

# The Immersion Project

## Protocol 2: Reflecting on the Immersion Experience

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2040 section (Group and Team #)	Green 4
Type of Diversity Explored in Immersion Project	I went to a Mosque in downtown Columbia

Please answer the following questions:

- 1) **Please briefly describe what you had proposed to do as part of your immersion project. What type of experience did you have (participant observation, direct involvement, or experiential involvement)?** During my project, I went to a Muslim Church, which is called a Mosque, in downtown Columbia. I went and prayed with my friend (he doesn't want me to say his name) and it was extremely awkward.
- 2) **How did you prepare to get the most out of your immersion experience?** I did some experience on the Muslim culture and faith. I found a lot of controversy about 9/11 and a lot of conspiracies about Muslims. I told my friend how I wanted to know about his culture firsthand so he told that a big part of his culture was praying and church.
- 3) **Who was your cultural informer or contact? What did you learn from this person or persons that helped you think about your immersion project?** He doesn't want me to reveal his name, but he is a friend from back home. He went to elementary school with me and after 9/11, his family was forced to move and we lost contact until college. I told him how and why I was interested, so he willingly said, "Let's go next week." He was really happy that I wanted to know more about his culture.
- 4) **How did the experience go? Please give details about what happened.** The Muslim weekly service time is on Fridays. I went with an acquaintance that regularly visits mosques and is good friends with many Muslims. The mosque is in an unmarked building in an office complex. You would never know it was a mosque if you passed by the building. The service started at 1:45 PM. Yes, in the middle of the day, so you have to take a late lunch break during work. We arrived at 1:30 and got to chat a little bit with

the one of the leaders there. They were very welcoming of us. The service is divided into the men and women sections. Before you go into the "Brother's entrance", you have to take off your shoes. Inside is a fairly plain room the size of an exercise room covered with lush oriental carpets. We sat in the back. At 1:45, service started with a prayer leader praying in Arabic. Only a handful of men were there at that time. Throughout the service, men slowly came in and prayed before sitting at any open spot that was available. The end of the service at 2:30 filled the room filled with about 75 women and some girls. Most of the men were Arabic, Middle-Eastern, Pakistani. I saw some African and Caucasians. After the prayer, a message was given in English for about 30 minutes about Muslim eschatology. I did not see any men bring in a Koran or taking notes. After the message, all the men prayed and bowed in unison for several minutes. During the entire service, the mood was somber and respectful. There was no music or singing. There were no religious formalities like a communion. The service closed with some announcements. Afterward, they had boxed lunches that you could buy for \$5 consisting of Pakistani rice and chicken. Most grabbed a box and left. Very few stayed long afterward to talk with others.

- 5) **Reflect on what you learned about this diverse group.** I learned that Muslims are very spiritual and take praying seriously. A mosque is a place of worship and sacredness and so purity is vital. However menstruating women are still permitted inside the mosque although prayer and reciting Quran cannot be practiced until after the period has passed and they have washed and made ablution. However they are still permitted to supplicate. Enter the mosque with your right foot first!
- 6) **In what ways are the lived experiences of this group different and similar to your own experiences?** I have learned there are a lot of similarities between Christianity and Islamic beliefs. Christianity and Islam share much common ground. Both trace their roots to Abraham. Both believe in prophecy, God's messengers (apostles), revelation, scripture, the resurrection of dead, and the centrality of religious community.
- 7) **How might having this new cultural knowledge assist you to become a better teacher? Person?** I know now that it is better to find the similarities between yourselves and others instead of focusing on differences. If I focus more on similarities, it'll be easier for me to help and identify with my students.
- 8) **Reflect back on Bennett's stages of cultural awareness. Has this experience pushed you further in your own development?** Yes, I feel that now I am more leaning toward acceptance instead of defense.

