

from a fishing village to an important metropolis of approximately 4 million, its government carefully avoided industries that contribute to air pollution commonly found in other eastern Chinese cities. Zhuhai staked its future, in part, to tertiary education. It helped establish five technical institutes or universities, including the Beijing Normal University-Zhuhai Campus, an institution that appointed me a visiting professor. I taught at this campus and went to Zhuhai some Saturdays.

As noted above, Hong Kong is a pleasant one hour ferry ride to the north. I am a visiting professor at The University of Hong Kong and had the pleasure of giving a workshop to a large number of practicing school (educational) psychologists during one visit. I visited the city on other occasions.

I used Hong Kong's international airport when traveling within the region and to the States. A ferry goes directly between Macao and the airport, thus easing travel transitions. I gave invited talks at the school psychology programs at the National Taiwan Normal University as well as the Hanoi National University of Education. These visits allowed me to reconnect with friends and, in Vietnam, to travel with my younger son.

The graduates of this program are excited to become psychologists yet realize they are entering an emerging profession, not one that is well established. For example, in Marco and Mainland China, psychology is not a recognized profession. Thus, the title *psychologist* is not protected. Anyone can claim to be a psychologist. Additionally, psychology lacks a strong professional association. Furthermore, the scholarly infrastructure in this region is comparatively weak. For example, the amount of scholarship on psychology by Chinese, though growing, is meager. Some tests commonly used in the States are available yet generally have not be adapted for local use. Thus, these students, the first prepared at the graduate level from a respected university, will be expected to provide the leadership to elevate the discipline and profession of psychology in Macau—a very tall order.

I felt proud to have been a small part of the emergence of the profession of psychology in Macao and to reconnect with colleagues in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Mainland China. These experiences, collectively, may have been the highlight of my academic life.

Readers are encouraged to seek similar opportunities abroad. Don't wait for the perfect time to go. There rarely is one. You too may find work abroad to be the highlight of your academic life.

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## Developing Cultural Competence through Graduate Study Abroad: Lessons Learned in Botswana

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### Introduction

The United States is home to people from many cultures, and, therefore, school psychologists are likely to work with children who come from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Newell et al., 2010). Recognizing that schools are diverse, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has emphasized the need to provide culturally sensitive services. Therefore, one of the foundational competencies for school psychologists is diversity awareness and culturally sensitive service delivery (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Additionally, the APA Division 16 Task Force on Cross-Cultural Competencies has emphasized the importance of becoming culturally competent psychologists. Graduate school is a time for school psychology students to begin their career-long journey of developing cultural competence.

School psychology graduate students have several opportunities to increase their awareness of diversity and develop cultural competence. Graduate students can learn about practicing with clients from different cultures when course content is integrated with lessons on culture. School psychology graduate students can also obtain skills in working with students from different cultures when diverse practicum experiences are carefully planned. Another powerful, though less common, way to

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provide graduate students with an opportunity to increase cultural awareness is through immersion in another culture.

We recently participated in a two-week study tour in Botswana, supported by a fellowship provided by the College of Education at Michigan State University. One of the College's goals was to expose graduate students to global perspectives in education and mental health. We also embraced personal goals of a) reflecting on our development as culturally competent practitioners and b) identifying ways to utilize the knowledge gained in Botswana to influence our future practice. This article identifies seven lessons learned on the trip for developing cultural competence.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Ask questions. On the first day, we were encouraged by our hosts at the University of Botswana to ask questions about people, culture, food, language, politics, education, etc. While the invitation was appreciated, we did not immediately accept it. It often feels uncomfortable to ask personal questions about ideas, beliefs, or values, and one may neglect to do so out of discomfort. Without asking questions, however, one is left to make assumptions. As we developed relationships with our hosts, our inquisitive personalities emerged and our discomfort with asking questions diminished. We were then able to learn more about the culture of Botswana and were challenged to think about our assumptions, perspectives, and values.

2. Ask someone else the same questions. It is important to remember that there is great diversity within cultures. As we became more comfortable asking questions in Botswana, we were reminded that if you ask multiple people the same questions you might get different answers. When learning about a new culture, it is easy to assume that the values, beliefs, and perspectives of one are representative of most, but this assumption only builds and enhances stereotypes.

3. Be open to learning, trying, and failing. Stepping out of personal and academic comfort zones can be challenging, but the discomfort can bring great growth. For example, learning a few words in Setswana (a commonly spoken language in Botswana) and attempting to speak the language, even if failing, was integral for showing interest, respect, and appreciation for those that we met. A

small gesture, such as learning a new greeting, brought new opportunities for interacting with people and learning about their culture.

4. Participate in cultural and traditional activity when invited. One powerful way to learn about a culture is to engage in a traditional or cultural activity when invited. During the trip, the group was invited to visit a cattle post for the day, observe the daily tasks that are completed at the cattle post, and eat a traditional meal prepared by the men who work there. Visiting the cattle post, interacting with the workers, and sharing a traditional meal was a great way to learn about the traditions and the daily life of the people who live in Botswana.

5. Look at every new experience from at least two different angles. Previous experiences shape the way we interpret events, even when we make conscious attempts to be open-minded. By trying to find at least two ways to make sense of new experiences, we force ourselves to abandon some of our presuppositions and accept that there can be multiple perspectives. For example, when watching a group of children play soccer in bare feet, one's immediate assumption based on prior knowledge of poverty in Africa may be that the children cannot afford shoes. However, when searching for an alternate explanation, one may realize that the children prefer to play in their bare feet to have a better touch on the ball. By choosing to examine events from multiple angles, one can attempt to better monitor their own assumptions.

6. Find similarities among the differences. While it is important to recognize cultural differences and be knowledgeable about what makes cultures unique, one way to forge both personal and professional relationships is by identifying similarities. While there are many differences in educational programs seen in Botswana and the United States, there are many elements to program implementation that are similar. For example, the term *treatment integrity* was not specifically discussed in the context of schools or academic programs, but measurement to ensure the "program is implemented as intended" was discussed. Finding these connections helps to build bridges between disciplines and discuss experiences within a cultural context.

7. Recognize differences among the similarities. We had an opportunity to visit a local children's

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orphanage and spent the afternoon playing games with the children there. When a peer asked the assistant director if we could take photos, she appeared to hesitantly agree. However, we later learned that her body language and facial expressions were not indicative of hesitancy, but rather genuine and heartfelt approval. It is important to remember that what looks similar may be different. Body language and other forms of nonverbal communication vary across cultures and one must be cautious not to make assumptions about nonverbal cues.

### Conclusions & Recommendations

Currently, there are no school psychologists in Botswana. There are social workers and counselors who help school-aged children, but the profession of school psychology does not yet exist. When speaking with a doctoral level counseling psychologist and discussing the many mental health issues facing school-aged children, however, it became apparent that there is a need for many of the services that school psychologists are trained to provide. Study abroad trips provide the opportunity for future school psychologists to identify how they may be able to provide school psychological services and promote the academic success and mental health of students across the globe.

Graduate study abroad is a unique experience that is not replicable through classroom activities. Not only do international experiences provide exposure to ideas of diversity and culture, but they also allow graduate students to reflect upon their worldview and how it influences their practice. For such experiences to be successful, openness to new ideas and conflicting beliefs is necessary. Additionally, constant reflection is required in order to grow as a scholar and practitioner.

We wholeheartedly recommend that graduate students seek out international opportunities as a way to explore ideas of culture and reflect upon their development as culturally competent practitioners. In addition, we believe that study abroad experiences are a great way to further the cultural competence of graduate students in school psychology as called for by NASP. Finally, study abroad allows graduate students to consider how they can make a global impact on education and mental health in the future.

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Note: Carolyn A. Hayter and Justin A. Barterian are pursuing their Ph.D. degrees in school psychology at Michigan State University. They wish to thank Dr. Feltz, co-leader of the Botswana study tour, for her feedback on this manuscript.

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## Professional Development through Attending the 33<sup>rd</sup> ISPA Conference

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Educational Psychology is an emerging discipline in Bangladesh. As one of the first Bangladeshi students of Educational Psychology, it was a wonderful experience for me to attend the 33<sup>rd</sup> ISPA Conference. I learned a lot of things that are helpful for me to implement at school. I participated at the pre-conference workshop on consultation that made me easy and confident to apply consultation as a tool at my school. Consultation becomes an effective and popular way to help pupils through their teachers and parents. This is because of the higher number of students and availability of only one School Psychologist over the school. Previously, I also used consultation to promote change for the betterment of the students which was mostly non-systematic. From this conference, I have gained the skill how to relate the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory in mapping the background context of pupils as a consequence of supporting them.

ISPA's conference plays an important role for networking with professionals from various countries as a means of professional development. During conference, I have met especially with Prof. Shane R. Jimerson, Maureen Costello, Margaret Moore, and Sharone L. Maital. They were very helpful and cooperative with me. We exchanged our views and knowledge about autism, ADHD,

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