; Wexler, Kosslyn, & Berthoz, 1998). Philosophers (e.g., Johnson, 2007; O'Hear, 1998) argue that any thorough account of meaning must consider the human body. Johnson (2007) holds, "Meaning grows from our visceral connections to life and the bodily conditions of life. We are born into the world as creatures of the flesh, and it is through our bodily perceptions, movements, emotions, and feelings that meaning becomes possible and takes the forms it does" (p. ix). He further asserts that meaning and mind are embodied at the biological, ecological, phenomenological, social, and cultural levels. Thus, in our work, we take into account the central role that critical reflection on bodily experiences had on students' long-term thoughts about, and

understandings of, course concepts.

CONTEXT AND METHODS

The work we report here is a case study. According to Stake (2005), a case is a bounded system. In our work, the bounded system was the course we taught in Spain in the summer of 2003. In this case, we sought to understand our students' perceptions of their experiences during the course and their retrospective perceptions of their learning about issues of diversity five years after the study-abroad experience.

The 2003 Course

The focus course for this investigation (cross-listed as an undergraduate/graduate course) was a diversity course that focused on literacy and mathematics instruction. It included both online and face-to-face components. The online component occurred in June 2003. Each week for four weeks, the students read one-fourth of Gay's (2000) text on culturally responsive teaching, wrote a paper reflecting on their reading, and discussed it online with their peers and us (their instructors). Additionally, each student completed a cultural immersion project during the month of June. The goal of the project was to help students develop greater understanding of other cultures by briefly experiencing what it means to be a cultural minority. For this assignment, students were asked to participate in a new (for them) cultural experience and write a paper that provided background details about the experience, their personal reaction to it, and how what they learned applied to teaching and learning.

The face-to-face component of the course took place in July 2003 in San Sebastián, Spain. The students and instructors lived in San Sebastián and met for an entire afternoon twice weekly for four weeks. During the month, students read, wrote about, and discussed books and articles pertaining to literacy and mathematics education for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Students also participated in various class activities geared toward helping them learn to provide effective, culturally responsive literacy and mathematics instruction for elementary children. Part of the class sessions were devoted to discussing how the students' own experiences living in a different culture, where they were language minorities, impacted their thinking about teaching U.S. children who do not come from White, middle-class, monolingual English backgrounds. At the end of the course, students took an essay exam with questions focused on assessing their understanding of culturally responsive literacy and mathematics instruction.

Participants

Seven students were enrolled in the course. Selected participant characteristics appear in Figure 1. Two students (Kelly and Sam) were practicing teachers. Ashley was a pre-service teacher majoring in elementary education. The remaining four students (Andy, Helen, Pat, and Vince) were undergraduates majoring in business or accounting.

FIGURE 1
PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED IN 2003 COLLEGE DIVERSITY COURSE

NAME	RACE/AGE	MAJOR/DEGREE LEVEL	RESIDENCE TYPE
Andy	White: 20	Business: Undergrad	Suburban Midwest
Ashley	White: 21	Education: Undergrad	Suburban West
Helen	White: 20	Business: Undergrad	Suburban Midwest
Kelly	White: mid-30s	Education: Grad	Rural West
Pat	White: 19	Accounting: Undergrad	Suburban West
Sam	White: 50	Education: Grad	Urban West
Vince	White: 20	Business: Undergrad	Suburban West

Two characteristics of the students stood out to us as course instructors. First, two students were considerably older than the other five. Kelly had been teaching for over a decade and was the mother of two elementary-aged children. Sam had taught for several decades. His wife accompanied him on the trip to Spain. Second, the students were from a variety of locations, and their majors were diverse. Students were from rural, urban, and suburban contexts as well as the West and the Mid-west. Both Kelly and Sam were working on master's degrees in education. The course was an out-of-discipline elective for four of the five younger students. Thus, students brought different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to class sessions.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

We saved all course- and student-related artifacts from the 2003 course. These included the course syllabus, course materials (including handouts), course lesson plans, class notes, submitted student assignments, and course grades. We archived and printed all online discussions pertaining to the course. Finally, we saved copies of all online and face-to-face course work. In 2008-09—five+ years after students had completed the course—we contacted the students, all seven of whom agreed to be interviewed about their 2003 course experiences. All interviews were transcribed.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the content of the interviews that we conducted over five years after the students participated in the course. In general, during the retrospective interviews, we asked students what they believed they learned about issues of diversity during the course and what they considered their most significant course-related experiences that shaped and impacted their learning. We read the interviews multiple times and identified and labeled themes and issues pertinent to each informant's learning about diversity as well as their perceptions of course-related experiences that impacted their learning. After analyzing each interview, we read and analyzed each student's course-related work and online discussion comments. We compared students' perceptions of what they learned with the course work they had produced five years earlier. Thus, we used each student's retrospective interview to direct our foray into that student's course-related artifacts. We created analytic memos (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) as we analyzed students' interviews and course-related work to discern common threads across informants' course-related experiences while simultaneously identifying what was unique about each informant's experiences.

RESULTS

We examined students' perceptions of different course-related experiences and how those experiences impacted their learning about issues of diversity. According to participants, three primary experiences were most significant with respect to their learning about diversity. These experiences included living in Spain, the cultural immersion activity, and class-related activities. Figure 2 presents an overview of the experiences students considered most salient, as well as the order of salience for each student. In the remainder of this section, we discuss each of these experiences in turn beginning with all students' most significant experience: living in Spain.

NAME	LIVING IN SPAIN	CULTURAL IMMERSION ACTIVITY	CLASS-RELATED ACTIVITIES
Andy	1st	2nd	3rd
Ashley	1st	3rd	2nd
Helen	1st		2nd
Kelly	1st	2nd	3rd
Pat	1st	2nd	3rd
Sam	1st	2nd	3rd
Vince	1st	2nd	3rd

Most Significant Course-Related Experience: Living in Spain

All students found that their experience of living in Spain most influenced their understanding of diversity. When asked about the nature of their learning while living in a different culture where Spanish was the primary language, the two teachers (Kelly and Sam) immediately related their experiences to their students. Sam said, "It helped me to see what my students may feel like (left out, different, confused)." Kelly stated, "The experience [of living in Spain] gave me an understanding of my students' struggles trying to communicate in a new language, and being frustrated, exhausted, and overwhelmed." Although she did not relate living in Spain to any of her intern teaching experiences, like Sam, Ashley, the pre-service teacher in the group, believed that the cultural immersion experience helped her understand what it is like "being an outsider, not speaking the language, not knowing the culture." Thus, both the practicing and pre-service teachers reported how living in Spain helped them to empathize with challenges cultural outsiders may face. In fact, Sam stated explicitly that living in a different culture where people spoke a different first language showed him "the importance of empathy."

The four business/accounting majors all suggested that living in Spain made them more open, adaptable, and tolerant. Vince talked about the opportunity to "experience new people, culture, and language." He said this was his first time outside the United States. Both Helen and Pat emphasized that they learned "new and different perspectives" as a result of living in a different culture. The trip to Spain was also Helen's first time to travel outside the United States. Helen stated that living in Spain helped her learn to be "more tolerant of others" and to be "less judgmental, less egocentric, and have greater sensitivity and cultural awareness." Andy said that he was "more open-minded regarding other languages and cultures." He thought he became more "patient and open to communicate with others—especially those who are different from me."

In essence, then, all seven students—regardless of major—explained that they gained sense of "otherness" as a result of living in Spain for a month. Regarding the importance of "otherness," Palmer (2007, p. 38) notes:

> As long as we inhabit a universe made homogeneous by our refusal to admit otherness, we can maintain the illusion that we possess the truth about ourselves and the world—after all, there is no "other" to challenge us! But as soon as we admit pluralism, we are forced to admit that ours is not the only standpoint, the only experience, the only way, and the truths we have built our lives on begin to feel fragile.

Palmer (2007) elaborates on the fruits of understanding otherness: "Otherness, taken seriously, always invites transformation, calling us not only to new facts and theories and values but also to new ways of living our lives" (p. 39). These "new ways of living our lives" can bear much positive fruit—especially with respect to teachers working with children. That is, when we, as teachers, can draw on our own transformed understanding of "otherness" in our work with children who enter U.S. classrooms from

diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, we are in a better position to facilitate our students' learning (Au, 2006; Howard, 2006).

Course participants discussed other benefits of living in Spain for a month. Four of the seven students said that living in Spain influenced their desire to learn and travel more. Vince and Pat said that traveling to, and living in, Spain gave them "the travel bug." Both Sam and Andy stated that they wanted to actively pursue "learning Spanish." Additionally, Sam said he wanted to "learn more about my Basque heritage and Spanish culture." Finally, both Vince and Pat talked about how living in Spain influenced their thinking about their careers. Vince became interested in "directing his academic work towards international business," and Pat became interested in "international law in Latin America."

Looking back on their course experiences five years after the fact, all students strongly perceived that living in Spain had the greatest impact on their learning about diversity. Further, each student had much to say about what she or he learned as a result of living abroad. Along similar but more limited lines, five of the seven students strongly expressed that their second most significant learning experience in the course was engaging in a cultural immersion activity.

Second Most Significant Experience: Cultural Immersion Activity

As shown in Figure 2, five students (Andy, Kelly, Pat, Sam, and Vince) reported that the cultural immersion activity in which they engaged was the second most significant learning experience in the course. Ashley considered this experience her third most significant experience. (Helen only reported her top two, which did not include this activity, so she is excluded from this discussion.) The goal of the cultural immersion activity was to help students develop greater understanding of another cultural context by briefly experiencing what it meant to be a minority in that context (Wiest, 1998). Students were asked to spend at least one hour participating in a different (for them) cultural experience and then to write and submit a paper providing background details about the experience, their reactions to the experience, and what they learned. Students were asked to engage in the experience individually. We gave students examples of experiences they could select, including—but not limited to—attending a cultural event, spending time in a gay bar (if they were straight), and attending a church service for an unfamiliar religion or which might be conducted in a foreign language. Students could propose other ideas. The key, however, was that students were asked to attend an event in which they were clearly a minority.

Interestingly, there was little variation in the events students chose. Ashley, Kelly, Pat, and Vince all opted to attend Catholic Masses in Spanish in their respective hometowns. Most parishioners at these masses were Latinos. Sam attended a Catholic Mass in Basque while in Spain, and Andy attended Catholic Mass in Spanish in Spain. All students except Pat—who said he spoke some Spanish but was not fluent—were monolingual English speakers, and none of the students were Catholic. All self-identified as White.

In addition to the fact that the students chose very similar cultural immersion experiences, we found it fascinating that they had vivid memories of their experiences five years after engaging in them. Some of their vivid recollections coalesced around the theme of being an outsider (Dilg, 2010). For example, Vince stated, "Being the minority [in terms of being White, monolingual English-speaking, and non-Catholic] rather than the majority was the strangest feeling I've ever had. I've never been the minority in anything." Ashley shared that she "felt completely alienated from this group of people…. I had feelings of not belonging and being different." Pat said, "I felt uncomfortable during the service. Members of the church would turn and stare at me as if I was an alien. This assignment…made me realize how hard it is to be a minority anywhere." Finally, Pat reflected, "This experience was something I will remember for a very long time because it was such a different experience."

Several students described how being outsiders made them feel extremely uncomfortable. For example, Ashley discussed how she was "intimidated, scared, nervous, and…completely alienated from this group of people. I had feelings of not belonging and being different." Similarly, Kelly said, "I was overwhelmed and trying too hard to understand all the time, and it was just overwhelming and exhausting." Ashley and Kelly do not stand alone in their experiences. Second language researchers have

documented the complex, intense, and exhausting process of striving to understand an additional language to which Ashley and Kelly allude (cf. VanPatten & Williams, 2007).

Kelly said the cultural immersion experience "opened my eyes to seeing different cultural events and experiences in my own local community." Kelly's insightful comment reveals that she now knows she could experience different cultures and languages in her own home community in the United States. In a related observation about how different cultural groups of people can live in the same urban neighborhood yet engage in no interactions, Hornberger (1992) suggests that, in some cases, the salience of social networks may transcend the importance of geographical location. Over two decades ago, Hornberger argued that individuals can live in the same community but be a part of such different social networks that barriers to potential interactions may be as great as actual physical location and distance. Unfortunately, this distance between races [Whites and Latinos in Kelly's case] is still prevalent in U.S. communities over two decades later. Dilg (2010) asserts that even as the U.S. "moves steadily toward a minority majority population [i.e., Whites are becoming the minority], many students have little opportunity to know each other across racial or cultural lines in their largely segregated neighborhoods and schools" (p. 11).

Andy—struck by how his lack of knowledge of Spanish impacted him during his cultural immersion experience—said, "I felt uncomfortable…mostly because of the language barrier. Mass took about 45 minutes, and in those 45 minutes I understood about two words!" Like most of the other students, Sam stated, "I was not invited into community with others. No one approached me…I was frightened, and I didn't know what to do during Communion." Describing the Communion experience in more detail in his cultural immersion assignment, Sam explained:

> The frightening part came after a time the priest showed us a cup and some bread. He told us many things about them, and he drank and ate from them. But then people began getting out of their seats and walking down the center aisle to the front. Most, some didn't. What was this…? They were receiving something from the priest, then returning to their seats. What do I do? Would I be found out? Would I be exposed, questioned? Others were not choosing to go forward. They were not being questioned. I would remain seated trying to appear safe. (Sam's cultural immersion paper, July 2003)

In previous examples, Andy, Ashley, Kelly, Pat, Sam, and Vince refer to the important social and cultural context of language use that impacts—positively or negatively—students' learning experiences (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). In short, the way the language learner is treated in particular contexts and the efforts put forth by knowledgeable others in the context to scaffold the language learner's experiences significantly impacts her or his opportunities to learn (Au, 2006; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). This, of course, has significant implications for our work with English learners in school contexts. When English learners are made to feel comfortable and welcomed in school contexts and when their learning is scaffolded effectively, they learn more about both language and academic content (Au, 2006; Casanova, 2010).

Only one of the seven students didn't perceive his cultural immersion experience as primarily challenging and stressful. Unlike his classmates, Vince's experience at the Catholic mass in Spanish was more positive. Even though Vince had "never been a minority" and "had no idea what was going on," support from those around him positively influenced his cultural immersion experience. Vince stated, "This was a very different experience, but those around me were very kind and understanding…. This…helped me to relax…rather than dread sitting there another minute." Providing a specific example of how those around him helped, Vince said, "The lady next to me gave me a little tug on the shoulder indicating for me to follow her." Vince's experience highlights the powerful role that cultural and linguistic mediators can play in facilitating an "outsider's" experiences in new (for them) contexts (Casanova, 2010; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). Further, part of what made Vince's experience more positive was the empathy those around him showed to him as an outsider. Clearly, this is a powerful lesson for monolingual, English-speaking White teachers who work with children from different cultural and

linguistic backgrounds (Au, 2006). Empathy and effective scaffolding can positively mediate learners' experiences (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978).

Third Most Significant Experience: Class-Related Activities

As shown in Figure 2, five course participants (Andy, Kelly, Pat, Sam, and Vince) considered class-related activities to be their third most significant experience in the course. Two participants (Ashley and Helen) considered class-related activities to be their second most significant experience. We asked the students what class-related activities they found most salient. Answers varied. We were again surprised at the students' ability to remember specific course-related activities five years after the course.

Two students, Kelly and Ashley, recalled that we (Cindy and Lynda) modeled various literacy and mathematics activities during the onsite portion of the course. Ashley said, "In Spain, both professors shared experiences about teaching math and literacy to English learners." Kelly described "face-to-face discussions in Spain where there was modeling of math and literacy." Pat, an economics major, recalled our instructional style: "Class in Spain wasn't lecture. It was a round-table thing. This was a foreign approach to me as an economics major."

In terms of the literacy aspect of the course, Ashley, Kelly, Pat, and Sam recalled Book Club activities (Raphael, Pardo, & Highfield, 2002) that Cindy led in class. Book Club is an instructional framework for using quality children's literature in the classroom. A central goal is to engage students in meaningful reading, writing, and talking about children's literature. The Book Club instructional framework first includes a whole-group instruction component during which the teacher provides instruction in some aspect of literacy (e.g., language conventions, comprehension, or literary elements). Second is a reading component that may include a read-aloud, silent reading, or partner reading. Third, students write in their Book Club logs about what they read for the day. Fourth, students get into small, peer-led discussion groups to discuss what they read and wrote about. Finally, the class reconvenes as a large group and debriefs about the small-group conversations.

We present a brief overview of two lessons when the students engaged in Book Club, an approach we used for both children's literature and expository text. In early July, the students came to class having read chapter 1 in *Book Club: A Literature-Based Curriculum* (Raphael, Pardo, & Highfield, 2002). In class, Cindy enacted the Book Club instructional framework using the children's book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (1995). Two days later, the students read the second chapter in *Book Club: A Literature-Based Curriculum* (Raphael, Pardo, & Highfield, 2002). They also read a chapter in a forthcoming book (Lapp, Flood, Brock, & Fisher, 2007) that focused on literacy instruction for English learners in mainstream elementary classrooms, highlighting one English learner named Deng—a Hmong child from Laos (cf. Brock & Raphael, 2005). During that same class, Cindy read aloud the children's book *Dia's Story Cloth: The History of the Hmong People* (Cha, 1995). (Note that some children's literature was also used for mathematics in relation to cultural difference.)

We suspect that Ashley, Kelly, Pat, and Sam recalled Book Club-related activities for different, but related, reasons. Sam taught many Hmong children in the Central Valley of California. Thus, it made sense that he remembered activities and readings related to the Hmong. In his interview, Sam stated: "There are a lot of Hmong people in Fresno, and I've had a number of Hmong students in my classroom. So, that discussion kind of really hit home for me, and I really liked that part." Thus, it was likely that Sam recalled Book Club because the discussion topic during Book Club was one with which Sam had a great deal of experience. Like Sam, Kelly and Ashley were also in the field of education. Kelly was working on her master's degree and she had been a teacher for more than a decade. Ashley was a pre-service teacher near the end of her program. Unlike Ashley, Kelly, and Sam, however, Pat was not in education; he was a business major. One reason these students from different backgrounds may have recalled Book Club is that their experiences were embodied. That is, rather than merely lecturing to the students *about* Book Club, Cindy and Lynda asked students to participate in the Book Club instructional framework numerous times during the course and to critically debrief about their experiences. In short, the manner in which the students experienced Book Club as grounded through simulation and situated action made it a significant experience that these students recalled years later (Bartlett, 2008).

Three of the seven students (Andy, Helen, and Vince) discussed a specific type of mathematics problem—partial-quotients division, sometimes called the ladder or scaffold division method—that Lynda modeled in class near the end of July. Vince stated, "I think that one thing that sticks out in my head that we talked about…[was] the math system that they use in Scotland. And I just remember learning that and seeing how it was done in a different place and, I guess, questioning how we do it here." Andy stated that "she [Lynda] had us do it…both ways [the way long division is done in Scotland and the United States] and see which way we like better, and I perhaps liked better the way the other country [Scotland] was doing their long division." Interestingly, all three students were able to connect this specific example to a bigger conceptual idea. For example, Andy stated that he is working as a builder with people from different cultural backgrounds. He said he now realizes that people from different cultures may not view mathematics concepts, such as ratio, the same way he views them. Both Helen and Vince noted that this example illustrated how people in different cultures do things differently.

As brief background, Lynda taught the students about partial-quotients division, an alternative to the standard U.S. algorithm for long division. (See example in Appendix A.) Lynda introduced this activity as follows: First, she displayed a completed example of a partial-quotients division problem and told the class this is how long division is done in some other countries, including Scotland. Second, she asked students to work with a partner (one group of three) to see if they could figure out the procedure for completing the problem. After discussing students' ideas and confirming the solution method, Lynda asked the class to complete a long-division problem using the partial-quotients method as well as the standard U. S. method. The students then discussed which method they preferred and why. They also addressed the fact that mathematics is a human-constructed activity that differs cross-culturally, in other words, mathematics is culturally embedded (e.g., Greer, Mukhopadhyay, Powell, & Nelson-Barber, 2009). This was one exercise among several Lynda used to illustrate this point.

DISCUSSION AND CLOSING COMMENTS

In this paper, we describe a study that makes a unique contribution to the professional literature on how diversity courses and cultural immersion experiences can influence student learning about diversity. Our research combines data collected during a 2003 diversity course with interview data from all seven course participants five years later. The two most significant experiences students named long after the course had ended were ones that engaged them fully outside of the classroom: living in Spain for a month and participating in a cultural immersion experience in the community. The students reported retrospectively that these two dominant authentic (or at least semi-authentic) experiences had caused them to feel "othered." They were outsiders who experienced confusion and discomfort but ultimately greater sensitivity to and acceptance of cultural difference. This response mirrors that which has been found in similar cross-cultural course experiences (e.g., Ference, 2006; Keengwe, 2010; Wiest, 1998). However, what is striking is how memorable and influential a course experience can be in the long run. The fact that students retained some essential learnings and recalled their emotional/psychological state five years after the experience is encouraging for the field of higher education.

Previous research conducted during or shortly after students had participated in diversity activities shows the importance of first-hand experience for furthering cultural sensitivity and understanding (e.g., Connor, 2010; He & Cooper, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011). First-hand, cross-cultural experience was the most salient factor in the long-term effect our course had on our students. Longitudinal student insights would probably have been less powerful with only in-class simulations as the dominant diversity-oriented activity. We thus return to our theoretical framework that suggests deep, lasting learning occurs within comprehensive physical experiences that merge cognition with emotion; in other words, well integrated learning is best promoted through embodied cognition (e.g., Johnson, 2007). Our instructional style with this course was also memorable. This seemed to be, at least in part, because the approach included high student engagement through participating in active tasks and class discussions. In a more limited sense, this again supports the idea of embodied cognition (through student active engagement, in particular) as a major influential factor in student learning.

Use of specific examples also seemed important to the course experience. Years after the course, our former students vividly recalled culturally embedded book characters and mathematics tasks. It may have also been beneficial that we explored cultural diversity through two specific subject areas, including one often not associated with cultural contexts (mathematics). In short, perhaps students needed concrete images upon which to build broader understandings; they did indeed connect the micro- to the macro- in processing course experiences. However, in line with other research on cross-cultural experiences (e.g., He & Cooper, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011; Olmedo & Harbon, 2010), we contend that structured reflection helped foster the types of insights students developed. This reflection was built into class discussions and student writings.

All participants in our course developed greater knowledge of and sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity in general. However, the two practicing teachers took this a step farther by relating their cultural immersion experiences to that of cultural minorities in U.S. classrooms, similar to what other research has found (e.g., Ference, 2006; Keengwe, 2010; Santamaría et al., 2009). They understood the cultural and linguistic challenges, as well as associated affective responses, that students face when their cultural background does not match that of the instructional setting. Guided critical reflection may be important to help make this connection, especially for inexperienced educators, such as pre-service teachers. This reflection should include self-evaluative sharing among course participants in order to learn from each other. For example, in our research, Vince's experience with his cultural immersion assignment differed from that of his classmates. His was more positive because some surrounding individuals shepherded him through the experience to some degree. This can help other course participants gain insight into the important role of insider assistance for making sense of, navigating, and feeling comfortable in an unfamiliar setting.

Despite our students' retained learning about cultural and linguistic diversity, we concur with others in the field (e.g., Keengwe, 2010; Owen, 2010; Sharplin, 2010) that students need multiple and varied first-hand cross-cultural experiences over time to promote broader and deeper learning. These types of experiences can occur within one's own community or an international setting. It is interesting that for their cultural immersion assignment all students in our course chose to attend a church service where they were cultural minorities. Was this because they lacked creativity in choosing an experience, found this choice most practical, or opted for what they considered a relatively "safe" experience involving a structured, audience-like setting that would require little to no interaction? Perhaps the broad array of possibilities for cross-cultural experiences that offer rich professional opportunities for students should be examined and ordered from those that offer the least to those that offer the most degree of culture shock. This way, students could be scaffolded appropriately along this continuum in experiencing cultural difference for the purpose of becoming more culturally responsive citizens.

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APPENDIX A

Partial-Quotients (or Ladder or Scaffold) Division

```
     7
    61
     -         10
   600          0
     1
    61
     -
    60         10
     1
    01
     -
    60         10
     4
     1
     -
    30          5
     1
     1
     -          +
     6          1
              ____
               12
     5          6
```

Answer: 126 remainder 5.