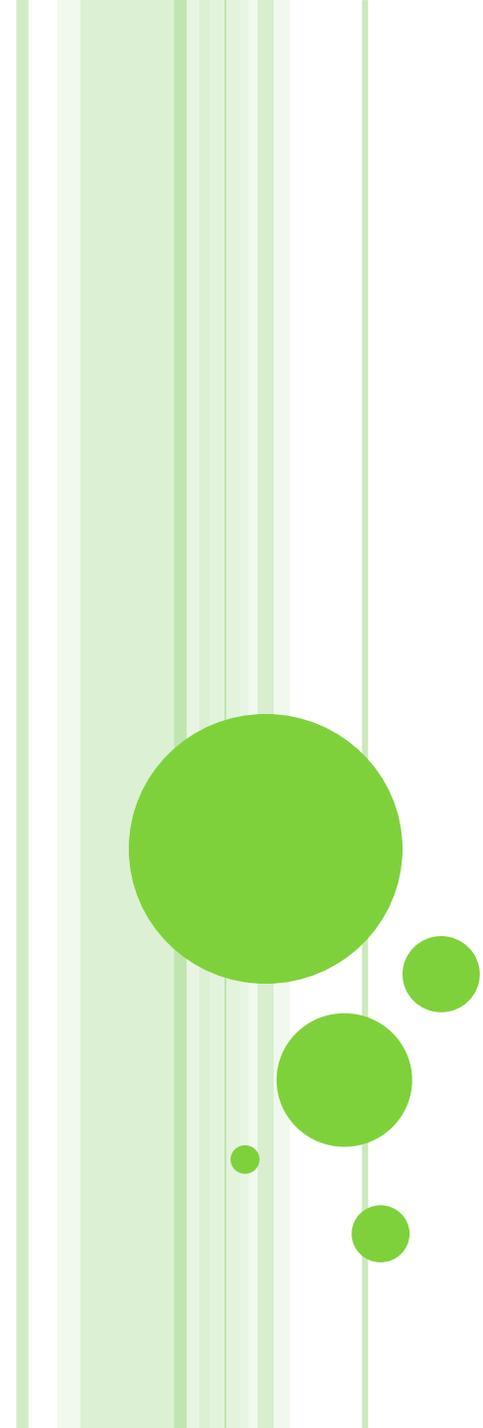




FAITH PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL PRACTICUMS

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FAITH PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL PRACTICUMS

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OBJECTIVES

- Overview of Literature
- Description of Research Study
- Results related to worldviews and faith perspectives.
- How can these results inform our development of international and cross-cultural practicum experiences?
- Model of international practicums that maximize learning outcomes



LITERATURE ON STUDY ABROAD

- Globalization-promotion of more global education in social work
- Increased interest in global opportunities
- Field as Signature Pedagogy
- Applied experiences suggested to have greatest benefit
- Anecdotal evidence and short term studies express benefits of international field experiences
- Increased benefit in semester or longer opportunities
- Few empirical studies on outcomes



WORLDVIEW IMPACT ON STUDENT

- Emerging adults: worldview/paradigm shifts do take place
- Cross-cultural experiences impact worldviews, according to cultural adjustment literature
- The more self-aware one is, the more they are open to change
- Specific types of experiences can impact worldview and faith perspectives: Orientation, supervision, housing, relationships with local people, comparative social welfare, experiences outside of the practicum...
- Increased self-awareness, cross-cultural sensitivity
- Reduced ethnocentrism, increased cultural competence and sensitivity
- Increased empathy, understanding of difference
- Increased sense of life purpose
- Concern for impact on community-imperialistic practices damaging rather than helping the international setting

(Barbera, 2006; Boyle et al, 1999; Dominelli & Bernard, 2003; IES, 2011; Dwyer, 2004 Fairchild et al, 2006; Lindsey, 2005; Gilin & Young,

2009 Mapp, McFarland, & Newell's, 2007; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010; Sobre-Denton & Hart, 2008)



PURPOSE OF STUDY

A Qualitative Study

To understand the significant experiences within international field practicums and their impact upon the participants

Implications for the development of international practicum experiences: to maximize positive outcomes and minimize negative outcomes.



METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative Study
- Purposive sampling
- In person semi-structured interviews
- Recorded and transcribed
- Lofland et al's (2006) data analysis
- Coded using Atlas.ti software
- Interviews summarized for member checking before final analysis.



DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Participants n=18

**14 BA level practicum ; 5 Master's level
practicum**

Gender:

- Female n=14
- Male n=4



DESCRIPTIVE DATA, CONT.

Table 4.2: Age of Participants	Range	Mean	Median	Mode
Age at Time of Placement	19-28 years	22.9	22	21
Time Since Placement	.08-18 years	4.82	3	2



DESCRIPTIVE DATA, CONT.

Table 4.3 University Type	State University	Private non- faith affiliated university	Private Christian University
Number of Participants (n)	7	2	10
Percentage of Participants	36%	10%	50%



DESCRIPTIVE DATA, CONT.

Table 4.4: Country Categories

Region of the World	North America	Central America	South America	Western Europe	Eastern Europe	Asia	Africa
Participants (n)	3	2	1	2	5	1	5
Percentage of Participants	16%	11%	.05%	.11%	28%	.05%	28%
Development Status	Developed* (Canada, Northern Ireland, South Africa)			Developing* (All other countries)			
Participants (n)	5			14			
Percentage of Participants	27%			78%			
*Based on CIA World Factbook categories in 2008							

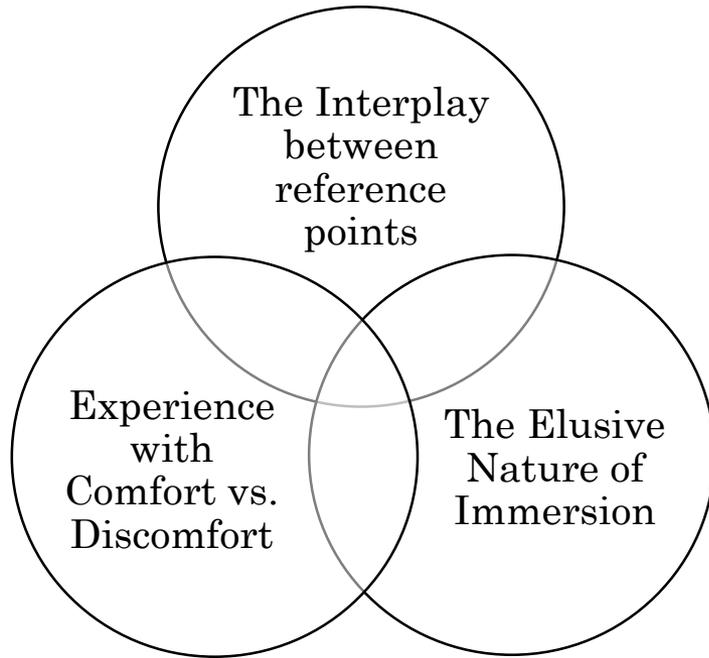
Canada (n=2), Mexico (n=1), Dominica (n=1), Guatemala (n=1), Ecuador (n=1), Northern Ireland (n=2), Romania (n=5), India (n=1), West Africa (n=1), Uganda (n=3), South Africa (n=1)

SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCES

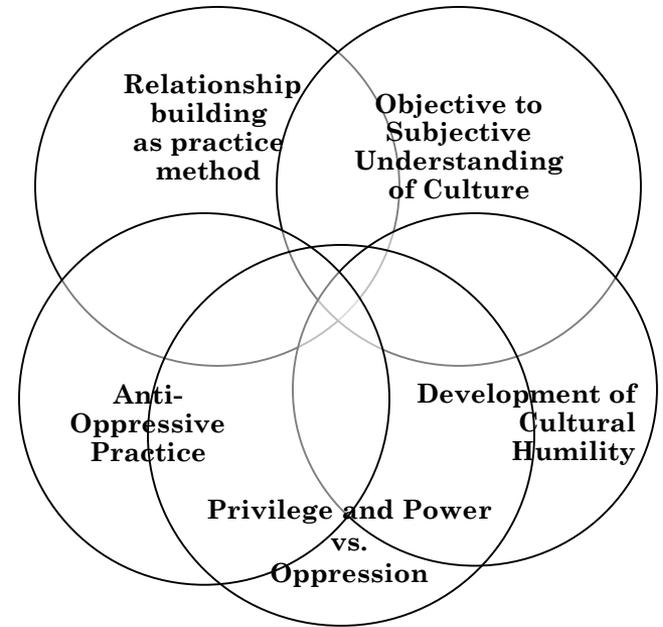
- The orientation experience
- Experience with being different
- Immersion through housing
- Relationships formed through living and practicum experiences
- Times of processing/debriefing/supervision
- Difference and similarities between developed vs. developing countries



Data Analysis



Significant Experiences



Outcomes



How did the experience impact Students' faith and worldview perspectives?

As their reference point shifted....

They felt different on their return home...

- A more global perspective:
 - Poverty
 - Global Christianity vs. American Christianity
 - Different political perspectives
 - Social Work practice
 - Serving and understanding people of all faiths in the name of Christ.
 - Faith, religion, and theology (polygamy example)
 - Other Spiritual viewpoints
- Critiqued
 - American culture and practices
 - Missions and international development
 - Faith Perspectives
 - Culturally humble attitude



GENERAL WORLDVIEW IMPACT:

Sam, after experience in Mexico:

“ (the professors who sponsored this)... dedicated their whole life to international development....they view the world upside down on purpose. They view things from a different perspective and I think it's useful to remember that...I mean they just most of the world doesn't live the way we do and they just have a profound understanding of that and they just they just you know they try to live simple lives and try to their being into social justice, they're Quakers so they're into social justice and equality”



VIEW OF POVERTY AND CROSS-CULTURAL PRACTICE:

Lyndsey, after serving in India:

“you always read about or see things about living in such extreme poverty but until you’ve spent so much time walking in it yourself and kind of seeing the sites and understanding, (you don’t know) what’s going on and what options they have or what lack of option they have... you don’t have a way to comprehend...

I think it has helped me to understand the importance of cultural competency and really to have more of an emphasis on like being aware of clients’ culture and kind of understand that... I think especially because I was immersed in a culture that was so different from my own...in the US it’s kind of been the opposite because you can, you can do a lot of things without having to understand their culture but you might do a lot of things really horribly.... I was exposed to so many different things and just being there and being immersed helped to understand how ethnocentric Americans are”

SERVING ALL FAITHS IN THE NAME OF CHRIST

Lyndsey:

“you know even because it was a Christian organization that was facilitating the social services...they served Hindus, they serve Muslims, and I think it was a really interesting way to kind of take religion out the picture. Like look at religious minorities in America, and a lot of times we come in with very Christian mindsets and to kind of learn from them and then you know, what they do to be more sensitive to religious differences as well was really interesting”



WORLDVIEW SHIFT

Andrea, after studying in Canada:

“It made me much more conscious of my world view and making sure that I do look at social work practice beyond just the US, that you know I look at what’s going on in Canada, what’s going on social work wise in other countries...(while in school after) I made sure that I got studies that were not just US based so that I could see how things were different and what research was being done in other countries.”



MORE OPEN TO DIFFERENT CULTURAL/FAITH PERSPECTIVES

Michelle, after getting to know polygamist families in Uganda:

- “like kind of like what’s right and what’s wrong...I interacted with people with polygamous families and like polygamy didn’t always seem bad and like, it didn’t seem like it had to be this awful thing or like, a lot of like, especially... like different like kind of more traveled, traditional practices,that was just how their families were...it didn’t have to be a bad experience...I think just being willing to like take your own ideas and what you’ve always known as right...just kind of being more open, having a more open view of how you look at things.



PERSPECTIVE OF AMERICA SHIFTED, AFTER LIVING IN ROMANIA:

Susan:

“I didn’t want to sing “God Bless America,” I didn’t want to sing any of the patriotic songs, I still don’t, I just I’m like we’re so egotistical and it bothers me. We are immigrants, like we came to a country and - uninvited - and killed all these people and we’re “Oh, we’re America, we’re a country.” Like it’s a huge struggle for me, it’s just the mentality that we think we’re so great and we’re one of the worst countries ever.”



EXPANDED PERSPECTIVE ON FAITH-BASED SOCIAL SERVICES

Rob after being in Canada stated:

The religious aspect (of social services) was very different. I live in the Bible belt so religion dominates a lot of cultural things. It's not a conservative, liberal thing but it's just a kind of a way of life...(Where I am from) the church is such a vital part of the community that's how you know a lot of social services are distributed and accessed.... I mean you did see some similar ways of accessing services but (in the U.S.) the church can kind of be like a lynch pin in some ways either it'll help move the program forward or it pulls it back.



DANGER OF MESSIAH COMPLEX, CULTURAL HUMILITY

Amy (after Ghana experience):

“she went on this diatribe about how she was going to come to Africa and save it and going on and on and it was so embarrassing and there were people around her like looking at her like... It was just awful! So I mean I think there were things like that and there were people who you know, worked in the orphanages and I have a big issue with that as well, just having it be short-term volunteers and putting them with children, like that’s not what’s good for the child, but it makes the volunteers feel good and then they give money’



FAITH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- The challenge of a paradigm shift
- Growth in faith through experience in a different culture
- Less self-selfish

• (Phil 2:4, 1 John 3:17, 2 Tim. 3:2-4, 1 Cor. 2:3-4)

- More love for “outcasts.”

(Luke 15:1-32, Rom. 13:8-10, John 4:4-26).

- More relationship focused in their practice

(John 15:15, Matt. 7:12, Rom 12:16, Acts, Matt 25)

- Value of other spirituality and religious practices beyond the faith culture of their own upbringing (Rom. 14)



FAITH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CONT.

- New realization of how their faith and social work coincide
- Awareness of justice issues (Isaiah 58, 61; Micah 6:8, Psalm 82:3)
- Cultural Humility (Micah 6:8, Eph. 4:2, Phil 2:3, Romans 14)
- More aware of American Christianity/American Cultural sins:
 - Materialism (Math 6:19-20)
 - “Messiah complex” (Micah 6:8, Eph 4:2, Phil 2:3)
 - Lack of care for poor (Matt 7:12)
 - Oppressive tendencies/Hurting when trying to help (Isaiah 58)
- Developed Anti-Oppressive Perspectives on how international development/social work/cross-cultural practice practice.

(Isaiah 58, Isaiah 61, Luke 4: 18-19; Psalm 31:9; 146: 7-9)



SHIFT IN FAITH PERSPECTIVE IS NOT ALWAYS EASY

Lori, after Uganda experience:

“I think personally it was a really hard time for me, like, spiritually and just like questioning my own faith and why I believe certain things...which I think I’m still struggling with a little bit, just like rectifying everything that I learned and everything that I saw and how Christianity looks in different cultures and then how do I translate that back to my life?

.....my view of world relief and aid and then missions and that kind of thing and what does that look like and what’s best for other cultures...I think was very much changed for me. I think before I went I was very much someone who was like, “yeah, let’s go on short term missions trips, and yeah!, let’s send these Christmas shoeboxes, and yeah, let’s give all our shoes to like these people, and let’s buy these t-shirts and they give this much to like drilling wells.” I was all for that kind of thing and now I’m just, kind of recognizing the fad in that or the status that gives to Americans but not necessarily to others. Um, I think I said earlier, become a little bit of a cynic. I think that’s really shaped my worldview maybe for the better maybe for the worse.

PERSONAL FAITH IMPACT

Melissa (after experience in Romania):

“I certainly relied on my relationship with God to get me through....I remember one time being very sick at my host parents’ house, and feeling like...there’s no one else here that speaks English, and then just remembering my faith, and thinking, ok, well I have a God who speaks English and I could talk to Him and so that was a comfort...it was a very growing experience... it was a big separation of my own self spiritually of, this is my own relationship with God and not with my family.... something that was interesting for me too is, trying to understand, um, why is it that I have a lot materially and these people don’t and how do I reconcile my understanding of God or how God works in people’s lives . I guess seeing that it’s, I always thought... I always thought of a blessing is a material thing, you know, this is how God is going to show his favor with me, is a material thing. And I guess I learned differently, that it’s not necessarily that way....was interesting to me to see I guess what parts of Christianity Romanians focus on a little differently...”



RELATIONSHIP FOCUS/LOVE OF INNOCENT OUTCASTS

Karen's experience in Uganda:

“(I learned a) deep love for just these people that are innocent outcasts and a lot of the women that I deal with are low income, impoverished individuals and pregnant and maybe and even the unborn children that are in the sense could become a throw away....that whole idea of social work and my faith go hand and hand....I think about Jesus and how he lived his life and it was relationships with people too, you know, it wasn't the theory, I think the Pharisees lived more maybe by the theory and the law but He probably put it into practice and challenged the theory... (no matter what one's situation) “You're still a child of God,” you know any person that I interact with I still, I think that's the one thing the Lord teaches me every day, sorry it makes me emotional, just you may have a different, a totally different life than me, you may have made some bad decisions in your life, but you're still a child of God and he loves you dearly. And I'm not going to sit here and criticize you... To be able to empathize and to love more.



VALUE OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION BEYOND FAITH UPBRINGING

Andrea, after studying in Canada:

“Yeah, it’s you know, down here it’s so much more.. Bible, Bible belt churches, you say spirituality and people automatically assume Christianity. Trying to explain to people there’s a difference between religion and spirituality, it’s very interesting...I use a lot of rituals and ceremonies and ceremony development when I’m working with people especially with grief issues, finding ways to help them move past their grief, so I end up using that quite a bit and that has been really good”



WHEN HELPING HURTS/OPPRESSES

After experience, Michelle wondered:

I'm still kind of wrestling with how I feel about whether sometimes international efforts are good or bad or helpful... I think I maybe have become a lot more in tune to ways that Americans (are) trying to help in other countries ...that sometimes it's not always actually helpful to the local people and so I think maybe that's partially why I'm hesitant about those things... seeing people there telling me that it's not always helpful and it's not always good, or that money is not always the answer or if you're not from that culture and you don't understand the cultural values, it's hard to help and it's hard to be effective... **I know less than what I started with.**

Influenced by experience combined with “Faith in Action” Course



QUESTIONING COMMON MISSIONS AND AID PRACTICES

Lori began to:

“question some of our efforts in relief and aid, and even missions and what that should look like...

I don't want to say that it turned me off towards international social work, but it just made me think a lot more deeply about, do I want to do that? Because I realize it's so hard. You know, and, not only is it hard to help people for that program development, but there are just years like building relationships with people and knowing what's even needed and how to work with nationals and help them in the best way possible. (It is important to) not having that Messiah Complex ..., so I think it's given me a huge respect for people who do that...it's so hard to do well. Um, and you know, some international social workers probably did it fantastically, some might be done with a little bit more of a “we're going to come in and take charge” attitude. And so, as to individual international social workers or international programs, I can't speak to that.”



ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE (AOP) PERSPECTIVES

Informed Melissa's practice perspectives, compared to her co-workers:

And so there were some people who we were working with what by American standards were in poverty and other practitioners were like, well they are eating possum. And I was like, well, maybe that's what they eat, you know. I don't think that's that big of a deal. I think that that came from being influenced by living there and seeing not everything has to be suburbia (sic) America. Most of the other practitioners who I was working with, that's their experience, growing up in middle class or upper middle class families and working with impoverished people and they hadn't experienced anything different. (It was) an unnecessary standard. (They also would say) I don't know if this is healthy for a family to be sleeping in the same room here...I had just come from Romania where that was a typical thing where everyone was going to sleep in the same room. I didn't see that as a problem at all. So that did lead to some conflict sometimes of what kind of intervention are we going to do with this family.



AOP PERSPECTIVE:

Lyndsey stated:

“I think that when you’re working with theories developed by westerners, and then you try to apply that to nonwestern societies that you, I mean you just can’t blindly apply everything without accounting for culture”



AOP PERSPECTIVES:

Amy expressed:

There was also the idea that like me as an outsider can come in, like I think I can tell you how you (can) change, to make this problem go away? ...clearly it's an issue that's plaguing your country, your culture, and your society as well and if you can't come up with a solution than surely I can't because I don't live in your culture you know, I don't live by the same norms and include all the same ways like if someone foreign came into my community here and told us like "this is what you need to do to stop the gang violence" and it's like "what do you know about the gang in my neighborhood?"



AOP PERSPECTIVES:

Lyndsey stated:

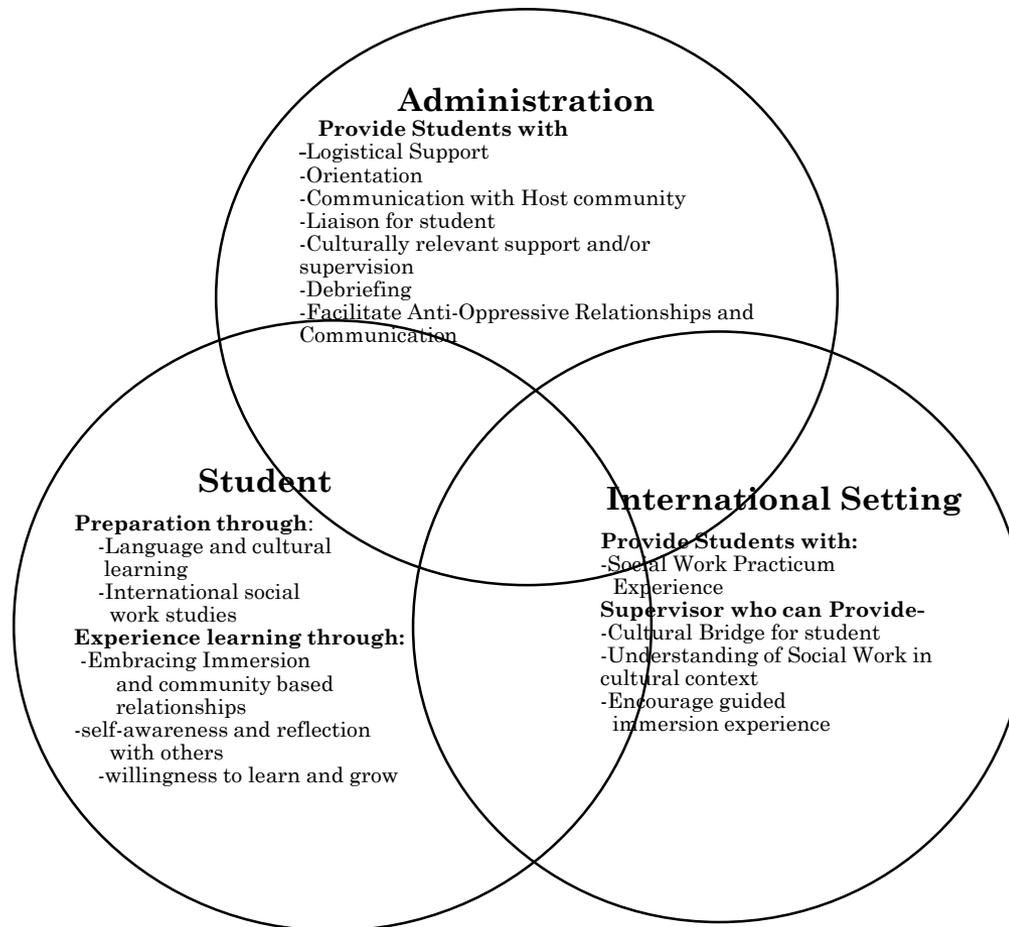
I felt some discongruencies (sic) between self-help group empowerment models that are defined (and) so widely used in development in India, but they're all really created by westerners and applied to nonwesterners... I started doing a lot of research about that, and especially for women in Hinduism, because the gender roles are very different and gender identity is very different in Hinduism. And gender-specific development programs that encourage women, or really pressure women into working and into taking these roles and measure their success based upon our standards was just really intriguing to me....that was something that I just really continued to wrestle with.....it's something that I'm trying to go back and do some more research on because I just really think, would like to think about you know, those types of development programs and trying to find a more culturally appropriate way to measure you know, their success.



How can these results inform our development of international and cross-cultural practicum experiences?



MODEL OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICUMS THAT MAXIMIZE LEARNING OUTCOMES



(See Handout for more details)



For more information on the full research study, please contact me:

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Figure 6.2: Model for International Practicum Programs

	Administration	Student	International Setting
Pre-Trip Departure	<p>Provide International Social Work/Development education to students</p> <p>Facilitate logistical needs re:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate supervision • Academic credit • Financial aid • Student housing • Practicum placement • Insurance <p>Communicate with host country and agree on anti-oppressive and mutually beneficial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic expectations • Student support expectations • Practicum Expectations • Living Environment <p>Provide Orientation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical to host setting logistics specific to country (including financial issues, packing & fitness expectations, etc.) • Includes cross-cultural adaptation training (general & specific to country) 	<p>Determine and Complete (with administration):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic approvals • Financial aid paperwork • Housing plan • Practicum placement • Transportation to host setting • Insurance needs <p>Learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take International Social Work or International Development course • History of host setting • Learn about social welfare system in host setting • Current events • Culture • Begin to learn language (if relevant). <p>Communicate with administration at home and international setting re:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistics of travel • Practicum information 	<p>Plan for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student housing • Practicum opportunities • Academic requirements • Financial logistics (cost of student experience) • Practicum supervisor knowledge of social work in both countries/cultures • Student transportation logistics <p>Communicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host setting needs • Opportunities for students that will support host setting needs • General student expectations • Practicum opportunities and expectations
During International Experience	<p>Provide student and host environment with communication and support</p> <p>Fill in any gaps of supervision not offered by host country</p>	<p>Embrace immersion through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicum • Relationships with local people • Community activities <p>Embrace opportunities for growth through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection • Supervision • Field practicum seminar and other coursework <p>Develop cultural humility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open-minded to different ways of being and doing. • Discover what you are learning and how this impacts your growth and learning during the experience and beyond 	<p>Provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicum experience that facilitates student growth and learning • Supervision to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bridge cultural gaps ○ Support culturally based social work learning ○ Encourage guided immersion experience that will encourage relationship building through internship, housing, and community activities
Post-Practicum	<p>Provide Debriefing Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support student in adjustment home • Help them discover ways their experience can positively impact their social work practice. 	<p>Understand the change that has taken place in you</p> <p>Reflect on Learning through formal and informal debriefing</p> <p>Discover ways that your international experience can impact your current perspectives, career choices and practice approaches</p>	<p>Reflect on experience and communicate to sending universities how future experiences can support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local goals • Local empowerment • Sustainability <p>Plan for student experiences that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local needs and goals • Facilitate student growth and learning towards cultural humility