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Translating diversity from theory to practice: Evaluating the effectiveness of
experiential learning in the helping professions

by

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ABSTRACT

The literature suggests that helping professionals are not prepared to effectively meet the needs of increasingly diverse populations. Despite professional standards and multicultural training curriculums, translating diversity from theory to practice poses as a major barrier in acquiring multicultural competence. The purpose of this thesis focuses on increasing the competency of self awareness through an examination of how experiential learning impacts graduate students' perception of diversity.

Through the process of grounded theory, a model was identified to explain how experiential learning is processed, the impact on cultural empathy, and the long term effects of such learning. The emerging framework, **Challenging One's Notions through Cultural Experiential Processing Theory (CONCEPT)** is discussed along with the implications for the helping professions. Considerations are also discussed for experiential learning in curriculum that addresses cultural diversity.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Karl and to my parents, Beth and Jim Insley whose loving support and encouragement helped make this dream a reality.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that the new millennium will find helping professionals working with a rapidly growing clientele whose backgrounds are culturally different from their own (Arthur, 1998a; Sue & Sue, 1990). While professional standards have been adopted for working with multicultural populations, a struggle continues to exist in providing culturally competent services (Allison, Echemendia, Crawford, & Robinson, 1996; American Psychological Association, 1993; Canadian Psychological Association, 1996; Ponterotto, 1997; Weinrach & Thomas, 1996). Further, despite the inclusion of a multicultural training component, many graduates working in the helping profession report that graduate programs do not prepare them for adequately addressing the needs of multicultural clients (Arthur, 1998a). In effect, a large proportion of culturally diverse clients seeking services continue to be misdiagnosed or misperceived due to a lack of cultural competence by the professional (Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990).

In order to meet the present and future challenges of our shifting society, educators and professionals alike must address the need for a multicultural framework that will increase the competence by which multicultural populations are served (Sue & Sue, 1990). However, one of the primary challenges faced in increasing multicultural competence is discovering how to translate diversity from theory to practice. The extent to which multicultural training programs address the distinction between knowing *that* and knowing *how* has been identified as a major challenge in increasing multicultural competence (Johnson, 1987). Thus, while helping professionals may possess knowledge about multicultural populations, there

is a challenge in training professionals *how* to be competent in working with diverse clientele (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1996).

Several factors have contributed to the challenge of teaching helping professionals how to be culturally competent. First, the diversity within the meaning of the term 'culture' itself has been found to influence the way in which professionals perceive and respond to client needs (Draguns, 1996; Helms & Richardson, 1997). Second, the inconsistency surrounding the content and method in delivering multicultural training has contributed to a large degree of variation in the way professionals are trained (Leach & Carleton, 1997; Stone, 1997; Weinrach & Thomas, 1996). This inconsistency in training ultimately affects the degree to which multicultural competence can be assessed in training programs (Leach & Carleton, 1997). Third, a lack of emphasis on self awareness in education curriculums been identified as an important factor in the challenge of translating theory to practice (Sodowsky, et al., 1997). While awareness has been defined as a domain of multicultural competence, more attention has been given to building knowledge and skills in the education curriculum (Sue & Sue, 1990).

The Current Study

While the notion of awareness has been cited as an important construct in the multicultural curriculum, little research is available in terms of how student's perception of diversity is impacted (Helms & Richardson, 1997). Self-reflexivity is perceived as a fundamental component in terms of building cultural empathy by helping individuals to challenge their own personal frameworks, and is believed to contribute to the missing link between theory and practice (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Ridley & Lingle, 1996; Sodowsky, 1996; Sue & Sue, 1990). It is suggested that individuals who are not

aware of their own personal beliefs, values, and attitudes may inadvertently marginalize clients from diverse backgrounds simply because of a lack of self awareness and an inability to separate one's own world view from that of the client (McIntosh, 1988; Ridley & Lingle, 1996).

Experiential learning has been used in the education curriculum as a means for increasing self awareness and challenging one's personal framework (Fowler, 1994; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). This type of learning has been considered to fill a void in multicultural training programs (Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997). The advantage of using experiential learning exercises as opposed to traditional learning methods such as reading, lectures, and audio-visual material is that students are exposed to a multicultural experience and allowed to process and resolve information through an affective domain (Pope-Davis et al., 1997; Pruegger, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990).

It has been proposed that targeting self awareness rather than only knowledge and skills in multicultural training allows individuals to ultimately increase multicultural competence (Sodowsky et al., 1997). Thus, the goal of experiential learning is to remove cultural "blindness" which may interfere with the degree by which one is able to effectively work with multicultural populations (Pope-Davis, et al., 1997). However, these exercises are placed into the curriculum without a clear understanding as to how perceptions of diversity are impacted or whether there are any long term effects once in professional practice (Barak, 1990; Frykholm, 1997).

The purpose of this study is an initial exploration as to how experiential learning influences awareness of multicultural populations. It is proposed that the identification of the processes which take place during an experiential learning exercise will lead to an increased understanding of the

efficacy of such learning in multicultural training programs. In order to be accountable in training culturally competent practitioners, it is imperative that further understanding of the impact of experiential learning in terms of increasing awareness of diversity be explored. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature in order to develop the rationale for the current research. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to understand the impact of experiential learning on student's perception of diversity. Chapter 4 discusses the results which emerged through this inquiry. Finally, Chapter 5 links the findings of the current study to the existing literature and provides a discussion of the implications.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the literature is explored in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the rationale for the current study. The chapter begins by addressing the meaning of culture in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the diversity existing within this term, and how this variation impacts one's approach in working with multicultural populations. Second, the need for a multicultural framework in the helping profession is identified, in order to prepare helping professionals for the present and future challenges in working with diverse populations. Thirdly, the challenges faced in establishing multicultural competence are discussed. Fourth, the lack of attention paid to self awareness in multicultural training programs is targeted as a key component in facilitating multicultural competence. Thus, the use of experiential learning as a tool for raising self awareness is explored. Finally, the need for further exploration relating to the impact of experiential learning is identified in order to provide insight as to the efficacy of this type of exercise in multicultural training.

The Meaning of Culture

Understanding the meaning of culture is critical in defining how professionals perceive and respond to client needs. The concept of culture is based on a learned set of behaviors and meaning which transcends through generations (Carter & Quereshi, 1995). However, *who* comprises the multicultural population continues to be debated in the literature (Draguns, 1996; Helms & Richardson, 1997; Weinrach & Thomas, 1996). As the term 'multicultural' is often used interchangeably with diversity, ethnicity, gender, disability, and race, the multiordinal use leads to confusion surrounding the meaning of the construct (Fassinger & Richie, 1997; Stone, 1997; Helms &

Richardson, 1997). It seems that one of the reasons for this discrepancy in meaning relates to whether the term is perceived and applied as a specific cultural domain, or a more general construct (Stone, 1997).

Defining Culture: Specific and Broad Applications

The culture-specific definition tends to incorporate indigenous characteristics of one's culture, whereby racial and ethnic issues are considered to be paramount (Draguns, 1996; Helms & Richardson, 1997). A concern exists that defining all groups as multicultural will diminish the importance of addressing specific ethnic, racial, and sociopolitical factors inherent in professional practice (Helms, 1995; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Sue & Sue, 1990). Further, it has been suggested that this may perpetuate a monocultural perspective which leads to unfair treatment and discrimination in the helping profession (Sue & Sue, 1990).

However, defining culture in such specific terms can result in overlooking other societal influences that impact clients (Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Loya, 1997). A broader based application of culture refers to barriers of access for marginalized populations beyond the scope of race and ethnicity (Arthur, 1998a). Thus, it has been suggested that principles of multicultural counseling should be embedded within all therapeutic relationships (Pedersen, 1991b; Weinrach & Thomas, 1996).

Rationale for the Ideographic Approach

Pedersen (1991b) suggests that clients are not simply representative of one culture. Rather, an individual may collectively belong to a number of different cultural categories such as race, socio-economic status, and gender (Hansen & Gama, 1996; Ridley, Mendoza, Kanitz, Angermeier, & Zenk, 1994b). Thus, these different categories combine together in creating a unique

person, by which there exist several lenses to observe and understand human behavior (Pedersen, 1991b). Thus, understanding a client by simply addressing culture as a single construct would limit one's ability to fully understand the individual and their experience (Pedersen, 1991b; Ridley et al., 1994b)

Further, defining culture in broad terms allows for a more inclusive definition to exist (Arthur, 1998a; Ridley et al., 1994a). This idiographic approach has prompted the construct of multiculturalism to be referred to as the "fourth" force in psychology (Pedersen, 1991a). That is, in order for the helping profession to become more effective in working with diverse populations, the construct of culture must not be thought of as an element of the client but rather as the core for understanding an individual's experience (Sue, et al., 1998).

The Need for a Multicultural Framework

One of the most apparent reasons to pursue research regarding helping professionals in the area of multicultural issues is based upon the notion that as we approach the new millennium, individuals working in the helping profession are challenged in meeting the needs of increasingly diverse populations (Arthur, 1998a; Sue & Sue, 1990). It is reported that in the year 2000, a significant proportion of clients will be from culturally diverse backgrounds (Sue & Sue, 1990). Yet, with this new era rapidly advancing, there are serious questions posed about the effectiveness of helping services between clients whose backgrounds are different from that of the helping professional (Helms, & Richardson, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). Thus, there is an immediate need for professionals to evaluate how their practice addresses the increasing diversity of populations in our shifting society (Sue & Sue, 1990).

Professionals are no longer effective in practicing from a monocultural perspective (Sue & Sue, 1990; Vasquez, 1997). Rather, the plurality found in today's society requires culture to be considered as a fundamental construct in the contexts of professional practice (Sue & Sue, 1990). In order to meet this formidable challenge, professionals must expand their repertoire of competencies to prepare for working with clients who are culturally diverse (Arthur, 1998a).

Developing a multicultural framework is a necessary step in preparing for the present and future challenges of working in the helping profession (Grieger & Ponterotto, 1995; Pedersen, 1995). It appears that professionals continue to report low levels of competence despite receiving training in the area of diversity (Allison, Crawford, Echemendia, Robinson, & Knepp, 1994; Allison, Echemendia, Crawford, Robinson, 1996). This suggests that professionals working in the helping profession may not be accurately recognizing or responding to the needs of culturally different populations. Indeed, it appears that one of the reasons why service provision falls short in meeting the needs of diverse groups, is due to the often unspoken expectation for persons to "fit the mold". Moreover, professionals are frequently trained to meet the needs of the status quo, whereby individuals who fall outside of the norm are expected to assimilate into the realm of the service being provided (Grieger & Ponterotto, 1995; Pedersen, 1995; Vasquez, 1997). Ultimately, this bias in the helping profession has resulted in unfair and unethical treatment of clients from diverse backgrounds (Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995; Ridley et al., 1994a; Sue & Sue, 1990).

Identifying Help Seeking Behaviors and Attitudes

Historically, professionals working in the helping professions have

misperceived help-seeking behaviors and attitudes by culturally different populations (Leong, et al., 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990). It appears that professionals may not be aware that symptoms convey different meanings depending upon one's cultural background (Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Loya, 1997). Further, a mental health system based upon Western values may conflict with cultural values of different populations (Leong et al., 1995). Thus, professionals may be prone to misdiagnose, and provide inappropriate treatment (Allison et al., 1996; Leong et al., 1995; Malgady, 1996; Zayas, Torres, Malcolm, & DesRosiers, 1996). In effect, this may account for negative perceptions towards therapy by culturally different populations, in addition to the high prevalence of individuals who fail to return to therapy (Allison, et al., 1996; Leong et al., 1995; Malgady, 1996; Sue et al., 1990; Zayas et al., 1996).

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Encapsulation

Presuming uniformity across cultures in the helping profession creates a disservice to clients (Malgady, 1996). However, the adherence to the monocultural standards by helping professionals may be explained by ethnocentric ways of viewing clients (Pedersen, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990). Ethnocentrism is defined as "a psychological phenomenon characterized by the belief in the superiority of a set of values and a worldview that evolves from one's cultural, ethnic, or racial group. The groups that one identifies with significantly influence the way one makes sense of life experiences and establish norms for appropriate and inappropriate behaviors" (Daniels & D'Andrea, 1996, p.157). Whereas ethnocentric thinking may not be deliberate, the potential exists for life experiences of persons from diverse backgrounds to be seen as pathological (Sodowsky et al., 1997). In effect, ethnocentrism may pose as one of the greatest barriers in adopting

multiculturalism as psychology's "fourth force" (Pedersen, 1991a).

A major goal of the multicultural paradigm then, is to move counselors out of a culturally encapsulated view of the world. Cultural encapsulation refers to the tendency to make sense of the world according to personal experiences, values, and beliefs, and an inability to incorporate the client's world view, cultural socialization, sociopolitical factors, ethnicity, or racial identity (Daniels & D'Andrea, 1996; Sadowsky et al., 1997). This lack of awareness or skill to perceive situations outside of one's own worldview has been targeted for creating potential gaps in service which may result in the client experiencing feelings of vulnerability, frustration, dissatisfaction, or an unwillingness to return for therapy (Grieger & Ponterotto, 1995; Pedersen, 1995; Ridley & Lingle, 1996). Thus, culturally encapsulated counselors are more prone to reinforce the idea of "problems" or "deficits" attributed to diverse populations, rather than recognizing the many barriers created by society. This can be due to a lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness of such barriers, which may be invisible to the majority of helping professionals, who are from white middle class backgrounds (Helms, 1995; McIntosh, 1988).

Cultural Sensitivity and Perceptual Schema

Ridley et al. (1994b) propose that barriers experienced by clients with diverse backgrounds may be invisible to helping professionals due to a hypothetical structure by which cultural information is processed. It is proposed that cultural sensitivity can be conceptualized as a perpetual schema model which enables individuals to perceive, organize, and interpret incoming information (Ridley et al., 1994b). Thus, information which cannot be organized or processed into a perceptual schema will not have meaning and is consequently ignored or discarded. As a result, if incoming

information is not processed, there is more likelihood that the individual will not respond in a culturally sensitive manner.

This lack of impact on one's affect, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors may provide an explanation for the low levels of competence reported among helping professionals who have engaged in multicultural training activities (Ponterotto, 1997; Ridley et al., 1994b). However, little research has been pursued to validate the presence of a cultural schema or an understanding of how perceptual schema function in terms of working with multicultural populations.

The Dangers of Good Intentions

In effect, the culture bound professional may inadvertently marginalize clients from diverse backgrounds (Pedersen, 1995; Sue & Sue, 1990). Pedersen (1995) has further stated that culturally encapsulated professionals may be practicing unintentional racism. While professionals may be well meaning and caring, this covert form of racism is dangerous, because there is a lack of awareness or understanding between the intention and resulting action (Pedersen, 1995). Professionals must become aware that good intentions do not always lead to equal actions (Pedersen, 1996). This lack of awareness about the influence of culture on one's own behavior creates the potential for professionals to further oppress clients with diverse backgrounds, despite knowledge regarding concepts such as racism, equality and justice as applied to others (Sue & Sue, 1990). In order to provide effective services, helping professionals must become aware of their own cultural values and learn to differentiate between their own cultural experiences and those of their client (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). This cultural self-other differentiation is imperative in order to prevent the tendency to

impose the cultural values of the professional upon their clients (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). If professionals do not understand how their own cultural experiences have shaped their perceptions of reality, then it is impossible to understand and respect the client's worldview (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). Hence, the recent declaration in the area of counseling, "Counselor, know thyself!" (Sue et al., 1998).

Establishing Multicultural Competence

As societal needs are shifting, individuals in the helping professions must become competent in addressing the cultural needs of the clients they serve. The need for professionals to develop multicultural competence was first identified by Sue et al. (1982) in a position paper regarding cross-cultural counseling competencies. This seminal work provided a template for individuals in the helping profession working with clients from diverse backgrounds (Helms & Richardson, 1997). The premise of the multicultural framework asserts that the traditional Western paradigm in the mental health profession instigates further marginalization of culturally diverse clients who do not comprise the cultural norms (Helms & Richardson, 1997). The effort to communicate an immediate need for increasing multicultural competence was renewed by Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis (1992) a decade later after insufficient progress in training and professional development had been made (Sodowsky et al., 1997). In a call for action, Sue et al. (1992) provided a more detailed account of multicultural competence to be comprised. As a result, the domains of knowledge, skills, and awareness have been identified as the framework for establishing multicultural competence in assessment and intervention (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sodowsky et al., 1997; Sue et al., 1992).

As a result of the increasing efforts by prominent researchers in the field of multicultural counseling (Sue et al., 1982; Sue et al., 1992), professional organizations have responded with the adoption of ethical guidelines for working with diverse populations (American Psychological Association, 1993; Canadian Psychological Association, 1996). Thus, while the question no longer exists whether professional education curriculums should provide multicultural training (Ridley et al., 1994a), the challenge has become how multicultural training should be delivered in order to produce culturally competent professionals (D'Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Ridley, Espelage, & Rubenstein, 1997; Sue, et al., 1992). As has been suggested, teaching professionals about the importance of multicultural competence is much easier than teaching professionals *how* to be culturally competent (Johnson, 1987; Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Sadowsky et al., 1997).

Delivery of Multicultural Training

With professional organizations adopting ethical guidelines for working with culturally diverse populations, the quest for training programs to augment multicultural competence has been magnified. Thus, in recent years, multicultural curriculums have begun to increase at a rapid pace (Ridley, et al., 1997). However, even with the inclusion of standards related to multicultural training, many programs continue to lack direction and consistency (Bluestone, Stokes, & Kuba, 1996; Ridley, et. al., 1997).

In addition, studies demonstrating the effectiveness of such programs have only recently emerged (Bluestone et al., 1996; Leach & Carleton, 1997). While preliminary research has indicated that multicultural training impacts student's perception of diversity (Arthur, 1998a; Neville, Heppner, Thompson, Brooks, & Baker, 1996; Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997), providing a

multicultural curriculum is still in the early stages of development (Ridley et al., 1997). Heppner & O'Brien (1994) have found that students who recognized changes in awareness, were more open to differences, and had an increased interest in diversity issues upon completing a multicultural course. However, without knowing which characteristics are responsible for the change, it is difficult to move forward in defining a multicultural training program. Thus, educators continue to struggle to determine effective methods of training in order to increase and evaluate multicultural competence (Leach & Carleton, 1997).

Perceptions of Graduate Students

Graduates also continue to be challenged in meeting the needs of diverse populations (Allison et al., 1994; Ponterotto, 1997). Further, it appears that many graduate students do not believe that graduate programs prepare them adequately for the realities of working with culturally diverse clients. Rather, competencies are learned through "trial and error" practices with clients (Arthur, 1999).

In a recent Canadian study, Arthur (1999) confirmed that professional helpers were struggling with ways to offer effective services to a wide range of culturally diverse clientele. Some of the key findings from this study include the notion that while counselors recognize value conflicts between themselves and their clients, there is a lack of competency for moving beyond this level of recognition. Further, it appears that many counselors involved with multicultural clients do not access supervision or consultation regarding those cases. Those who do, report their multicultural competencies to be higher than those who do not (Arthur, 1999).

While multicultural training programs appear to be in the early stages

of development, there is an immediate need to establish concise content and method for delivery of such programs (Ridley et al., 1997; Vasquez, 1997). In effect, multicultural training programs must discover consistent methods in which to translate theory into practice, so that professionals are not left to resort to a “trial and error” approaches (Arthur, 1999; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1996).

Challenges in Developing Multicultural Training Programs

While the area of multicultural counseling is no longer considered an area of specialization in many graduate educational curriculums (Pruegger, 1991), there continues to be some resistance among programs in regards to the delivery of multicultural training (Leach & Carleton, 1997; Vasquez, 1997). There have been many suggestions in the literature as to why establishing an effective training program has been such an evasive task. First, many faculty members fail to recognize the relevance of a multicultural curriculum (Vasquez, 1997). In addition, the task of developing a multicultural component in the curriculum is often assigned to educators who lack experience and training themselves (Leach & Carleton, 1997). Finally, the essence of what the term multicultural implies to many individuals continues to indicate a strong political flavor many prefer to avoid for fear of offending particular groups (Sue & Sue, 1990). Thus, programs may avoid addressing multiculturalism due to a belief that focusing on culture leads to teaching stereotypes rather than challenging beliefs, values, and providing an alternative framework for approaching diverse populations (Leach & Carleton, 1997).

Curriculum Content and Methods

One of the major discrepancies in providing multicultural training is

defining how a course should be represented by both content and method within the education curriculum (Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997; Ridley et al., 1997). Firstly, while it has been mandated that multicultural training be integrated into graduate curriculums, the extent to which this integration should occur has not been identified (APA, 1993; Bluestone et al., 1996). Thus, it has been questioned whether one course is sufficient for establishing culturally competent professionals, or if a multicultural philosophy should be infused throughout the entire academic training program (Arthur, 1998a; Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997). In evaluating the advantages of a single course design, Ridley et al. (1997) have suggested that this method is easy to include in the curriculum, addresses specific issues relating to multiculturalism, attained competencies can be more easily evaluated, and a multicultural expert can be employed in order to teach the course.

While the single course method is currently the most popular in training, this process has been criticized for brevity and a lack of depth necessary to increase multicultural competence (Ridley et al., 1997). Thus, it has been argued that multiculturalism should be integrated throughout the entire program (Ponterotto, 1997; Ridley, et al., 1997). While it is believed by some that one course may not provide students with the necessary competence in working with diverse populations (Arredondo, 1994; Pedersen, 1991b), achieving the state of an infused multicultural philosophy in the helping profession is not without obstacles (Ridley, et al., 1997). Primarily, this appears to be due to the conflicting philosophy inherent in the traditional learning paradigm of graduate education (Leach & Carleton, 1997). A multicultural framework may not transcend the first three "forces" of psychology; psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistic psychology. Many

of the basic skills taught in graduate curriculums such as norms, independence, and person-centred counseling may not reflect other cultures, nor take into account sociopolitical barriers (Arthur, 1998a; Sue & Sue, 1990). In effect, there appears to be a need to redefine education curriculums in ways that are culturally responsive (Pope-Davis, Breaux, & Liu, 1997).

The Evolution of Multicultural Training Programs

It has been suggested that at present, many multicultural training programs operate at different levels (Daniels & D'Andrea, 1996). Graduate training programs evolve through a process, which may contribute to the challenges of delivering concise content and method in relation to multicultural training. D'Andrea & Daniels (1991) have proposed a model involving four stages in which multicultural training programs may progress. In the first stage *Cultural entrenchment*, traditional models of learning are present. The concept of worldview is not addressed, and counseling skills are believed to transcend culture. Stage 2, the *Cross-cultural awakening stage*, is where most programs exist in functioning (Leach & Carleton, 1997). This stage adheres to many of the beliefs in stage 1, but recognizes that traditional approaches may not always be appropriate for culturally different groups. The challenge exists in this stage to move beyond this acknowledgment and create change. While stages 1 and 2 are bound to a culturally encapsulated view, stage 3 and 4 operate on a level of conscientious. Stage 3 programs are identified as the *Cultural integrity stage*, where programs are operating in a transition phase. Multicultural courses are offered, whereby students are challenged to become aware of cultural issues and personal biases (i.e., privilege, unintentional racism, worldview, power constructs, and oppression). While this stage moves toward a

philosophical change in thinking, the traditional structure of the program continues to operate. The final stage, the *Infusion stage*, makes a paradigmatic shift to an intercultural program, whereby multicultural training is not a component, but permeates throughout the entire course curriculum (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991).

If graduate programs are operating at different levels, it would make sense that the delivery of programs would also vary. This may contribute to the challenge in defining a consistent course content and method, in addition to contributing to graduate perceptions of multicultural training. While many graduate students receive multicultural training, their level of competence may reflect the stage of development of the graduate program.

Assessing Multicultural Competence in Training Programs

In defining multicultural competence, Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis (1992) provide a conceptual framework for counselors relating to competencies and objectives deemed necessary for multicultural counseling. Each aspirational statement is followed by criteria listed under the headings of beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. While this framework attempts to develop appropriate guidelines for counselors, the challenge exists in translating these principles into competent professional practice. Particularly in the statements relating to beliefs and attitudes, counselors who are culturally encapsulated may not be challenged to move out of their existing framework. The objectives cited are mainly descriptive statements that may not target the reactions necessary in the affective domain. Thus, in addition to the challenge of defining course content and method in professional education programs, evaluation of multicultural competence remains somewhat vague and ill defined (Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995).

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methods

A number of inventories have been developed to assess multicultural competencies such as the CCCI-R Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory-R , the MCI Multicultural Counseling Inventory, and the MCAS-B Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale - Form B (LaFramboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991; Ponterotto, Sanchez, & Magids, 1991; Sadowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). However, while these appear to identify one's knowledge and skill level about multicultural issues, there often exists a challenge to capture the emotional reactions which significantly direct a persons behavior (Pruegger, 1991; Ridley et al, 1997). In addition, most inventories designed to measure multicultural competence are self report which are answered using a rating scale format. This may lead to individuals answering in a socially desirable manner, and may not reflect one's actual feelings.

The assessment of multicultural competence has been largely represented through quantitative research methods. While this method is useful for measuring some aspects of multicultural competence such as in the domains of knowledge and skills, qualitative methods may be necessary to understand what *processes* take place in acquiring multicultural competencies (Arthur, 1998a).

Understanding Process Through Qualitative Methods

Pruegger (1991) found that when evaluating awareness of diversity in student education, self report ratings failed to account for the personal meaning of experiences which were captured by more qualitative methods. Thus, it appears that in order to better understand the processes which impact perceptions of diversity in counselor education, evaluating subjective reflections and reactions may be an important component (Morgan, 1988;

Pruegger, 1991).

A parallel has been drawn in the literature between multicultural competencies and the basic philosophy and methods which guide qualitative research (Merchant and Dupuy, 1996). Qualitative research allows the lived experience to be explored without reducing the meaning into smaller units as quantitative research often does (Merchant et al., 1996). Principles of both qualitative research and the multicultural paradigm include self awareness, understanding the world view of others, and developing interventions appropriate to the client/participants needs.

An advantage of qualitative research is that the narrative of individuals allows for implicit cultural assumptions to become explicit (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Since the challenge remains of training students *how* to work with multicultural populations, rather than simply *knowing* about different groups (Johnson, 1987), qualitative pursuits may reveal an increased understanding of critical issues pertinent for translating theory to practice. The distinction between “knowing that” versus “knowing how” appears to suggest there may be different means in the acquisition of the three domains of multicultural competencies (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1996). Thus, uncovering the process which takes place during multicultural training may provide some clarity as to what should be included as content and method in the education curriculum (Merchant et al., 1996; Ridley et al., 1994a).

Emphasis on Knowledge and Skills

The previous discussion implies that more emphasis needs to be focused upon awareness in terms of increasing multicultural competence (Sue & Sue, 1990; Westwood, 1994). In contrast to the domains of knowledge

and skills, self awareness has received little attention in graduate educational curriculums (Sue & Sue, 1990). One reason for this apparent lack of emphasis on self awareness may be due to the importance placed upon knowledge and skills in traditional training programs (Sodowsky et al., 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990).

Sue & Sue (1990) suggest that the emphasis on knowledge and skills allow students to distance themselves from multicultural issues. The emphasis for learning is then placed on other groups, rather than on one's self (Sue & Sue, 1990).

The Concept of Self Awareness

It has been suggested that the present strategies employed for multicultural training may not invoke the emotional responses required in order to raise self awareness (Sodowsky et al., 1997). Thus, it appears that alternative methods of instruction need to be utilized in multicultural training. Activities targeting self awareness may be the key in transforming training material into personal meaning (Sodowsky et al., 1997). As the struggle continues for educators in raising multicultural competence among individuals in the helping profession, considering the importance of self awareness is timely (Sodowsky et al., 1997).

One of the primary reasons for addressing self awareness is to move counselors out of a culturally encapsulated view of the world. In effect, information which is retained as knowledge and skills, lacks the ability to master reactions, and an empathic understanding which is not culture bound (Pedersen, 1991b). Perhaps one of the highest hurdles in the area of training multicultural competencies is discovering how to translate knowledge into meaning for individuals. Ridley et al., (1997) argue that in order for

individuals to acquire multicultural competencies, simply understanding these issues from a cognitive mind set is not adequate. Material delivered through lectures, readings, videos, and guest speakers provide the listener with information that can be processed and intellectualized (Ridley et al., 1997). One of the potential barriers in acquiring multicultural competence due to the instructional methodology and learning activities, is that there is no personal meaning attached to the incoming messages (Ridley et al., 1994a). Therefore, the individual is unable to relate at an emotional level (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). Ridley & Lingle (1996) suggest, that this ability to attribute personal meaning and self awareness of information relating to multicultural issues is critical in order to increase the counselor's competence. However, despite the importance placed on cultural sensitivity, there is little to be found in providing direction for achieving this state (Ridley et al., 1994b).

Cultural Self-Reflexivity

In addition to developing a knowledge base relating to diversity, educators must also provide opportunities for students to develop cultural self-reflexivity, in order to separate one's own world view from another's (Sodowsky, 1996). Cultural self-reflexivity is referred to as a process of self reflection, and questioning of one's views and perceptions related to culture, and professional practice (Sodowsky, 1996). In effect, self-reflexivity allows the student to organize incoming information into meaningful personal experiences.

Self-reflexivity is necessary in developing empathy, which is considered a key component in becoming a more effective practitioner (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). While empathy has been thought in traditional paradigms to transcend culture, Ridley & Lingle (1996) argue that this is not

the case. Moreover, traditional empathy may further marginalize a client from a diverse background, because the counselor attempts to understand and respond in a culturally encapsulated fashion (Pedersen, 1995; Ridley & Lingle, 1996).

Empathy in Multicultural Training

Empathy is a complex term, for which many definitions exist (Ridley et al., 1997). Ridley & Lingle (1996) define cultural empathy as “the learned ability of counselors to accurately gain an understanding of the self experience of clients from other cultures - an understanding informed by counselors’ interpretation of cultural data. Cultural empathy also involves the ability of counselors to communicate this understanding effectively with an attitude of concern for culturally different clients” (p.32). Thus, empathy is the ability to both understand and respond to information in an empathic manner (Ridley & Lingle, 1996).

If one is to adhere to the definition of empathy proposed by Ridley & Lingle (1996), then it is assumed that empathy can be learned. Therefore, it is necessary to understand methods by which the development of empathy can be achieved. Without doubt, a need exists for training counselors in order to develop their ability to consider alternative perspectives of situations (Sue & Sue, 1996). According to Ridley & Lingle (1996), empathy is constructed by seeking out experiences which will enable students to evaluate and challenge their own personal framework, to become more aware, and to separate their own world view from another’s.

The Use of Experiential Learning in Multicultural Training

Filling a Void in the Multicultural Curriculum

It seems that traditional learning paradigms may not create experiences

for students to challenge their own personal framework and further develop cultural empathy (Pope-Davis, Breaux & Liu, 1997). The use of experiential learning has been suggested to fill this void in the multicultural curriculum (Fowler, 1994; Pope-Davis et al., 1997). Experiential learning has been considered a bridge between theory and practice (Byrnes & Kiger, 1990; Fowler, 1994; Frykholm, 1997; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Randel, Morris, Wetzel, & Whitehill, 1992). The advantage to this type of learning is that students must process their surroundings through an affective domain. This is not achievable through resources such as lectures, readings, or videos (Pope-Davis et al., 1997). Further, it has been suggested that student's awareness of multicultural issues may be the initial step in a process of acquiring multicultural competence (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994).

Immersion Experiences

Experiential learning may vary from activities designed to immerse the student in a culturally different environment, to exercises which can be simulated in a class room. Immersion experiences provide in vivo contact for trainees, and the opportunity to envelope oneself in a culture different from their own (Ridley et al., 1994a; Pope-Davis et al., 1997). Pope-Davis et al. (1997) suggest a model of experiential learning, whereby students are immersed in another culture for an entire semester. During this period of time, students participate in events with the identified group, in addition to journaling and presentations regarding their experiences (Pope-Davis et al., 1997). While the concept of a total immersion experience offers the ability for students to experience in vivo situations, there are some challenges for programs to meet this model.

First, there is no information regarding the outcome or impact of this

approach. Thus, a program identified in the early stages of D'Andrea & Daniels (1991) multicultural development, may not be equipped to manage the emerging issues faced by students. This type of experience seems appropriate for a more highly evolved multicultural program in the later stages of multicultural development. Unfortunately, completely infused programs continue to be relatively rare (Pope-Davis et al., 1997). Further, one must consider the realities of finances, competent faculty, and time to invest in such a task. This may in effect negate the possibility of utilizing this model.

It is also possible that students may become overwhelmed to the point where the new experience is "turned off". It has been found that students may experience culture shock and revert to their own framework in order to cope with the experience (Fowler, 1994). This might provide some insight as to why experiential learning has been shown to increase cultural encapsulation when used for multicultural training (Fowler, 1994).

Finally, the potential exists for the identified culture participating in the immersion experience to have challenges. This could potentially result in negative feelings toward the student and program. As negative perceptions of the helping profession currently exists among diverse populations (Allison, et al., 1996; Leong et al., 1995; Malgady, 1996; Sue et al., 1990; Zayas et al., 1996), students in training may inadvertently perpetuate this belief through maintaining a culturally encapsulated view of the world. For instance, students exposed to new learning situations who are not properly prepared, may increase dogmatic views when fear or uncertainty exist (Bruschke et al., 1993; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). Thus, the host culture may perceive the student in training in a negative light, further perpetuating

beliefs regarding helping professionals.

The Use of Simulation Games to Build Cultural Empathy

While the feasibility of a total immersion experience in most graduate training programs is questioned, the concept of simulation games may provide a worthwhile alternative. The use of simulation games provides a stepping stone towards preparing students for real life experiences (Fowler, 1994).

It has been suggested that the use of simulation games can bridge the gap between traditional learning and experiential learning using total immersion (Fowler, 1994). Simulation games are designed to remove the cultural blinders that create barriers in interacting with others from different cultural backgrounds (Pope-Davis et al., 1997). Simulation games have been used in cross cultural training as early as 1960, to prepare individuals traveling overseas (Fowler, 1994). Simulations have an advantage over other types of learning activities, in that students are able to experience real world situations in a relatively risk free environment (Fowler, 1994). Thus, students are able to both process and resolve new information prior to actual exposure reducing the risks of harm for both the student and the client (Pruegger, 1991).

The goal of simulation games, or empathy exercises, is not to emulate an exact experience by another (Grayson & Marini, 1996), but to develop an awareness and an understanding of the situation, and to move the counselor out of their own cultural encapsulation. Simulation games have been found to help students challenge and overcome personal biases existing in relation to diversity (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994), without the risks related to total immersion experiences (Fowler, 1994).

Research Using Simulation Exercises

Experiential learning has been rated as one of the two most critical elements for students in gaining multicultural competence (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). Thus, it can be assumed that the type of experiential learning exercise is indeed an important consideration. Sadowsky et al., (1997) suggest that these learning experiences should not only be designed to increase awareness of personal biases, but should provide students with a sense of mastery in resolving any powerful feelings. Further, experiential learning is necessary for effective self awareness enhancement.

However, at present the literature remains inconsistent as to the impact of empathy exercises on counselor competence. A study by Brusckke et al. (1993) found that the simulation exercise BAFA BAFA increased ethnocentric views in students. However, it should be noted that the student population consisted of business and communication majors. Thus, it is entirely possible that the focus of learning differs from the training received in the helping professions. Further, the study questioned the validity of the scale used to measure outcomes. The tools used to determine these findings may not actually measure constructs of ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and motivation. Alternatively, other researchers have found that the game BAFA BAFA increased awareness of cross-cultural issues (Gannon & Poon, 1997; Pruegger, 1991). However, these differences were identified through qualitative methods. In both studies, the use of experiential learning as an educational tool was not found to be statistically significant when compared to other instructional methods (Gannon & Poon, 1997; Pruegger, 1991). This indicates the importance of considering multiple sources of data in the assessment of multicultural competencies (Pruegger, 1991; Merchant et al.,

1996).

The risk of creating a culturally encapsulated exercise. In a study by Barak (1990), graduate students participated in an empathy game designed to increase trainees' counseling skills. Students were divided into groups and asked to respond to a written statement emulating a client concern. Next, groups were asked to choose the response of the client, the emotion experienced, and the cause of the concern from a multiple choice questionnaire. One group member then role played the scenario out for the rest of the class. Class members received a point for each correct answer in interpreting the role play.

From a multicultural framework, this empathy game may inadvertently create an environment which reinforces an ethnocentric approach to counseling. Barak (1990) discusses how the game conjured a competitive environment which was well received from participants. This reinforces a North American attitude that winning is important. Particularly in the area of counseling, this competitive nature surrounding empathy may create impulsive reactions by therapists who become engaged in a guessing game surrounding client thoughts and feelings. Further, professionals from diverse backgrounds may do poorly at this game, simply because of its competitive nature. This may be due to identified thoughts and feelings which are not congruent with those of the larger population. In a multicultural framework it must be acknowledged that there may be more than one "truth" to a situation observed by many participants. Rather than attributing differences in answers to right and wrong, individuals may simply ascribe different thoughts or feelings for the same situation.

Additionally, the empathy game employed was targeted at increasing

empathic understanding of counseling scenarios (Barak, 1990; Barak, Engle, Katzir & Fisher, 1987). It has been suggested that a counselor who does not communicate both an accurate empathic response, in addition to an empathic understanding may create a frustrating situation which harms the therapeutic relationship (Ridley & Lingle, 1996). The counselor may not be aware that their empathic understanding has not been communicated, and may become puzzled when the client displays frustration or resistance (Ridley & Lingle, 1996).

The role of the student. While it has not been determined, it may be that an empathy game which removes the student from the role of counselor altogether, may impact perceptions differently. Relying on a familiar role such as that of a therapist may not necessarily challenge counselors to become competent in working with diverse populations. Conversely, simulating the role of a client may not be the most effective method in raising awareness. Cosgray, Davidhizar, Grostefon, Powell, & Wringer (1990) conducted a study involving staff at a psychiatric hospital. The goal was for staff to experience a day in the life of an inpatient. Facilitators assumed the roles of an admissions clerk, a psychologist, a ward attendant, and a medication nurse. Participants were either exposed to staff who conveyed a positive attitude, detached/indifferent, negative, or a combination of positive and negative attitudes. The exercise was composed of a 45 minute simulation, and 45 minutes debriefing. Reactions to the exercise revolved around power and helplessness, in addition to anger and hostility.

Results indicated that direct staff commented negatively towards the experience, and were defensive regarding the facilitator roles and treatment received. Three months later, non direct staff reported a benefit from the

exercise, while direct staff were less likely to retain a long term positive change. Interestingly, the long term impact of experiential learning has been considered an important issue, but has received little attention (Barak, 1990; Frykholm, 1997).

These studies raise the question of whether experiential exercises should remove participants from specific roles in order to raise awareness of diversity. Simulation games which do not rely on the emphasis of roles in the helping profession may lessen the amount of defensiveness and anger participants feel towards a specific character. It appears that reducing these emotions may increase the degree of self awareness and understanding of the exercise (Cosgray et al., 1990; Grayson & Marini, 1996). Further, focusing on oneself may bring to consciousness personal biases which may exist (Sodowsky et al., 1997). By decreasing the amount of threat experienced by participants, there may be increased opportunity for self examination. Thus, exercises which are designed to focus upon self may result in personal shifts for students (Sue & Sue, 1990).

The Current Study

It is increasingly apparent that there is a need to identify effective methods of training for professionals in the area of diversity. In particular, self awareness has been identified as a key component of multicultural competence. As yet, the literature is sparse in evaluating how awareness impacts one's perception of diversity (Helms & Richardson, 1997; Westwood, 1994). It is thought however, that raising self awareness enables counselors to move out of a culturally encapsulated view of the world. Moreover, if counselors are challenged regarding their own personal framework, there is potential for other world views to be perceived.

The use of experiential learning has been cited in the literature as a method by which students can engage in the process of self-reflexivity, and increased self awareness. It appears that while experiential learning is accepted as a training tool, it is not yet clear *how* these exercises influence self awareness. While there have been some promising studies, many have only offered reflections by participants, and have not focused upon the process of change itself (Barak, 1990; Byrnes & Kiger, 1990; Fowler, 1994; Frykholm, 1997). This appears important to determine, in order to understand what processes take place during experiential learning. Currently, it appears that experiential exercises are placed into the curriculum without a clear understanding of how the student perceptions are impacted, or in what ways the exercise may create new awareness.

While it has been suggested that simulation games impact student's perception of diversity, there has been little research in the area of the long term effects (Barak, 1990; Frykholm, 1997). The need to include information as to the long term impact of experiential learning is necessary in order to ascertain the usefulness of incorporating these exercises into the curriculum. In addition, it would appear beneficial to understand how students fare in relation to cross cultural issues, once in a professional environment. Finally, understanding the long term impact of experiential learning would offer some insight as to evaluating awareness as a component of multicultural competence.

Chapter Summary

As professional organizations now adopt ethical standards relating to working with multicultural populations (APA, 1993; CPA, 1996), educators struggle with the challenge of training competent practitioners in the domains of knowledge, skills, and awareness (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992). In addition, professionals working in the helping profession continue to be challenged in meeting the needs of increasingly diverse populations (Arthur, 1998a).

It has been suggested that the lack of attention given to awareness as a multicultural competency has contributed to the present challenges confronting educators and professionals (Ridley et al., 1994a; Ridley et al., 1997; Sadowsky et al., 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). The use of experiential learning has been identified as a tool in order to raise self awareness about the influence of culture (Pope-Davis et al., 1997; Pruegger, 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990). However, despite the use of experiential learning situations in multicultural training, it remains unclear *how* students are affected, and what processes take place in this type of learning.

The aim of this study is to determine what impact a simulation exercise, BARNGA (Steinwachs, 1990) has on graduate students' perception of diversity. This study was guided by the following questions; First, how are participants' awareness of diversity issues affected by an empathy exercise? Secondly, what learning processes take place through participation in an empathy exercise? Third, what are the long term implications for practice once in a professional environment? Fourthly, in what ways are empathy exercises a valuable resource in the professional education curriculum?

CHAPTER THREE: THE METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the method of inquiry used to address the research questions proposed in chapter two. First, the rationale for choosing grounded theory as the qualitative research design will be identified, followed by an account of the researcher's motives for pursuing experiential learning as a topic of interest. Finally, the process by which data was gathered and analyzed will be detailed in order to provide the reader with a better understanding as to how this research was constructed.

Rationale for Grounded Theory

The decision for choosing a methodology is largely directed by the research question which is asked (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). In the researcher's opinion, this meant choosing a qualitative research design which would examine the lived experiences of participants. In addition, since the research question posed was related to identifying what processes take place in an experiential learning situation, grounded theory was considered to be an appropriate methodology.

Grounded theory consists of systematic procedures of analysis which allow the researcher to develop a theory that will withstand the criteria of scientific method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These criteria include: significance, theory-observation, compatibility, generalizability, reproducibility, precision, rigor, and verification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The purpose of grounded theory is to describe and interpret phenomena through constant comparison, whereby theory evolves during research and in between data collection and analysis (Rennie, 1998).

While the procedure of grounded theory is well defined, the process also requires the researcher to be flexible and creative in approaching the data

(Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In order to develop a theory which is grounded, the researcher must be able to ask questions, interpret and re-interpret the data, and possess insight in order to identify and explain new phenomenon emerging (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988).

Theoretical Sensitivity

An integral feature of grounded theory is the concept of theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to “the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to the data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.42). Thus, theoretical sensitivity refers to the personal quality of the researcher which is highlighted by the researcher’s understanding of the literature, professional experience, and personal experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Theoretical sensitivity also refers to an ability to identify what is important in the data and provide meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, the analytic processing of the data is beyond the level of description and is a continual process whereby theoretical sensitivity increases through interactions with the data (Corbin, 1986a). In order to maintain the balance between creativity and technique, Strauss & Corbin (1990) suggest that researchers continue to 1) ask questions about the data, 2) maintain skepticism regarding hypotheses arising, 3) validate ideas through the data, and 4) follow the procedures clearly outlined in implementing the methods of grounded theory.

The Researcher’s Lens

In terms of qualitative research, it is integral for the methodological framework chosen to fit the values and beliefs of the researcher (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990). It has become increasingly apparent that research is no longer regarded as a value free science (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Rather than being portrayed as the objective bystander, qualitative methods invite the participation and lived experience of the researcher (Kvale, 1996). This is deemed necessary in order to strengthen the research process and to examine researcher bias (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The Traveler Metaphor

Kvale (1996) refers to the researcher as a traveler on a journey whose purpose is to gain information about other people en route. This traveling metaphor provides an account of how knowledge can be created within a postmodern representation of the world. This "science" differs from logical positivism, in that reality is seen as subjective and based upon one's own beliefs, values, and experiences (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Thus, a belief exists that human reality is constructed through interactions with others where multiple meanings may exist about the world (Kvale, 1996).

Kvale (1996) suggests that the traveler embarks on the journey with the objective of re-telling the stories of others upon returning from the trip. Many people are encountered along the way whereby information is gathered primarily through social interactions such as conversations. While visiting foreign land, the traveler may deliberately seek certain sites or roam freely around different landscapes. Upon returning home from the journey, the traveler reconstructs the information from observations and interviews with others, in order to understand and share their lived experiences. Thus, these stories are remolded through the travelers interpretations and are validated by those who listen to the newly formed narratives.

While the journey itself may be the means to obtaining new

knowledge about the world, it is possible that the traveler may also change from the process. Traveling outside of one's own world may lead to self reflection, change in self understanding in addition to challenging existing beliefs and values held about the world (Kvale, 1996).

In terms of qualitative methodology, the goal for the researcher is to analyze stories from the lived experience of others in order to produce new knowledge and meaning representative of these collective narratives (Kvale, 1996). As interpretation is an important part of this process, understanding the existing knowledge which guides the researcher is seen as particularly critical in the process of qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). With this in mind, it first becomes necessary to provide some insight into the researcher's perspective about experiential learning before grounded theory is explained.

Personal Relevance of Experiential Learning

As a professional working in the field of traumatic brain injury, I was often responsible for providing training and education to a wide range of individuals and groups in the community. One of the challenges of this role, was trying to raise awareness and understanding of a disability whereby many of the effects are not physically visible. Often, individuals coping with traumatic brain injury are discriminated against and isolated due to cognitive, social, and emotional challenges.

In my opinion, perceptions of brain injury could be shifted by creating a simulated learning situation where individuals might be able to "experience" the effects of brain injury. I adapted an "empathy kit" which consisted of different simulations emulating various consequences of traumatic brain injury. The empathy kit appeared to become one of the most effective

portions of my presentations during training sessions and educational seminars. Individuals would often respond that these simulated learning activities were more meaningful than other methods of information. It appeared that these empathy exercises triggered a reaction in many participants that other resources I utilized did not.

While I placed importance on the use of experiential learning I was not certain of the impact nor whether these exercises had any effect in the long term. These became two important questions for me to understand. In part, this was due to the extent which I used such exercises in presentations and as training tools. Further, I believed understanding the utility of such learning would be beneficial in order to determine the efficacy of experiential exercises as a medium for learning.

When I entered graduate school, I enrolled in a course relating to diversity and quickly became attracted to the multicultural paradigm. The emphasis on self awareness and experiential learning were similar to my own beliefs about how meaning is created. During my own encounter with the simulation game BARNGA, I can remember the reactions I personally experienced during and after the game. I felt discomfort, anger, frustration, as well as being somewhat ashamed of myself for the way I had acted while playing. After all, it *was* only a game!

However, following this exercise, I was also more cognizant of how I acted and reacted towards others. The emphasis on self reflection helped me to realize how my own beliefs, values, and experiences guided my behavior and attitudes towards others. At one point, I had reflected in my journal "How can I really understand how an individual with a disability feels, if I have been unable in my own life to recognize barriers or limits I have faced...

How can I understand this situation if I am only responding from my own personal experiences and beliefs?"

Data Collection

As the simulation game BARNGA was already embedded within the graduate curriculum of the University of Calgary in a course on Equity and Individual Needs, targeting this exercise seemed most effective and the least intrusive means in terms of understanding the effects on future helping professionals.

Participants

This sample was targeted specifically because they were helping professionals in training and enrolled in a course which encompasses diversity. As the aim of this study was to determine whether experiential learning impacted students' perception of diversity, graduate students in training for pursuing a career in the helping profession was considered to be valid. Participants consisted of first year graduate students enrolled in the Department of Educational Psychology with areas of specialization in counseling, community rehabilitation, and school psychology. Participants were registered in one of two sections of a 7 week course relating to diversity, *Equity and Individual Needs II*, which was designed to target multicultural competencies in the areas of knowledge, skills and awareness. The content of the curriculum consists of theoretical knowledge, experiential learning to promote self-reflexivity, guest speakers, videotapes, and discussion surrounding the applications with diverse populations. This course is instructed by one professor who has expertise in the area of diversity education. This course was relatively new to the curriculum, and was the third time it had been offered by the University of Calgary in this format.

Participants were asked to take part in three stages of this study. While the course was a required component of the Educational Psychology program, participation in all three stages of this project was entirely voluntary and not connected to course grades in any way. Samples of the letter of invitation and consent form are found in Appendixes A and B.

First, students were asked to participate in the simulation exercise BARNGA conducted in the course Equity and Individual Needs II. Within 4 weeks of this exercise, students were invited to participate in an individual interview. Finally, students were asked to participate in one of three focus groups which took place 9 months later. The purpose of the focus groups was intended as a follow up in order to understand the long term impact of experiential learning. Participants were provided with the option of choosing which of the following stages they wished to participate in.

Stage 1: A simulation exercise. There were 26 participants who completed the simulation exercise BARNGA, including 3 males and 23 females. The average age of participants was 29.5 years. Participants were asked to describe their ethnic background. All participants identified themselves as Canadian with the following descriptors: 1) European, 11 participants, 2) Scottish, 3 participants; 3) English, 2 participants, 4) French, 2 participants, 5) German-Yugoslavian, 1 participant, 6) German, 1 participant, 7) Judao-Christian, 1 participant, 8) Polish, 2 participants, 9) Irish-Catholic, 1 participant, 10) German-Scottish, 1 participant, and 11) Chinese, 1 participant.

Stage 2: Individual interviews. One male and 21 females took part in the second stage of the study, which consisted of an hour long individual interview. This comprised 22 of the 26 students who had participated in the empathy exercise. While the interviews were scheduled according to times

convenient with participants, 2 participants reported that they were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts and busy timetables. In addition, 1 participant had indicated on the informed consent that they were unable to participate in the individual interviews. Finally, 1 participant did not respond to the invitation for an individual interview.

Stage 3: Focus groups. Finally, during the focus groups 9 months later, a total of 19 of the 26 participants originally participating in the exercise took part in one of three focus groups. These focus groups took place during a time when participants meet for a regularly scheduled practicum seminar. The determination of which focus group participants enrolled in was based upon which practicum seminar the student was registered in. Four participants who were from the school psychology program were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. Two participants had indicated on the informed consent that they would be unable to participate. Finally, 1 participant did not respond.

The Simulation Exercise

BARNGA. BARNGA (Steinwachs, 1990) is well known as a cross-cultural simulation game, and has been used most recently with preservice teachers in an effort to increase understanding of diversity (Frykholm, 1997). BARNGA is a card game designed to reflect cultural clashes and communication barriers which emulate real life situations (Steinwachs, 1990). The goal of BARNGA is to serve as a metaphor relating to cross-cultural interactions (Steinwachs, 1990). While participants make the assumption that everyone is “playing by the same rules”, subtle differences exist in the written instructions for each group of players. This is further complicated by instructions that players are not to communicate verbally or use symbols to

confer with each other. Ultimately, these seemingly minor complications quickly result in the breakdown of the game as players begin to move to different tables. In order to be successful playing BARNGA, participants must learn to become aware of, and reconcile differences in order to work effectively as a cross-cultural group (Steinwachs, 1990).

One of the advantages of this exercise, is that participants do not have to assume a specific role in order to participate (Fowler, 1994; Steinwachs, 1990). Thus, the outcome of this game allows participants to focus on self in addition to others. Focusing on self has been cited as critical in increasing multicultural competence (Sue & Sue, 1990; Sadowsky, 1996).

Critical incidents questionnaire. The use of critical incidents have been found to probe and articulate reactions of students in relation to multicultural issues (Arthur, 1998a; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). A set of focused questions related to the educational material are designed to generate meaningful experiences of students' learning (Brookfield, 1995). Students were asked to respond to the following six open ended questions: 1) How has this experience influenced your learning? 2) What was the highlight of this simulation? 3) What did you find least helpful? 4) Describe how you feel this experience may influence you as a professional. 5) What beliefs, values or attitudes has this experience challenged for you? 6) How will this experience potentially change your behavior? The use of critical incidents was used as a source of triangulating the data, in addition to providing another method of debriefing following the exercise.

Procedure

In terms of collecting data, grounded theory asserts that different types of data help to strengthen the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus,

four different ways of gathering data were utilized during this research. Data was collected during the debriefing portion of the experiential exercise in addition to written feedback obtained through the critical incident questionnaires. Individual interviews were then conducted, followed by the three focus groups which took place 9 months later.

Stage 1. During the second scheduled class of the graduate course Equity and Individual Needs II, participants engaged in the simulation exercise BARNGA. As this exercise was part of the existing course curriculum, the instructor facilitated the simulation.

The simulation exercise took place in a room set up with four tables, and four chairs at each table. Placement at the tables was according to where participants chose to sit upon arrival. Once all players were seated, a set of instructions as given in the game directions was passed out to participants, followed by a second set of instructions which were to be read 3 minutes later. Both sets of instructions contained intentionally detailed information in order to create a sense of pressure. Players were unaware that instructions varied depending upon which table one sat. This form of deceit was deemed necessary in order for participants to experience the intended communication barriers and clashes.

Participants were instructed to begin playing the card game. After several rounds had been played at each table, a whistle was blown. Players were told to move to the appropriate tables, and begin another round of cards. This process continued approximately 4 times. The purpose was to escalate the confusion and frustration of playing cards with others who had different rules. This also required participants to communicate and resolve differences through less familiar methods.

Following the exercise, participants engaged in a debriefing session. As debriefing has been identified as a critical component of experiential learning (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Sadowsky et al., 1997), discussions continued until participants decided there was no more to add. During the debriefing, the facilitator targeted participant's reactions regarding the experience. Student's perceptions relating to affect, problem solving methods, and other reactions were focused upon. In addition, the facilitator attempted to stimulate discussion surrounding implications for professional practice.

After the debriefing, participants were asked to complete the critical incident questionnaire. This was intended to be part of the debriefing, as it allowed students the opportunity to further share any outstanding experiences. The critical incident questionnaires remained anonymous. No identifying information was included on these forms. Responses were later analyzed for content and themes using an iterative coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The entire process with participants took approximately two hours to complete.

The purpose of stage 2 and stage 3 of this research was to have participants respond and reflect regarding their previous experience. The simulation exercise was videotaped in order to have participants reflect upon their experience. It was hoped that a window of opportunity would exist in order to observe the narrative of students as they retrospectively constructed their experience (Young, Friesen & Broycki, 1994).

Asking participants to watch themselves in a previous experience has been cited as a potentially effective means for gaining insight into beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Morgan, 1988; Young et al., 1994). While this type of procedure could not be found in the multicultural literature, the

methodology was identified in a study related to narrative structure in career development (Young, et al., 1994). The results of this study indicated that participants who retrospectively constructed an experience, were able to challenge “truths” which were perceived at the time (Young et al., 1994).

Stage 2. Within 1 month of the simulation exercise, participants were asked to take part in an individual interview for approximately one hour. This focused interview consisted of an interview guide designed to probe reflections about the simulation exercise (Kvale, 1996; Appendix C). The focused interview has been found to be effective in reflecting subjective experiences (Kvale, 1996; Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956; Morgan, 1988). This type of interview was intended to be both *thematic* and *dynamic* (Kvale, 1996). The researcher focused upon thematic probes which were designed to uncover personal reactions of the participant’s experiences. Further, the interview format was dynamic, insofar as the conversation was intended to keep the narrative of participants flowing.

During the interview, participants watched the videotape of their previous experience involving the simulation exercise. While participants were watching, the researcher engaged in an informal interview targeting themes such as thoughts, feelings, and reflections regarding the experience. In effect, participants provided a narrative of their previous experience which allowed for expansion and clarification of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors observed on the videotape.

After participants watched the videotape, the researcher asked three structured questions: 1) What observations can you make about yourself from watching the videotape? 2) After watching the videotape, what stands out the most for you? 3) What are your thoughts or feelings at this time

about implications for professional practice?

Finally, each participant was asked if there was anything more to add, prior to completing the interview. This allows participants the additional time to address issues which may have arisen during the interview period (Kvale, 1996). In addition, participants were given further opportunity to debrief once the audio tape recorder was turned off. Debriefing following interviews has been cited as important in allowing participants to make comments or ask questions which were not perceived as comfortable while being taped (Kvale, 1996).

Stage 3. The intention of the focus groups as a 9 month follow up, was not only to understand the effects of the exercise but to triangulate the data. Focus groups have been found to strengthen the data obtained in qualitative research (Morgan, 1988). Further, because it is not clear what impact experiential learning has on students in the long term, it was deemed beneficial to explore student's perceptions once in a clinical environment.

It appears that when evaluating the effectiveness of experiential learning, the literature tends to rely on the use of personal journals and responses to reflective questions (Pope-Davis et al., 1997). However, it was thought that the use of focus groups as an additional follow up measure to the experiential exercise may provide valuable information. Focus groups have been found to allow researchers to generate hypotheses based on participant feedback, in addition to receiving feedback from a previous encounter (Morgan, 1988). In terms of debriefing, focus groups may allow participants an opportunity to discuss issues at a date after there has been time to process information (Morgan, 1988).

Two weeks prior to the focus groups, participants were invited in

writing to attend one of three focus groups scheduled at a convenient time around another course (see Appendix D). In order to understand what the experience meant in terms of professional implications, the following probes were asked to facilitate discussion: 1) Now that you are working with clients in professional practice, what is your experience as you reflect upon this videotape? 2) What meaning does this experience have in your professional practice? 3) What have you carried forward from this previous experience? 4) What do you consider to be the professional practice implications of this exercise now? 5) Anything else you would like to share about your reflections about professional practice? Participants were shown a 5 minute segment of the videotaped exercise in order to aid in reflection.

Opportunities for Participant Feedback

One of the advantages of gathering data at varying times, is that the researcher is able to revisit participants in order to check out emerging hypotheses related to the data. This is considered important in terms of validating one's research methodology (Morgan, 1988).

At the end of the data collection and analysis, participants were invited to provide feedback on the grounded theory which had emerged from the data. In addition to the input received by participants in the study, the researcher presented the results for feedback to individuals involved in a research group at the University of Calgary. Seeking feedback from others not connected to the current study was deemed a critical component in further validating the findings.

Transcription of Data

A professional was hired to transcribe the individual interviews and focus groups due to the large amount of data collected. However, qualitative

research places an emphasis on transcribing one's own material as this process can be considered a means for increasing theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, the researcher transcribed 4 of the interviews which the transcriber had difficulty understanding. This provided an opportunity to be immersed in the data. It should be noted however, that all tapes were reviewed by the researcher and compared to the written transcription in order to check for accuracy. However, it should be noted that intermingling voices during the focus groups contributed to a small number of segments which were inaudible by both the transcriber and researcher. While each word was not understood, the researcher was able to extract the main theme when these incidences occurred.

Data Analysis

Continual comparison of ideas and concepts emerging from the data is central to grounded theory (Rennie, 1998). The researcher is constantly challenging ideas with new questions and re-interpretation of the data, thus confronting biases throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) identify four stages of the comparison method utilized in grounded theory; 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, 2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) reducing the theory and 4) writing the theory.

Coding is considered the primary technique for producing constant comparison of the data (Corbin, 1986a). In essence, coding allows the data to be deconstructed into smaller parts, conceptualized, then pieced back together in a new way (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The generative process of coding allows the researcher to "provide the grounding, build the density, and develop the sensitivity and integration needed to generate a rich, tightly

woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents” (p.57). Three levels of coding are identified in grounded theory: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding:

Open Coding

Open coding represents the most basic level whereby the researcher breaks down the data into discrete parts and compares for similarities and differences. The process of open coding takes place throughout data analysis, often alternating between axial coding since the researcher continues to identify and organize new categories and concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). At the level of open coding, many questions are asked in order to identify concepts, and develop categories and sub-categories which pertain to phenomenon. A category is considered to portray ideas and phenomenon at an abstract level, and is conceptually more powerful (Corbin, 1986a).

Initially, the researcher engaged in the process of open coding using a line by line analysis involving careful examination of the data and asking “what is happening here?”. Line by line analysis is considered to be the most generative, but is only necessary as a step to help the researcher begin to identify and name concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Once the researcher became more comfortable with the process and had generated a number of codes, the analysis within open coding moved to the level of coding information by paragraph. This was considered the most effective means by the researcher, as each paragraph contained an exchange by both the researcher and participant.

As the purpose of open coding is to ask questions and make comparisons in the data, each time a new label was identified it was compared to previous codes for similarities and differences. As the researcher

continued with this process it became possible to group concepts into several categories. At this point some labels represented properties or attributes of the category, while others were related to dimensions of the property. The process of identifying categories, concepts, properties, and dimensions occurred during early stages of analysis as well as in later stages.

Following the simulation exercise and after each interview, notes were taken about ideas, perceptions, and questions to reflect upon during analysis of the data. It was important during coding that the researcher referred to these field notes when engaged in open coding procedures. This was found to be extremely helpful in further identifying and asking questions about labels and concepts emerging in the data.

Axial Coding

Once a number of categories were in the process of being developed, the researcher began to incorporate axial coding in addition to open coding. Whereas open coding deconstructs the data, axial coding reassembles the data in new ways by linking categories and sub-categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding develops categories beyond the level of properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories at this stage continue to remain discrete rather than broad themes which emerge from the data later in selective coding.

The purpose of axial coding is to identify the 1) conditions which lead to the phenomenon, 2) the context, 3) the strategies by which the phenomenon exists, and 4) the consequences of those strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These features give categories or phenomenon rigor.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify the following paradigm model for axial coding whereby each category is linked by a set of relationships shown in

Figure 3.1.

The model is identified as a method for thinking systematically about the data. The researcher found this helpful in terms of balancing creativity and scientific method.

During the process of analysis, categories were further developed by identifying and organizing labels into the paradigm model. Subcategories were linked to larger categories and then verified against the data. In earlier stages of analysis, checking categories against the data often resulted in modifying the development of the category or identifying new ideas for categories. For instance, early in the research the concept of emotional reactions was identified within the category called 'negotiation' as a causal condition. It was later found when revisiting the data that emotional reactions should instead be represented as a larger category consisting of several subcategories. It appears that as analysis progressed, so did the correspondence between emerging categories and data.

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the highest level of analyzing data and is characterized by the integration of categories to form a grounded theory (Rennie et al., 1988). While this type of analysis is similar to axial coding, the process requires the researcher to become much more abstract.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) suggest that the first step involved with selective coding is identifying the story line. This pertains to committing to a brief description of what the main issue is within the data. Second, related categories are organized around the main issue or what is referred to as the core category. At this point the researcher must move beyond description towards conceptualizing and explaining the "story" analytically (Strauss &

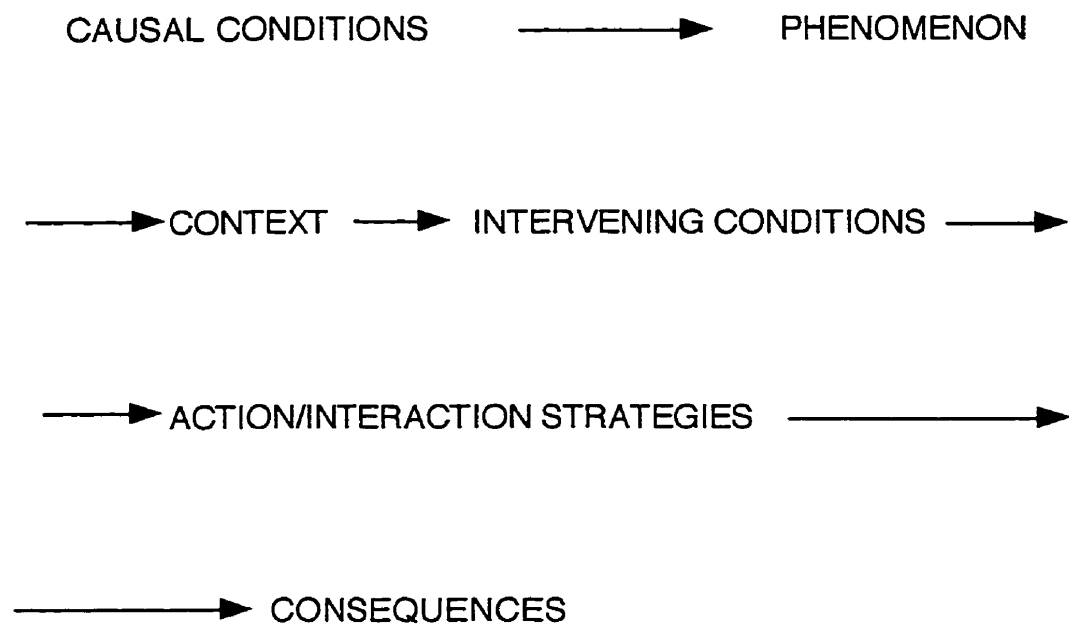


Figure 3.1. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) paradigm model.

Corbin, 1990). Relating these categories is accomplished by means of the paradigm model. The researcher must also validate the relationships identified in the paradigm model. Comparing one's model to the data is a crucial part of the selective coding process and is instrumental in grounding one's theory (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). This provides the opportunity for the researcher to evaluate their model and make necessary refinements to what are considered weak areas (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Cultural schema was selected as the core category since it was found to be the underlying theme connecting all categories together. Cultural schema represents the process by which participants receive, interpret, and respond to information. The cultural schema were found to exist at the level of self, other, and the condition. The self schema relates to personal beliefs, values, and experiences, whereas the other schema is an external frame of reference encompassing perceptions of the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of others. The condition schema refers to details in the environment which are processed during the experiential exercise.

Once cultural schema was identified as the core category, the paradigm model was used to link other categories together. An illustration is found in Figure 3.2.

The Importance of Diagrams

Diagrams of concepts are considered fundamental in developing grounded theory (Corbin, 1986b; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Drawing concepts throughout the research process was critical for this researcher to discover, identify, explore, interpret, and validate what was emerging in the data. These visual representations allowed for demonstrating the evolution of categories and relationships between categories. Illustrating thoughts and

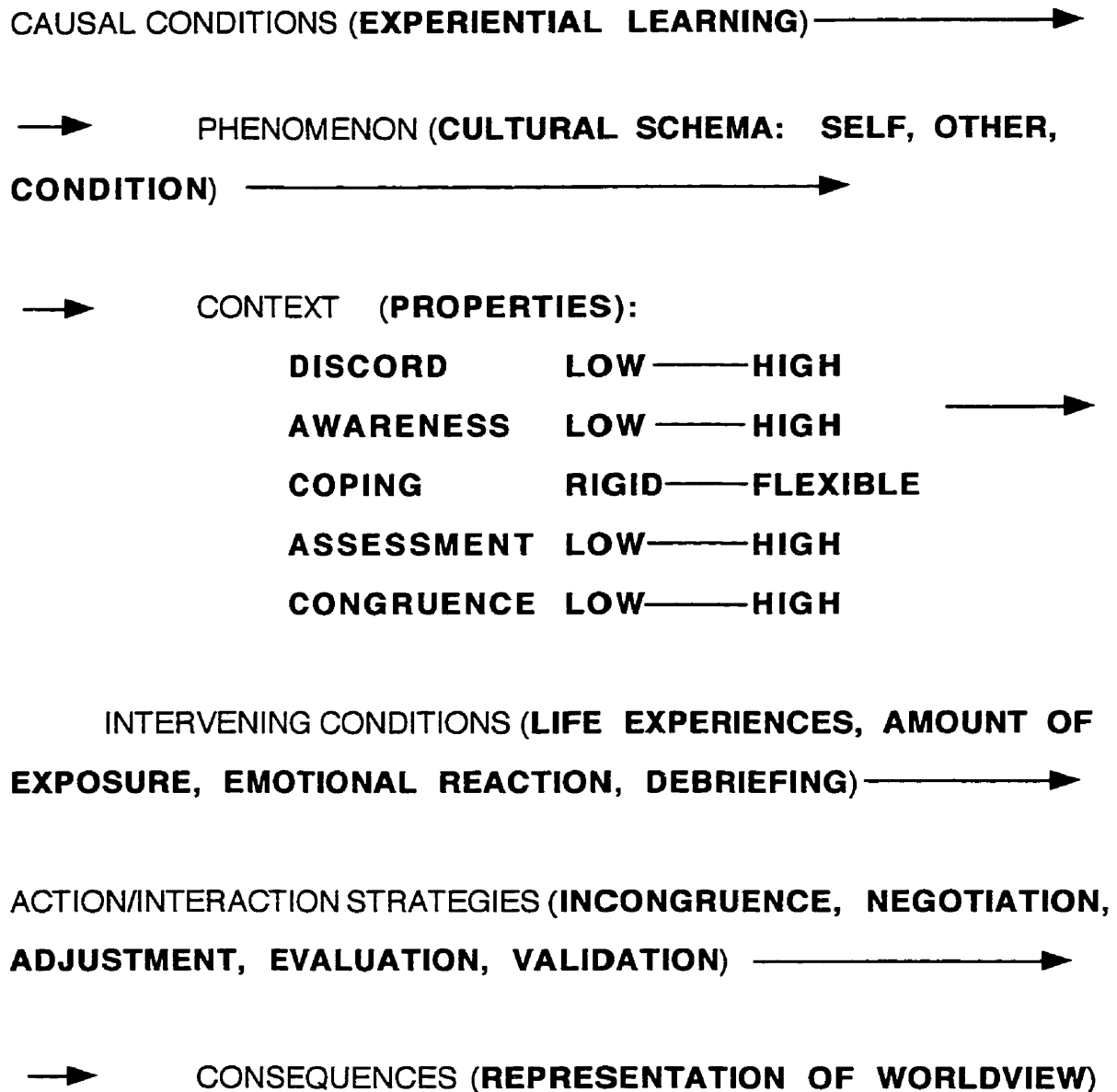


Figure 3.2. Selective Coding using the Paradigm Model.

concepts began early in the analysis of data with simple diagrams relating to single concepts such as fear, moving tables, and receiving instructions. These progressed by drawing links between categories such as the 'aha experience' and the 'roller coaster ride'. Later diagrams are more sophisticated with the emerging grounded theory becoming increasingly recognizable.

Representations of cultural schema, key events, and the development of empathy were developed in the final stages of analysis.

Process

Grounded theory is based on a transactional system which relies on actions and interactions, considered to be instrumental in formulating a rich theory (Rennie, 1998). Thus, the analysis must be able to explain changes and dynamic interactions in relation to the core category. One of the difficulties the researcher faced early on in the analysis pertained to the development of categories. It was later realized that the primary reason for this challenge was that the majority of categories were dynamically constructed. Process is considered a powerful analytic notion, but difficult especially for the novice researcher to grasp. Until the researcher was able to identify and work with the concept of process in the data, the level of analysis appeared to be narrow. Building the concept of process into analysis was critical, particularly since categories relied heavily on dynamics and change.

One way of conceptualizing process is to describe the phenomenon in terms of phases or stages (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In developing the grounded theory stages, phases, and multi level constructs were fundamental in explaining how participants processed experiential learning.

Theoretical Memos

The importance of theoretical memos has been identified as

fundamental in facilitating the process of grounded theory (Corbin, 1986b). Memos allow the researcher to reflect upon the situation, develop hypotheses about the data, and keep a record of the ongoing analytic process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Since interpretation and re-interpretation of the data are elements of analysis, it becomes necessary for the researcher in qualitative research to be self reflective in practice (Kvale, 1996). Personal beliefs, values and attitudes of the researcher shape the entire process (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Thus, it is integral that the researcher be acutely aware of how such biases may affect the process of analyzing. Reflective writing such as the process of journaling is considered to be integral in order to become theoretically sensitive towards the material (Corbin, 1986b). Keeping a journal throughout the entire process allowed not only for reflection, but as reminders and challenges of previous held interpretations. For instance, during the individual interviews I had written the following entry in my journal:

February 4, 1998

I need to focus in on the patterns that seem to identify *what* makes the experience meaningful for people. I found it interesting that this participant could not really think of any professional implications of this exercise. She was not aware that the rules were different for others nor did she move tables throughout the entire exercise - could be an important factor in processing the exercise.

For months, I considered that not moving tables during the exercise and being unaware of differences in rules were main contributors to one's processing of the experiential learning exercise. However, further reflection and revisiting of the individual interviews facilitated how these two aspects fit into the experiences of participants. In a later journal note I consider the following challenge of previous beliefs:

August 26, 1998

I had initially thought that those who had moved tables or had the a-ha experience of rules had a greater level of understanding. However, this does not appear to be the case. There is something else contributing. It appears to be *what* people do with the information regardless of whether they move tables or find out that others have different rules. Whether one looks at self or if they focus on others seems to be the key point.

A later journal note to myself demonstrates how the linking of previous ideas was critical in better understanding the process for participants. This journal entry is one of the later reflections when the data was in the final stages of analysis and represented a particularly enlightening period of my data analysis:

September 21, 1998

It makes so much sense now - I feel like I have been getting nowhere for months but my thesis vision has appeared! I have been confused because I have been looking at the events within the exercise to determine how one processes the exercise. But this is not the case. What people are identifying are descriptions of a process which takes place at different levels. All of the information in the interviews can be distinguished between cultural self, cultural other, and cultural context. While participants are involved in the exercise, they are constantly processing at these three levels which interact with each other to provide a perspective of the situation. This perspective is continually evolving throughout the entire process which enables participants to interpret the experience. Revisit the data and look for different examples of these three levels - and what influences their interactions.

Grounding the Theory

Once categories have become saturated and verified against the data, grounding the theory takes place. This involves laying out the theory either through diagrams or through narrative (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In grounding the theory, the researcher illustrated the process through a series of diagrams. These were validated against the data and with other graduate students involved in a research group. After a series of modifications based on feedback and verifying with the data, the grounded theory emerged. As

discussed earlier, the theory was presented to several participants from the study who volunteered to provide feedback. The grounded theory is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

This chapter details the method of inquiry used in understanding the process by which experiential learning impacts perceptions of diversity. Grounded theory was chosen to guide the research, as it was considered an appropriate method for exploring what processes take place during experiential learning. Grounded theory is a systematic procedure which is comparative in nature and designed to withstand scientific rigor (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Pursuing qualitative research requires the researcher to be an active participant in the process rather than an “objective bystander” common in more traditional research methods (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). The qualitative researcher is compared to a traveler on a journey whose purpose is to produce new knowledge and meaning based on the collective experiences of individuals encountered en route (Kvale, 1996). Thus, personal relevance for undertaking this study is included in order to increase theoretical sensitivity which is a critical component of grounded theory.

Participants in this study consisted of graduate students who were enrolled in a course relating to diversity and participated in the experiential learning exercise BARNGA designed to reflect cultural clashes and communication barriers. The study consisted of three stages; the experiential exercise, individual interviews, and three focus groups 9 months later in order to determine the long terms effects. The following chapter presents the findings which emerged through the process of grounded theory.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONCEPT THEORY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this study. Through the process of grounded theory, the process of Challenging One's Notions through Cultural Experiential Processing Theory (CONCEPT) emerged. The most challenging piece of constructing the CONCEPT model was the realization that *how* individuals processed the experiential exercise is multifaceted. Thus, the CONCEPT theory is defined by four domains which are described in this chapter: 1) Schematic Representation, 2) Process, 3) Outcome, and 4) Debriefing.

Schematic Representation

In analyzing the data collected through the debriefing, critical incident questionnaires, individual interviews, and the focus groups it became apparent to the researcher that participants processed information at different levels. In this respect, three frames of reference were identified: the cultural self, the cultural other, and the cultural condition which represent the core category of this grounded theory. The constant interaction between the three schema creates a lens through which individuals perceive and interpret the world.

Cultural self refers to one's beliefs, values, and experiences and is portrayed by the following statements: 1) *I realized from the very beginning I was not going to have that power. I was not going to be able to take charge which is my normal way of coping.* 2) *Oh, I'm feeling a bit apprehensive. I'm the type of person who, you know, I like to know and don't like to be free floating. I like to know where,when, why. So that was a bit scary.*

Cultural other represents a lens by which other's personal beliefs, values, and experiences are interpreted. Examples from the data illustrate

how cultural other is defined: 1) *I understand what they are saying, but they think that I don't understand what they're saying.* 2) *Yeah, and I was trying to look at people's reactions to what card I put down. And if someone reacted in a surprised or negative way then I would know that I hadn't got the rules right.*

The cultural condition relates to the environmental surroundings. As illustrated by the following statements: 1) *And then I knew I was also irritated because I lost one hand because we were at the lowest table number. I never got to move. I wanted to move. I never got to move.* 2) *It's like I can't express myself. If I were just talking, I would just tell her to move but I'm trying to show my opinion by wild hand signals....you can see in this example how it would be nice to just be able to use one word.*

These schema appear to be instrumental in allowing participants to organize information regarding the experiential exercise in a meaningful ways. As Figure 4.1 illustrates, these schema are interconnected, constantly changing and reorganizing with incoming information.

While the schematic representation shifts throughout an experience, it is important to recognize that the amount of overlap may either facilitate or block the degree of processing. As Figure 4.2 demonstrates, a large degree of overlap may not challenge an individual to move away from perceiving the world at a personal level of comfort. For instance, one participant commented: *That it was fun. Like I really thought it was fun 'cause I never was frustrated or anything. ...I wonder now if I had gone to a different table if- I don't think I would have sat down and said 'this is how it is'. I would have said 'how is it at this table?' I for sure would have done that. To me it was a table thing - at this table this is how it is.* In contrast, a lack of overlap may

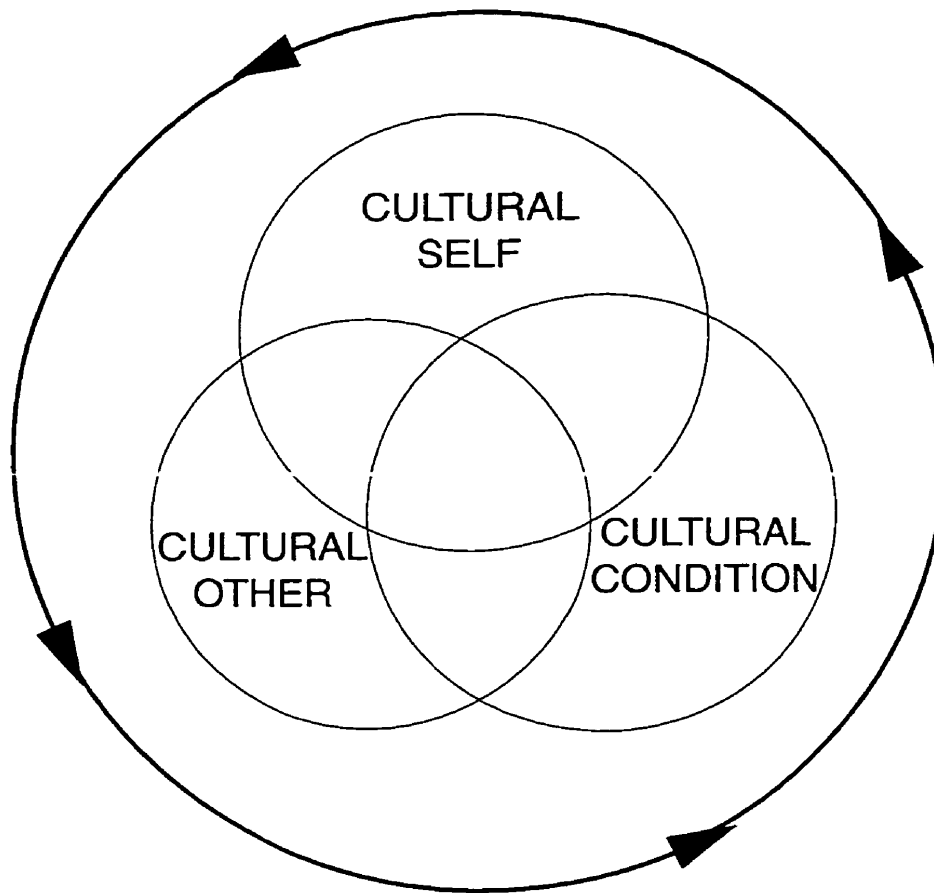


Figure 4.1. Schematic Representation.

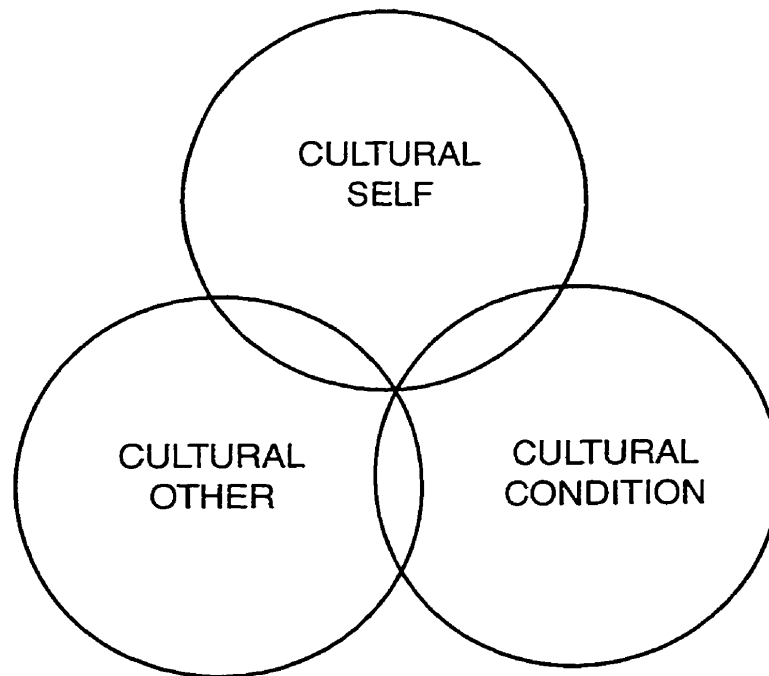
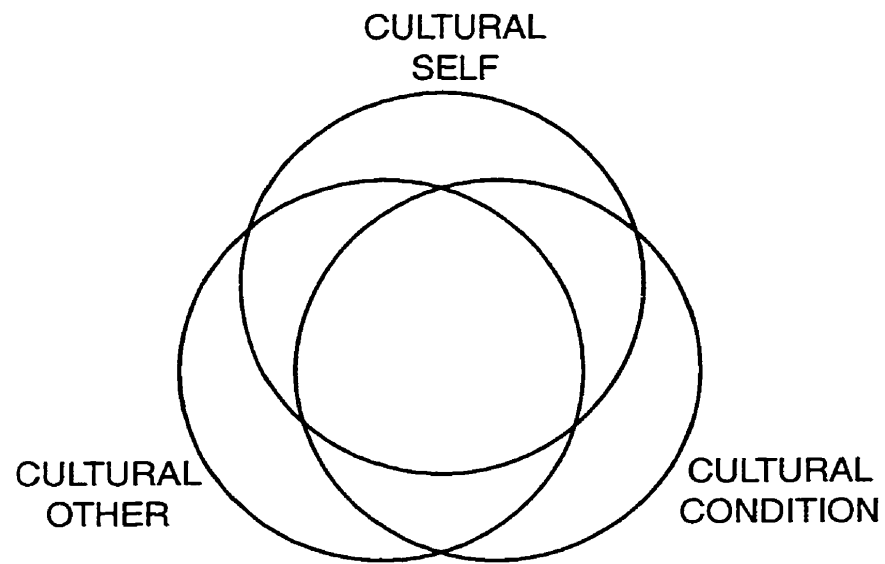


Figure 4.2. Influence of Schematic Representation.

contribute to an inability to internalize or relate to incoming information with personal relevance: *I know you asked [about professional implications] on the sheet. It feels like it's sort of a big jump, you know, from that exercise to think about education. I think that, if anything, that understanding that people have their own way of communicating...and it takes a lot of sensitivity and time and patience to understand each other.*

In effect, the extent to which the cultural self, cultural other, and the cultural condition are each reflected within one's schematic representation, largely influence the perceptions and actions of the individual. An imbalance of any schema may inevitably result in instances such as cultural encapsulation, unintentional racism, or cognitive dissonance. The data revealed that true empathy reflects the ability to be aware of all schemas; the cultural self, cultural other, and the cultural condition in order to construct a fuller representation of the experience. The impact of cultural schema on the development of empathy is discussed later in this chapter.

Process of Experiential Learning

Key Events

Process refers to key events which occur throughout an experiential learning situation. As Figure 4.3 illustrates, these key events contribute to the ongoing reconfiguration of one's schematic representation. Key events are processed at the level of cultural self, cultural other, and cultural condition. In lived experience, key events are intricately related to one another and work together to construct one's perception of incoming information. Five key events were identified during the data analysis: incongruence, negotiation, adjustment, evaluation, and validation. These key events influence how one perceives, interprets and reacts during the experiential learning situation.

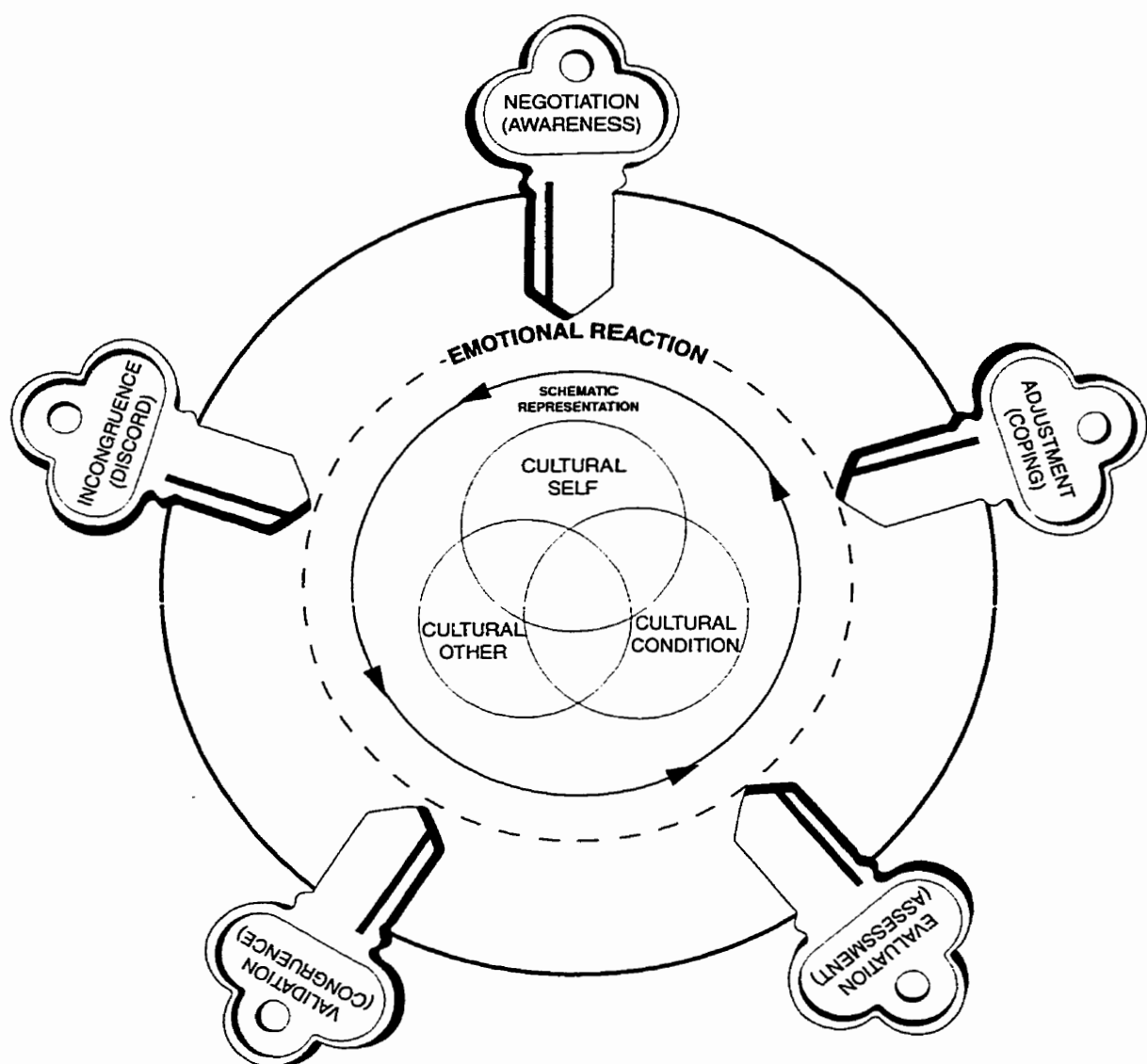


Figure 4.3. Representation of Key Events.

A critical component in determining the impact of experiential learning relates to the emotional reaction triggered by the key event. As illustrated in Figure 4.3, emotions act as a gate in facilitating or blocking the extent to which the experience is processed. While individuals expressed a variety of feelings in relation to the experiential learning situation, it was found that those who became “stuck” within an emotional reaction for the duration of the exercise were less likely to process key events at different levels of schema. The following examples from the data illustrate the gate keeping role of emotions during the experiential learning exercise: 1) *It’s a feeling of being lost and it’s very - very frustrating because it seems like you go round in circles.* 2) *I mean, she was at a different table but it’s almost like these people are going to start laughing at me...And I’m like, well, how come she’s laughing and having a good time and I’m sitting here feeling like crap...it’s almost like feeling hyper-sensitive to criticism. I was completely lost, I don’t understand what’s going on, I can’t explain to the other people and they are not helping me.* Thus, individuals who were unable to make sense of an emotional reaction were more challenged in interpreting the intended meaning of the experience.

In effect, it was found that if an individual is not ready to receive incoming information and the key event does not fit within the intended schema, the information may be discarded or processed by an alternate schema. For example, an individual who is not processing information at the level of cultural self may appear to possess a culturally encapsulated view of the experience. Similarly, an individual who continues to process all information at the level of self instead of cultural other or cultural condition may appear to be sympathetic in describing the experience.

Table 4.1 illustrates how each key event is processed along a continuum which is determined by the moment in time, the type of incoming information, which schema processes the information, in addition to one's previous experience and exposure to the situation. Movement along the continuums of key events is another important factor in determining how individuals process the entire experience. Participants who experienced key events in the same manner throughout the experiential learning exercise tended to be limited in understanding the meaning of the card game.

Incongruence

Incongruence refers to the amount of discord one experiences during the experiential learning situation. At the level of **cultural self**, incongruence relates to the level of self doubt or self confidence one perceives during the exercise. For many participants, this tended to fluctuate depending upon what was occurring during the experiential learning situation. One participant who was experiencing self doubt reflected upon the situation:

Well, I was feeling kind of left out 'cause I thought I read the instructions. I know what I'm supposed to do. I thought that I seemed to be out numbered. So I kind of went along with it. I just started to second guess myself.

Incongruence processed at the level of **cultural other** pertains to the expectations an individual has of others. Whether an individual experienced incongruence with others was dependent upon the amount of conflict perceived during the game. As would be expected, for most players the amount of incongruence with others increased as they began to play with those who had different rules. At one point, a participant related the following: *There's no sense trying to win this game. In fact, I remember thinking like 'just give it up, don't fight over this...just come to some*

Table 4.1
The Relation of Key Events to Cultural Schema

| Key Event | Theme | Cultural Schema | Continuum |
|--------------|------------|-----------------|--|
| Incongruence | Discord | Self | Low ——— High Self Doubt |
| | | Other | Low ——— High Perceived Conflict |
| | | Condition | Low ——— High Attached Meaning |
| Negotiation | Awareness | Self | Passive ——— Aggressive |
| | | Other | Reactive ——— Proactive |
| | | Condition | Low ——— High Competition |
| Adjustment | Coping | Self | Low ——— High Flexibility |
| | | Other | Individualism ——— Collectivism |
| | | Condition | Low ——— High Adaption to Environmental Demands |
| Evaluation | Assessment | Self | Low ——— High Self-Reflexivity |
| | | Other | Low ——— High Preconceived Notions |
| | | Condition | Low ——— High Observation |
| Validation | Congruence | Self | Low ——— High Acceptance |
| | | Other | Isolation ——— Solidarity |
| | | Condition | Low ——— High Level of Comfort |

agreement and maybe play another round'.

In terms of incongruence with the cultural condition, many individuals had preconceived notions about what a card game represented. The ambiguity and time pressure to master the instructions, inability to communicate, in addition to the level of attached meaning one related to cards influenced the amount of incongruence experienced. For instance, one participant commented on the personal meaning attached to the game which created incongruence during the experience: *Well, I love games. I'm a game person. So, I mean, I always want to win.*

Negotiation

The process of negotiation is action oriented and relates to the strategies used in terms of one's self, others, and the context which is presented. Awareness is the critical theme in terms of negotiation. At the level of cultural self, this relates to the extent of awareness one has about their own actions and reactions when communicating with others. A lack of awareness of cultural self during negotiation may result in an inability to recognize the amount of power and influence one has over the situation. Thus, an individual may completely take over negotiation or may not participate in the process at all. One participant reflected the following during an experience with negotiation: *I just barreled ahead not giving any time to that look of uncertainty or any concern to whether she knew or not 'cause I just assumed she did. And if she didn't, tough.*

In relation to cultural other, negotiation involves the amount of accuracy one has in interpreting the actions and reactions by others. For example, analysis of the data revealed a lack of awareness of the cultural other during the process of negotiation often resulted in increased frustration and

communication clashes with players. In addition, actions by others such as withdrawal or increased agitation were either not acknowledged or antagonized during negotiation. The following reflects one participant's account of negotiating with another player: *I just told her where to go and I was like 'what are you talking about?' She goes like 'is this high' and I was like 'duh'. I didn't even realize she didn't know. I never thought that maybe there were different directions.*

In terms of negotiating at the level of **cultural condition**, this relates to one's awareness of the stakes involved in the situation. Whether individuals focused upon winning or maintaining relationships influenced how individuals engaged in negotiation. The following example illustrates a participant who negotiating in terms of winning the game rather than focusing on relationships: *I thought 'I'm winning'. I was just trying to win, trying to focus on winning the card tournament, not on everybody else.*

Adjustment

Adjustment is a key event which encompasses one's coping strategies throughout the experiential learning exercise. While numerous coping strategies were used by participants, an important factor in determining one's ability to adjust to the situation is dependent upon the level of flexibility possessed at a given time. At the level of **cultural self** adjustment relates to the individual's coping style. The majority of participants ranged on a continuum from rigid to flexible depending upon the moment in time during the exercise. While rigidity was at times perceived by participants as a coping strategy, this form of coping was seen to stagnate the experiential learning process if engaged during extended periods of time. One example pertains to a participant who described the following: *So I was kind of just*

'winging it' cause like I said, I was kind of nervous when I read the instructions. So I thought 'well, maybe I didn't get it all fully but I'm gonna play and whatever works out works out'.

Adjustment in relation to the **cultural other** represents one's flexibility in terms of individuality or collectivism. Participants who were challenged in moving between these two poles had more difficulty managing throughout the experience. While many participants shifted between individualism and collectivism, it seems that participants who were able to recognize that the rules were different during the game, identified a distinct shift referred to as the "aha moment". At this point there appears to be a deliberate intent to move towards collectivism, and an increased ability to cope with the situation: *It's a very sort of conciliatory attitude towards others as well. I'm having a lot more empathy coming out for others and their circumstances. And feeling sort of comfortable myself. When I had the a-ha experience it was like suddenly there were no rules, I knew that was the rule.*

At the level of **cultural condition**, the process of adjustment relied upon adapting to various environmental demands throughout the experience such as moving tables, the demeanor of the facilitator, and the inability to communicate in a familiar manner. For instance, the following statement reflects adjustment at the level of cultural condition and relates to the experience of moving tables: *I'm still feeling pretty safe and secure because I was still at my table. I wasn't supposed to move again. I think that if I had moved I would have been even more anxious than the first time because then I would have maybe thought that I was going to a situation where the rules were not the same.*

Evaluation

Evaluation relates to one's ability to assess and interpret information in terms of cultural self, cultural other, and the cultural condition in order to establish meaning. This key event is contingent upon the extent to which one is able to generate hypotheses about situations. Evaluation of cultural self involves asking "What am I doing?". The process of questioning oneself is dependent upon the level of self-reflexivity and openness to challenge personal assumptions. The spectrum between lack of self-reflexivity and ability to reflect upon one's own behavior ranges for individuals and is also linked to the situation at hand. One participant identified the following: *I remember a moment when I thought 'okay, I know what is going on here. We each think a different card is a high card or whatever the trump card is.'*

At the level of cultural other, the focus is upon asking "What are others doing?". Assessment continues throughout the experience and ranges depending on the extent of one's openness to the experience of others. While many participants had preconceived notions about others during the exercise, those who were able to put judgments aside in order to work with others were found to be more effective in uncovering the intended purpose of the exercise. One participant reflected: *But I was like, 'what are you doing?' Like I was starting to get the sense of 'okay you are doing this wrong'.*

Evaluating the cultural condition relies upon participants' questioning "What is going on here?" Participants who were able to observe the context and begin a process of problem solving were less likely to become "stuck" in their assessment of the situation. In terms of evaluation, the extent to which one's preconceived notions interfere with the ability to generate alternate hypotheses was instrumental in either blocking or facilitating the processing

of the key event. One participant realized the purpose of the game when there was a conscious effort to remove the focus away from the emotional reaction experienced: *I just sort of talked myself out of it and it sort of took the focus off of me and my emotions. And then I realized that some of the other people are looking and acting just as confused as I felt. And that was when I started thinking 'it's not just me it is the rules'.*

Validation

Validation refers to the perceived congruency or acceptance experienced during the experiential learning situation. Validation is instrumental in reinforcing future beliefs and attitudes about the experience. Validation of cultural self involves the degree of acceptance one has of their own actions, thoughts, and feelings. Individuals who felt validated during the experiential process experienced a comfort level which reinforced thoughts, behaviors, and actions. Validation tended to fluctuate for most participants throughout the experiential exercise. High validation early in the game which continued until the end tended to result in ethnocentric behavior. One participant identified the following reflection during the later stage of the game: *I felt more comfortable, more competent just higher self esteem. Like it doesn't really matter who these people are, I'm okay with myself.*

In terms of cultural other, validation encompasses the extent to which one perceives congruence with others. Most participants experienced various degrees of congruence ranging from isolation to solidarity. An experience of solidarity is reflected in the following statement: *And here I was drawing a heart and I was drawing pedestals. And first place was hearts 'cause I thought hearts was first in our game. And I was like drawing pedestals for first,*

second, and third place. Everyone liked that idea so I felt like part of the group.

At the level of **cultural condition**, validation reflects the amount of acceptance one has for the surrounding context. For instance, participants who perceived the condition as chaotic were less likely to experience validation of the cultural condition. One participant relates to the lack of impact the whistle blowing had: *It didn't bother me. Like to me that's normal in terms of a game. That's the way it goes. I knew we had to move around.*

The Influence of Key Events

In summary, key events which take place during the experiential learning situation influence the outcome, or how the individual perceives and interprets the experience. The impact of the event depends largely upon the degree to which the key event is processed in addition to whether the information is internalized at the level of cultural self or externalized through the cultural other and cultural condition schemas. For instance, it appeared that when individuals externalized key events more often than internalized, instances of cognitive dissonance and cultural encapsulation were identified. In contrast, key events which were processed internally with little externalization resulted in a sympathetic attitude and an inability to separate self from other. Participants who were able to process various experiences at each level of schema were more likely to fully realize the purpose of the experiential exercise.

Outcome of Experiential Learning

While process refers to the key events which influence one's perception during an experience, outcome relates to a series of stages or worldviews an individual may move through depending upon the impact of

the encounter. In effect, the outcome portion of the **CONCEPT** model pertains to the development of empathy.

The Development of Empathy

As illustrated by Figure 4.4, the development of empathy is portrayed by a cone shaped structure which was adapted from Richie, Fassinger, Linn, Johnson, Robinson, & Prosser (1997). The cone is represented by several layers of schema: cultural condition, cultural other, and cultural self. At the outermost layer, the cultural condition exists and is the most accessible to the influence of experiences. The middle layer consists of the cultural other, while the inner core is constructed by the cultural self. As the cultural self is enveloped by several layers, it is the most challenging to access. However, processing an experience at the level of self is fundamental to the development of empathy.

The state of true empathy exists when an individual is able to process an experience at all three levels. However, as the arrow indicates in Figure 4.4, this is a bi-directional process whereby the experience transcends to the level of the self and then permeates outwards towards the cultural condition. In effect, it is critical in developing true empathy that the individual is able to identify and separate their own perceptual schema of self from that of others and the context of the situation.

Empathy as a Stage Model

Figure 4.4 illustrates that experiences are perceived and interpreted through a series of four stages or worldviews which are represented in a spiraling form. The spiral has been adapted by Noam (1993). In the **CONCEPT** model, the spiral relates to the notion that an individual does not remain stagnant in any given stage. Rather, it is the experience itself which

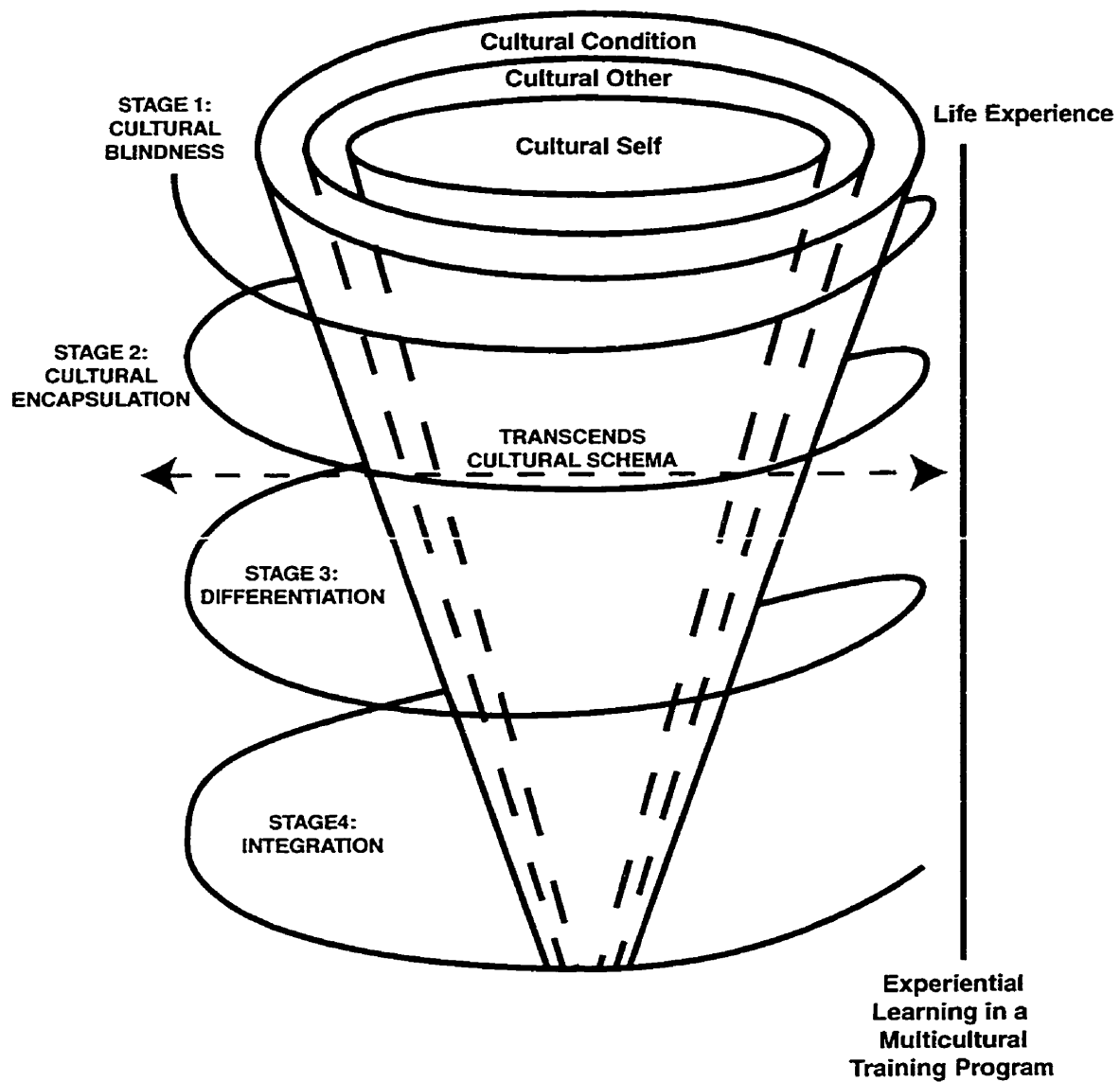


Figure 4.4. The Development of Empathy

largely influences how the event will be perceived. As a result, the stages of empathy may be influenced by various aspects such as amount of exposure to the experience, readiness to learn, anxiety, stress, and apathy.

Stages of Empathy

Each stage is represented by common themes emerging from the data. As each stage progresses, the relationship between the cultural self, cultural other, and cultural context strengthen indicating a higher development of empathy. In addition, as one moves through the stages there is an increased relationship between the experiential learning exercise and one's perception of general life experiences.

Stage 1: Cultural blindness. Stage 1 refers to the lack of relationship between the cultural self, cultural other and cultural context. The type of responses given suggest that the exercise actually reinforces culturally encapsulated views of the world. In effect, the individual plays the game but is limited in the type of reflections regarding the experience and is unable to conceptualize the purpose of the exercise. Finally, the link between the exercise and professional implications is considered a leap. Thus, few professional implications can be made. An example of cultural blindness would be the following statement:

I'm still for the most part smiling throughout it all. So even though I'm being really assertive like at that last table, this is still a game to me. Like it's not like I'm internalizing it or I'm taking it too seriously.

Stage 2: Cultural encapsulation. Stage 2 reflects observations from the exercise which are mainly descriptive and related to the overt behavior of self and others. Reflections are directed primarily towards others and the condition with which the game was played. Limited insight exists as to the

purpose of the game. Most participants in Stage 2 respond that the exercise was to help students understand how difficult it must be for others who do not speak the dominant language. Implications for professional practice are superficial, which mainly relate to communication barriers for ethnic populations and increasing tolerance and patience towards minority clients. A Stage 2 response would reflect the following:

I think it's a good exercise because it gives you the point of view of people who don't know the language, are in a foreign country.

Stage 3: Differentiation. While there remains an emphasis on communication barriers, Stage 3 responses are geared more toward abstract concepts of communication such as values and meaning which may differ between two individuals. Increased awareness exists at this level in relation to self and others. However, awareness of self is only related to the influence by others. For instance, self reflections such as not making assumptions about others represent a statement which raises awareness due to an external source of influence. Making assumptions is a strategy which is focused on the other, in order to understand and respect the client one is working with. At this stage, the realization that everyone does not play by the same rules is perceived with some level of abstraction. The differences in rules however are attributed to immigrants and ethnic groups. Professional implications are focused upon making an effort to understand the clients one works with:

I realized the responsibility of a counselor to really, I don't know how I am going to do this, but really explore someone's diverse background. Try and understand as best you can what kind of common stress or what kind of values are around it. What's going to be important to me as a counselor? The importance of trying to establish communications. The importance of

realizing that even though it seems so futile there is some common ground that can be established.

Stage 4: Integration. Participants in Stage 4 were most likely to realize that people were playing by different rules during the game, rather than realizing this in the debriefing. In Stage 4, there is a major shift towards self reflection, and how the self impacts others and the condition. There is a distinct attribution of the experience towards self and how their behavior affected others. The meaning of the exercise is reflected in a more abstract manner where “playing by different rules” is generalized to life experiences rather than specific populations and situations. At this level, participants identify professional implications for working with all clients, rather than ethnic populations. Another notable distinction of Stage 4, is that the notion of not making assumptions is explained primarily in reference to the self rather than focusing on others:

It's the people who look like me, who act like me, who seem more like me that could have just as vast differences. But who don't have an accent or who don't have a different skin color. I would assume much more with those people....they're playing by my rules. And that's the one thing I really was conscious of, not making that assumption anymore. Like that's the pivotal thing is that even if you look just like me, that doesn't mean you're like me at all. Which I've really got from this exercise. Like I said once I realized people were different I was very conscious of it. So it's getting that initial reality.

The Impact of Life Experiences on the Development of Empathy

The experiential learning situation offers individuals an opportunity to experience an increased stage of empathy. However, whether the

individual is able to achieve a higher level ultimately depends upon the life experiences that are brought to the experiential learning situation. As illustrated in Figure 4.4, life experiences filter downwards to influence the experiential learning situation. However, it appears that experiential learning situation does not influence life experiences in the same manner. This may be attributed to the narrow spectrum which is represented by the experiential learning exercise. Thus, the generalization of the experiential exercise to one's life experience can be limited particularly if an individual is operating in the earlier stages of empathy.

The more connection one can relate from their own life experiences to the experiential learning exercise, the more impact the learning situation is likely to create. As illustrated by Figure 4.4, stage 4 represents the most parallels between the experiential learning situation and one's life experiences. However, again it is important to note that in order to represent true empathy, one must have the ability to process life experiences towards the level of self and translate this meaning outwards into the environment.

Long Term Impact

At the time of the individual interviews, the majority of participants were located between Stages 2 and 3 in terms of empathic development. During the focus groups which took place nine months later, data analysis revealed that participants' development of empathy was represented between Stages 3 and 4. While Stages 1 and 2 were evident in the focus groups, there was a distinct shift identified towards later stages of empathy. It was found however, that this movement to higher stages of empathy was not considered by participants to be a direct result of the experiential learning exercise. Participants in later stages found it difficult to isolate their existing framework

to the exercise itself. Rather, the experience was perceived as a component of their multicultural training, personal development, and professional practice. Participants who remained in earlier stages continued to have difficulty in relating the experience to professional practice.

Use it or lose it. Figure 4.4 illustrates how long term impact of experiential learning is established for individuals. It appears that the impact is highly dependent upon the degree of past and future life experiences. Thus, experiential learning alone does not seem to impact one's life situation. Rather, increased exposure and openness to life experiences filter down to create one's meaning of the experiential exercise. Analysis of the focus groups indicated that individuals who did not continue empathic development were not "practicing" in general life experiences. It appears that lack of familiarity with the situation, lack of opportunity, and stress are major barriers to shifting one's worldview in the long term.

Implications for Professional Practice

The following two themes were identified during the focus groups in relation to the professional implications of experiential learning:

Increased Awareness of Self

While many participants continued to focus on others in terms of relating the purpose of the experiential learning exercise, there was an increased amount of reference towards the self when compared to previous data. Participants demonstrated an increased awareness of self in relation to others and the context and readily identified perceived privileges which were seen as potential barriers in working with others. Increased self-reflexivity was identified by participants as critical in professional practice.

Training/Supervision

Participants indicated that it was easy to fall into old habits of working with others as their professional practice becomes more familiar. It was suggested that a need for ongoing discussion of multicultural issues, in addition to having future experiential exercises as a “refresher” was important in maintaining an empathic attitude.

Debriefing of Experiential Learning

Impact of Debriefing

While the process which takes place during experiential learning largely influences the outcome of participants’ worldview, the debriefing portion was found to be instrumental in further facilitating the extent to which information was processed at the level of cultural self, cultural other, and the cultural condition. During individual interviews it was identified that some participants who had not understood the purpose of the exercise immediately afterwards were able to make sense of what had happened following the debriefing. In addition, participants who had a strong emotional reaction to the experience, indicated that the debriefing allowed for the opportunity to resolve and further process the situation.

Process vs. Outcome

Interestingly, results indicated that the data from the debriefing could be separated into process and outcome related material. Process directed questions led to responses which were related to the five key events. Outcome directed questions contained information from participants which involved one’s worldview. The data collected during the debriefing following the exercise and the Critical Incident questionnaires were found to include more outcome type questions over process related queries.

Participant Reactions to the Debriefing

One of the purposes of the discussion and the Critical Incident questionnaires was to gather participants' immediate reactions regarding the simulation exercise. Four main themes were identified during this process: 1) What impacted your experience 2) Beliefs, values, and attitudes which have been challenged 3) Identified changes in professional and personal approach, and 4) Feelings. Each category contained several sub-themes which defined the larger themes. The number of participants responding were obtained from the Critical Incident questionnaires.

The Impact of the Experience

In order to better understand how student's perception of diversity is impacted, it was deemed important to discover whether there was anything that stood out in the experience of participants. Six sub-themes emerged from the data representing both process and outcome responses. Themes reflecting process oriented responses included: observing others, emotional reaction of self doubt and validation, challenges of communication, and realizing not everyone plays by the same rules.

Observing others. *Seeing all my other classmates reactions and strategies to the card game. Particularly who was dominant in the group, who would focus on a cooperative effort and who would enforce their own set of rules.* What impacted 5 participants during this experience was focusing on other individuals during the exercise. Observing problem solving strategies, group dynamics, and dominant personalities comprised most of these responses. While observing others was found to be instrumental in processing key events, participants who were found to be most impacted by observing others during the experiential exercise tended to have decreased

self-reflexivity.

Emotional reaction of self doubt and validation. *The most positive feelings occurred when I felt confident that I understood. These were just brief moments, but at least I didn't feel so stupid.* Three participants identified the emotional reaction personally experienced during the simulation exercise. These emotions related to the fluctuation between feelings of self doubt and validation. In the critical incident questionnaires, self doubt was related to the rules of the game and communication with others, whereas validation was imminent when there was a sense of confidence or realizing that other participants shared similar reactions.

Challenges of communication. *Trying to communicate without speaking or letters. Made me be very creative in attempting to get my thoughts across.* Ten participants felt that what impacted their experience related to the challenges in communicating with others. As the example indicates, responses related to an inability to relay thoughts to others, difficulty in understanding non-verbal communication, and overcoming barriers to communication through resourceful strategies.

Realizing not everyone plays by the same rules. *The highlight of this exercise was when I realized that people were operating under different rules.* Five participants felt that realizing others were not playing by the same rules was the element which impacted their experience. For some individuals, understanding that there were different rules was expressed *concretely*. That is, the realization that others were operating under different rules during the game accounted for the difficulties with communication. However, this meaning was also interpreted at a *metaphorical* level which was perceived as an understanding that beliefs/values/experiences are not universal.

While most participants reflected process type responses in discussing what impacted their experience, the debriefing and the notion of seeing the world from a different perspective were identified as outcome related responses.

The debriefing. *The debriefing - it shed light on why we all acted the way we did.* The debriefing provided an opportunity for explanation and making sense of the experience. Five participants responded that the debriefing assisted with establishing meaning, and validating their experience. The discussion which the debriefing produced was found to provide closure regarding the experience and allow for reflections about professional implications. Hearing the experience of others during the debriefing was also identified as an important part of the exercise. Participants expressed in individual interviews that the debriefing assisted in processing emotional reactions during the exercise.

Seeing the world from a different perspective. *Learning about the experiences of someone who is not part of the dominant culture by participating in a similar, although less important situation.* Stepping outside one's own world view was identified by 11 participants as the highlight of their experience. The exercise was identified as creating an opportunity to experience life from a different perspective. Other cultures, new immigrants, and diverse groups outside the mainstream population were defined as a "different perspective". One participant reflected the realization that some individuals may experience what was termed as "traumatic" on a daily basis.

Challenges in Beliefs, Values, and Attitudes

This theme relates to what beliefs/values/attitudes have been challenged by the experience. Participant responses reflected 5 sub-themes

which all encompassed outcome oriented responses.

Beliefs/ values/ knowledge are not universal. *[This challenges] the belief that everyone plays the game of life with basically the same set of rules.* Almost half of the responses related to the realization that there is more than one way to perceive the world. Twenty one participants identified the simulation game as challenging the view that their own beliefs, values, and knowledge were universal. Previously held notions which were challenged included a) the belief that there is only one “right” way b) the realization that multiple meanings of “rules” exist depending upon one’s background c) the same situation can be experienced different ways d) barriers in communication can result from not recognizing that different worldviews exist e) there are different ways of “knowing” and f) one’s own experience does not necessarily mean that it is “right” or represents ultimate truth.

Making assumptions about others. *[What has been challenged is] my belief that people who act like they understand actually do understand.* Eleven participants responded that the assumptions personally held about others had been challenged. Judging others by their non-verbal behavior, perceived knowledge, and perceived level of understanding were assumptions most challenged. Many participants discussed during the debriefing that there was a lack of personal awareness as to how certain assumptions were made about others prior to playing the game.

Realization about self/ personal beliefs/ values/ biases. *I thought I was more tolerant than I really am. I was quite frustrated for most of this exercise.* In addition to the realization by many participants that multiple truths may exist, other personal beliefs, values, and biases were also challenged. Participants appeared to realize how much emphasis they placed on being

“right”, and recognized an unwillingness to compromise in their own thoughts and behavior. Moreover, participants noted how their own beliefs and values became stronger than the desire to understand another’s point of view. Several participants recognized how personal assumptions can interfere in “seeing the whole picture”.

More than one way to communicate. *[What has been challenged is] the belief that people have to talk while interacting as a group to be effective.”*

Three responses indicated that what had been challenged during the exercise was the notion that there is only one method of communication. Participants noted that other modes of communicating were effective besides verbal exchanges. Thus, there was a realization that non verbal gestures can have a powerful influence in a social exchange. While common ground was established without verbal or written communication, some participants were found to make the *assumption* that nonverbal communication was effective when this was not perceived by other participants.

Satisfied with own behavior/thoughts/actions. *This experience has shown me alot about myself and my personal approach to problem solving. I was quite happy with my reactions. I was democratic yet I conveyed my views and what I believed the correct way to play.* Three participants responded that the exercise had not challenged personal beliefs, values, or attitudes. This type of response appeared to exist when participants had limited insight as to the purpose of the game and were challenged in self-reflexivity. The experiential learning exercise did not appear to impact participants who found that there was no incongruence with self, others, or the environment.

Identified Changes in Professional and Personal Approach

This theme reflected responses which related to how beliefs, values, and actions will change personally and professionally as a result of this experience. Seven sub-themes were identified which encompassed outcome oriented responses:

Increased awareness toward others. *[This experience will] make me more sensitive to the needs and experiences of those who I am different from.*

Twenty participants related to how the experience will encourage more awareness, empathy, and sensitivity to others. Participants reflected that having the personal experience from the simulation helped in understanding why these characteristics were so important. Several participants reflected upon an importance to become aware of non-verbal cues to assist in understanding the perspective of others.

Becoming more aware. *I hope it will make me remember to be less presumptuous.* The majority of responses related to becoming more reflective and aware of personal assumptions, beliefs and values when communicating with others. Nine participants responded that this exercise would increase awareness of personal assumptions made during social exchanges. Thus, through increased awareness of personal beliefs and values, participants felt that they would be less likely to jump to conclusions when working with others.

Becoming more patient/tolerant. *Forces me to be more patient and understanding with those that cannot understand seemingly simple commands.* Twelve participants responded that in the future they would become more patient and tolerant. Many of these responses related to dealing with individuals when language is a barrier. Individuals who related to

becoming more tolerant, tended to provide information from an external frame of reference. It was also noted from responses that individuals would speak slower to others when language was a challenge in addition to becoming more clear and direct.

Communicate more clearly. *I think this will reinforce the importance of taking a moment for myself to assess the situation at hand. Clearly state the objectives of the assessment plan/intervention as clearly as possible..*

Similar to the need to be more patient and tolerant with individuals who do not speak the common language fluently, four participants felt that in the future they would be more direct in their own communication. Responses indicated that individuals would now tend to establish ground rules before proceeding with therapy by stating rules and objectives for clients in using a more direct approach. This type of response was characterized by one's own agenda rather than checking out the perceptions of the client.

Seek more information about others. *It highlights how important it is to check that everyone is viewing or operating on the same instructions.*

Nine participants responded that there would be more emphasis on doing perception checks with others, and clarifying information during therapy in order to prevent misinterpretation of messages. Many participants identified during individual interviews how easy it was to jump to conclusions about others. Had some common ground been established prior to playing the game, some participants felt that the process would have been much less chaotic.

Not sure/need more time. *I expect to remember this exercise and integrate it as I think more about it.* Three responses indicated that right after completing the simulation game they were unsure as to how it would

potentially change their behavior. This may be reflected by the need for processing time. During individual interviews, some participants noted that they were unable to make sense of their experience immediately following due to strong emotional reactions. However, at the time of the interview further reflection allowed for discussion surrounding the impact of their experience.

Feelings

The feelings of participants were considered to be important in better understanding the impact of experiential learning. The following statements reflect some of the emotions expressed by participants: 1) *I felt frustrated more than anything.* 2) *I am doing a lot of self doubt - feeling it must be me.* 3) *A little bit of confusion because I thought I knew what I was supposed to be doing.*

The feelings experienced were categorized in 12 process related sub-themes which included 1) frustration (9 responses) 2) confusion (4 responses) 3) misunderstood (2 responses) 4) reminder of a previous experience (1 response) 5) negative (1 response) 6) enjoyable (1 response) 7) low self esteem/self doubt (2 responses) 8) acquiesce (2 responses) 9) anger (1 response) 10) validation (2 responses) 11) distrust (1 response) 12) overwhelming (2 responses). The identification of these feelings were also found during individual interviews when participants reflected upon their experience. It appears that the ability to cope with these feelings during the experiential exercise was instrumental in facilitating or blocking the extent to which participants were able to process the experience. Thus, emotions appear to be the gatekeeper in determining how, and the extent to which participants processed the experiential exercise. The reactions described by participants can

be compared to the myriad of feelings experienced during culture shock.

The Importance of Debriefing

In effect, debriefing allows participants to further process the experiential learning exercise. In addition, the individual interviews found that the debriefing portion of the experiential exercise can be instrumental in helping participants work through emotional reactions which may be referred to as culture shock. The debriefing is found to exist at two levels; process and outcome. Process oriented questions target information from participants which are related to the five key events. Many of the process type questions in this study related to the identified *impact* for participants, in addition to discussion surrounding the *emotional experience* of individuals. Thus, identifying these types of questions appear to facilitate the processing of the exercise at the level of cultural self, cultural other, and the cultural condition. The outcome oriented questions appeared to retrieve information about the stage at which the participant's existing worldview is represented. Thus, questions related to *how* the experience challenged beliefs and values in addition to identified *changes* one would make personally and professionally elicited responses based upon worldview.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate how **Challenging One's Notions through Cultural Experiential Processing Theory** emerged during the process of Grounded Theory. The **CONCEPT** model is represented by four domains: schematic representation, process, outcome, and debriefing.

Schematic representation refers to three levels of schema which help individuals interpret and make sense of the world. These schema exist at the level of cultural self, cultural other, and cultural condition and constantly reorganize depending upon the experience one encounters.

Process represents five key events which occur throughout the experiential learning situation and are responsible for influencing one's schematic representation. Incongruence, negotiation, adjustment, evaluation, and validation are the key events which are processed at each cultural schema. Depending upon how one processes the experiential learning exercise contributes to the outcome or stage by which the experience is perceived.

The outcome portion of the **CONCEPT** model relates to the development of empathy and is represented by four stages which one may move depending upon the ability to relate life experiences to the situation. The development of true empathy occurs when one is able to transcend each cultural schema. That is, true empathy is the ability to differentiate between internal and external frames of reference.

Finally, the debriefing is fundamental in helping individuals further process the experiential learning exercise. The debriefing can be separated into process and outcome oriented questions to help facilitate further development of empathy. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which the findings

from this study are related to the literature in addition to the implications for educators and helping professionals for working with diverse populations.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice

One of the challenges educators of helping professionals continue to face is providing competent services to multicultural populations (Arthur, 1998a). Experiential learning in multicultural training programs has been prescribed as an attempt to increase self awareness and to provide a bridge between knowing *about* multicultural competence and knowing *how* to be culturally competent (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Johnson, 1987). However, without a clear understanding of how experiential learning impacts perceptions of diversity, it is difficult to determine how best to fill a void in the educational curriculum (Frykholm, 1997; Pope-Davis et al., 1997). The rationale for initiating this research was based on a need to understand how experiential learning impacts students' perception of diversity. Further, identifying the way in which individuals are impacted over time was considered important to understand the efficacy of such learning.

The purpose of this chapter is to link the findings of the current study to the existing literature. In the first section, a discussion surrounding the impact of experiential learning on cultural diversity and professional training is presented. The current study suggests that factors such as the individuality of experiential learning, the effects of cultural schema, and culture shock contribute to one's development of cultural empathy. In the second section, experiential learning in the multicultural curriculum is discussed. The third and final section of this chapter includes a review of the limitations and strengths of this study in addition to suggestions for future research.

Cultural Empathy and the Individual

Although empathy has been proposed to be multidimensional and

dynamic (Ridley & Lingle, 1996), this study provides evidence for the construct of empathy as a process. Further, it has been queried whether individual differences exist in the development of empathy, and whether these differences may affect the degree to which students are impacted by experiential learning (Gannon & Poon, 1997; Ridley & Lingle, 1996). The current research suggests that individuals do not process experiential learning in the same manner. Rather, each experience is unique and thus impacts individuals differently. For instance, it was found that the stage of empathic development influences the degree to which one was able to understand and respond in an empathic manner. This may provide an explanation as to why counselors recognize value differences with clients but continue to address value conflicts from ethnocentric perspectives (Merali, 1999). A helping professional functioning in the stage of Cultural Encapsulation or Differentiation would likely be challenged to move beyond recognizing differences and consider culturally appropriate options for the client.

The Effects of Cultural Schema

Ridley et al. (1994b) propose that individuals possess a perceptual schemata which organizes cultural information in a meaningful way and acts as a precursor to cultural empathy. Thus, in order to be culturally empathic, one must first be perceptive of cultural information prior to understanding and responding in an empathic manner. It is suggested that “schemata do not predispose individuals to particular courses of action but serve to a) give meaning to stimuli, b) provide the basis for anticipating the future, c) enable people to set goals, d) suggest the implications of certain actions, and e) guide the formulation of plans to achieve goals” (Ridley et al., 1994b, p.130). Thus, cultural information which is not meaningful will be ignored or discarded,

ultimately affecting the degree to which one is able to respond in a culturally responsive manner.

While it has been hypothesized that a cultural schema may exist, little is known about how this would be conceptualized or in what way such a construct would impact empathy in the helping professions. Previously, cultural schema has been proposed as a single construct acting as a gatekeeper for processing cultural experiences (Ridley et al., 1994b). However, this study identified cultural schema as a dynamic construct which exists in three separate domains: cultural self, cultural other, and the cultural condition. As has been suggested by Ridley et al. (1994b), cultural information which is not meaningful will not be detected by one's cultural schema. This lack of cultural sensitivity may contribute to the challenge in identifying differences in help seeking behaviors and attitudes, in addition to understanding client issues (Helm, 1995; Leong et al., 1995; McIntosh, 1988).

The schematic representation of culture. As mentioned in chapter two, a large debate continues to exist regarding the diversity of the term 'culture' (Draguns, 1996; Weinrach & Thomas, 1996). Thus, the ambiguity relating to this definition has led to confusion surrounding *who* should be represented by the term (Helms & Richardson, 1997). While it has been suggested that culture is a subjective term influenced by one's beliefs, values, and attitudes, a lack of theoretical framework regarding the construct has been attributed to decreased multicultural competence (Draguns, 1996; Helms & Richardson, 1997). Further, Helms and Richardson (1997) have indicated that the obscurity related to culture "typically means whatever the advocate would have it mean at the moment" in terms of professional practice (p.61). Thus, it has been suggested that the way in which culture is defined largely influences

how one perceives and responds to client needs (Sodowsky et al., 1997).

This research identified varying definitions of culture depending upon participants' stage of cultural empathy. Earlier stages tended to represent definitions of culture which were ethnically bound. As individuals progressed towards higher stages of empathic development, the implied definition of culture became closer to the idiographic approach identified by Pedersen (1991b). As Helms and Richardson (1997) suggest, it appears that in order to identify a theoretical framework of 'culture' educators must address personal meaning rather than assuming individuals are working from the same principles of culture which are taught in the curriculum.

In addition, the relation between one's stage of empathy and cultural definition has implications for helping professionals. Information outside of a personal definition of culture may not be processed by one's cultural schema. In effect, an ethnically bound helping professional may demonstrate decreased empathic ability due to certain information which is not processed as cultural.

Assessing the individual's worldview. In order to understand personal meaning, it appears important to assess the individual's worldview. "World views are not only composed of our attitudes, values, opinions, and concepts, but also they may affect how we think, make decisions, behave, and define events" (Sue & Sue, 1990). In terms of challenging one's worldview in order to increase awareness of diversity, it is critical that educational programs provide students with learning to become more aware of the frame of reference by which they perceive situations. In a discussion about how different clients may view the world, Sue & Sue (1990) differentiate between one's locus of control and locus of responsibility. Locus of control refers to

the extent to which individuals internalize or externalize events. Thus, an internal locus of control would rely on internal processes while an external locus of control is highly influenced by events which occur outside the individual. Locus of responsibility refers to the way in which individuals possess a person-centred or person-blame reference to establishing accountability (Sue & Sue, 1990). Individuals with a person-centred orientation tend to attribute responsibility from within while a person-blame locus of responsibility holds an external source accountable. While this construction of worldview has been proposed by Sue & Sue (1990) to apply to clients, a parallel process is evident in the current research. In terms of multicultural training, it is important not only to help students become aware of issues pertaining to client worldviews but how their own personal framework is oriented.

Novice and expert helping professionals. Ridley et al., (1994b) have questioned the differences between novice counselors and experts in working with diverse populations. Previous research has found that experienced counselors are more effective in conceptualizing client issues (Cummings, 1992; Martin, Slemon, Hiebert, Hallberg, & Cummings, 1989). This distinction between novice and expert helping professionals has been attributed to differences in the development of cultural schema (Ridley et al., 1994b), however, little research is available that tests this hypothesis.

According to the findings in this study, the potential differences between expert and novice counselors may be attributed to one's schematic representation. First, emotional reactions were found to highly influence the degree to which individuals perceived the impact of the experiential exercise. Since novice counselors are more prone to anxiety in working with clients

(Hiebert, Uhlmann, Marshall, & Lee, 1998), the extent of one's previous experience and perceived stress appears to largely influence how information is processed or not processed by one's cultural schema. Secondly, previous life experience was identified as impacting the organization of one's schema. Thus, the amount of congruence between one's existing schematic representation and the experience may influence the degree to which cultural information is processed. However, the possibility for cultural "blindness" to develop as one becomes more experienced may also occur (Ridley et al., 1994b). As the cultural self, cultural other, and cultural condition are perceived as more congruent, the potential exists for helping professionals to be more comfortable and less likely to challenge their personal framework. Thus, there appears to be a pivotal point for helping professionals between perceived comfort level and perceived stress in terms of working in a culturally sensitive and responsive manner.

The existence of cultural schema may assist educators in terms of increasing multicultural competence in the helping professions. Cultural schema may contribute to culturally encapsulated views which limit the effectiveness by which helping services are offered to multicultural clients. In terms of professional training, the impact of one's subjective meaning of culture, the locus of one's worldview, and the distinguishing factors between novice and expert helping professionals appear to be important considerations for multicultural curriculums.

Culture Shock in Helping Relationships

Ridley et al. (1994b) have referred to the need for plasticity of cultural schema. Plasticity refers to the degree of rigidity within one's cultural schema which is influenced by incoming cultural information. The amount of

plasticity of one's cultural schema reflects the level of cultural sensitivity by the individual. Thus, a highly incongruent situation evoking a strong emotional reaction may influence the helping professional to respond in a way which represents an earlier stage of empathic development. Further, it appears that the long term effects of experiential learning are bound by factors such as the role of emotions, stress, and motivation (Ridley et al., 1994a).

When multicultural training invokes an unresolved emotional response such as guilt, fear, and defensiveness in participants, this is viewed negatively and unhelpful (Barak, 1990; Sadowsky et al., 1997). Thus, it appears that emotions largely influence the extent to which experiential learning is processed, perceived and interpreted. Although individuals may normally be able to function at a higher stage of empathy, stress, anxiety, the degree of adaptability, or a new learning situation may decrease the extent to which cultural information is processed (Berry, 1997; Ridley et al., 1994b).

Although experiential learning is intended to challenge one's personal framework, incongruence between one's existing worldview and the exercise may produce culture shock (Fowler, 1994). Without familiar ways of interacting or sources of validation, a sense of confusion and conflict emerges which may lead to stressors beyond one's level of coping skills (Arthur, 1998b). In terms of experiential learning, it is important for professionals and educators to be aware of the implications of culture shock and the methods students utilize to cope (Arthur, 1998b; Fowler, 1994). It has been suggested that in order to increase the effectiveness of experiential learning, exercises should avoid inducing strong emotional reactions (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). As demonstrated in this research, individuals with strong emotional reactions tended to become "stuck", resulting in a decreased ability to process

the purpose of the exercise.

However, as the goal of experiential learning is to experience some degree of incongruence between one's personal framework and the situation, educators must prepare for providing a means to help students address uncomfortable emotions and reactions (Fowler, 1994). Secondly, further follow up is suggested, as unresolved emotions may significantly impact the way in which helping professionals work with multicultural clients (Sodowsky et al., 1997). Finally, it appears important that educators assist students to develop coping skills for working in cross-cultural contexts (Arthur, 1998b).

Experiential Learning in the Multicultural Curriculum

While the assumption of universality in working with clients has been scrutinized recently (Ridley & Lingle, 1996), it is also timely to consider the methods by which students are trained. As Pedersen (1995) suggests, combining the principles of universalism and relativism creates the 'multicultural perspective' in working with clients. Similarly, this concept may prove worthwhile if applied to students in multicultural training programs. This research has identified that the use of experiential learning in multicultural training impacts individuals differently. While a framework for understanding the processes which take place during experiential learning has emerged, it is also important for educators to consider the unique needs of the individual. In terms of experiential learning in educational curriculums, it is important to consider the ethical implications, the incorporation of experiential learning into the curriculum, and the long term effects of such learning.

Ethical Considerations in the Use of Experiential Learning

While many educators use experiential learning in their programs, there is a large amount of variation in the methods utilized (Merta, Wolfgang, & McNeil, 1993). Thus, there is an increased potential for students to be at risk for unethical and harmful treatment (Merta et al., 1993). Various strategies have been suggested which educators should consider when using experiential learning (Merta et al., 1991, 1993). First, in order to protect students, educators should make clear that participation in the experiential component is voluntary, and not based on course grade or evaluation. In addition, educators should have informed consent from participants. Finally, educators should limit self disclosure in relation to experiential learning.

However, it has also been suggested in the literature that if participants are not assisted to process reactions from the exercise, this type of learning may actually be harmful (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Sadowsky et al., 1997). This study supports the notion that educators must be skilled and sensitive in ensuring that individual participants are effectively managing their reactions from the experiential exercise.

The importance of debriefing. Activities such as debriefing have been suggested to provide a window for educators to better understand how students are perceiving situations following an experiential exercise. However, the extent to which experiential learning should be debriefed has been inconsistent in the literature (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Merta et al., 1993). As demonstrated by Heppner & O'Brien (1994), debriefing was identified by many participants as the event which most impacted their experience. Further, debriefing was found to help participants further process the experience, provide closure, and increase reflection about their personal

reactions. In effect, the debriefing was found by participants to help make sense of a confusing and frustrating experience. This validates the notion that if individuals are not given opportunity to sort out reactions from the experience there may be more harm posed rather than benefit of experiential learning (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Sadowsky, et al., 1997).

The goal of experiential learning is to facilitate a process of self awareness which builds confident and secure professionals (Sadowsky, 1997). However, emotional reactions as a result of the experiential exercise may pose a significant barrier to understanding the purpose of the exercise. As has been suggested by Sadowsky et al. (1997), this study identified that unresolved feelings impeded self awareness. Whereas the simulation exercise itself may bring forth many emotions experienced by the participants, the critical key becomes how the participant deals with these feelings once they have arisen (Sadowsky et al., 1997). Emotional conflicts which can emerge as a result of experiential learning need to be resolved in order to prevent personal biases and subjectivity from directing a therapeutic relationship (Sadowsky et al., 1997). Thus, educators have an ethical responsibility to include debriefing following an experiential exercise, in order to prevent unresolved issues which may later surface in professional practice. A lack of time spent on debriefing following experiential learning may contribute to a lack of impact and increased ethnocentric thinking (Bruschke et al., 1993; Byrnes & Kiger, 1990; Cosgray et al., 1990; Grayson & Marini, 1996). For instance, it was found by Brusckke et al. (1993) that the use of the simulation game BAFA BAFA increased ethnocentric thinking when compared to students who did not participate. This outcome was attributed to the lack of time to adjust following the exercise (Bruschke et al., 1993; Pope-Davis et al., 1997). Further,

Heppner & O'Brien (1994) have found that students who do not have time to process information regarding multicultural issues report this to be a hindrance to their learning. Thus, without debriefing unresolved emotions may have adverse effects on professionals (Sodowsky, et al., 1997).

The need for self disclosure during debriefing contradicts the position by Merta et al. (1993), who suggest that educators limit self disclosure during debriefing due to ethical implications. It was found in this study that if participants do not address personal reactions about the exercise there may be increased risk of culture shock and culturally encapsulated worldviews. Debriefing must be considered an integral component of experiential learning (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Sodowsky et al., 1997). In effect, *not* discussing personal reactions during the debriefing would be deemed unethical and potentially harmful to both the individual and future clients in professional practice.

The goals of experiential learning. Despite the call for experiential learning as a training method for self awareness, there has been little research to clarify whether this goal is being met. Conversely, the possibility exists that many experiential exercises may not achieve the goal of self awareness and may actually invoke negative reactions which stifle the opportunity to elicit self awareness. For instance, in a well known study by Byrne & Kiger (1990), students participated in the simulation "blue eyes/ brown eyes". Participants regularly attending an elementary education course were separated into the experimental and control condition based on eye color. Those who did not have blue eyes were visibly discriminated against and treated as inferior. While the ethical treatment of participants should be questioned, so should the results indicated. It appears that this particular exercise was designed for

understanding diversity by oppressing participants, rather than focusing on raising awareness as the outcome of the exercise. It may be that this type of focus induces feelings of anger and resentment rather than obtaining the goal of understanding and awareness. This may also be true for other simulation exercises where participants have assumed the role of prisoners and cancer patients, resulting in reports primarily based on feelings of fear and oppression (Mann & Jarvis, 1968; Zimbardo, 1973). In effect, more attention needs to be focused on the vulnerability of participants in experiential learning exercises, the outcome of such exercises, and the resulting emotions described by participants (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994).

Considerations for Using Experiential Exercises

In addition to the ethical implications of experiential learning, it is important to consider other factors which may influence the impact of such exercises. The type of exercise used in the curriculum, the timing of experiential learning, structuring the debriefing, and the need for self-reflexivity are elements which educators need to consider when using experiential learning in the curriculum.

Choosing experiential exercises. Experiential learning has been rated as one of the two most critical elements for students in gaining multicultural competence (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994). Thus, it can be assumed that the type of experiential learning exercise is indeed an important consideration. Sadowsky et al., (1997) suggest that these learning experiences should not only be designed to increase awareness of personal biases, but should provide students with a sense of mastery in resolving any powerful feelings. Further, experiential learning is the basis of effective self awareness enhancement. The type of experiential learning exercise and the elicited outcome from the

situation appear to be important factors to consider in terms of multicultural training. The type of experiential learning exercise may range from assuming the role of a specific population to engaging in a game format. Simulation exercises which are designed to emulate a certain population have been criticized for potentially further oppressing a marginalized group. In addition, assuming a specific role in simulation exercises, may allow for the opportunity to externalize the behavior, thoughts, and feelings which emerge (Sue & Sue, 1990). For instance, it has been suggested that exercises such as those which simulate a physical disability may lead participants toward a simplified outlook on what an individual with a disability actually experiences (Grayson & Marini, 1996). Thus, the potential exists for the myth to perpetuate regarding the ineptness of persons with disabilities. This study suggests that targeting self awareness through exercises which promote self-other differentiation may decrease the potential for externalizing the experience.

The timing of experiential learning. It appears that educators must not only prepare for an adequate amount of time to debrief, but also should consider when to place an experiential exercise in the course curriculum. It has not been determined whether experiential learning is most effective at the beginning, middle, or end of a multicultural course. Based on the discussion illustrating the importance of debriefing, experiential learning exercises may be better placed at the beginning of a multicultural training course. In doing so, students are allowed the opportunity for further debriefing in order to process the meaning of the exercise. Placing an experiential learning exercise at the beginning of a course would provide the foundation of an experience for which students could compare as they

proceed with other multicultural training activities. Thus, experiential learning may serve as an initial opportunity to shift in one's worldview. The opportunity for continued debriefing of multicultural experiences was identified as a key factor for increasing the long term effects of learning. While participants found the debriefing important immediately following the experiential learning exercise, the need for further opportunities was identified in facilitating long term impact. Ongoing debriefing was found to decrease the possibility of resuming what was considered "old habits". Further, other self-reflective activities should follow in an attempt to maintain and facilitate transitions in empathy (Sodowsky et al., 1997).

Structuring the debriefing. While the importance of debriefing has been discussed, little is available in terms of how educators should structure debriefing portions of experiential learning (Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Sodowsky, et al., 1997). One of the distinctions which arose in terms of analyzing the debriefing portion of this study was the identification of process and outcome oriented questions. Process questions tended to elicit responses based on the thoughts and feelings the individual was experiencing during the exercise. Outcome oriented questions targeted responses based on thoughts and feelings *as a result* of the experience. It appears that process oriented questions tended to facilitate the degree to which individuals were influenced by the exercise. Thus, process questions may affect the quality of the outcome related responses. In terms of multicultural training then, it would make sense for educators to identify the differences in the type of questions asked during the debriefing and facilitate further processing of the exercise by targeting more process type probes. Further, the identification of key events in this research may be helpful in targeting specific types of

questions surrounding the processes which individuals are involved with during the experiential learning situation.

Self-reflexivity. One of the major issues surrounding the construct of empathy relates to the need for self-other differentiation in terms of building cultural empathy (Ridley & Lingle, 1996; Sue & Sue, 1990). In this study, the ability to identify one's own worldview as distinct from another's was found to be critical for demonstrating empathic understanding and empathic responses. As self-other differentiation is an important element in building cultural empathy, training professionals to be self-reflexive in practice appears to be fundamental in decreasing culturally encapsulated worldviews (Sodowsky et al., 1997). Self-reflexivity was found to influence the long term effects of experiential learning. During the focus groups participants demonstrating higher levels of empathy were self-reflexive in their professional practice. This included identifying privileges which may pose as barriers with clients, evaluating personal values, and possessing a naive attitude with clients which are key in developing empathy (Ridley & Lingle, 1996; Sodowsky, 1996). Experiential learning as a training tool for facilitating self awareness may help professionals to move from ethnocentrism to more self-reflective practices.

Long Term Impact of Experiential Learning

Little research is available to demonstrate the long term impact of experiential learning. One of the few existing studies found that participants who possessed negative perceptions at the time of the learning experience were less likely to identify benefits three months later (Cosgray, et al., 1990). As has previously been discussed, this study has demonstrated that emotional reactions may block the degree to which an individual processes an

experiential learning exercise. Further, increased exposure to multicultural experiences may facilitate long term effects of experiential learning.

Increased exposure. In order for students to benefit from the long term impact of experiential learning, it may be necessary for individuals to continue engaging in multicultural interactions (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991). Thus, in order to create long term change, students need to be supported throughout the education process rather than a "one shot" approach (Arredondo, 1994; Pedersen, 1991b; Ponterotto, 1997; Ridley et al., 1997). What became apparent in this study is that students who do not increase exposure to multicultural situations tend to revert back to a previous schema. As one participant suggested, this entails a "use it or lose it" attitude where frequent "refreshers" must be provided in order to maintain long term benefits. It is possible that the lack of long term impact over time may be influenced by strategies used to cope with culture shock (Arthur, 1998b). Without motivation to practice new behavior, individuals may retreat to more familiar ethnocentric practices.

An infused curriculum. The idea of increased exposure to multicultural experiences has some implications for multicultural training programs. Pedersen (1991a) has long stated that the multicultural paradigm be the "fourth force" in psychology. In addition, there has been debate over including multicultural principles throughout an infused curriculum. The model of experiential learning in this study appears to validate the need for educators to consider infusing multiculturalism throughout graduate training programs. As demonstrated by the current research, one course is unlikely to impact any individual in the long term who possesses high incongruence between life experience and components presented in a

multicultural training course. In effect, it appears that experiential learning alone may have little impact on one's life experience. Thus, the use of experiential learning should be considered a component in helping to facilitate a shift in one's personal framework.

Can Empathy be Learned?

Experiential learning has been used in multicultural training as an attempt to increase awareness and empathic attitudes towards clients from diverse backgrounds (Fowler, 1994; Frykholm, 1997; Heppner & O'Brien, 1994; Pope-Davis et al., 1997). However, the extent to which students' perception of diversity is impacted has been largely debated (Barak, 1990; Bruschke et al., 1993; Cosgray et al, 1990; Grayson & Marini, 1996). As each person is impacted differently in an experiential learning exercise, it is possible that the inconsistent findings identified in the literature may be attributed to a presumption of uniformity in learning.

This study has demonstrated that experiential learning alone does not impact perceptions of diversity. Further, experiential learning is a process which does not fully impact individuals immediately. Rather, experiential learning should be considered a tool for developing empathy and increasing multicultural competence. The degree to which experiential learning impacts perception of diversity is multifaceted. This study has provided an explanation as to how experiential learning is processed. As has been suggested by Ridley and Lingle (1996), cultural empathy is a dynamic construct which can be learned and facilitated when individuals engage in a practice based repertoire which includes increased exposure to multicultural experiences, self-reflexive methods, continuous debriefing, and resolution of emotional reactions. Thus, it appears that individuals must incorporate their

revised worldview into their everyday practice for these changes to have sustained influence on their perceptions of diversity.

Limitations and Strengths

Several potential limitations of the study are noteworthy. Possible limitations exist in this study surrounding the methodology. First, while focus groups have been found to triangulate data (Morgan, 1988), using such groups as the main method for establishing the long term effects of experiential learning may reflect weakness in the research design. While the data from the focus groups was found to triangulate earlier concepts such as cultural schema and stages of empathy development, such groups may not have been ideal as a single method of measurement in determining the long term effects. First, the intermingling of voices posed as a challenge for systematic data analysis (Kvale, 1996; Morgan, 1988). Second, the group format may have been difficult for some individuals to discuss their personal experiences in professional practice. Thirdly, it is not known whether responses obtained in the focus groups mirror individual behavior (Morgan, 1988). Thus, responses may have been swayed due to the context of the group. Fourth, only participants from the community rehabilitation program and counseling psychology took part in the focus groups. While only four participants were from the school psychology program, it is possible that their personal experiences may have differed long term due to differences received in professional training.

Additional possibilities which may be considered limitations include factors such as the role of the researcher and interpretation of data. Both instances may be considered biases which directed the process of this study. However, this reasoning may be debated in one of two ways. First, these may

be considered confounding variables of this study if one is to concede the concept of the “objective bystander” utilized in traditional research frameworks (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). As Kvale (1996) suggests, one may arrive at the conclusion that different researchers will find different interpretations of the data which challenges what is considered scientific method. My role as researcher and peer to participants in this study is certainly not considered objective. In effect, this likely influenced the way in which the data analysis was interpreted.

In contrast, the role of researcher and interpretation of data may also be considered a rich contribution to this research. Merchant & Dupuy (1996) have suggested that the purpose of qualitative research is to generate knowledge about an individual’s experience. Thus, the relationship between the researcher and participant is extremely important and based upon trust (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Further, Kvale (1996) has referred to the researcher as a traveler. In order for a traveler to learn about new cultures, it is important to interact with individuals. In terms of my own life experiences, beliefs and values which guide me personally and professionally, Corbin & Strauss (1990) have identified personal and professional experience as two key factors in enhancing theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity is a necessary element in developing a sound grounded theory.

Despite the identified limitations, there are several strengths of this research that should be considered. First, while experiential learning has been widely recommended for use in multicultural training (Fowler, 1994; Heppner & O’Brien, 1994; Pope-Davis et al., 1997), no known study currently exists in explaining the process by which individuals are impacted by experiential learning. Thus, a major strength of this study is the primary

purpose of exploring how learning occurs during an experiential exercise. The results of this research indicate that experiential learning takes place in two ways: process and outcome. Second, the findings of this research validated the existence of a perceptual schema. The cultural schema were found to influence the degree to which individuals processed cultural information. As previously discussed, the presence of cultural schema have implications not only for professional training but also to further understand concepts such as ethnocentrism and cultural encapsulation. Third, an increased understanding regarding the development of empathy was identified through the process of grounded theory. Understanding empathy as a dynamic construct will assist educators in increasing the efficacy by which helping professionals are trained. Fourth, little research has been directed at the long term effects of experiential learning. By following up with focus groups nine months later, this study has contributed in providing increased understanding of how students' perception of diversity is impacted once in professional practice roles of training for diversity. In effect, this research has contributed to the literature by addressing several issues which have been primarily speculative thus far.

Suggestions for Future Research

There is an increasing need for helping professionals to meet the challenges of our shifting society (Arthur, 1998a). In response to the growing diversity of our population, there is a need to establish a multicultural framework in order to evaluate how clients from diverse backgrounds are served. Further, identifying effective training methods to increase the multicultural competence of helping professionals within professional training programs is necessary. In terms of the effects of experiential learning

as a tool for increasing awareness of diversity, the findings of this research have demonstrated that the impact on individuals is not universal. Thus, one cannot expect each person to process or react in the same manner. In this study, each participant's experience was unique and dependent upon many factors including one's personal beliefs, attitudes, and previous experiences. The interpersonal variation identified during this study suggests that differences exist in the development of cultural empathy. For instance, self-efficacy may play a role in how experiential learning affects awareness of diversity. Future evaluations of experiential learning may need to consider the dynamic processes involved.

The findings of this study have contributed to some important considerations in relation to multicultural training and increasing students' awareness of diversity. This study is an initial exploration into the processes which take place during experiential learning. Further research is necessary to validate the domains of the **CONCEPT** model which emerged from examining the lived experience of graduate students. While most of the current literature pertaining to experiential learning and multicultural training is in the area of counseling, it appears that many of the issues faced by the counseling profession are those that reflect other occupations such as rehabilitation, medicine, nursing, and social work. It is hoped that this study will stimulate the investigation of education relating to diversity in other helping professions. In addition, further investigations are warranted to determine whether this theory holds for other cultural learning situations outside of experiential learning.

Finally, this research has demonstrated some considerations for the present inconsistency of the effectiveness of experiential learning in

multicultural curriculums. Future research which is qualitative in nature may increase understanding in improving multicultural competence using experiential learning.

Conclusions

In summary, experiential learning by itself does not appear to produce long term changes alone. Rather, experiential learning provides an opportunity for an individual to experience an event outside of their existing worldview provided the experience itself is not beyond one's ability to process the information. This study found that for a shift in world view to occur long term, "practice" appears to be a critical component. Experiential learning may impact an individual short term, but in order to produce long term effects increased exposure to similar experiences are needed. This study found that experiential learning does not impact life experiences to the same extent that life experiences impact experiential learning. Thus, generalization of experiential learning is limited if life experiences do not parallel the exercise. It appears to be critical then, to increase the connection between one's life situation and the experiential learning situation. The need to increase exposure to multicultural experiences has been suggested by many researchers in order to narrow the gap between life experience and multicultural training (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1991; Gloria & Pope-Davis, 1997; Ridley et al., 1997). In terms of multicultural training, experiential learning should be considered as part of a multifaceted approach in increasing awareness of diversity. When used in combination with other self reflective activities, experiential learning may be considered a powerful tool in helping individuals to challenge their existing worldview.

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Appendix A

Letter of Invitation to Participants

January 12, 1998

Dear _____,

My name is Kathleen Achenbach, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology, Community Rehabilitation studies, at the University of Calgary. Under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Arthur, I am conducting a research project entitled *Translating diversity from theory to practice: Evaluating the effectiveness of an empathy exercise in counselor education*. This project will be my thesis topic, which is part of the requirements towards an MSc. degree. This letter is intended to convey information regarding my research project so that you can make an informed decision regarding your participation.

The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether the use of empathy exercises in counselor education can be an effective means towards understanding diversity, and whether these exercises impact the student's perception of diversity once in a clinical environment. As part of the study you will be asked to participate in three stages of the project.

During the second class of EDPS 691.04 you will be asked to take part in an exercise currently in the curriculum. You will be asked to take part in a discussion, and answer a questionnaire. The exercise will be videotaped in order to collect data. Should you not wish to take part in this stage, other arrangements have been made to ensure you receive the intended subject matter pertaining to the course material.

In the second stage of this project, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview. This will last no more than one hour, and will be scheduled at a time suited to your needs. The final stage of the study will take place during the second year of your degree program. At the beginning of November 1998, your participation in a 90 minute focus group will provide valuable information regarding the long term effects of counselor education. Even if you give your permission you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. You should be aware that participation in the study is not connected in any way to your course grade.

Participation in this study will involve no greater risks than those ordinarily experienced in daily life.

To ensure anonymity, data will be collected without the use of names, and by number coding. With respect to future published studies, information may be presented at both the group and individual level. In cases of individual information, responses will not reveal names, but will use pseudo names as part of a narrative analysis in which your chosen words may be used and published.

The videotaped portion of the data can be considered an identifiable record, but is intended to record the group as a whole, without focusing on individuals. This videotape will be used only for the purpose of data collection.

Once the information is collected, all data will be kept in the strictest confidence, and locked in a file cabinet at the University of Calgary. Data will be destroyed two years after completion of the study. Written documentation will be shredded, and audio taped data will be erased. The videotape will be erased upon completion of the November 1998 focus group.

The purpose of this project will be reviewed at the end of the first EDPS 691.04 class. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 220-3867 (office EdT 518), my supervisor Dr. Nancy Arthur at 220-6756, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice President of Research at 220-3381.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Achenbach

Appendix B

Consent for Research Participation

Two copies of the consent form are provided. Please return one signed copy to me in my mailbox by 4:00 p.m. on January 19, 1998 and retain the other copy for your records.

I, the undersigned, hereby give my consent to participate in a research project entitled *Translating diversity from theory to practice: Evaluating the effectiveness of an empathy exercise in counselor education*.

I understand that such consent means that I can choose to take part in the following stages: (Please initial)

- _____ Videotaped exercise, discussion, and questionnaire during the second class of EDPS 691.04 (January 22, 1998).
- _____ Follow up interview for 1 hour scheduled within two weeks from the completion of the first stage (January 22, 1998).
- _____ Focus group and questionnaire during a 90 minute period to be scheduled in November, 1998.

I am aware that the videotaped data is intended to target group participation, and will not focus on individuals.

I understand that participation in the study is not a condition of enrollment in EDPS 691.04, and is in no way connected to course evaluation.

I understand that participation in this study may be terminated at any time by my request or at the request of the investigator. Participation in this project and/or withdrawal from this project will not adversely affect me in any way.

I understand that this study will not involve any greater risks than those ordinarily occurring in daily life.

I understand that the responses will be obtained anonymously and kept in strictest confidence.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my records. I understand that if I have any questions I can contact the researcher at 220-3867, her supervisor at 220-6756, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice President of Research at 220-3381.

Date

Signature

Participants printed name

Appendix C

Interview Guide

A. Probes for Participants While Observing the Videotape

- 1) What was your reaction to this part of the experience?
- 2) What was running through your mind at this point?
- 3) What were you thinking/feeling at this point of the experience?
- 4) What do you think contributed to your perceptions?
- 5) Tell me about your awareness of what was happening during this time.
- 6) What contributed to this change in awareness?
- 7) How were you making sense of what is going on here?
- 8) What feelings were you experiencing at the time?
- 9) Describe these feelings.
- 10) How did [the participant's description] make you feel?
- 11) Describe how this experience is different from what you mentioned earlier.
- 12) Tell me more about your experience.
- 13) Tell me about your actions at this point of the experience.
- 14) How did [the participant's description of the event] impact your experience?

B. Questions Asked Following Observation of the Videotape

- 1) What observations can you make about yourself from watching the videotape?
- 2) After watching the videotape, what stands out the most for you?
- 3) What are your thoughts or feelings at this time about implications for professional practice?
- 4) Anything more to share regarding your experience?

Appendix D

Letter of Invitation to Attend Focus Groups

October 21, 1998

Dear _____,

This letter is intended to be a friendly reminder about the study *Translating diversity from theory to practice: Evaluating the effectiveness of an empathy exercise in counselor education*. Plans for the third and final stage of the project are in place for November 1998.

As you may recall the purpose of the study is to evaluate whether the use of an empathy exercise in counselor education can be an effective means towards understanding diversity, and whether these exercises impact the student's perception of diversity once in a clinical environment. Your participation in the experiential learning exercise and the individual interview have provided valuable information towards acquiring further insight regarding the effects of experiential learning. The third stage of this project is necessary in order to gain needed information related to the long term effects of counselor education.

This final stage of the project consists of a 60 minute focus group interview. The focus groups have been arranged for November 3, 1998 at 5:00 p.m., November 16, 1998 at 2:00 p.m. and November 17, 1998 at 2:00 p.m. in Ed 281. It should be noted that part of this time is when you regularly meet for your practicum seminar. Please be aware that this time has been arranged to meet the needs of your demanding schedules, and is in no way connected to your course requirements or grade.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 220-3867 (office EdT 518), my supervisor Dr. Nancy Arthur at 220-6756, the Office of the Chair, Faculty of Education Joint Ethics Committee at 220-5626, or the Office of the Vice President of Research at 220-3381.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Achenbach