

INTRODUCTION FROM THE GUEST EDITORS

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International study abroad is now a common activity in many schools of social work. However, little has been published about the transformative nature of working in global settings. In this special issue of *Reflections*, we set forth to explore how study abroad is carried out in a culturally competent manner and what faculty, our students, and host country facilitators have to say about study abroad as a transformative experience. We focus on post-conflict and post-colonial countries with a hope that we will encourage knowledge building to take study abroad far beyond typical travel destinations into these regions of the world that challenge and expand existing paradigms of social development and social work education.

This issue takes us on a journey around the world. We hear from host country facilitators in South Africa, Romania, Belize, and Guatemala as they share their insight about the interactive nature of a study abroad experience. We hear from Rich Furman as he shares a creative approach to documenting a Latin American journey with poetry. From South Africa we hear from a student, Emily Sanford, who shares her insight about being paralyzed by language and yet transcending this barrier towards a meaningful experience. Another student, Kim Bauer, pulls back the curtain on military social work in Germany during a time of war. Her account of a military field practicum is an important look at the many forms of global practice and reminds all of us of the importance of training social workers to assist our veterans. Then, on another continent, Khadija Khaja recounts embarking on her doctoral research, which required relocating from Canada to the U.S. to study female circumcision of African-Muslim women. Her own journey into the world of Somalian women living in the West clearly was a global study abroad experience that transcended many boundaries.

We hear from several different authors about Ghana, a study abroad location that is very popular for schools of social work. Randi Buerlein's approach to study abroad, focusing heavily on service learning in Ghana, reminds us that we can do far more than just observe and that social work students are highly motivated to roll up their sleeves and work. Also, she poses the question, "What happens after service is over?" This is an important question for any study-abroad effort.

Rose Penzerro shares her experience taking Mexican-American students deep into Mexico, including learning activities with a *curandero* (healer), a midwife, and a women's cooperative. Her discussion of student journals gives us new insight into how our students digest and reflect on differences and similarities.

Intae Yoon, Jim Ward, and Sunjung Lee present their insight into hosting a short-term visiting program of Korean social workers. They walk us through a model of engagement, assessment, and planning. Strategies for success are discussed, as well as issues of empowerment. Their experience in hosting others is important as U.S. schools of social work are increasingly involved in such endeavors.

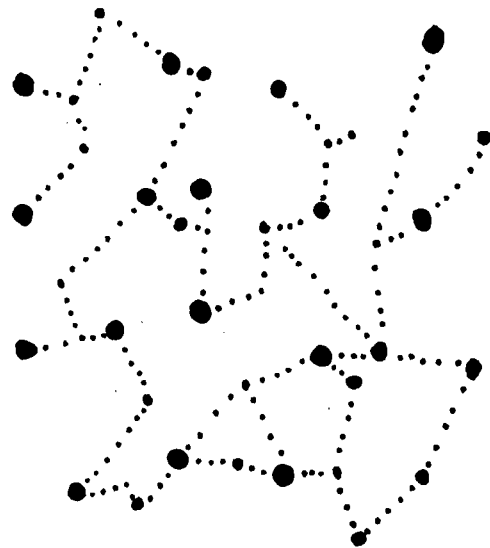
We close with Jane Birkbeck and Shawna Bava's discussion of e-supervision of a field practicum in India. We chose this article as the last in the series because it leaves us with ideas for strengthening study-abroad approaches with technology. This particular article impresses upon us the importance of clear and consistent communication between faculty and student during extended or long-term study abroad experiences like field practicum.

This particular manuscript touches upon a subject that has not yet been fully addressed by our professional educators. That is, how are we really supervising students in their trans-

global experiences—especially field placements—that meet curriculum requirements? We fear that there is a real gap here, and there may actually be a failing in this particular area when one overlays the general field practice expectations in an international context—settings that are often unpredictable and far less structured than a U.S.-based agency experience. However, Birkbeck and Bava demonstrate how promising email is as a tool, and that leads us to other ideas like discussion forums, instant messaging, and video technology.

Social work is truly a global profession and this special issue has been an adventure that illustrates the many different activities taking place around the world. From these articles we can begin to glean some commonalities, such as the challenges and even barriers of language. Also, the importance of reflection through journaling and poetry is clearly a theme. Additionally, intercultural competence—whether in a U.S. military setting in Germany, engaging in a U.S.-based research project with Somalian women, or hearing from and communicating with a Belizean poet—is critical not only to success, but in building bridges of mutual understanding.

As social work educators, we have only just begun to build systems of global learning. We must come together to define exactly “What is study abroad?” and “How is it ethically carried out?” The reflections compiled in this volume are a start to answering those questions.



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