Qualitative Experiential Outcomes of an Undergraduate Nursing Immersion
Clinical Experience in El Salvador

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire College of Nursing and Health Sciences—Nursing 422 Nursing Practice: Health Enhancement—Fall 2014
Melissa Finley, Lauren Fix, Courtney Gehring, Elizabeth Husnick, Amanda Marvin, Valerie Parrish, Heidi Solchenberger, Clare Sievert

“You go where love is the strongest when you need to be held” – Sister Peggy

PREPARATION
Upon being selected to participate in the immersion experience, we read articles and blogs, and watched documentaries about El Salvador’s culture, healthcare, and history. We began preparing for this cultural experience primarily in our instructor’s home with discussions and by eating traditional Salvadorian food. It was imperative that we had a basic understanding of the history of the recent Civil War and in particular of Archbishop Oscar Romero.

BRIEF HISTORY
On March 24, 1980, Archbishop Romero was assassinated. Six months later, the Civil War began. There were two groups involved, the right-winged government and military, and the left-winged rebel group, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). At least 75,000 people were reported missing or killed by the government and military during the Civil War. A Peace Accord was signed in 1992, ending the 12 year war. In 2015, the Roman Catholic Church finally acknowledged Archbishop Romero as a martyr, putting him closer to in the process of becoming a saint.

Puerta del Diablo (Devil’s Door)
During the Civil War, Puerta del Diablo was used as an execution and body disposal site of those killed by the right-winged government and military. Historically, the Mayans used this site as a sacred place to perform sacrifices. Today, Puerta del Diablo is known for it’s magnificent views of the country.

“Solidarity means you hang in there. It’s giving to each other. It’s the new word for love.” – Sister Peggy

CULTURAL IMMERSION ASPECTS

Casa Esperanza (Hope House)
A survivor of the civil war, Maria Trinidad is the director of Casa Esperanza, Casa Concordia, and Sembrando Esperanza to build opportunities for those in need. She is the director of Casa Esperanza, a program designed to help those on the street who are in crisis providing food and basic necessities. Within the house they facilitate Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs, as well as addressing other health concerns.

Casa Concordia
Also run by Maria Trinidad, Casa Concordia functions as a hostel and orphanage for children and young adults. This house provides them with safety, food, shelter, and opportunities to go to school and work to help develop skills for their future.

Sembrando Esperanza (Farming Hope)
Cofounded by Maria Trinidad, Sembrando Esperanza is a farm that provides people in need with the opportunity to learn skills such as growing and harvesting crops to support Casa Esperanza, Casa Concordia, and themselves. Some of the crops include corn, red beans, hibiscus wine, eggs, and papaya; products include soap, and shampoo.

Maria Trinidad with a hibiscus plant.

NURSING CLINICAL ASPECTS

Community Health Teaching
We had the privilege of sharing our clinical expertise with the community health promoters of Nahualapa on topics of their choice regarding maternal child health, including breastfeeding, mastitis, and hyperbilirubinemia. Demonstration lessons included proper use of infant scales, taking blood pressures, hand hygiene, and oral hygiene. This cross-cultural interaction provided both knowledge and perspective for the healthcare workers of Nahualapa, as well as our own.

National HIV/AIDS Day
On December 1st, a national public health initiative promoting the prevention of HIV/AIDS took place in the center of San Salvador. Testing booths, presidential speeches, personal testimonies and educational materials were provided to the public. Overall, this experience expanded our knowledge on preventative measures for contracting sexually transmitted infections such as contraceptive care for males and females.

Hospital Divina Providencia
Hospital Divina Providencia is the only palliative care hospital in Central America. Archbishop Romero wished to live among and to serve the poor community; thus he chose to reside and preach at the chapel located alongside the hospital. At the hospital, we practiced holistic care by providing massages to several patients promoting healing and relaxation.

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank the following for their support and guidance throughout this experience: Dr. Jill Hecker Fernandes, Dr. Linda Young, Maria Trinidad, Casa Concordia, Jamie Stark, Pastora Norma Noemí Castillo de Menjivar, Pastora Concepción María Ángel, Mónica Barahona Alas, Bonnie Salem, and the Eau Claire Student Nursing Association.

We thank the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for supporting this research, and Learning & Technology Services for printing this poster.