The International Field Placement Experience:

A Continuous Process with Learning Moments and Outcomes

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Abstract

In recent years, student mobility has increased as more students have been taking part in various programs such as a semester abroad, short-term international exchanges, and international field placements (IFP). Studying abroad yields many positive outcomes. This qualitative research borrows from narrative inquiry to gather knowledge from stories told by practitioners who completed an IFP during the last year of their bachelor's degree program in social work. This study looks at IFP outcomes for the professional practice of 20 social workers, half having completed their IFP within five years or less after graduation from university and half having completed their IFP more than five years after graduation. Questions explored include:

- What do the stories about the personal, professional, and global outcomes gained in an IFP tell us about how participants negotiate the transition between various contexts, and the knowledge, skills, and values transferred from one social practice to another?

- What do these stories reveal about the value of these experiences for their individual social work practice?

- How do these stories contribute to social work education and IFP planning?

This study's findings reveal two important aspects of the IFPs: first, a seven-step process model that illustrates both the learning moments in each step and the complexity and interconnectedness of events before, during, and after the IFP and second, the personal, professional, and global outcomes of an IFP. Four analytical themes emerge that have implications for social work education and IFP planning. They pertain to expectations, identity, touring when abroad, and students' identification of personal, professional, and

global outcomes. A framework for IFP planning is proposed to avoid some of the pitfalls of IFPs and maximize success for students.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Historically, internationalization of the social work profession is tied to the rise of

social problems as a result of

> global interactions and economic interdependence of countries around the world. Over time, social work professionals have been increasingly confronted with the challenges of immigrants and refugees or have traveled to assist in humanitarian and reconstruction efforts during or after major catastrophic events such as disasters and war. (Estes, 2009, p. 5)

Consequently, in order to deal with such challenges, Schools of Social Work had to focus their

efforts to internationalize programs. Some schools, for example, collaborated on overseas

research projects, encouraged faculty/student exchanges, created courses on international

social work (Estes, 2009), and developed international field placements (IFPs) as a way to

achieve internationalization (Yeom & Bae, 2010).

Despite the benefits of internationalizing programs, concerns remained about certain

initiatives, such as inadequate IFP planning and negative impact on stakeholders. Among other

things, the increased popularity of IFPs raised issues about the "potential imposition of

hegemonies of values and knowledge" (Parker, Ashencaen Crabtree, bin Baba, Paul Carlo &

Azman, 2012, p. 146). Further study of such field placements and their outcomes was needed.

Outcomes are defined as "impacts or end results" that occur "due to an experience, process, or

programme" (Bendelier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015, p. 186–187). Regardless of the growing

commitment to internationalize social work programs, "research into the impact of these

activities has not kept pace with growth" (Dorsett, Clark & Phadke, 2015, p. 1). It is

important, therefore, that social work educators who are "developing international programs

for students (*sic*) learning make a conscious effort to address the shortcomings and potential

injustices of such a program through specific strategies and techniques" (Boetto, Moorhead & Bell, 2014, p. 14).

1.1 Purpose and Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore IFP outcomes related to social workers' individual professional practices by examining the learning moments of 20 social workers who completed an IFP, either as a recent graduate (i.e., within five years or less) or as a distant graduate (i.e., more than five years). This is an important area of study because the way students integrate theory and practice during their field placement has an impact on their practice (Guransky & Le Sueur, 2012). I am interested in looking at how individual social workers transitioned between Canada and the host country and transferred skills, values, and knowledge from one context to another.

A deeper understanding of these experiences through the exploration of long-term outcomes using individual social workers' narratives will contribute to the knowledge-base for future students going abroad and will help prevent potential shortcomings of such field placements (e.g., negative impacts for the host community).

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- What do the stories about the personal, professional, and global outcomes gained in an IFP tell us about how participants negotiate the transition between various contexts, and the knowledge, skills, and values transferred from one social practice to another?

- What do these stories reveal about the value of these experiences for their individual social work practice?

- How do these stories contribute to social work education and IFP planning?

A qualitative approach provides thick description (McNamara, 2009) about social workers'

participation in an IFP. Borrowing from narrative inquiry, I gathered knowledge from

narratives, which provided much more than "responses to items" but stories to be explored

(Riessman, 2015).

1.2 How IFPs Developed

To understand forces that have contributed to the development of IFPs in social work

education, it is important to explore some contextual elements. There has been a push to

internationalize higher education in North America, and especially to encourage student

mobility. The social work profession has also demonstrated an interest in international and

intercultural issues, and these interests have had an impact on curriculum development (e.g.,

offering courses on international social work and promoting IFPs). As did other Schools of

Social Work in Canada, the Université de Moncton's School of Social Work saw the benefits

of promoting IFPs, and recognized the importance of developing a better understanding of

both the IFP experience (e.g., benefits and shortcomings) and the implications for IFP

planning.

1.2.1 Internationalization of higher education.

Internationalization in higher education is defined by Knight (2004) as a process that

incorporates intercultural, international, and global dimensions and may include many

activities, such as academic/student mobility and international partnerships. This process is not

new: universities and academic culture have a history of gathering information from many

parts of the world and proposing innovations for dissemination both locally and globally, with

practitioners/academics often crossing borders (Teichler, 2004). However, it has recently

become more salient in academia (Harrison & Ip, 2013). While the process of internationalization traditionally focused on increasing border activities, such as mobility of individuals and knowledge transfer for specialists in a few fields, it has become increasingly necessary to internationalize all sectors of higher education (Teichler, 2004). Seidel (1991) attributes internationalization of higher education to an increasing interdependence between the professional world, the labour market, and the economy. According to Universities Canada (2016), "Canada needs to do more to encourage a culture of mobility among Canadian students. Studying abroad or in another province helps young Canadians develop the cross-cultural competencies and problem solving-skills that give them an edge with today's employers" (para. 1).

In 2012–2013, 3.1% of Canadian undergraduate students (25,000) who were enrolled full-time took part in an international experience (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014), and it is expected that 12% will have an experience overseas before they finish their studies (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014). As part of the internationalization of higher education, most universities in Canada "engage to some degree in activities aimed at forging global connections and building global competencies among their students, faculty and administrative units" (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014, p. 3).

There is also a political will to promote cross-border study, teaching, and research (Teichler, 2004, p. 21). Policies developed are viewed by government as a "key driver in economic development" (Llieva, Beck & Waterstone, 2014, p. 875). Organizations such as The Conference Board of Canada (2016), for example, actively promote the merits of mobility. Many employers are also pressing higher education to serve the interests of global

capital and the labour market (Rhoads & Torres, 2006). With greater needs for a global workforce, employers want to hire graduates with international and cross-cultural competences who can provide adequate services. As a result, universities are providing more financial opportunities to encourage students to go abroad. Through the process of internationalization, institutions of higher education aim to develop international and intercultural competence among students. At the same time, they promote research on international issues and attract global talent in order to maintain Canada's competitiveness (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014; Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2016).

Internationalization is not solely the product of pragmatic and economic motivations (i.e., instrumentalism), such as labour force mobility to increase profit (Stier, 2004). Schools of Social Work recognize two other ideological motives for internationalization of higher education: *educationalism* and *idealism* (Stier, 2004). Educationalism refers to the aim of enriching both students' and faculty's academic experience (e.g., transformational benefits of studying in an unfamiliar setting). Idealism refers to the desire to achieve a fair and equal world (e.g., social work as a global profession needing to fight for human rights and social development).

Kloppenburg and Hendriks (2013) identify three arguments that are used to justify the internationalization of social work education. First, the internationalization of education improves the learning processes by creating experiences of disequilibrium that lead to transformative learning. It can be "transformative for students in ways that lead to the development of respect for diversity and a strong commitment to social justice" (Lager & Mathiesen, 2012, p. 342). Second, internationalization ameliorates social work practice

whether "helping a child refugee adjust to her new country, assisting a woman who has been trafficked for sexual purposes, or working with an undocumented worker who is being abused, international issues touch all social workers" (Mapp, 2008, p. 162). Third, internationalized education helps to prepare students to work in national and international settings by developing their knowledge, skills, and values for international social work (ISW) (e.g., international adoptions or the cultural survival of Indigenous peoples) and multicultural social work (e.g., cultural conflict resolution between ethnic groups) (Healy & Link, 2012). Both types of social work often overlap and are not "mutually exclusive but can be distinct" (Healy & Link, 2012, p. 12).

1.2.2 Interest in international and intercultural issues in social work.

Interest in international and intercultural social work is not new. Since the 19th century, many organizations and individuals have enjoyed the benefits of an international exchange of ideas (e.g., programs to address poverty) (Healy, 2008). Agencies worked with immigrant families, including the Settlement House (SH) movement in North America (Bellamy, 1914). It was important for SH workers to improve relationships among diverse groups in the community to increase knowledge of one another. SH workers were encouraged to study a foreign language and to teach immigrants about their new country (Holden, 1922). They also organized an Old Settler's Party where immigrants who had improved their social status could share their success stories as an incentive for others (Stroup, 1916). However, due to the climate of fear about biological/cultural contamination that came with each wave of immigration, relationship-building was often a difficult task (National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1906).

The Charity Organization Society (COS) movement also played a significant role in improving the welfare of immigrants. COS workers attempted to rehabilitate families, educate the community, and provide aid to eliminate the roots of poverty (McCulloch, 1880). Often, workers inside agencies were immigrants themselves who strongly advocated for their own people. Mary Richmond, an important contributor, believed in developing helpful relations between worker and immigrant. To achieve this, major political changes were needed so that workers could include "knowledge of their history and of their old environment" in their interventions (Richmond, 1917, p.73). It was necessary to study their differences and to provide interpreters to work with them. But like others of her time, Richmond held some stereotypical views of immigrants: she described, for example, South Italians as "intensely proud" and not always responding "from reasoned motives" (Richmond, 1917, p. 74).

The nature of this interest in international and intercultural issues in social work has developed over the years and taken many forms, such as the creation of international organizations (Healy, 2008), involvement in the peace movement (Hyman Alonso, 1993), the fight against racial discrimination (Thomas Bernard, Lucas-White & Moore, 1993; Reynolds, 1963) and the fight against the overrepresentation of minority groups as recipients of benefits/services (Armitage, 1988), and the access to social work services by minority groups (Mio, 1989). For some social workers, the interest in international and intercultural issues resided in a desire to find ways of improving practice with immigrants and refugees or with citizens in an intercultural context of intervention to address communication and cultural barriers (Fong, 2004; Whitmore & Wilson, 2005). This interest has contributed to changes in social work curricula.

1.2.3 Social work education: The development of IFPs.

While interest in international issues and traveling abroad was evident early on within social work education in North America, promotion of international experiences increased significantly in Canada during the 1990s. This will be discussed further in the following section.

1.2.3.1 Interest in international issues and travel abroad.

In the 1920s, many social workers recognized the need to attain racial harmonization and promote greater international co-operation. Schools of Social Work were asked to provide "very specialized training for work with immigrants" (National Conference of Social Work, 1922, p. 484). Social workers needed skills (e.g., language), knowledge (e.g., racial characteristics), and values (e.g., respect). Educators in Schools of Social Work had concerns about the foreign-born and issues pertaining to health, continuation of their heritage, and the impact of North Americanization. It was determined that social science courses were needed to help students gain an awareness of their personal judgments on the basis of custom, creed, class, and sectarian standards in order to provide "the ground for acting with tolerance . . . and unaccusing eyes" (Cheyney, 1923, p.54). These courses helped students to see racial and national characteristics, such as the clannishness of Italians as positive assets (Lee & Kenworthy, 1931).

Not only did educators promote knowledge of immigration issues, but they also participated in international conferences on social work issues and training around the world (1928 - *Première Conférence Internationale* in Paris; 1932 - *Zweite Internationale Konferenz für Soziale Arbeit* in Frankfurt; 1936 - *Third International Conference* in London (Kniephoff-

Knebel & Seibel, 2008). During the 1932 conference, for example, participants spoke of the need to encourage student exchanges to internationalize social work education (Kniephoff-Knebel & Seibel, 2008). After World War II, the United Nations granted scholarships and fellowships for students to learn about social work. Casework training was considered indispensable; as a result, many European countries sent individuals to the United States. Between 1947 and 1949, 42 North American experts spent several months in more than 14 countries to set up Schools of Social Work in Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe (United Nations, 1950). Educators from the United Kingdom were also sent to developing countries. The idea of an international school that first appeared at the third international conference resurfaced a few years later (Kniephoff-Knebel & Seibel, 2008). It was determined that advanced training in ISW would enrich the knowledge base, centralize information, and promote cooperation among countries (United Nations, 1950).

After World War I, European students came to North America to learn about social work. In 1921, for example, 12 students from Czechoslovakia studied in the USA. Following Jane Addams' visit to Alice Salomon's school in Berlin, one German student also traveled to Hull House for a stay in 1926 (Hegar, 2008). Similarly, after World War II, students came to North America on internships and scholarships. There was concern about field placement outcomes, however, as it was considered dangerous to send "students alone with little or no faculty support to undertake difficult assignments at a distance from the school" (Younghusband, 1964, p. 133).

The 1960s/1970s were characterized by increased means of communication and transportation, which popularized a more mobile attitude (Axinn & Levin, 1975). By the 1980s, students were expressing a greater interest in traveling abroad, which coincided with

Schools of Social Work hiring field coordinators to develop placements with agencies and monitor student progress (Minahan, 1987). This centralization of efforts led to the development of field placements in other less common settings for professionals to "expand the boundaries of traditional social work" (Kimberley & Watt, 1982, p. 110).

Locally, some authors wrote about the need for better preparation of social work students for a diverse population. To offer services of quality, students had to acquire "the ability to empathize with sufferers who are unlike themselves" (Minahan, 1987, p. 961) through training on ways to respond more appropriately to Aboriginal needs, for example (McKenzie & Mitchinson, 1989). Some authors proposed courses to deal with "pluri-ethnic contexts" (Jacob, 2011). Others advocated for the internationalization of the curriculum (Hokenstad & Druga Stevens, 1984) in order to prepare students for cooperation in a global world (Healy, 1986). Professional exchanges (Alexander, 1982) and field placements (Favreau, 1987) were considered ideal ways to promote cooperation. Also, comprehensive books on ISW were written to better prepare students for social work practice in these contexts (Hokenstad, Merl, Khinduka & Midgley, 1992).

1.2.3.2 Promoting international experiences.

By the 1990s, accreditation standards in Canadian schools made anti-racist and intercultural education a priority. The Canadian Association of Social Workers (1991) raised issues of adequate training for all students and specialized training for those in certain fields of practice. Attention centered on "globally informed practitioners" and international practice (Adedoyin & Sossou, 2011). Specialized content was added to the curriculum, but educators still identified gaps, such as the lack of national or international cross-cultural experiences based on experiential learning to address ethnocentrism (Holmes & Mathews, 1993). While

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some educators explored experiential learning inside the classroom as a way of developing empathy toward minority groups (Moreau, 1991; Deepak & Biggs Garcia, 2011), others looked outside the classroom to field placements in multi-ethnic agencies (Jouthe, Bertot & Bourque, 1993). However, there were limits to what could be accomplished with regards to ISW in the classroom and with field placements locally.

In the 1990s/2000s, the popularity of IFPs continued to grow. Some Schools of Social Work looked at short- and long-term programs (e.g., seminars, exchanges, study programs, and IFPs). Immersion was seen as a way to promote cultural competence, global knowledge, and social justice (Cordero & Negroni Rodriguez, 2009). Social work educators were sometimes critical of this trend and its potential to be a double-edged sword with its potential for oppression and empowerment. Powell and Robinson (2007) warned of the dangers of imperialistic attitudes during exchanges. Nevertheless, there was an intensification of IFPs, short-term international stays abroad, and courses on diversity. Some universities promoted experiences abroad as a way of developing an international perspective and global citizenship. While field placements became the signature pedagogy in social work and was seen by many as "an essential educational preparation method for acquiring and applying knowledge" it was not seen as the unique "setting in which students learn to connect the theoretical contribution of the classroom with the practical/real world of practice" (Boitel & Fromm, 2014, p. 609-610). Some evidence-based practice researchers also asked for greater evidence about IFP outcomes (Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens & Ferrell, 2011).

IFPs required shifting from a Western paradigm to an international framework that included multiple perspectives of social work (Staniforth, Fouché & O'Brien, 2011). Many educators saw the benefits of IFPs. Immersion allowed students both to negotiate uncertainty

and ambiguity (Cordero & Negroni Rodriguez, 2009) and to learn from daily living practices

and interactions with local people (Blanchy, 2009; Peterson, 2002). The bonds created with

the people encountered abroad added an emotional aspect that promoted a desire to improve

the well‑being of their community (Gauthier & Olivier‑d'Avignon, 2005). Social work

educators were also promoting international cooperation activities such as field placements to

encourage the development of appropriate values, skills, and knowledge (Healy, 1986;

Caragata & Sanchez, 2002; Dominelli, 2007). Through this process, concerns were identified

about IFP outcomes (e.g., challenges of finding employment upon returning home and the

limited value of doing an IFP). Hence, social work educators have long expressed an interest

in research about IFPs.

1.2.4 Interest in research about IFPs at the School of Social Work, Université de Moncton.

Initially, social work educators at the Département de service social, Université de

Moncton were preoccupied with developing a curriculum that addressed the realities of

Acadians. Subsequently, the Départment de service social created a bachelor's degree program

that emphasized rural social work and the "uniqueness of the Acadian citizens" (Département

de service social, 1983, p. 15, author's translation). However, access to research on Acadian

and Aboriginal communities living in New Brunswick was limited. It was necessary to address

the needs of populations living in a minority context, including those of the Aboriginal

communities, and to develop a greater sensitivity to socio‑historical racism (Tufts &

Levasseur, 1975). By the end of the 1980s, social work educators at the Université de

Moncton wanted to integrate more intercultural and international content. One initiative was to

develop IFPs. These opportunities constituted an exciting experience for students who were

curious about the world and wanted to immerse themselves in another culture. Educators

believed that IFPs would "open up social sciences to cultures . . . for a substantial change in

the perception and understanding of others" (Baccouche, 1988, p. 1, author's translation).

Notwithstanding the potential for positive outcomes, those social work educators concerned

with evidence-based practice and social justice stressed the importance of having a better

understanding of positive and negative outcomes for all stakeholders and any implication for

IFP planning. Therefore, the proposed research has important implications for the

development of social work education.

1.3 Contribution of This Study to IFP Planning

What then is the value for a social work educator in examining social workers'

narratives about IFPs and long-term outcomes for their individual practices? This study may

provide insights about the experience that would be useful in terms of IFP planning, such as

*encadrement /*accompaniment and pedagogical support of students. For example, the

narratives may be used in integrative seminars during the last year of their studies,

internationalizing content, and enhancing learning opportunities for all students. Elements of

these stories have the "potential to open a window onto ideas about practice" for both students

and social work educators (Cree, 2012, p. 454). Issues of space allowance and the use of

experiences from the margins are most pertinent for classroom content. Social workers'

narratives may therefore prove particularly useful for educators with regards to future IFP

planning.

1.4 Chapter Overviews

Chapter one provides a brief history of the interest in intercultural social work and ISW

that has contributed to the development of IFPs. My interest as a researcher for this study is

also explained along with the study's purpose and its potential contribution to social work education.

Chapter two is a review of the literature on experiential learning in an international context, beginning with studies on outcomes related to types of experience abroad (e.g., study programs, short stays, and long-term stays). This is followed by an examination of the conclusions of various authors about field placement experiences in terms of choice of location. Research on IFPs at various stages of the process (i.e., before, during, and after) is then reviewed, and gaps in the literature are identified. A summary of the strengths and limitations of this study concludes the chapter.

Chapter three outlines the methodology including the epistemological position and the theoretical framework followed by the data collection and analysis processes, and ethical issues related to human subjects. The chapter concludes with a discussion of research bias and the limitations of the study.

Chapter four introduces the two male and eighteen female participants and their stories about the IFP. Each had participated in a four-month IFP during the final year of their bachelor's degree program. Their stories tell of their experiences ranging from their initial interest in an IFP to the commencement of their first job as a social worker.

The focus of chapter five is twofold. First, it presents a seven-step process model and illustrates both the learning moments in each step and the complexity and interconnectedness of events before, during, and after the IFP. Second, the personal, professional, and global outcomes of an IFP are presented.

Chapter six provides a discussion of the social work education issues that emerged from the participants' learning moments and outcomes. A framework for IFP planning is

created and aimed at helping future students benefit fully from their IFP and receive the

encadrement (accompaniment and pedagogical support) needed to maximize outcomes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this review of the literature regarding social work student experiences of an IFP, the sources draw upon a variety of international experiences, including practicums, service learning programs, and volunteering. The general consensus is that the IFP is a positive venture. The sources examine the following aspects of IFPs and IFP planning: (a) learning milieu: characteristics, outcomes, and challenges; (b) types of study-abroad experience: characteristics, outcomes, and challenges; (c) spaces where students learn; (d) phases of the IFP; (e) transferability of the IFP; and (f) IFP planning.

2.1. Learning Milieu: Characteristics, Outcomes, and Challenges

To highlight the merits of studying abroad and, more specifically, the merits of the IFP as a significant learning experience, the reviewed authors look at four characteristics of the learning milieu: situated, experiential, transformative, and ethical. These authors also highlight potential outcomes and certain challenges of each learning milieu (Table 2.1). It is important to know the learning milieu in order to more effectively plan IFPs.

2.1.1 Situated learning or immersion in another context.

Learning outside the classroom is characterized as "neither explicit nor teacher directed, and is often related to accomplishing a particular task with others" that must be meaningful to the learner (Wong, 2015, p. 132). Immersion in another country, for example, provides opportunities for the learner to be challenged in different ways that are "not easily replicated in the classroom" (Das & Carter Anand, 2014, p. 111). It consists of a "constant process of learning 24/7" (Magnus, 2009, p. 382).

Table 2.1 Characteristics of Learning Milieu and Outcomes

Learning milieu	Characteristics	Positive outcomes	Challenges
Situated learning or immersion	- Student directed - Task oriented - 24/7	- Experience daily life (e.g., relationships) - Modify attitudes towards diversity - Learn about a community of practice	- Limited time spent to learn about the community and people - Limited time to reflect
Experiential learning	- Focused on hands-on experience - Link theory to practice - Exposed to other ways of doing/being (e.g., daily life)	- Inner growth (e.g., flexibility and openness) - Knowledge about social justice and diversity - Paradigm shift (e.g., identity) - Cultural sensitivity	- Students' expectations and motivations - Problems with program structure (e.g., adequate supervision and length of stay) - Re-entry issues
Transformative and reflective learning	- Travel to another place - Disruptive encounter (e.g., new food or disorienting dilemmas) - Spirit of a place	- Personal (e.g., beliefs) - Social (e.g., lifestyle) - Academic (e.g., knowledge of global issues – colonialism)	- Avoid disorienting dilemmas - No critical reflection - Do not find meaning
Ethical learning	- Confronted by ethical issues in North-South context (e.g., lack of knowledge of global issues and privileged students)	- Knowledge of political dimensions (e.g., power relations, oppression, and inequality)	- Shallow observations and conclusions (e.g., generalize) - Asymmetrical encounters - Exploitation of people and places - Othering of people (e.g., denigrate citizens)

While situated learning has many benefits, different types of immersion may not produce the same outcomes. Immersion that occurs through leisure travel offers some opportunities to discover a new community, but certain types of educational holidays may be "a gateway into a new community of practice" (Minnaert, 2012, p. 609). Short-term immersion (10 days, for example) allows students to discover daily life, to develop relationships with nationals, and to modify their attitudes toward diversity (Koch, Ross, Wendell & Aleksandrova-Howell, 2014).

It may be that being transplanted out of their familiar cultural surroundings made the student participants more in tune to cultural factors such as language, race, and

socioeconomic status. In an immersion experience, one is sometimes required to suspend former beliefs and judgments because they simply do not apply in the new context. This process lends itself to reflection and growth. (Koch et al., 2014, p. 1236)

However, immersion itself may not always be sufficient to produce positive outcomes. It may be necessary to combine immersion with service learning to produce "the most intense experience for students" (Koch et al., 2014, p. 1219). Students need to reflect and create meaning during "the placement itself where they are challenged by everyday immersion experiences, and then upon return" (Fox, 2017, p. 10). Also, through a longer program and an ability to form meaningful relationships (Fox, 2017; Minnaert, 2012), students can explore their identities, different contexts, and social work practice in another country. Immersion provides "a cross-cultural learning experience for the participants and prepares them for international practice" (Thampi, 2017, p. 1).

2.1.2 Experiential learning.

Experiential learning is described as a process "through which inner growth can be facilitated that places particular focus on the external environment or educational milieu" (Morgan, 2010, p. 251). Experiential learning also links "education, work and personal development, as well as the academic learning with the outside world" (Askeland, Døhlie & Grosvold, 2016, p. 3). This learning occurs in the classroom and during field-based experiences (e.g., cooperative education and practicums). In the classroom, experiential learning through activities, such as role plays and field trips, may increase learning about diversity and social justice (Cramer, Ryosho & Nguyen, 2012). While students explore their identities, identify biases towards others, and experience the lives of people through their viewpoint in order to deepen their knowledge (Cramer et al., 2012), in these classroom experiences they do not always discuss issues in depth or disclose biases. Short field trips with

limited immersion are sometimes seen as voyeuristic, as they have "a circus‑like quality in that students are coming to watch/observe the locals/foreigners perform for them but not spend time being genuinely engaged with those communities" (Cramer et al., 2012, p. 9).

There are many outcomes to experiential learning in another country. During an experiential program in Italy, for example, 16 social work students enrolled in a Master's program in the US undertook a 10‑day study trip in which "other ways of knowing and doing appeared to facilitate a paradigm shift in the students' thinking, while also clarifying their understanding of barriers in the social welfare system" (Gilin & Young, 2009, p. 41). During a longer experiential program, Canadian students spent eight weeks taking part in activities with other social work students in India (Sachdev, 1997). Every student but one demonstrated increased cultural sensitivity (e.g., greater appreciation of the host culture). In another experiential program in Ghana, social work students gained through hands‑on experience "the skills of flexibility, openness, innovativeness, increased adaptability in interactions, and appropriate cultural intervention responses, and their self‑confidence improved by solving daily life problems in their new environment" (Boateng & Thompson, 2013, p. 713).

Despite the outcome potential provided by experiential learning, a number of variables influence outcomes: prior knowledge and experience, program length, motivations, expectations, program structure, attributes of instructors, unanticipated events, social desirability, adjustment, and re‑entry issues (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009). These may influence both the students' readiness to learn and the content learned. For example, some instructors possess greater abilities than others in conducting post-visit briefings (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009).

2.1.3 Transformative and reflective learning.

Research in the fields of travel, tourism, and education explores the transformative potential of individuals who travel. Travel provides an opportunity for transformative learning, which consists of "a profound engagement with unfamiliar places and experiences" where individuals are confronted with "a degree of disruption to their subjective orientation to the world (worldview or inner consciousness)" (Morgan, 2010, p. 249). Similarly, travel to a place where the location is a "very different milieu to their habitual domestic one" or where the "spirit of a place" has a special meaning to the individual (e.g., birth place of parents) sometimes has a great transformative effect (Morgan, 2010, p. 252).

Beneficial outcomes happen at a personal, social, and academic level and may include changes in lifestyle, revision of belief systems, and awareness of global issues (Morgan, 2010). While catalyzing challenges in normal life (e.g., bereavement) and activities in the classroom (e.g., resolving ethical dilemmas) offer transformational opportunities, travel provides "a disruptive encounter with 'Otherness' that (hopefully) drives the transformative learning process" (Morgan, 2010, p. 252). Some individuals who visit "a contrasting locality within the same country" often face disorienting dilemmas. Some examples are contacts with urban/rural dwellers or Indigenous/non-Indigenous communities.

However, travel does not always signify transformation. Staying in an all-inclusive resort does not provide the same opportunities to encounter otherness as living with a host family. If travel does not provoke disorienting dilemmas or include critical reflection, transformation potential is limited (Morgan, 2010).

Transformative learning also requires a structure whereby students can attribute meaning to the experience (Lough, 2009). The learning needs to promote a shift in

consciousness so that students gain a broader worldview, including a better understanding of imperialism/colonialism, inequality, and power/privilege (Das & Carter Anand, 2014). Transformative learning requires strategies for exploring shortcomings of an IFP which may include benevolent helping and paternalistic attitudes. In the classroom, strategies to promote transformative learning require a pedagogy that explores international issues and postcolonial and critical race theories (Razack, 2009). When students go abroad, strategies for transformative learning include narrative work often in the form of journal writing, and reflective questioning of critical incidents (Das & Carter Anand, 2014).

2.1.4 Ethical learning.

IFPs provide many occasions for ethical learning because they raise important ethical issues (Tiessen & Epprecht, 2012). This can be the case when placements involve students from the North going to the South (Heron, 2006), which can be problematic as they constitute the "product and actualization of the material privilege of middle-class Northern lifestyles which are in turn implicated in the economic exploitation of the South, the very exploitation that underlies the social problems Northerners feel called upon to alleviate" (Heron, 2006, para. 14). While many students are motivated to help, they lack understanding of North-South relationships and their historical roots. This can in turn lead to asymmetrical intercultural encounters where students exhibit a paternalistic attitude towards people in the host country.

There are three challenges worth mentioning. First is the exploitation of people and places through travel that is not environmentally sustainable (Klein, 2007; Morgan, 2010). When students are abroad, they may face financial expectations from people in the host country (e.g., paying to have clothes washed by a local woman). This can lead to an economy that is "mutated toward the tourist industry" with potential negative consequences to the

region (Morgan, 2010, p. 260). Such a context does not constitute a learning environment based on "solidarity and mutual learning" (Morgan, 2010, p. 261).

Second is the danger of universalizing and essentializing realities encountered during an IFP (Morgan, 2010). Students who do not recognize "the diversity and contigent nature of these traditions" encountered abroad can develop a superficial understanding of the people met "which is more likely to reify than transform existing frames of mind and consequent power asymmetries" (Morgan, 2010, p. 261, 264).

Third, the learning milieu also raises concerns. When preparation is focused on pragmatic arrangements for the field placement rather than pedagogical issues, there are limited opportunities to explore ethical aspects of the IFP (Heron, 2006). There are strategies to address the challenges of ethical learning. IFPs, for example, require ethical and anti-oppressive pedagogy in order to change "the focus more to the political dimension of ISW practice and education—to issues of power relations, oppression and inequality—and by employing a critical, antiracist and postcolonial perspective" (Nadan, 2017, p. 80). It is also necessary to employ a decolonizing pedagogy. Solarz (2012) highlights how replacing terms such as "First World/Third World" by "North/South" perpetuates a worldview that contributes to the ordering of complex relationships that oppose countries.

Applying strategies to ethical learning would require pedagogical changes. Prior to field placements, Wehbi (2009) recommends that students be provided "the opportunity to critically examine their motivations" (p. 49) because of the consequences that these may have on the host community. Albert, Lanteigne and Savoie (2014) proposed a model for ethical deliberation that is useful to learn before going abroad. This model helps students practice solving ethical dilemmas that they may encounter during their IFP.

During the field placement, it is imperative that social work students do not act as tourists "who undertake relatively shallow observations and conclusions about unfamiliar cultures through a Euro-Western lens" (Boetto et al., 2014, p. 12), but rather adopt a stance where they borrow the lens of people from the host country to learn with and from them. The students need to strive for equality by promoting symmetrical encounters (Morgan, 2010) and learn to be critical of the way in which they narrate their experiences when they are abroad and upon returning home (Bosangit, Dulnuan & Mena, 2012). Citizens from the host country are often described as interesting, even unique and exotic. On other occasions, differences are perceived as strange and shocking. Through the process of othering, travelers contrast what they know from the individuals at home ("us" or the in-group) to what they are experiencing during their travels with individuals they encountered ("them" or the out-group) (Bosangit et al., 2012; Duffy, 2012). This process creates a subordinate position for the out-group (Duffy, 2012). In some instances, there is a reversal of positions where individuals denigrate their own country instead of the out-group (Duffy, 2012).

Following the field placement, debriefing provides a space where students deconstruct their IFP experience and address unexamined issues (Heron, 2006), which may lead to a new understanding of appropriation and exploitation.

2.2 Types of Study-abroad Experience: Characteristics, Outcomes, and Challenges

Study abroad internationalizes a program in a way that lectures alone cannot, and foreign travel for a field placement can facilitate this (Small, Sharma & Pavlova Nikolova, 2015). Social Work Schools use one of three models of internationalization: selective, concentrated, and integrated (Estes, 2009). At one end of the spectrum, a selective approach includes limited resources for international content that is, limited course load and field

placement opportunities. At the other end are specialized programs in ISW. Some authors
write more specifically about the types of programs offered to internationalize schools (Panos,
Pettys, Cox & Jones‑Hart, 2004; Panos, 2005; Pettys, Panos, Cox & Oosthuysen, 2005; Rai,
2004; Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010). The most popular types of programs in the social work
literature are (a) short stay, (b) service‑learning, and (c) field placement/practicum (Table 2.2).
Many authors highlight the characteristics, positive outcomes, and challenges for each of these
three models. This has implications for program planning.

Table 2.2 Types of Study Abroad and Outcomes

Types of study abroad	Characteristics	Positive outcomes	Challenges
Short-stay abroad	- Shorter length (e.g., 2–8 weeks) - Many types of program (e.g., summer semester, service-learning, study tour) - Academic flexibility and affordability	- Knowledge (e.g., global interdependence) - Attitude (e.g., appreciation for other cultures and goodwill towards host country) - Personal (e.g., self-confidence)	- Superficial understanding - Forget information over time - Limited time to explore incidents that happen
Service-learning program	- Combine theory and practice - Social responsibility - Relevancy - Types of program (i.e., short and long) - Includes many types of activities (e.g., lectures and tours) - Out of comfort zone	- Personal (e.g., civic engagement) - Professional (e.g., social justice engagement, multicultural awareness, and multicultural skills)	- Does not always reduce prejudice - Difficulty to maintain desire for change and civic engagement over time
International practicums and field placement	- Longer stay (i.e., intensity of experience) - Cultural disequilibrium - Absence of usual support system - Different models: unidirectional (e.g., North-North and North-South) and collaborative (e.g., Western-non-Western) - Change of boundaries between students and supervisor/faculty member	- Learn professional realties of intercultural, cross-cultural, and transcultural work - Reduce ethnocentric views - Awareness of predominance of Western models and theories	- Lack or avoidance of knowledge and methods to do social work in host country

2.2.1 Short-stays abroad.

Short-term study abroad includes a combination of courses, visits, homestays, and group discussions. As an example of a short stay, Correll Munn (2012) reported on a course on global issues in the Czech Republic organized for five social work students. They collected and analyzed visual data such as photos, pamphlets, and magazines on various issues, such as human trafficking. Another example is a two-week program in which 18 Australian social work students went to India to gain a better understanding of global issues, for example, the impact of global warming, and environmental social work (Boetto et al., 2014). They were exposed to "contrasting standards of poverty, environmental practices, and cultural differences on a scale, which they would not have normally been exposed to so readily in Australia" (Boetto et al., 2014, p. 12). The students explored social work identity in this context.

Shorter programs have both advantages and limitations (Pitts, 2009). They provide greater academic flexibility and are more affordable, which enables some students to have an experience abroad (Pitts, 2009). Research in this area tends to focus on positive outcomes. In a study of three types of short-term study-abroad programs of two to eight weeks—summer semester, study tour, service-learning trip—Sachau et al. (2010) found that students developed new attitudes and appreciation of other cultures, gained knowledge of global interdependence, and grew in confidence. An added benefit was the goodwill engendered towards people from the host country "that will last a lifetime" (Sachau et al., 2010, p. 650) even if the student forgot some of the information learned.

On the other hand, short programs do not offer the same level of cultural immersion and learning opportunities as do longer programs. While exposing students to an international perspective, the "benefits should not be over-stated" (Dorsett et al., 2015, p. 12). Brief stays of

less than six months often produce superficial understanding because students lack the time to comprehend the daily struggles of the people in the host country (Heron, 2006). Ideally, such short educational trips (one to three weeks) would require critical reflection to explore incidents that surface during the stay abroad (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013); however, critical reflection is not always possible because of the lack of time.

      2.2.2 Service-learning programs overseas.

      Service-learning programs combine both learning goals and community engagement when students provide services to the community as part of their learning process. They include the use of a social responsibility model which necessitates ethical and sensitive behaviour (Bolea, 2012). The model provides benefits for academia and communities, combines academic and experiential learning, and is relevant. It seeks to "bridge the gap between students and oppressed groups" (Bolea, 2012, p. 286). For example, in a 10-day service-learning program with Native Americans, students learned about social change through cultural immersion that included work on an archeological dig site and visits to a former residential school in the United States (Bolea, 2012).

      Some research looks at the outcomes of service-learning overseas when a reciprocal model is used (i.e., students from two countries take part in the course). For example, a summer program facilitated learning between students from Canada and Ghana on local/global citizenship skills (Quist-Adade, 2013). The cross-disciplinary collaboration taught students about social justice and civic engagement through activities such as lectures, internships, and educational tours. Some service-learning programs focus on promoting service to others abroad by establishing on-line communities (Sachau et al., 2010).

Overseas service-learning programs have many benefits, such as increased understanding of both social inequalities and systemic problems, increasing students' ability to advocate for change. In one study, psychology students had many uncomfortable moments and incurred a majority-minority flip during a 10-day service-learning course in Belize that used a social justice framework (Koch et al., 2014). There, most students felt that the discomfort experienced was positive as they saw the benefits at a personal and professional level. While domestic programs help to increase multicultural awareness and develop multicultural skills, international programs force students out of their comfort zones and lead them to experience intensive relational activities with more intense outcomes (Koch et al., 2014).

Students also encounter challenges. Service-learning programs do not always achieve prejudice reduction if contacts abroad do not contradict prevailing stereotypes (Koch et al., 2014). However, to date, no research explores whether the desire for social justice and civic engagement is maintained over time and whether it translates into action after a few years.

2.2.3 International practicums and field placements.

Many disciplines encourage field practicums, which include a field seminar, and field placements, which do not, because of the learning opportunities provided by a longer stay (e.g., one semester). Both education (Marx & Moss, 2011; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009) and social work (Pawar, Hanna & Sheridan, 2004; Yeom & Bae, 2010; Pettys et al., 2005; Cornelius & Greif, 2005; Dominelli & Thomas Bernard, 2003b) are two disciplines that promote IFPs.

IFPs encourage students to learn about the professional realities of intercultural, cross-cultural, and transcultural work. In a study on educational programs for US teachers in England, for example, the research reveals how life and work in another culture modified their

"ethnocentric worldviews and set them on a path towards culturally responsive teaching"

(Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 37). Growth was facilitated by cultural dissonance from "being that

other, that different person" (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 41) and from facing language barriers

(Baccouche, 1988). However, growth requires cultural reflection "to move students'

intercultural development forward" (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 44). IFPs offer learning

opportunities for social work students that differ significantly from traditional field practice.

Learning is different because of

> (1) the intense emotions of students; (2) "cultural disequilibrium"—culture shock, instability, and lack of clarity; (3) absence of natural support systems; (4) lack or avoidance of knowledge and methods; (5) questions relating to modern colonialism and paternalism; (6) tourism—combining traveling with professional visits which are often confused with each other; and (7) changes in boundaries between faculty members and students. (Ranz, 2015, p. 3)

Outcomes are influenced by a number of factors: whether the IFP is a one-time

placement, whether there is a long-term relationship between learning institutions, and

whether there is an on-site faculty member (Pettys et al., 2005). For example, welcoming

agencies may not always understand the students' learning goals or the culture shock that they

will experience, both at the agency and in the community. Despite different IFP models,

North-North exchanges and North-South unidirectional models predominate (Lough, 2009).

A few authors have written about North-North international collaboration (Dominelli &

Thomas Bernard, 2003b; Fairchild, Pillai & Noble, 2006); others have focused on North-South

collaboration (Askeland et al., 2016; Magnus, 2009; Pawar et al., 2004) or Western-non-

Western collaboration (Yeom & Bae, 2010, p. 313). Yeom and Bae (2010) identify beneficial

outcomes for non-Western students who become aware of the predominance of Western

models and theories in non-Western countries. These programs elicit "the sort of constructive

culture shock that allows them to best determine which of the Western practices to adopt or

adapt, and which ones to jettison as ill-fitted to the dynamics of their own societies" (Yeom &

Bae, 2010, p. 313). Some challenges are highlighted in the literature, including the challenge

of providing field placements that are not primarily unidirectional, for example, having

students from Canada undertake an IFP in Tunisia, although few Tunisian students come to

complete an IFP in Canada. As yet, few authors have explored collaborative models of IFP.

While collaboration has merit, there are challenges due to lack of resources. Collaboration is

also difficult to maintain when "only one colleague at each campus [is] committed" (Cornelius

& Greif, 2005, p. 831). Other challenges will be addressed later in this chapter.

2.3 Places Where Students Learn

Of relevance to students who do an IFP are the geographical place where students

travel (e.g., region or country) and the symbolic place where students undergo an inner

journey, that is, a threshold/limen or window to an "other place") (Morgan, 2010) (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Places Where Students Learn

Places where students learn	Characteristics	Topics covered
Geographical place	- Most common destinations (e.g., Western Europe—Belgium)	- Reasons to go to Western Europe: Economic development, similar technology, similar infrastructure, and political stability
	- Less common destinations (e.g., Algeria, Ecuador, and South Africa)	- Needs of students: To be prepared, informed, and engaged - IFP planning issues: Preparation, supervision, and re-entry
Metaphorical place (liminal space)	- Description of this place	- Doorway or window to a metaphoric place - Border zone between home and host country - Exposed to "otherness" - Experience tensions - Negotiate the old and the new
	- Benefit	- Paradigm shift where they gain a different understanding (e.g., social work and values)

Research on geographical place tends to focus on the reasons for selecting a destination and its perceived benefits. North American students prefer Western European destinations over countries of the Global South. This is explained by the "level of economic development, with most Western European countries having the same technology, infrastructure, and political stability" found in the student's home country (Boateng & Thompson, 2013, p. 705). Further research may be needed into the motivations behind undertaking an IFP, exploring the choice to live in places with familiar ways of living as opposed to situations where students become the other.

Lane-Toomey and Lane (2013) point out the need for "the study abroad literature to broaden in scope to better understand new trends in study abroad destination choice" (Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013, p. 312). There is research on study abroad programs in less common destinations such as China, Ecuador, Argentina, or South Africa (Wells, 2006), India (Barlow, 2007; Bell & Anscombe, 2013), Mexico (Larsen & Allen, 2006; Martone & Muñoz, 2009), Uganda (Corbin, 2012), Ghana (Boateng & Thompson, 2013), Malaysia (Ashencaen Crabtree, Parker, Azman & Paul Carlo, 2014), the MENA region—Middle East/North Africa (Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013), and the Sub-Saharan African context (Heron, 2005). These studies focus on various aspects, including the need for students to be well prepared by way of language preparation, to be informed about economic realities, and to be engaged in the fight against terrorism (Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013); the need for IFP planning and preparation to discuss important issues (e.g., oppression), supervision particularly for reflecting on living conditions of supervisors/colleagues at the field placement agency, and re-entry issues of debriefing and creating meaning for their experience (Heron, 2005). IFP research has typically focused on English-speaking students going abroad from North America.

Along with issues of physical space is the notion of metaphorical place or liminality (Crump, 2010). Travel takes students to a metaphoric border zone as they leave their habitual milieu (home country) and encounter otherness in the host country (Morgan, 2010), where they become the other. Going abroad for an IFP is presented as a rite of passage. It is a liminal state of being between and betwixt countries where students experience uncertainty and complexity as they negotiate "a passage between cultures and different understandings of social work practice and values" (Parker et al., 2012, p.151). Barlow (2007) names this location "Third Space": a place "of strangeness, a borderline place where cultural differences touch" and create tensions (Barlow, 2007, p. 244). It allows students to become aware of values that had not been previously challenged; it is also a space where differences "overlap and displace each other and cultural values are negotiated" (Barlow, 2007, p. 245). To date, only limited research is being conducted to explore how students negotiate in and through this Third Space.

2.4 Phases of the IFP

Some research focuses on the overall IFP process (Pettys et al., 2005; Thampi, 2017), as well as on specific phases of the IFP (e.g., preparation, supervision, and debriefing). Drawing on the literature, the IFP is viewed here in terms of a five-phase process: 1) recruitment, 2) selection, 3) preparation, 4) study abroad, and 5) return home.

2.4.1 Recruitment.

Two important topics are covered in the literature with regard to recruitment: (a) broadening access to study-abroad programs and (b) promotional tools used to recruit IFPs (Table 2.4). Research highlights the need to broaden access to study abroad programs for certain groups of students (e.g., ethnic minorities, low-income, and LGBTQ+). In the case of

students with disabilities, the literature explores barriers such as transportation whether

"architectural barriers, the lowered expectations of others, or dependence on family for

independent living" (Hameister, Matthews, Hosley & Groff, 1999, p. 86). For "African

American students and ethnic minorities, other obstacles, principally financial, stand in the

way of a study abroad" experience (Dessof, 2006, p. 23). Many strategies aimed at broadening

access focus on the dissemination of information, such as personal testimonies of minority

groups (Dessof, 2006). In the case of students with disabilities, strategies look at changing

their perceptions so that they see obstacles "that are not actually going to be a problem"

(Dessof, 2006, p. 25). Strategies seem to centre on changing students' perceptions instead of

providing material resources (e.g., financial assistance for sign language interpreters). While

most research focuses on students who do not have equal opportunities to study-abroad

programs, one study explores how to broaden access for men since fewer of them take part in

these programs. Kim and Goldstein (2005) identified the need for strategies to help "reduce

ethnocentrism and apprehension about communicating with culturally different others" in

male students in order to increase the number of participants in IFPs (p. 275).

Table 2.4 Recruitment

Recruitment topics	Issues raised	Strategies to improve recruiting
Broadening access to study abroad programs	- Groups lacking equal opportunities (e.g., students with disabilities) - Limited presence of men	- Outreach (e.g., study-abroad information and personal testimonials) - Interventions that reduce ethnocentrism and apprehension about going abroad (e.g., develop intercultural communication)
Promotional tools used to recruit for IFPs	- Inappropriate portrayal of country (e.g., traditional), people (e.g., exotic), and the IFP experience (e.g., tourism)	- Avoid using popular imagery of country and people - Avoid presenting tourism as being the central component

Mukherjee and Chowdhury (2014) discuss promotional tools used to recruit students for an IFP. They suggest that tools such as flyers and brochures should not portray a host country and its citizens as mystical, folkloric, traditional, or the "exotic other" and should avoid using "historical imageries that conforms to Western popular cultural interpretations of the countries" (Mukherjee & Chowdhury, 2014, p. 582). Epprecht (2004) raises the issue of "clichéd images of the exotic, needy South that flatter conceits about Northern do-goodism. A particularly common trope is the smiling white girl either helping dark-skinned people or exalting in the beauty of a tropical paradise" (p. 698). Finally, promotional material should not make tourism the central component of a study-abroad program, nor should it imply that the experience in a host city reflects the whole country. It is important that students understand the nature of the experience when applying for an IFP. There is no mention about promotional tools being used to help broaden access to certain underrepresented groups (e.g., students with disabilities and racialized minorities).

2.4.2 Selection.

Selection criteria are similarly highlighted in the literature (Table 2.5). In the case of IFPs, students need to possess certain academic requirements (Parker et al., 2012) such as a required grade point average and successful completion of their first field placement. Skills and abilities are found by some studies to be important aspects for evaluating students for any study-abroad program. Interpersonal skills are necessary (Parker et al., 2012), as are adaptability (Parker et al., 2012) and the ability to cope with unfamiliar and challenging situations (Das & Carter Anand, 2014).

Table 2.5 Selection

Selection criteria	Topics covered
Academic requirements	- Grade point average - Successfully completed first field placement
Skills and abilities	- Interpersonal skills, adaptability, ability to cope, etc.
Previous travel experience	- Not a selection criterion but valued (e.g., exposure to nationals, relocation skills, ability for cross-cultural adjustment, etc.)
Motivations	- Reasons to study abroad (i.e., push factors—internal psychological factors; and pull factors—attributes of destination) - Reasons for social work students to do an IFP (e.g., fascination for culture, like the people, make a difference, give back, and personal/professional development)
Expectations	- Types of expectation (e.g., language, academic, social, culture/values, and travel/cultural experience) - Sources of expectation (e.g., media, university, and entourage) - Impact of expectations on outcomes (e.g., adjustment and level of satisfaction)

While previous experience is not identified as a criterion for selection, students with prior experience whether for travel, work, or study are believed to possess the required skills and abilities because they have undergone perceptual, attitudinal, and motivational changes. While travel abroad broadens their horizon and reduces ethnocentrism (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013, p. 278), the value of these experiences with regards to future ability for cross-cultural adjustment is debated. Multiple factors influence the development of cultural adjustment, including previous experiences (e.g., relocation skills acquired), timing of experiences abroad and at what age, and context specificity (e.g., two countries of high similarity) (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013). For example, a student participating in an IFP in Japan may find it "more informative and transferable" to have previous experience in Korea than Germany (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013, p. 277). North American students may experience more difficulties in Southeast Asia, India/Pakistan, the Middle East, and North Africa than in Europe if they lack prior exposure to nationals from these countries (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013).

With respect to the selection of students, research has identified motivations and expectations as two critical aspects.

2.4.2.1 Motivations.

The motivations for study abroad, and more specifically for IFPs, cover a wide range. The "push-pull model" delineates types of motivation for travelers. On the one hand, while some are "pushed" to travel by internal psychological motivations, on the other hand they are "pulled" to a destination by external motivations such as its attributes (e.g., wilderness) (Grimm & Needham, 2012). Crompton (1979) looks at push and pull factors in a different way—push factors explain the desire to study abroad (i.e., deciding whether to go) whereas pull factors look at destination (i.e., deciding where to go).

Internal and psychological motivations in push factors include such things as personal discovery, personal growth, psychological health, enlightenment, desire to help, desire to travel, escape from daily life, adventure, knowledge, and social interactions. Cohen's (2010) study of travelers (n = 25) to India and Thailand focused on one set of push factors. It found that travelers adopted an essentialist viewpoint whereby motivation to travel was expressed in terms of a true self to "be developed or actualized" (Cohen, 2010, p. 124). They talked about their motivations in three ways: (a) looking for self through travel (e.g., inner search), (b) finding themselves while traveling, and (c) visiting locations where they had the "possibility of choosing to perform whatever selves" they wished (e.g., freedom) (Cohen, 2010, p. 128).

Pull factors, in contrast, are the extrinsic characteristics of a location. In terms of an IFP, these can include project opportunities, climate, reputation, language spoken, geographical location, safety, and price. When Lane-Toomey and Lane (2013) explored

motivations of US students for going to the MENA region using a survey (n = 601) and focus

groups (n = 76), they found that students' decisions were influenced by the cost of living in the

host country and the opportunity to learn various Arabic dialects.

Some research on motivations explores the specific reasons, push or pull factors of

social work students for undertaking an IFP. Wehbi (2009) proposed four: (a) "fascination for

other cultures" (p. 52); (b) "liking people of another country" (p. 53); (c) "making a

difference/charity perspective" (p. 54); and (d) "giving something back" to the country of

origin (p. 55). Nuttman‑Shwartz and Berger (2012) add personal and professional

development as an important motivation. Despite the foregoing research on IFPs, "little is

known from the published literature about [social work] students' reasons for undertaking an

international placement" (Wehbi, 2009, p. 50). This is important, because being "pulled" to a

country mainly because of travel opportunities or being "pushed" to a country because of a

desire to learn about its innovative social policies does not carry the same weight when

evaluating students during the selection phase.

2.4.2.2 Expectations.

Alongside the idea of motivation is expectation. Before leaving for the host country,

students' anticipation of what their experience abroad will be like influences study-abroad

outcomes. There are three related issues: (a) types of expectations, (b) sources influencing

expectations, and (c) the impact of expectations on outcomes. A study of 127 students taking

part in an educational program identified a range of expectations, including expectations about

language (e.g., communicate fluently), academic issues (e.g., achieve learning goals), social

issues (e.g., create meaningful social ties), culture/values (e.g., adjust culturally), and

travel/cultural experience (e.g., travel throughout Europe) (Pitts, 2009). Partnering with a

student with prior experience "with transitions could assist one in developing realistic expectations" about the international experience (Martin, Bradford & Rohrlich, 1995, p. 92). A student going to a host country similar to their home country expected experiences to be similar (Martin et al., 1995).

Expectations are influenced by "media representations, travel stories from previous sojourners, and school book presentations" (Pitts, 2009, p. 454). Universities, host families, co-students, friends, and families all impact a student's expectations. Students hear of the benefits of studying abroad from multiple sources and this often shapes high expectations about the experience and its outcomes.

Expectations influence adjustment abroad and thereby impacting outcomes. In a study of 59 US students, Weissman and Furnham (1987) examined both pre-departure expectations and actual experiences after living from four to six months in Great Britain. They found that disparity "between expectations and their fulfilment are important predictors of adjustment" (p. 325). However, only large gaps "between expectations and experience (positive or negative) affect sojourners' evaluation of and adaptation to the intercultural experience" (Martin et al., 1995, p. 104–105). While more realistic expectations do not seem to facilitate adjustment at a psychological level, individuals facing experiences that are more difficult than anticipated amplify hardship when adjusting (Martin et al., 1995). If expectations are over-met, students often express a higher level of satisfaction. If students anticipate fewer challenges but expectations are under-met, they are "highly dissatisfied with outcome" (Roskell, 2013, p. 166). Students going overseas initially

> expected to have an incredibly positive experience abroad and often were disappointed by how hard it was for them to adjust. With those students who went on to have a positive ending experience, the initial stage of disappointment was followed by taking

"risks", getting involved, and learning useful new personal and social skills that led them to "feel like I can handle just about anything." What seemed to separate those students who ended positively from the few who did was whether they had increased confidence in their ability to have an effect on their environment. (McLeod & Wainwright, 2009, p. 68)

Research on expectations provides valuable knowledge on issues that may be discussed with students during the selection phase, including the expectations of the host university and the host agency.

2.4.3 Preparation.

The preparation phase is crucial for both the avoidance of the pitfalls of study abroad and increased learning outcomes (Parker et al., 2012). Students require "plenty of support prior to departure, as well as [having] supports in place when arriving" abroad (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 254). Helping students with their preparation is useful, since many lack "relevant experience and knowledge on which to focus their preparations" (Magnus, 2009, p. 375). Research on preparation covers a range of topics (Table 2.6). While preparation highlights the importance of being sufficiently prepared, it provides few guidelines. Dubois and Ntetu (2000) note that efforts to prepare "should be directly proportionate to the differences between the two cultures" (Dubois & Ntetu, 2000, p. 51). They stress that the greater the cultural distance between home and the host country, the greater the need for more preparation. Helpful strategies for preparation include seminars where learning contracts are developed (Heron, 2005) and assignments to promote cross-cultural adjustment are required (e.g., intercultural contacts before going abroad) (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013).

Table 2.6 Preparation

Topics about preparation	Issues covered
Quantity of preparation	- Proportional to cultural distance
Helpful strategies	- Seminars

Aspects to prepare	- Learning contracts
	- Assignments to promote adjustments (e.g., intercultural contacts)
	- <u>Practical:</u> Logistics, security issues, medical, and communication strategies/visits
	- <u>Cognitive:</u> Learning about the country; developing goals/objectives; and language (e.g., motivations to learn a new language, training needed for proficiency, and expectations about proficiency)
	- <u>Emotional:</u> Being a minority and being othered
	- <u>Ethical</u> (North-South preparation): Global issues, life in the foreign country, risk management, and cultural background of students

Preparation involves practical aspects which span logistics, security issues, medical, and communication strategies/visits (Gilbert, Bailey & Dwumah, 2012; Quist-Adade, 2013), cognitive aspects such as learning about the country and developing goals/objectives (Gilbert et al., 2012), emotional aspects of being a minority and being othered (Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012), and ethical aspects to prevent harm to clients/agency/host community (e.g., obtaining consent when taking photos and abstaining from producing *poverty porn* (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). Two aspects—North-South preparation and language preparation—are worth special attention as students are often insufficiently prepared for either of these prior to their study abroad. These two aspects are discussed in the following section.

2.4.3.1 North-South preparation.

Several topics need greater attention during preparation. First, seminars are required to deal with issues such as "colonization, globalization, third-world debt, and identity and diversity/anti-oppressive practice theory" (Heron, 2005, p. 791). Second, preparation has to include concrete information about life in a foreign country (Askeland et al., 2016) and the changing nature of the context (e.g., strengthening of civil society in the Sub-Sahara) (Heron, 2005). Third, students need to understand risk management, including personal safety such as exposure to HIV (Heron, 2005) and codes of conduct that explore "guidelines for appropriate personal and collective conduct while traveling" (Morgan, 2010, p. 262). These include

inappropriate dress, social destructiveness, environmental defilement (e.g., cruise industry), and essentializing or exoticizing people. Fourth, preparation also needs to provide students with occasions to discuss their own cultural background and power imbalances, particularly North/South power relations (Wehbi, 2009). This requires "reflection on how they are positioned in relation to the community where they will be practicing, and what this concretely means for how their potential contributions and involvement will be facilitated or hindered" (Wehbi, 2009, p. 56).

2.4.3.2 Language preparation.

During the preparation phase, language learning is essential for countries where students do not know the language. Although research about this aspect is limited, three important issues are discussed: (a) motivation to learn a new language, (b) training hours required for proficiency, and (c) expectation about students' proficiency level. Knowledge about these three issues provides valuable insights for participants in order to discuss the importance of preparation (e.g., hours required to learn a language).

Many students are motivated to study abroad by the opportunity to gain language skills, either to learn a new language or to improve on proficiency achieved in the classroom (Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013). A few seek proficiency in a regional language (e.g., Tunisian Arabic) for economic and/or political reasons (Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013). While social work students are not always motivated by language skills acquisition, language proficiency can facilitate their experience abroad.

The number of training hours required for professional work in a different language depends on the level of difficulty in learning the language. Lane-Toomey and Lane (2013) found that English speakers require approximatively 24 weeks (500 hours) to learn a Romance

language, such as Spanish or Italian, and 88 weeks (2,200 hours) to learn Arabic, Chinese or Japanese. Although language training is an essential part of preparation for departure, *hyperbolic discounting* is a model that explains how individuals often "put off tasks leading to distant but valuable goals in favor of ones with more immediate though lesser rewards" (Steel & König, 2006, p. 892). This model is helpful for understanding choices often made by students who postpone language learning until they arrive abroad and who focus instead on other aspects of preparation, for example, travel plans. At the same time, some students postpone language learning because some languages require "study in the region in order to become proficient" (Lane-Toomey & Lane, 2013, p. 319).

Unfortunately, there exists a double standard about language proficiency. Linguistic fluency is often expected from foreign students on a social work field placement in Canada, while Canadian students going abroad are often accommodated despite limited language skills through translation services (Harrison & Ip, 2013). Linguistic barriers are seen as an opportunity for Canadian students to broaden their outlook and gain cross-cultural skills (Harrison & Ip, 2013). However, international students are perceived as lacking not only the linguistic fluency but the social networks and the know-how (e.g., dress code) "to more easily fit in with the agency workplace culture while on placement" (Harrison & Ip, 2013, p. 231).

2.4.4 Study abroad.

While a local field placement in social work is comprised of the required number of hours spent at the agency, an IFP is in reality a 24/7 experience during the length of the sojourn outside of the home country. To better summarize the entire experience and learning opportunities, research on IFPs recognizes four components: (a) travel abroad, (b) daily living, (c) field placement, and (d) social work supervision as seen below in Table 2.7.

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Table 2.7 Study Abroad

24/7 experience	Learning opportunities
Travel abroad	- Personal and professional development when traveling (e.g., independent travel and organized field trips) - Limited opportunities of the lifestyle bubble of being the 'tourist'
Daily living	- Adjustment - Culture shock - Contacts with nationals - Diversity of life abroad - Outsider and otherness
Field placement	- Bridge gaps between theory and practice - Challenges with IFPs
Social work supervision	- Supervisor role - Supervision contracts - Types of supervision (e.g., on-site, off-site, and long-distance supervision)

2.4.4.1 Travel abroad.

The educational benefits of travel are well documented. For example, the upper class in the 17th–19th centuries in Europe enjoyed the merits of travel abroad with the Grand Tour (Stone & Petrick, 2013). Travel often comprised "pleasure, learning, and confirmation of the relative superiority of one's way of life" (Wong, 2015, p. 130). After a long tradition of educational travel, study abroad programs increased significantly during the 1990s (Stone & Petrick, 2013).

During the stay-abroad phase, travel, both organized field trips and independent travel, is an essential component of study abroad. Travel enhances the study-abroad experience and contributes to the personal and professional learning of students (Laubscher, 1994). Benefits include personal independence, confidence, and self‑esteem, and the generic skills of problem solving, communication skills, time management, and interpersonal skills (Chen, Bao & Huang, 2014; Minnaert, 2012; Scarinci & Pearce, 2012). Despite the fact that many students mention the benefits of travel as being transformative and contributing to their emotional

growth, there is insufficient empirical evidence to suggest that travel "translate[s] into multicultural counseling competencies" (Kim, 2015, p. 94).

There is the danger that travel will take precedence over learning or over the IFP itself. Students going abroad "may have been initially drawn to a particular destination when choosing where to study, [however] the place comes to largely serve as a home base from which students make frequent sightseeing forays into other parts of the country or region" (Ogden, 2007, p. 38). In other words, they do not immerse themselves fully into the host community. As well, some students who travel remain in a sort of lifestyle bubble disconnected from local culture, spending time at places such as Starbucks, McDonalds, and Zaras. Students "stay on the veranda, viewing the culture and natives from the comfortable position of the privileged elite or timid observer" (Ogden, 2007, p. 50). Similarly, the experience of students who embrace an identity as "a 'tourist' and as an outsider [is] very different from moving into and beginning to understand the lived world of residents" (Sewpaul, 2003, p. 318).

2.4.4.2 Daily living.

Daily living provides many learning opportunities that ultimately influence outcomes. For example, students learn communication and language skills while shopping in local markets. Daily living involves the following four aspects: (a) adjustment (e.g., culture shock), (b) contact with nationals, (c) diversity with life abroad, and (d) outsider and otherness.

Adjustment to daily life abroad is a multifaceted process that involves work, interactions with nationals, and the environment (e.g., social customs) (Shimoni, Ronen & Roziner, 2005). While various factors influence adjustments – these include the job performed (e.g., role ambiguity), individual characteristics (e.g., adaptability), cultural differences (e.g.,

huge gap), and positive experience of accompanying family members (e.g., spouse), it is

genuine interest in the host culture that contributes the most to adjustment while living abroad

(Shimoni et al., 2005). Adjustment happens in three stages (Roskell, 2013). In the initial stage,

there is either exhilaration, distress, or a combination of both simultaneously (Roskell, 2013).

In the middle stage, there is a double culture shock, that of the host and/or work culture

(Hanna & Lyons, 2014; Roskell, 2013) whereby individuals often experience "disorientation,

homesickness, stress, loss, role confusion, depression, rejection of host nation and idealization

of home country" (Roskell, 2013, p. 163). Many aspects of daily life will influence the

intensity and frequency of the shock experienced, ranging from the amount of the social

support received and interactions with nationals to the frustrations of public transportation

(Moufakkir, 2013). Studies frequently focus on culture shock that happens overseas as well as

domestically through contact with immigrants (Moufakkir, 2013), in remote northern

communities of Canada (Zapf, 1993), and when students are enrolled in programs at home but

operated by a university outside the country (Pyvis & Chapman, 2005). In the last stage,

individuals adjust to their environment abroad, although not all adjust equally. Some may

adjust well to work but not to the host culture. Resenting an aspect of adjustment can translate

into a perception of unsatisfactory transition (Roskell, 2013).

   Students on an IFP learn a significant amount from interactions with local people

(Blanchy, 2009). On the one hand, friendships are especially helpful in mediating cross-

cultural transition and handling cultural discontinuity (Roskell, 2013); these friendships allow

students to "find someone with whom he or she can communicate on a satisfactory level of

intimacy" (Dubois & Ntetu, 2000, p. 47). Bonds created with citizens from the host country

often promote a desire among students to improve their well-being and living conditions

(Gauthier & Olivier-d'Avignon, 2005). On the other hand, students who surround themselves

mostly with compatriots, maintaining their attitudes or behaviours from home, isolate

themselves and may develop xenophobic attitudes (Dubois & Ntetu, 2000). Caragata and

Sanchez (2002) and Razack (2002) warn of the negative impact that students' attitudes and

behaviours may have abroad. This needs further exploration.

Another element of daily life is diversity. Students come to know that life abroad takes

on multiple forms. Diversity in daily life exists among people living in different regions of a

country (e.g., Muslims in the North and Christians in the South) and in different parts of the

city, for example, a more traditional lifestyle in some neighbourhoods. Ottelid (2010) found

that students realized that "there is no 'Indian daily life' or 'Swedish daily life'. There are a

great number and great variety of Swedish and Indian daily lives" (p. 69). Life abroad also

helped students grasp how multiple factors influence daily life and create or limit

opportunities.

Daily life in an IFP causes a student to experience being an outsider and otherness.

The malaise "felt about being overtly different from the majority population, and therefore

conspicuous, was a powerful and for some, entirely novel experience" (Parker et al., 2012,

p. 155). Being an outsider forces students to reassess values and norms (Saito & Johns, 2009).

Some students explain how it increases their "awareness of differences, of being an 'outsider',

and how this increased their sensitivity to clients of social welfare services" (Gilroy, 2003,

p. 250). They often develop greater empathy for people living in another country because of

obstacles they personally encounter there (Dominelli, 2003).

The sense of otherness also generates questions about global dynamics and North–

South relationships (Nadan, 2017), creating a malaise that many students like the least about

their IFP (Bennett, 2003). However, this malaise is important for white North American students who may benefit from learning about being a minority and otherness. They have to reflect "critically on the (mostly invisible) 'whiteness' within the international context, through shifting attention from 'them' towards 'us', from the 'other' to the 'self'" (Nadan, 2017, p. 80).

2.4.4.3 Field placement at the agency.

Field placements require students to link theory and practice. However, bridging the gap between theory and practice is often difficult when students are abroad (Yeom & Bae, 2010). For example, in one study, social workers from Pacific countries who studied in Hawaii struggled to apply concepts learned at university to the country of origin (Beecher, Reeves, Eggersten & Furuto, 2010). With time, they were "better able to apply them as they became more experienced in their agencies" (Beecher et al., 2010, p. 212). In another study, international social workers working in England struggled with a similar gap. They had to adapt to "different statutory requirements and legal interventions, the casework method, report writing and managing hostility in relationship with service users" (Hanna & Lyons, 2014, p. 7).

Bridging gaps between theory and practice can be challenging because of insufficient information when selecting a field placement (Yeom & Bae, 2010), limited preparation prior to arrival (Matthew & Lough, 2017), and a different knowledge-base (Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012). Students are required to constantly reflect on social work practice and "whether what they were assigned to do could be considered social work" (Askeland et al., 2016, p. 7). This sparks sentiments about being de-skilled, de-professionalized, and not useful to the workplace abroad (Roskell, 2013). Further research on challenges faced at the field placement

agency, for example, research on communication barriers, is important for maximizing learning opportunities for students.

2.4.4.4 Social work supervision.

Field education "grew out of the apprenticeship model of teaching where students learned by 'doing' and the practitioner acted as role model" (Cleak & Smith, 2012, p. 244). This supervisor role is still crucial in all field placements. Supervisors "facilitate the student's best learning opportunities and engage the student in knowledge, values, and skills development related to social work practice" in the host community (Gilbert et al., 2012, p. 67). Supervision represents an important tool "for transforming experiences into sustainable knowledge" (Askeland et al., 2016, p. 11). Yet, there is limited research from the perspective of supervisors. Three topics are discussed in the IFP literature: (a) the role of the supervisor, (b) supervision contracts, and (c) types of supervision.

According to Mercure (2017), "knowledge about oneself as a social worker and the development of critical thinking" are essential goals in IFPs (p. 89, authors's translation). The supervisor plays an important role in the students' learning process but this is especially true when students are overseas with a limited support network. In some cases, North-South power dynamics make some supervisors uncomfortable with their supervisor role (Matthew & Lough, 2017). However, it is essential that students doing an IFP receive all necessary support (Parker et al., 2012). Universities need to ensure that supervisors provide "familiar and regular supervision in a supportive, containing professional environment" (Nuttman-Shwartz & Berger, 2012, p. 2412).

As supervision is not always the same at home and abroad, a supervision contract is required between the supervisor in the host country and the student (Hong Chui, 2009). Most

importantly, they need to discuss expectations about supervision. In addition, they have to prepare a supervision contract that includes aspects such as frequency of supervision, length of the term, role of supervisor, teaching methods, and learning goals.

Another issue covered in the literature is the type of supervision provided. Supervision abroad is not easy to ensure because students sometimes find themselves in isolated locations or placed in agencies with limited resources (Roby & Panos, 2004). Furthermore, on-site supervision by trained professionals is not always possible. Depending on the context, supervision may be offered off-site by a social worker or a field instructor at the School of Social Work. Long-distance supervision (e.g., via video-conferencing) may prove helpful in many situations where supervision is unavailable or inadequate (Panos, 2005). When web-based support is used, students need to know what can and cannot be discussed to protect privacy, for example, health information about a person in the EU to another location outside the EU (Roby & Panos, 2004). Nonetheless, off-site or long-distance supervision does not always elicit the same level of satisfaction as on-site supervision (Cleak & Smith, 2012). This requires further exploration in order to improve the supervision of IFPs.

2.4.5 Return home.

Returning home is the final phase of an IFP. Relevant issues include: (a) debriefing, (b) reverse culture shock, and (c) outcomes (Table 2.8). Once again, there is limited research to respond to the needs of students by way of strategies to help with reverse culture shock and identify professional outcomes.

Table 2.8 Return Home

Topics	Needs of students	Strategies to respond to student's needs
Debriefing	- Create meaning about significant experiences that happened during the IFP	-<u>Tasks:</u> Process significant experiences (e.g., harassment), discuss re-entry issues (e.g., emotions), and reflect on broader issues (e.g., global inequality) - <u>Tools used to debrief</u> (e.g., seminars and debriefing exercises)
Reverse culture shock	- Dealing with manifestations of culture shock (e.g., homesick for host country, disorientation/oddness of being home, and adjusting to being back home)	_____
Outcomes	- Identify personal (e.g., confidence), professional (e.g., choice of work setting), global (e.g., civic involvement) and long-term outcomes	_____

2.4.5.1 Debriefing.

Lessons learned from non-government organizations (NGOs) show the exigencies of both processing experiences that occurred abroad and discussing re-entry issues (Heron, 2005). Nuttman-Shwartz and Berger (2012) describe it as digesting the experience to integrate learning. Debriefing helps students to "create meaning for themselves out of what they have seen, heard and done" (Heron, 2005, p. 791). It involves looking back on challenging incidents such as unwanted sexual advances, harassment for coming from the West, moral judgements towards the treatment of animals, and day-to-day scrutiny by locals (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013). It is also necessary to discuss othering processes ("them" and "us") and "the discomfiture of being between two cultures, two statuses and two practices" (Parker et al., 2012, p. 156). Doing this requires reflection on broader aspects, such as global inequality and various ethical issues.

Seminars assist students in seeing the challenges abroad as "critical incidents, which have big potentials for learning" (Flem, 2010, p. 25). Seminars offer a "safe and non-

judgemental" space where students unlearn conclusions and stereotypes they may possess (Tiessen & Kumar, 2013, p. 425). Using exercises to reflect on, comprehend, and contextualize significant experiences (Parker et al., 2012; Webhi, 2009) improves students' grasp of the integration of their learning into professional practice.

2.4.5.2 Reverse culture shock.

Reverse culture shock was first explored in the 1940s among returning military personnel and later with returning expatriates (Gaw, 2000). Research on reverse culture shock explores the two main topics—culture shock as a process and manifestations of culture shock. Reverse culture shock is a process that influences re‑entry and involves "readjusting, reacculturation, and reassimilating into one's home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time" (Gaw, 2000, p. 83–84). Students experience an initial high upon returning home but "the high lasts less than a month, and many report it lasting only a few hours" (Adler, 1981, p. 345). This is followed by a low period with manifestations of disorientation, stress, academic problems, homesickness for the host country, disenchantment with home, and a lack of interest of friends in the overseas experience. Unlike culture shock, reverse culture shock is often unexpected or it is minimized by many returnees. Students experiencing challenges are "less likely to use student support services" (Gaw, 2000, p. 100).

It is unknown whether levels of immersion or identity issues in the host culture influence reverse culture shock and adjustments (e.g., loss of amazing friendships and picking up life where it was left off) (Gray & Savicky, 2015). Each experience is unique. Those with more intense reverse culture shock may require professional help to address their needs.

2.4.5.3 Outcomes.

Outcomes are hard to evaluate when students "find it difficult to clearly express the impact of their study abroad experience" (Wong, 2015, p. 124). Furthermore, the study-abroad experience does not end after returning home—it has an "impact on subsequent experiences" (Wong, 2015, p. 124). Students often return home with new ideas (Gilin & Young, 2009) that make way for innovative practices in the future (Foerster & Lee Simon, 2003). While outcomes of study abroad can be both positive and negative, a few studies mention negative outcomes—they confirm stereotypes, they regress in intercultural competence (Wong, 2015), they shy away from service-oriented activities that are perceived as activism (i.e., radical) (Cermak et al., 2011), or they feel helplessness, all of which can contribute to lower self-esteem (Magnus, 2009).

The literature looks at outcomes within four categories: (a) personal, (b) professional, (c) global, and (d) long-term. Despite different living and working conditions during field placements, students identify "personal development as the most important part of the experience" (Thörn, 2010, p. 16). Personal development refers to personal awareness, interpersonal awareness, confidence (that is self-esteem and self-efficacy), and self-contentment (Morgan, 2010). As one student explained, "I have returned with the knowledge about myself. . . I will never forget the personal lessons and insights that I have acquired" (Hammond, 2003, p. 44). Some students are able to reassess their previously-held perceptions about the home country and relationships with other cultural groups (DeDee & Stewart, 2003) and clarify their personal values (Peterson, 2002). Also, being an outsider in the host country forces them to rethink previous understanding that had not been questioned before (Saito & Johns, 2009). Students develop a higher tolerance for ambiguity when searching for answers

in a complex world (Peterson, 2002). New situations test their abilities to cope and adapt in cross-cultural settings (Panos, 2005) and allow them to discover "previously untested inner resourcefulness" (Green, Johansson, Rosser, Tengnah & Segrott, 2008, p. 987).

Professional outcomes include knowledge, values, and skills. Students acquire international knowledge in areas of professional interest (Savoy, 2003) and deepen their knowledge about cultural diversity (Askeland et al., 2016; Saito & Johns, 2009). With regards to values, students foster greater empathy for certain groups (e.g., immigrants) (Gilin & Young, 2009). They also develop new skills or further cultivate them (Gauthier & Olivier-d'Avignon, 2005). For example, they learn about intercultural intervention (Mercure, Ba & Turcotte, 2010) and specific skills with which to intervene (Hamad & Lee, 2013a). All the while gaining "confidence, sensitivity and skill level in relation to working with multi-ethnic groups" (Kreitzer, Barlow, Schwartz, Lacroix & Macdonald, 2012, p. 259), students develop critical thinking about "their limited competence in a culture different from their own" (Magnus, 2009, p. 383).

While IFPs are seen as a way of preparing students to work "competently in diverse environments—both domestically and abroad" (Nadan, 2017, p. 76), this competence is difficult to evaluate. Students who study abroad already demonstrate less ethnocentric views, lower levels of prejudice, lower apprehension about intercultural communication, and less intolerance for ambiguity (Kim & Goldstein, 2005). There is another concern with cultural competence. Students adopting an essentialist perspective interpret the learning process as cumulative (e.g., knowledge about characteristics of cultural group and skills congruent with culture) and that may lead to generalization, stereotypical, even folkloric views, and othering of the group where others are seen as having a culture and where students are cultureless

(Nadan, 2017). In its place, cultural competence needs to be viewed as socially constructed in specific contexts and constantly changing so that it requires the adoption of a "position of not knowing" and the development of skills facilitating the exploration of various identities (Nadan, 2017, p. 77).

IFP research also identifies global outcomes as another important aspect of the program. This is positive, as students are not always exposed sufficiently to ISW during their training. For example, a study by Small et al. (2015) showed that one half of the students enrolled in a social work program (BSW, MSW, and PhD) said their program "did not provide them with adequate training in global issues and activities" (p. 419). However, students who have completed an IFP develop greater global literacy which enables them, for example, to see how North American lifestyles are dependent on the exploitation of other countries (Abram, Slosar & Wells, 2005). This global literacy raises their consciousness about the need for involvement as global citizens on international issues (Chan & Chui, 2003). Sometimes, the experience abroad contributes to the creation of permanent and structured ties between transnational social movements (Boulianne & Favreau, 2002).

However, few studies have explored the challenges faced by students with regards to identifying outcomes. To maximize outcomes for students, knowledge about this is important. In addition, few studies have looked at the long-term impacts on students (Garbati & Rothschild, 2016). Some studies allude to the fact that education abroad has long-term implications at a personal and professional level (Brown, 2009). There are links made between study abroad and professional development 10 years after graduation (Franklin, 2010). Long-term impacts include personal outcomes, such as maturity and professional outcomes including one's career trajectory (DeGraff, Slagter, Larsen & Ditta, 2013).

2.5 Transferability of Experiences

Traditionally, four aspects about transferability of experiences are explored in the research literature: (a) transfer of skills from one workplace to another, (b) transfer of values and theories from one country to another, (c) transfer from classroom to workplace, and (d) transfer from IFP to workplace (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9 Transferability of Experiences

Types of transfer	Issues covered
Transfer of skills from one workplace to another	- Near transfer: Easier to transfer skills when situations are similar - High transfer: Harder to transfer skills in varied situations; however, easier to transfer generic skills
Transfer of values and theories from one country to another	- Universal model: Core value and knowledge applicable to any country - Local model: Difficulty to apply values/knowledge learned in one country to another country
Transfer from classroom to workplace	- Factors influencing transfer: Relevance; opportunities to practice; feedback given; follow-ups provided; similarities between contexts; and ability to generalize - Transfer outcome: Positive transfer (e.g., apply appropriately); negative transfer (e.g., apply inappropriately); and, no transfer (e.g., inability to see how to apply)
Transfer from IFP to workplace	- Changing role (e.g., student to employee) - Employment context (e.g., temporary work) - Students and employers doubt usefulness of IFPs

One aspect identified in the research literature is skill transfer from one workplace to another, recognizing two types: near transfer (i.e., transfer of skills learned to similar situations) and high transfer (i.e., transfer of skills learned to varied situations) (Stevens & Miretzky, 2014). Higher‑level skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, and logic are more easily transferable to other high transfer contexts than to near transfer skills, but they require "thoughtful application of more abstract knowledge and skills to varied situations" (Stevens & Miretzky, 2014, p. 32). However, not all learners are able to observe "similarities that would trigger recognition of relevant knowledge and skills appropriate for addressing situations initially perceived as different" (Stevens & Miretzky, 2014, p. 32). It is important,

therefore, that social work students receive help to bridge gaps between contexts in order to see the transferability of core skills, such as communication, problem solving, and self-awareness (Tolleson Knee & Folsom, 2012).

Another aspect identified in the research literature is the transferability of values and theories from one country to another. Two paradigms are present—universalism and indigenization. Universalism looks at how core values are transferable regardless of country (Beecher et al., 2010), whereas indigenization examines how values are contextually and culturally specific and influence local practice (Beecher et al., 2010). Social work values and theories cannot be assumed to be universal. They may be interpreted in different ways (Kreitzer, 2006). In one study, international social work students found it difficult to transfer what was learned in an Hawaiian classroom (i.e., Western setting) to their home country in a non-Western setting (Beecher et al., 2010). They shared their initial struggles "to apply many concepts learned in their baccalaureate social work education" (Beecher et al., 2010, p. 12). Some skills and theories could be used in their home country because imperialism had spread the Western model, yet skills and theories were not always helpful for understanding the people (Beecher et al., 2010). According to Kreitzer (2006), the assumption

> that man has power over the world, that time is linear, that rationalism prevails, spirituality is non-existent and that the written word is the only important knowledge are some of the values that indigenous and non-western *(sic)* cultures might find difficult to accept as values important to their cultures. (p. 13)

In addition, students regretted not having "learned more relevant knowledge and skills in classes that could be used in their practicum setting" (Beecher et al., 2010, p. 214).

A third aspect of transferability concerned the conveyance of learning from the classroom to the workplace. Some influencing factors include the perceived relevance of the

material, opportunities for practice, feedback given, follow-ups provided, similarities between

contexts, and the ability to make generalizations (Ettington & Camp, 2002). For social work

students undertaking an IFP, there are important challenges associated with differences in

social work between Canada and the host country. The research also looks at types of transfer.

In one study, three types of transfer were identified: positive transfer wherein the student

appropriately applies the knowledge gained, negative transfer, and no transfer at all, when

students fail to recognize when to apply the knowledge (Ettington & Camp, 2002). Identifying

evidence of transfer is often a challenge because of the complexity of the phenomenon. Hence,

transfer needs to be reconceptualised as a "preparation for future learning" and dealing with

new tasks (De Corte, 2003, p.145).

Transferability of learning from the IFP to the workplace is the fourth aspect that

emerges from the research. Challenges encountered with the job search post-IFP influence the

ability of individuals to transfer learning. Popadiuk and Arthur (2014) explored international

students' transition from university to work. The transition involved leaving the host country

and making plans for their future at home. This often entailed "growing youth unemployment,

underemployment, periods of temporary work, and returning to training or education"

(Popadiuk & Arthur, 2014, p. 124). During this time, students frequently struggled to show

employers the value of studying abroad (Wong, 2015). Students were also plagued with

doubts about the usefulness of their IFP as the social work abroad "might not be seen as social

work from their [students'] point of view" (Askeland et al., 2016, p. 10). Similarly, employers

have doubts about the transferability of learning from an IFP. This is also observed with

employers who interview social workers that have immigrated. These social workers face

many challenges with "the transfer of qualifications and skills acquired in different countries"

(Pullen-Sansfaçon, Spolander & Engelbrecht, 2012, p. 1035). Therefore, to assist students during repatriation, it is important to gain more knowledge about the transferability of experiences and its challenges.

2.6 IFP Planning

Three important issues are covered in the research with regards to IFP planning: (a) challenges with IFP planning, (b) factors to consider when planning IFPs, and (c) recommendations when planning IFPs (Table 2.10).

Table 2.10 IFP Planning

IFP Planning topics	Issues covered
Challenges with IFP planning	- <u>Challenges with IFPs:</u> Lack of suitable field placements (e.g., more time needed to find suitable IFPs); communication barriers; lack of suitable supervisors; fees to be paid overseas for a field placement; and lack of resources to assist with re-entry - <u>Problems due to poor planning:</u> Inadequate pre-departure training; insufficient support/ supervision – problems with differences in conceptualizations of social work practice; and inadequate re-entry assistance - <u>Outcomes of poor planning:</u> Ineffective outcomes (e.g., cross-cultural misunderstanding) and counterproductive outcomes (e.g., increase prejudice)
Factors to consider when planning IFPs	- Role taking (e.g., students having meaningful roles at the agency) - Support (e.g., adequate supervision) - Reflection (e.g., journal and discussions) - Intensity (e.g., number of weeks, hours per week, and time for SW roles/reflection) - Reciprocity (e.g., negotiate learning goals)
Recommendations when planning IFPs	- <u>Preparation:</u> Decolonizing pedagogy; orientation to host country; positionality of students; strategies to bracket knowledge; gains/costs of an IFP; and discussion about expectations, roles, and communication loop - <u>Supervision:</u> Reflect on ethnocentrism, reconcile student/tourist identity, long-distance supervision to supplement local supervision - <u>Assistance when returning home:</u> Make sense of experience, knowledge transfer, and career opportunities

2.6.1 Challenges with IFP planning.

The first challenge pertains to IFP planning. Lack of field placements is compounded by communication barriers, staffing issues, lack of qualified supervisors, and in some cases, the cost of practicum fees (Yeom & Bae, 2010). These challenges may result in poor IFP planning, inadequate pre-departure training, insufficient support and supervision during

placement, poor international field education structure, differences in conceptualizations of

social work practice, and inadequate re-entry assistance (Matthew & Lough, 2017). Poor

planning often results in IFP experiences that are either ineffective (e.g., does not prevent

cross-cultural misunderstanding) or counterproductive for students (e.g., it increases prejudice)

(Lough, 2009). Such planning also negatively impacts both the host community and field

placement agency "by reproducing paternalism, imperialism, and dependence, often associated

with unidirectional service from the global North" (Lough, 2009, p. 468). As a result,

exploration of the transition experiences of individuals who have completed an IFP is

necessary to identify planning issues and how to address them.

2.6.2 Factors to consider when planning IFPs.

The literature suggests that IFPs require "structured collaboration, communication, and

planning between schools, students, and international agencies" (Matthew & Lough, 2017,

p. 30). Thus, educators have a responsibility "to address the shortcomings and potential

injustices" that stem from such programs (Boetto et al., 2014, p. 14). They need to pay careful

attention to all phases of the IFP (Thörn, 2010). To achieve this, effective IFP planning

practice depends upon five factors: (a) role taking, (b) support, (c) reflection, (d) intensity, and

(e) reciprocity (Lough, 2009). First, students need opportunities to undertake meaningful

social worker roles, such as support. Second, they require support during training, such as

adequate supervision. Third, students need to be encouraged to reflect on their experience by,

for example, engaging in conversations with nationals, finding ways of expressing themselves,

and participating in guided reflection (Lough, 2009). Fourth, it is necessary to balance the

intensity of the experience, allowing time for both role taking when performing service tasks

and personal reflection when writing in their diary. In balancing intensity, length of stay "may

actually be more important than the number of hours student[s] engage in the service task" (Lough, 2009, p. 474). Fifth, reciprocity is a requisite in the negotiation of IFP goals between students and agencies, and this is made easier when a long-term partnership has been established. For example, having students at the same site over several years allows coordinators to anticipate challenges (Lough, 2009).

2.6.3 Recommendations when planning IFPs.

A third challenge identified in the literature concerns planning across three phases of the IFP: (a) preparation before going abroad, (b) supervision during field placements, and (c) assistance when returning home. The first phase concerns preparation before going abroad to maximize positive outcomes and minimize the impact of negative ones. Orientation seminars are proposed as a way to offer students information on important laws and regulations abroad (e.g., privacy and confidentiality) (Kreitzer, 2006) and knowledge about transitions they will experience (Hamad & Lee, 2013b). Use of a decolonizing pedagogy allows students to learn about colonization and imperialism in order to understand the injustices towards people who are othered (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013). Seminars should also help students question their positionality and better understand who they are (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013). Seminars require a constructivist perspective so students may explore power relations and recognize how "context shapes people's experiences and the meaning given to them" (Nadan, 2017, p. 79). For example, students who are motivated by a fascination for other cultures need to reflect on the dangers of voyeurism and cultural imperialism in a North-South context (Nadan, 2017). Furthermore, research suggests that seminars assist students in developing bracketing strategies to create an openness about local practices and to avoid judgments (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013). Within seminars, students

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need to explore both the gains and the costs of undertaking an IFP, as well as expectations, roles (e.g., faculty educator), and communication feedback loops (Mathiesen & Lager, 2007).

Supervision during field placements is the second phase of IFP planning addressed in the research literature. Adequate supervision can assist students in questioning assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of doing (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013). Supervision helps students "to critically reflect on social work practice in their host country while containing the powerful forces of ethnocentrism" (Kreitzer et al., 2012, p. 263). Likewise, crucial issues with students, such as victim blaming and a desire to fix the community, can be addressed within supervision (Lough, 2009). In addition, supervision provides an opportunity for students to discuss the reconciliation of their student and tourist identities so as not to impede learning (Fox, 2017). While supervision usually happens on-site or off-site locally, supplementary long-distance supervision is sometimes available when local supervision is limited. Likewise, long-distance supervision allows students to express frustrations about the agency and the host culture, which may not be possible during local supervision (Lough, 2009).

The third phase of IFP planning addressed in the literature centres on assistance to students when returning home. During IFP planning, it is important to create spaces, such as debriefing sessions, so that students can make sense of situations that they have experienced (VeLure Roholt & Fisher, 2013). It helps students to scrutinize "knowledge learned as well as create personal meaning of their experiences and situate them within broader contexts of social work theory and practice" (Matthew & Lough, 2017, p. 30). Critical reflection is necessary to address repatriation-related issues that require adjustments; it is typically achieved through various written assignments and creative projects (e.g., photo exhibits) (Matthew & Lough, 2017). Assistance when returning home also supports those who "feel

disconnected from career opportunities" and those who "wonder if and how the skills learned abroad will transfer to future jobs" (Matthew & Lough, 2017, p. 33).

2.7 Gaps in the Literature and Strengths/Limitations of this Study

Most of the research concerns the short-term outcomes of going abroad. Mohajeri Norris and Gillespie (2009) found that shortly after returning home, participants expressed an interest in participating in international work or volunteering in the future. Only a few studies have explored long-term outcomes. Franklin (2010) identified long‑term career impacts of studying abroad, such as holding an international/multicultural job, earning a higher income, and having greater value for the employer. Nonetheless, there are still major gaps in the IFP literature with regards to long‑term outcomes (Peterson, 2002) and the transfer of outcomes from an international context to various national contexts. There are also gaps in research about long-term outcomes with regards to social justice. Cordero and Negroni Rodriguez (2009) did look, however, at an immersion program in Puerto Rico designed to promote active integration of social justice values and advocacy for oppressed groups. This research was conducted shortly after field placements, so whether the desire for change expressed in the study translated into action and if the changes endured over time is impossible to know.

Topics such as the transferability of skills, values, and knowledge after an IFP and the transition to workplace have not been explored sufficiently. This lack of research is challenging for students undertaking an IFP. Many students doing local field placements find it difficult "to appreciate the applicability" of their experiences in a specialist context to other social work settings (Quinn, 1998, p. 14). Macaulay and Cree (1999) explain that recent graduates often cannot "see underlying principles of similarity in situations that do not appear obviously alike" (p. 84). The research seems to recognize the need for sufficient time after a

field placement to allow social workers to create or find meaning from their IFP and see the transferability of new values, knowledge, and skills to other practice situations.

Future research requires exploration of changes in students' understanding of ISW practice as a result of IFPs—for example, the IFP's impact on field placements and expansion of ethical and professional foundations of social workers' practices. Knowledge about the impact of IFPs on agencies, supervisors, and host communities is also limited. Supplementary attention has to be given to IFP location since most studies explore only North-North or North-South field placements. Furthermore, more research needs to focus on strategies to better support social work students during all phases of the IFP (Thörn, 2010).

The strengths of this study include context and scope. Unlike other studies focused on English-speaking students from various Canadian provinces, this study explores the IFP experience of a specific ethno-cultural group from New Brunswick. Research has never focused on the IFP experience of Acadian students living in this province. Furthermore, this study not only examines transitions that occur during the IFP, but it also looks at implications for planning. Because of the nature of the IFP experience—its continuity after returning home—it takes time to digest what happened. Another strength of this study is its examination of both the short-term and the long-term perspectives of students. Two of its limitations include the small number of participants (n = 20) and the lack of perspectives from important stakeholders such as field placement coordinators and supervisors, both locally and internationally.

2.8 Chapter Summary

Despite existing research on IFPs, much remains to be learned about this type of study-abroad experience. To avoid pitfalls, more research is required on various aspects of the IFP

and from the perspective of all stakeholders. The proposed study will contribute to knowledge production and have implications for social work education and, specifically, IFP planning, design and implementation. This is important because of the significant learning opportunities that the IFP offers for a social worker's individual practice. The next chapter provides a description of the research design that was developed for answering the research question. It also addresses ethical concerns and measures taken to protect the participants.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

IFPs offer an excellent learning opportunity for students. There is much to gain from an exploratory study focusing on their stories about the long-term outcomes of IFPs. As a result, participants in this study were asked to reflect on their experiences. Not only will future students interested in undertaking an IFP find it helpful to read these stories, but social work educators who are involved in IFP planning will also gain useful insights, for example, seeing the benefit of including integrative seminars.

This chapter presents the purpose of the study, then summarizes the steps I undertook as the researcher to explore the experiences of these social workers who had completed an IFP. The chapter includes:

- reasons for opting for a qualitative research,

- position as a researcher,

- theoretical framework to understand the lens with which the topic is explored,

- sampling strategies, recruitment, and interview process,

- explanation of procedures for data analysis, and presentation of results.

The final section of the chapter addresses ethical issues with human subjects, research strategies for rigor, and bias/limitations of the study.

3.1 Purpose of Study

In this study, I analyzed social workers' narratives about the outcomes (i.e., knowledge, values, and skills) of their IFP and the transferability of these outcomes to other social work practice contexts. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

- What do the stories about the personal, professional, and global outcomes gained in an IFP tell us about how participants negotiate the transition between various contexts, and the knowledge, skills, and values transferred from one social practice to another?

- What do these stories reveal about the value of these experiences for their individual social work practice?

- How do these stories contribute to social work education and IFP planning?

3.2 Research Design and Method

The research design is a central part of the research process. Not only does it provide the structure of the study to answer the research question, but it also guides me as a researcher and ensures that the study is being done in a systematic way. The following description of this study's methodology outlines the decisions made to gather the requisite information.

3.2.1 Qualitative approach.

Qualitative research has been defined in numerous ways by researchers across time. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe the work of qualitative researchers as studying "things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 4). Qualitative research was chosen for this study because of its advantages. Such research seeks to capture a deeper understanding (*verstehen*) of the lived experience of "those who live it and create meaning from it" (Padgett, 2008, p. 16). By focusing on the insider perspective (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012, p. 9), qualitative research "emphasizes subjective meanings and questions the existence of a single objective reality" (Padgett, 2008, p. 2). The phenomena studied are social constructions "rather than objectively 'real'" (Padgett, 2008, p. 7). Moreover, this type of research collects rich

description in order to better understand experiences (McNamara, 2009) and increase knowledge about the outcomes of a phenomenon (Duggleby & Williams, 2016). Furthermore, researchers are able to go beyond an individual's first response and discover more about the topic. Tools such as semi‑structured interviewing enable me as a researcher to gather detailed information about participants' experience. For all of these reasons, I used the qualitative research method and borrowed from a constructivist framework to explore the stories of social workers who had taken part in a semester-long IFP.

Through semi‑structured interviews, respondents were able to speak more freely and with fewer interruptions. According to Riessman (1993), it is better "to ask questions that open up topics and allow respondents to construct answers in collaboration with listeners, in the ways they find meaningful" (p. 54). These interviews can explore the narratives of people's lives to better understand emerging patterns (Moosa‑Mitha, 2015). The narrative respects "respondents' ways of constructing meaning" and "gives prominence to human agency and imagination . . . [that] is well suited to studies of subjectivity" (Riessman, 1993, p. 4–5).

There are many ways to conceptualize and practice narrative research (Riessman, 2015). As a result, it is important for me to present my perspective. Borrowing from narrative inquiry, my goal as a researcher was to gain knowledge held in stories told by social workers about their IFP outcomes. These stories presented information about past events, which in some cases happened more than 20 years ago. The stories also provided a useful way for social workers to continue making sense of their international experience as they re-told stories or shared parts of them for the first time. Some stories have transformed into different ones, as stories are a reflection of time and changing circumstances (Riessman, 2015).

Stories recorded by the researcher were shaped not only by the speaker, but by the listener as well (e.g., perception of the performance). Stories collected from social workers (i.e., the listener) served as a basis to produce narratives about their experiences. They included "plots, characters, actions, and contexts" that have a tale to tell (Fraser & Jarldorn, 2015, p. 154). Narrating experiences requires an organization of the account that makes sense of people, places, and events in order to produce a meaningful plot of the story being told (Riessman, 2015). These narratives help the researcher to explore not only how individuals understand past events, but also what these events mean to them. As Riessman (2015) explains, narratives are more than answers to questions during interviews. They tell stories about many aspects. They include protagonists and other characters, for example, social work students doing an IFP and significant people around them. Stories describe plots (e.g., events before, during, and after the IFP) with turning points, such as learning moments stemming from positive or negative experiences that represent a point of realization leading to personal and professional outcomes. Stories are more than a "container of ideas": social dimensions are seen through individual stories, or what feminists describe in their catch phrase, "The personal is political" (Riessman, 2015, p. 14). In this study, I look at the themes (e.g., transition) and social/structural dimensions, such as gender issues, oppression, and othering processes that emerge from these IFP stories.

3.2.2 Researcher's position.

In qualitative research, researchers recognize that they influence the research process, so it is important to acknowledge this (Lapan et al., 2012). They "need to do a careful critical analysis of themselves and be sensitive to how their values and biases influence the research situation" (Mertens, 2012, p. 23). Constructivist researchers, for example, are aware that their

own background influences research so "they 'position themselves' in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8–9). Feminist researchers, for example, have also incorporated self-reflection as a way to examine these biases (Padgett, 2008). These researchers have provided insights for research about the challenges of knowledge and situated knowing. First, knowledge reflects the perspective of the knower. Second, the production of knowledge requires an exploration of "location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard" (Haraway, 2004, p. 92). Social location (for example, one's gender and occupation) has an influence on what and how knowledge is known. Knowledge is also situated in social, political (Kurki, 2015), and historical contexts (Moosa‑Mitha, 2015).

As a result, it is important for me to share my interests, past experiences, and worldviews about the topic being studied. My interest for experiential learning abroad began in my twenties after I took part in Canada World Youth (CWY), an intercultural exchange program, where I spent four months on a farm in Ontario with a Peruvian counterpart, followed by four months living with a host family in Peru. This was a life-transforming experience where I witnessed extreme poverty and from which I emerged determined to make a difference in the world. I switched my field of study from engineering to social work. I also joined Tools for Peace, a Canadian NGO, working in solidarity with Nicaragua and the Sandinista Revolution. After touring Nicaragua, I undertook my first field placement with Tools for Peace, which included lobbying and collecting material aid. Still in my late twenties, I took part in an intercultural exchange program called Ship for World Youth (SWY). This

allowed me to stay with a Japanese family and then sail for three months in the Pacific Ocean on a cruise ship with participants from more than 20 countries.

Having developed a taste for travel, I took a few short trips in Europe, but without enough time to truly explore the countries visited. I was unable to experience intense moments like those I had experienced during my cultural exchanges with CWY and SWY. Because of this, I decided to arrange for an extended stay abroad, spending three years working in Japan where I was part of a vibrant expatriate community. I extensively traveled in South-East Asia. Upon my return from Japan, I taught at the School of Social Work at the Université de Moncton and eventually became involved with IFPs. When I started teaching in the fall of 2007, I was not taking part in IFP planning. However, I came to realize from students' stories of their IFP that they needed better preparation and more frequent contacts with the School of Social Work while they were abroad. I also wanted to ensure that students were better prepared to handle challenges abroad and prevent unfortunate situations that had been part of my experience, such as committing cultural faux pas and adopting ethnocentric behaviours.

Ultimately, in 2009, two years later, I got involved because I had become aware that some students were returning from their IFP feeling concerned about the lack of support that they had received. I began to oversee the selection process, pre-departure workshops, and long-distance supervision. In 2010, the School of Social Work at the Université de Moncton created a committee on international exchanges and IFPs that was composed of the two field placement coordinators and four professors. The School decided that offering IFPs required a collective effort and more institutional resources. At that time, I shared the responsibility of providing long-distance supervision with other professors. However, in 2012, I took over the responsibility of the long-distance supervision of all students undertaking IFPs, in the hope of

providing more support to students undertaking IFPs and short-term programs. In this way, I would be offering more than I had received during my participation in my own international programs.

While all my experiences abroad allowed me to learn on a personal and professional level, skills such as autonomy, resourcefulness, problem solving and communication, my first experience was also life-transforming, motivating me to switch my field of study from science to social work. I did not find the transition from Canada to the host country particularly difficult; however, I found leaving the host country the more challenging transition. While these experiences have influenced my belief in the value and transformative nature of the IFP, they have driven home the importance of being better prepared to stay safe and to not harm others. Since the Université de Moncton and its School of Social Work promote student mobility, it is essential that they provide the critical support that students need during all phases of the IFP.

Recognizing my situated position, I asked myself questions about the meaning of this situated knowledge during this research process. What did it mean to be a researcher and educator who was transformed by her own international experiences and who interviewed social workers who had completed an IFP? How did I listen to their stories from this position? How did I hear voices from the margin that shared stories that differed from mine and expressed bitterness about their experience? Previous experience, either professional or personal, is an asset as researchers gain "access to a research site and respondents" (Padgett, 2008, p. 20) and develop a greater sensibility to look at data collected during analysis (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2012). However, previous experience also requires that researchers stretch their ways of looking at the world beyond their situatedness "to open horizons of understanding"

(Kurki, 2015, p. 795) or "find a way to make the familiar unfamiliar" (Padgett, 2008, p. 21). As such, I needed to ensure that I listened attentively to participants who had lived intense culture shock in the host country because this was not something that I had experienced during my own travels abroad. Also, when students shared experiences similar to my own, such as saying goodbye to a good friend, I needed to stay open to see the experience with fresh eyes.

3.2.3 Theoretical framework.

Researchers may draw from several theoretical perspectives "as 'lenses' through which the study's data and ideas are refracted" (Padgett, 2008, p. 13). Being influenced by a pragmatist perspective, I will therefore borrow from several theoretical frameworks to guide my comprehension of the research topic. My epistemological and methodological choices as a researcher will be influenced by the following framework. The three sets of theories presented in this chapter will help me as a researcher adopt a critical perspective to understand oppression in society and provide insights into ways of contributing to social change. Since racism is not the only system that accounts for the oppression of individuals, intersectional theories are useful to explore how interlocking systems of oppression/privilege and intersecting identities could produce multiple experiences to account for the complexity of the world. Postcolonial theories, for their part, shed light on one particular system of oppression, colonialism, and its representation of the colonized as the other. This is important, as some countries hosting students from Canada have a long history of colonialism.

3.2.3.1 Critical theories.

Critical theory attempts to explain what is wrong in society and propose practical ways to change conditions that contribute to the problems. The ethical ideal for critical theorists is the production of research for a just society (De Angelis, 2015). Researchers coming from

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such a perspective are critical of social realities and interest groups because studies are

necessarily situated in an historical context (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Understanding the

cultural, economic, political, religious, and social conditions at a specific time in history helps

to explain situations or events that happen and the role played by certain groups in society, for

example, professional groups such as social workers. Critical research theorists examine

oppression and issues of power and authority. Gaining knowledge is powerful. It allows

critical theorists to look for transformative solutions to change structures and institutions in

society to promote social justice (McDowell & Jeris, 2004). Critical race theory (CRT), a

specific application of critical theory, describes racism as part of the fabric of society. Race

and racism need to be analyzed, therefore, from a legal perspective. CRT also encourages the

telling of unique stories by racialized groups, theorizes about injustice, and calls for political

action "in relation to context-specific articulation of women's and men's needs and interests"

(Hawkesworth, 2012, p. 694).

Many theories fall within this critical perspective. In social work, critical theory looks

at ways to address multiple forms of oppression that result in injustice for many groups.

Critical theory also explores the structural nature of social problems (Mattsson, 2014). It

requires understanding of the impact of social structures on living conditions and ways to

challenge these structures. Critical reflection is important because, in spite of social workers'

and social work students' good intentions, they may still "uphold and reproduce social

structures and oppression" (Mattsson, 2014, p. 9). Sometimes, it is easier for social workers to

see the marginalization and exclusion in society due to racism rather than acknowledge the

profession's role in the oppression of people seeking help. Critical social work theory is

therefore essential to explore structures locally and globally that contribute, for example, to cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect (Fook, 2002).

Critical social work theorists have been interested not only in social work practice but also in social work education. They provide a critical eye to certain practices with regards to study-abroad programs. Authors such as Dominelli and Thomas Bernard (2003b) have explored issues of oppression and privilege during IFPs with regards to one's position. For example, it is important to take into account the privilege that Canadian students have when working with racialized/marginalized groups in the host country. For their part, Payne and Askeland (2008) raised concerns about the exploitation of limited resources in host communities abroad which provide IFPs. Some authors such as Heron (2005) looked at the pitfalls of IFPs and planning issues such as teaching about anti-oppressive principles and the impact of colonization, globalization, and post-colonization. However, others, including Larsen and Allen (2006) for example, wrote about the benefits of ontological shifts that occur during short-term study-abroad programs for social work students: students stop attributing responsibility for poverty to individuals and are able to see the structural/collective dimensions of problems.

The intention for this study was to give voice to Acadian social workers in New Brunswick who had completed an IFP. They represent voices from the margin— Acadians being a linguistic minority group constituting one third of the population in New Brunswick (Noël & Beaton, 2010)— and few studies exist with regards to their experience as social workers. Chang (2017) explains that the narratives of lesser-represented groups expose counter-storytelling that has value because of its power to present "one's own reality" in order to reveal "otherwise silenced voices" (p. 10). By using a narrative approach, linking past,

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present, and future, I hoped to promote a reflexive process among social workers about their social work practice from a critical perspective to explore, for example, the nature and purpose of social work, anti‑oppressive practices as a result of undertaking an IFP, and social change. This study also attempted to contribute to change in areas of planning practices. Social work research is "change-oriented, regardless of methodology. As such, it is committed to improving peoples' lives by contributing to more effective and human practices and policies" (Padgett, 2008, p. 22).

3.2.3.2 Intersectional theories.

Feminist theories use gender analysis to promote change. However, these theories examine gender and oppression with differing theses depending on feminist strands (MacLoed & O'Meara, 2007). Some strands recognize the diversity of stories among oppressed groups despite the fact that they often share similar experiences of exclusion or disadvantage. While many postmodern feminists reject metanarratives, a few recognize the value of narratives about sexism and patriarchy (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2009). Some postmodern, black, and postcolonial feminists identify challenges when creating rapport between researcher and participants in a study. These feminists argue that shared similarities, such as being a female researcher, do not always lead to knowing more and better about women. Also, the production of knowledge needs to be examined in terms of the researcher positioning and the politics involved, for example, in producing research that allows a researcher to obtain a promotion. Doucet and Mauthner (2008) point to the dangers in research of believing in mutuality of relationships between the researcher and the respondents. In interviews, these relationships can translate in greater opportunities for exploitation—the researcher may press respondents to answer questions as these individuals represent a means to the coveted data.

In this study, I am interested in the contributions made to research by intersectional feminists. They offer lenses through which to better understand the complexity of human experience by examining social location, intersectionality (e.g., intersecting identities and categories), and interlocking systems of oppression/privilege. Social location is "the patterned attribution of positive and negative qualities to perceived social identities" where some individuals have the power to define certain social groups (Hulko, 2009, p. 48). This process of defining others varies in terms of time and space. Authors such as Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1994) contributed to the exploration of ways in which social identities, such as being black and female, shaped realities in the workforce. She examined both structural intersectionality—how experiences are qualitatively different depending on social identities that intersect, and political intersectionality—how political agendas of feminists and antiracists marginalize women of colour. Other intersectional theorists highlight the need to explore people's lives using a variety of intersecting identities and interlocking systems/processes, such as capitalism, colonialism, ableism, and racism. They provide ways of thinking critically about "the fluidity, hybridity, and contingency of oppressions and identities" to better understand their experiences (Mehrotra, 2010, p. 426). Furthermore, they recognize that knowledge production about equality is essential to attaining social justice (Moosa-Mitha, 2015). These theorists believe that being at the intersection of multiple identities makes it qualitatively different. They also help social workers grasp the multiplicity of experiences of oppression/privilege and develop social work education, practice, and research that promote social justice. According to Yuval-Davis (2006), social divisions such as class, race, ethnicity, etc., influence how people "subjectively [experience] their daily lives in terms of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, specific aspirations and specific identities.

Importantly, this includes not only what they think about themselves and their communities but also their attitudes and prejudices towards others" (p. 198).

Undertaking research borrowing from an intersectional perspective raises two important issues. While an intersectional perspective explores everyday life and intersectional identities by bringing "the dynamics of privilege and oppression to life" (Hulko, 2009, p. 51), it raises the challenge of taking into account the complexity of the multiplicity of intersecting identities and experiences of oppression/privilege (Corbeil & Marchand, 2006). Many students going abroad have stories to tell about being treated as an outsider because of their national identity. Stories vary according to their multiple identities, however. In this study, some stories described the privilege of being a Canadian student while others told stories about the stigmatization experienced due to their gender identity and sexual orientation. Participants benefited from telling these stories. It allowed them to link past experiences to present/future social work practice situations, such as grasping the frustration of individuals who are being treated differently because of their identities.

3.2.3.3 Postcolonial theories.

Postmodern research includes a wide range of theories. Theoretically, postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism share similarities and differences. Postmodernists criticize modern society and its metanarratives (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008). Poststructuralist researchers examine the role of language in helping to describe and "create the thing it describes" (Healy, 2005, p. 197). Studying discourse in social work provides competing viewpoints about crucial concepts used by professionals, such as *need* or *help*. Biomedical, service, and alternative discourses shape "our understanding of the rights, responsibilities, experiences of, and relationships between, service workers and service users" (Healy, 2005,

p. 200). In addition, poststructuralist researchers see the potential for transformative learning

in lived experiences by interrogating practices about what is taken for granted (Bay &

Macfarlane, 2011, p. 745). As for postcolonial researchers, they explore the colonial legacy

and how it still shapes social workers' understanding of issues such as immigration,

Indigenous communities, resistance to the colonizer, and hegemony of Western knowledge.

In this study, the researcher borrows from a postcolonial perspective to deconstruct the

narratives produced by participants. Such a perspective ensures that participants' voices are

heard with regards to situations that reinforce and maintain injustices. From a postcolonial

perspective, social work research looks at the representations of the other and its impact on

social work practice. Said (2006) indicates that deconstruction of these representations is

essential to address hierarchies between oppositional categories that have been created such as

"us/them". In mainstream society, many groups are presented as other based on their

difference because they are deviant, diseased, or inferior (Moosa-Mitha, 2015). In this study, a

postcolonial lens was used to examine the narratives of social workers in order to identify

experiences of othering abroad and othering narratives produced about the citizens from the

host country.

3.2.4 Sampling and recruiting strategies.

There are many forms of non-probability sampling in qualitative research, including

snowball, theoretical, convenience, and purposive sampling (Denscombe, 2007). Purposive

sampling was used for this study since specifically chosen participants are "likely to produce

the most valuable data" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 17). It allowed the researcher to access

"participants meaningfully and strategically" (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 15). The sampling

technique was criterion sampling (Padgett, 2008). Those who were still enrolled as a student at

the School of Social Work at the time of interviews were excluded. To be recruited, participants had to meet the following criteria: have studied at the Université de Moncton and have successfully completed an IFP or an intercultural field placement in another province/territory during the last year of their bachelor's degree program.

Selection criteria also included length of time and location of placement. This was relevant for a few reasons. First, more recent graduates are still processing their IFP and learning to transfer outcomes from one context to another. Graduates from an earlier time may experience situations differently because of the length of time that has elapsed since placements, where the experience of being treated as other fades with time. According to Ruch (2002), practice wisdom knowledge (e.g., experiential and personal theories) and tacit knowledge (e.g., intuition) both require integration and assimilation over time. Placements in countries of the Global South often expose students to extreme poverty or oppression. Hence, outcomes from an IFP may differ because the program reduces ethnocentrism or increases the desire for involvement in global issues.

To recruit participants, I compiled a list of names, year of placement, host country location, and current workplace with the assistance of the field placement coordinator. To protect participants' privacy, I did not access other information from student files. Twenty social workers were selected according to the four sampling groups. All were sent a letter (Appendix 1) describing the study and inviting them to participate. A pamphlet (Appendix 2) provided more detailed information about the study. Both documents stated the voluntary nature of participation and explained the objectives of the study. All 20 accepted the invitation. All participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 3) before starting interviews.

3.2.5 Interview process.

Padgett (2008) explains that when planning for interviews it is helpful to select a location where "privacy, comfort, and safety are paramount" (p. 107). Padgett (2008) adds that to achieve a free-flowing interview, the researcher needs to create "space and comfort for the interviewee to speak" such as "emotional closeness and mutuality" (p. 108). Factors related to the identities of the participant and interviewer, any past or current relationship between the researcher and participant and the nature of the interview itself (i.e., that the interview is for research purposes) can sometimes influence the interview process. The use of probes during interviews are also "critical for getting beyond rehearsed accounts and prefabricated renditions" (Padgett, 2008, p. 108). However, probes can disrupt the flow of interviews.

Before interviews were conducted for this study, an appropriate location was chosen by each participant whether at home or in the workplace. Just before the interview started, some time was given for small talk before going over the consent form. During interviews, I paid attention to participants' reactions to probes but such probes did not seem to hinder the interviewing process or limit the spontaneity of interviews. I also avoided using academic jargon to minimize any effect on the fluidity of interviews. While I had a regional accent that is different from some participants, this did not appear to make them uneasy. Also, it did not appear to me that generational differences had an impact on data collection. In spite of multiple identities intersecting (e.g., practitioner, male, and *Brayon*—francophone from Madawaska county), the process of constructing a relationship with social workers was easy. Silences occurred with three participants when they recounted painful experiences, such as conflicts abroad with other Canadian students. At the end of each interview, after the

recording had stopped, I took time to thank the participants. Observations and queries that arose during interviews were noted in a journal shortly after having left the interview location.

3.2.6 Data collection method.

Qualitative research uses various methods of data collection such as observation, informal field interviewing, in-depth interviewing (e.g., individual and focus groups), and gathering of printed material (e.g., letters). Researchers tend to rely on interviews (Padgett, 2008). In the case of narrative research, information can be collected from many sources, such as interviews and personal diaries, in order to have a more complete representation of participants' words (Lapan et al., 2012). Researchers, influenced by Riessman's approach to in-depth interviewing encourage respondents to speak freely (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). As Riessman (1993) explains, "Respondents (if not interrupted with standardized questions) will hold the floor for lengthy turns and sometimes organize replies into long stories" (p. 3). Others prefer an approach that resembles more of a conversation between researcher and participant. For data gathering, I used in-depth interviews to explore the stories told by participants, and semi-structured interviews where open-ended questions were asked. The sequence of questions for these semi-structured interviews assured that participants talked about their experiences before, during, and after the IFP. Questions were broad and general to enable participants to "construct the meaning of a situation" (Creswell, 2003, p. 8).

A narrative strategy was used to collect stories that reflected participants' understanding of their experiences. The strategy involved gathering a "large section of talk" from interviews including interactions between the participants and researcher (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010, p. 274). Interviews helped me to grasp how participants constructed their stories about the IFP, such as highlighting outcomes and describing the lack of support from

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the university. Interviews were conversational in style but issue-oriented, and included open-ended questions to gather thick and highly contextualized descriptions of people's stories. The stories gathered included content about career timelines, IFP experiences, outcomes of placement upon return, and transferability of outcomes to various social work practice contexts (Appendix 4).

Interviews were conducted in French, lasted from one to two hours, and were carried out in different parts of New Brunswick. Interviews were held at each participant's preferred location, mostly in their home and workplace, to create both a relaxed location and a context of familiarity— a comfortable environment conducive to dialogue (Liamputtong, 2009). Participants were asked if they wanted to share personal documents, such as a field journal, diary, field report, or photos as a way to jog memories about their IFP.

Interviews were recorded with an audiotape device and verbatim transcriptions prepared shortly thereafter. Two transcription assistants helped with interviews. Each signed an oath of confidentiality and were trained for the task, including the use of codes to indicate silences and laughing, for example. All transcripts were revised by me to verify accuracy and avoid transcription errors. After transcription, participants received transcripts to check for accuracy. None identified any information that they wished to have removed to protect their privacy or anonymity. If any participants regretted telling some stories, they did not ask to have content removed.

3.2.7 Transcription, data analysis, and presentation of results.

I adapted Doucet and Mauthner's listening guide in order to do multiple readings of the transcriptions when I was analyzing the data. To interpret this data I borrowed from Gadamer's hermeneutical approach. Combining multiple readings with such an hermeneutical

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approach helps me as a researcher to go beyond what seems evident initially, for example, that only students doing an IFP in the Global South have experiences of being the other. Borrowing from an hermeneutical approach, I adopted a stance of pushing deeper to understand what participants are saying. Some of Riessman's ideas about narratives were also useful when thinking about the presentation of results. This will be explained further in the following sections.

3.2.7.1 Transcription.

When the transcriber is listening to recordings of interviews, it is not always easy to make choices about ways to present the stories in a written form, such as displaying silences and discourse markers (e.g., the word "so") (Riessman, 1993). As a result, it was important to check the transcription completed by the transcribers. I verified transcripts for errors and immersed myself once more in the data by listening to every recorded interview. I first analyzed each transcript for its specificities. I sorted and organized data while coding using a comparative method. *In vivo* codes from the narratives helped to keep meaning in codes. Some of the themes derived from immersion in the data were based on:

- chronology (before, during, and after the IFP);

- plot (characters—host family, expatriates; settings—daily life, agency, travel; problems—supervision, culture shock, communication; resolution—strategies to cope);

- three‑dimensional space (interaction—relationship with supervisors, rapport with Canadian colleagues; situations—getting lost, shopping, mistaken identity); and

- themes (places and experiences—touring, Ramadan; turning points—visit of a friend, cultural faux pas; aha! moments—incidents of violence, journaling).

I also looked at broader meanings, or the big picture, of each participant's story (e.g., moral of stories) and repetition in patterns found when comparing all stories as part of a multi‑layered approach. I examined other transcripts to compare and contrast for similarities and differences.

3.2.7.2 Data analysis.

A reading/listening guide was used with five successive readings for "listening in a different way" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 405). The idea of a reflexive process involving multiple readings for data analysis was inspired by the *Listening Guide* developed by Doucet and Mauthner (2008). First, I looked at *the big picture* and significant themes about experience, such as similarities and differences between contexts. Second, the *self and I statements* were explored to see how the participants described themselves, for example, in their role as field placement student, in their ethno‑cultural identity, and in their self as traveler. Third, *us and them* statements were observed when describing relationships between Canadians/Acadians and citizens from the host country. Fourth, the *research questions* were examined in relation to stories told and how they were assembled, for example, whether they conveyed a message of accomplishment, suggested recommendations, and identified gaps with regards to supervision. Fifth, narratives were *linked to macro-levels* such as power/privilege issues as a result of social identities (e.g., sexual orientation and class) or social change versus individual change.

Interpreting the data in this study required understanding parts of a story as they relate to the whole story, and how stories told by one social worker were tied to the stories told by others. Hermeneutic considerations provided the foundation for interpreting the data collected. Borrowing from Heidegger's (1966) ideas of dialogue between scientist, teacher, and scholar, I explored the world from the perspectives of researcher, social worker, and fellow traveler.

Gadamer (1996) described the art of understanding as being ready and open to be told something and see beyond what was immediately evident or beyond what could not be seen anymore. Therefore, when interpreting the data, I proceeded as would a translator who emphasized or downplayed certain instances noted as a result of my partial perspective rooted in space and time (Kinsella, 2006).

3.2.7.3 Presentation of results.

Within the narrative approaches, there are different methods of exploring the spoken word. One method focuses on stories as an "information storage device" (i.e., what is said). The other method explores stories as an "object of investigation" (i.e., how it is said) where the purpose of analysis consists in exploring how a story is "put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1–2). For Riessman (1993), this interest in how content is said has implications when presenting results as "the goal may be to tell the whole truth, [however] our narratives about others' narratives are our worldly creations" (p. 15). According to Riessman (1993), a gap already exists between the way the narrator lived the experience and how the narrator recounted it (or wanted to project it). She adds that when writing the report, the researcher will transform the interview narratives by "editing and reshaping what was told, and turning it into a hybrid story" (Riessman, 1993, p. 13). In this study, while I looked at some aspects of how stories were told (e.g., when they used "us" and "them"), I focused primarily on what was said and on the themes that emerged from stories.

To give form to stories in the chapter on results, a past, present, and future chronology was examined for continuity of experiences in response to various situation, in this case, host and home country. To help with writing, Creswell (2007) proposes several micro level

strategies. For example, *space allowance* creates more room for certain stories, though all voices must be heard. While all voices were heard, some stories had to be excluded to protect anonymity. Sometimes, to avoid repetition, one example of an important aspect of the experience was presented in the re-storying of a few narratives but not in all narratives. *Key moments* were identified to reflect major events (e.g., saying goodbye), cumulative ones (e.g., challenges faced), those that were representative (e.g., the harassment of women on the streets), and those that were repeated (e.g., the feeling of independence when traveling alone).

The text was then structured around similarities and differences among participants. I tried to present stories in a reader-friendly format to make it more accessible. Stories included specific incidents, key characters, and learning opportunities and challenges that students had encountered. These stories are important for those who desire to take part in an IFP, enabling them to better understand the nature of the experience through exposure to multiple narratives. All the stories in the chapter of results were written in English and the parts of stories that were used to illustrate aspects of the IFP experience were translated from French to English. Occasionally, translation was a challenge because of culture-bound idiomatic phrases. For example, expressions such as *chanter la pomme* (to woo) and *draguer* (to seek an intimate relationship) are difficult to translate in order to convey accurate meaning. While these case summaries provided a means to present results, the process of producing them also served as a heuristic device so that each participant would be "viewed holistically" (Padgett, 2008, p. 140).

Participants were given an opportunity to read their transcribed stories (in French) and confirm the accuracy of the information. Then, after listening to the interviews and doing multiple readings of the transcript, certain stories were selected to illustrate their experience.

These stories were woven into a case summary to show the participants' learning moments and transitions. A title for each case summary was selected to demonstrate a significant aspect of the participant's experience. I wrote these summaries in order to reflect commonalities and differences among participants, such as diversity of contexts and events, using a writing style that tried to convey "a sense of 'feel' and 'place'" (Sikes, 2005, p. 87).

Once written, each summary (written in English) was sent back to the participant so that he/she could confirm their satisfaction with the way the stories were presented—that they were error-free and included significant parts of the experience. For Riessman (1993), when returning the work to participants, they "may or may not recognize their experience in it or like how they are portrayed" (p. 14). None of the participants requested changes, and three sent comments to show their appreciation: "I remembered good memories [reading it]. Thank you!"; "Thanks for sharing the story. You summarized it well."; "It's so strange to read what I lived from another perspective, especially under another name. You did well to summarize what I said. . . I talked a lot." However, the last word belongs to readers who will read these personal experiences that have been transformed and "bring their own meaning to bear" (Riessman, 1993, p. 14).

3.3 Ethical Issues with Human Subjects

There are important principles to follow in qualitative research because "additional layers of ethical concerns" emanate as a result of the researcher being the instrument for inquiry (Mertens, 2012, p. 19). These principles include non-malfeasance (Van Den Hoonard, 2002), beneficence (e.g., participants, science, and humanity), respect (e.g., courtesy), and justice (e.g., fairness and non-exploitation) (Mertens, 2012). I have therefore included measures to prevent harm of this study's participants and to maximize benefits for them. This

is important as researchers are responsible "to thoroughly examine the risks and benefits of conducting the research" (Lapan et al., 2012, p. 12).

The research was approved by my PhD supervisory committee composed of Dr. Ross Klein (Memorial University), Dr. Catherine de Boer (Memorial University), and Dr. Hélène Albert (Université de Moncton), and it received full ethics clearance by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) on September 12, 2012 (Appendix J).

3.3.1 Informed consent.

Participants had the freedom to accept or refuse to take part in this study. I had no position of authority over them and was not in a position to withhold services or reward participants. Participants signed a form to ensure informed consent. The consent form highlighted the following information: (a) the right to withdraw from research at any time and remove contributed content; (b) the purpose of the research and the procedures for gathering, transcribing, and storing data; (c) the measures that would be taken to protect confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy (e.g., authorization for using shared data after digital recorder was turned off); (d) the limits of confidentiality; and (e) the risks and benefits of taking part in the study (Creswell, 2007). Participants were also advised that while a peer auditor and PhD supervisor would have access to the collected data, their confidentiality would be protected.

3.3.2 Confidentiality.

To preserve confidentiality, pseudonyms were used on all documents. Recordings, transcripts, and notes were kept in locked cabinets and saved on the computer with password-protected files. Transcription assistants signed an oath of confidentiality preventing them from divulging any information about content to a third party (Appendix 5). Information was removed or modified to protect anonymity, for example, the precise location of IFPs. Having

participants read their own transcripts provided another level of monitoring to maintain

anonymity. As a privacy measure, participants could remove information that undermined

their sense of self. The offer to remove content from transcripts was reiterated on more than

one occasion before and after data collection to avoid the release of any sensitive information

that could negatively impact their reputation if "known publicly" (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 38).

They were also advised that I was required by law to report when (a) a child under 16 years

old is a victim of abuse; (b) the participant or a third party could be harmed.

At key moments, participants were reminded about their rights to stop participating at

any time or for any reason without fear of being penalized. To ensure voluntary participation

and avoid undue pressures to participate, the social workers selected were not currently

enrolled at the School of Social Work and it had been at least one year since they had returned

from a field placement. To address other issues related to voluntary participation, I offered to

discuss any worries they had with regards to the research. Only one participant expressed

concerns during the interview that her reference to her job might reveal her identity. Measures

were taken to modify such information.

3.3.3 Risks and benefits to participants.

To minimize the potential harm that may have stemmed from parts of the self being

revealed or politically risky content being disclosed, participants could ask to remove sensitive

information. While the methods used in this research were not psychology-based, there were

still opportunities to reveal hidden parts of self (Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010). In this study, it is

our belief that no knowledge was uncovered that put participants at risk. They were not in a

position where they would have felt undue pressure to take part in the study. Potential harm

was also minimized by giving information about available resources if the interviews brought up unresolved or traumatic experiences requiring professional support.

The research process appeared to have had benefits for those taking part in the research, such as opportunities to be reflexive. This was an important dimension of the research process (Brabeck & Brabeck, 2009). It provided moments for "reflection-on-action" (Schön, 1983) and "positioning of the self" (Payne & Askeland, 2008) to link past, present, and future actions. Additionally, my previous professor-student relationship with a few participants provided a relaxed atmosphere during interviews.

3.4 Research Rigour

The study examined individual portraits of Acadian social workers' experience of their IFP and outcomes for practice aimed at providing knowledge about the specificity and typicality of situations/participants (Holloway & Fulbrook, 2001, p. 547). Of course, some "standards of quality are needed" to determine the rigour of the qualitative research (Padgett, 2008, p. 180). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important criteria for demonstrating the soundness or "trustworthiness" of research. These four criteria are described in the following sections.

3.4.1 Credibility: Congruency of findings and reality.

A credible account conveys a plausible picture of what is studied, and the credibility criterion ensures that findings are an accurate record of what is being studied. Credibility is achieved by showing truth as perceived by participants. This is accomplished by providing rich and contextualized content of experiences shared (Kjørstad, 2008). Also, relevant information that accompanies quotations needs to be explicit enough to allow an outside reader to make a judgment similar to the researcher's (Snyder, 2002). To ensure credibility,

participants needed to provide data freely— hence they could refuse to take part in the study.

Descriptions and verbatim quotations were used as evidence for interpretation. To prevent the

"vicissitudes of memory," reflexivity helped to illustrate how my position and perspectives

influenced various aspects of the research (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). Detailed notes were

systematically recorded during the process. I noted many aspects to contextualize the research

process (e.g., reactions to probes) and relationships between myself and participants (e.g.,

what was shared after the interview and what content provoked an emotional reaction). This

critical subjectivity enabled a deeper understanding of the influence of the questions asked and

the responses elicited from interviewees (Holloway & Fulbrook, 2001).

3.4.2 Transferability: Information about context.

The criterion of transferability refers to providing sufficient details on fieldwork to

allow the reader to determine whether the environment is similar enough to another setting so

that findings have some applicability there. Information about the boundaries of the study,

such as organizations involved, people participating in the study, data collection, and

geographical location allows the reader to make comparisons. To ensure applicability of the

findings, detailed information about processes have to be given to facilitate transferability to

other similar research situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Information about the specific

aspects of this research process was given so that the reader might transfer knowledge to other

contexts.

3.4.3 Dependability: Detailed understanding of research design.

The criterion of dependability requires the researcher to report in detail the steps

undertaken during the inquiry process (here, the field work). Dependability is demonstrated by

including notes about recorded biases and documenting changes or shifts in the research

process (Liamputtong, 2009). In this study, sufficient information was given to describe both the research process and the potential biases as a result of my positionality as a researcher and my personal/professional experiences and identities.

3.4.4 Confirmability: Findings reflect experiences of participants.

To demonstrate confirmability, the researcher must show how findings from the study emerge from data and not from preconceived notions. The researcher needs to illustrate the experiences of participants and not the researcher's ideas about them. Confirmability signifies that data collected can be adequately contextualized by providing a trail to follow the research processes involved in data gathering (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Documenting justification for the choices made is important. In addition, it is necessary for the researcher "to come clean" about her/his position in order to demonstrate quality and rigour (Lincoln, 1995, p. 280). This was achieved in this study in two ways: through information provided about both my research path (e.g., decisions about research design, data collection, data analysis and reporting) and my position as a researcher.

In conclusion, a few strategies helped to ensure rigour in the qualitative research. Triangulation by data source (my field notes, the interviews, and my research journal) helped to corroborate information about the rigour and trustworthiness of the study. To avoid incorrect interpretations of stories, member checking provided retroaction on the data collected and presented in the results. Participants provided verification for their own transcript and case summary but not cross-case interpretation. Decision trails give readers the necessary information, for example, reasons for choices to interpret the significance of decisions I made as a researcher and its influence on the research process. Peer audit subjected

a portion of data analysis to the scrutiny of a colleague for independent review in order to support findings.

3.5 Bias and Limitations of Study

Critical perspectives allow a researcher to see that it is impossible to be bias-free when doing research. Some standpoint theorists, for example, advocate for strong objectivity in research. To accomplish this, it is necessary "that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge" (Harding, 2004, p. 136). While I am uncomfortable with the term *strong objectivity*, I agree with the importance of exploring positionality and interactions during the research process. Furthermore, I do not believe that positionality is exclusively negative. To explore potential research bias, I prefer to borrow from Roulston and Shelton's (2015) conception of bias as "a characteristic quality unique to a researcher" that can limit as well as illuminate inquiry (p. 337). They propose a few strategies to minimize bias. To begin with, it is important to be transparent about epistemological and theoretical perspectives to comprehend what led to methodological choices. Then, the role as researcher needs to be explored to see the implications of such a role for data interpretation in the specific context where the study was done (e.g., ways in which the relationship with the topic being studied evolved). Also, the researcher has to analyse the interviewer's interactional style to reflect on the context in which interviews were done.

In this study, I recognize that my worldview, beliefs, values, presence, personality, personal interest on the topic, previous association with participants, etc., had an impact on the research process. It influenced stories that were further explored during interviews, and in particular stories providing insights for improving the experience of students doing an IFP. Being non-judgemental during interviews was important regardless of what participants talked

about, especially when they criticized supervision. While I wanted to come to a correct interpretation of what was said, it was a challenge to stretch the "potential for discovering new data and generating new knowledge" (Holloway & Fulbrook, 2001, p. 542). My positionality as a researcher also had consequences on the greater visibility given to the presentation of the stories that were considered the best, for example, an affinity to certain explanations or events, such as heartache when leaving the host country.

The qualitative research design chosen for this study is appropriate for the in-depth understanding of the complex realities investigated from the perspective of social workers interviewed about their representation of the IFP experience. However, several limitations deserve discussion, even if they did not compromise the quality of the study. First, this was a small-scale study in a Francophone university with a sample of 20 participants from a total of 60 who accepted to be interviewed. This has implications for the transferability of findings to other contexts.

Second, favourable or unfavourable responses provided by participants in the study may have been coloured by my position at the School of Social Work as professor or by my verbal/non-verbal cues during the research process. Being a professor matters, as stories are always "told to particular people" and because of this, these stories "might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener" (Riessman, 1993, p. 11). Borrowing from Goffman's notions of face-saving, participants may have presented themselves or others in a favourable light as part of "traffic rules of social interaction" (Goffman, 1955, p. 216). What is more, some participants may not have been able to articulate parts of their experience if they felt that I played a role in either easing or complicating their IFP experience. This could have affected the response of 6 participants who had completed their IFP within five years or less

after graduation, as the researcher was involved with IFP selection, pre-departure workshops (but not finding field placement agency/lodging), and long-distance supervision. Acting as a long-distance supervisor whose role is to discuss critical incidents during the IFP and provide additional support may have affected the way they spoke about their experiences. Hence, it was possible that the stories were not as rich as if someone not involved with IFPs or not linked to the School of Social Work had done the interviews.

Third, some of the social workers who had studied together or who are now working together, may have spoken to others about the interview process and altered responses during interviews. Fourth, because I conducted interviews in French and then translated them into English, some of the nuances about the experience may have been lost in translation. Also, since the materials were translated, readers may not sense the same resonance when reading the translation as they might if reading the original version. Certain expressions do not convey the same depth of meaning (e.g., *tannant*—irritating, exasperating, or harassing). Fifth, the issue of time and retrospection may have affected vivid memories that were emotionally charged, such as meaningful events and challenging situations as "unusual, atypical, or distinctive events are more likely to be remembered" (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, 2012, p. 13–14).

3.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a qualitative framework for the exploration of individual stories of social workers to understand their IFP experience and outcomes. Some ethical considerations were presented with regards to the researcher's social location. The methods and tools used to collect, analyze, and present data in this qualitative research were presented, followed by a section on human subjects and ethical issues raised and the measures taken to

protect the social workers who participated. There was also a description of the strategies I

employed as a researcher to ensure the rigorous execution of the study. As with all process of

inquiry, bias may skew findings. The last section of the chapter covered the limitations that

might have impacted this study. However, the limitations did not limit the quality of the study

nor my ability as a researcher to answer the research questions. The next chapter introduces

the participants' stories in order to better understand the nature of their IFP experience, such as

transitions, learning moments encountered, and some outcomes for practice.

Chapter 4: Participants and Stories About Their IFP

4.0 Introduction

The chapter recounts in the form of story the experiences of 20 participants in this study. The sample included recent graduates (i.e., five years or less) who traveled to the Global South (North Africa) and recent graduates who traveled to the Global North (Europe). I also selected less recent graduates (i.e., more than five years) who did placements in the Global South and distant graduates who did IFPs in the Global North (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Study Sample

Time since graduation	Global North (Europe-8;Canada-1)	Global South (NA-11)
Five years or less	6 participants	3 participants
More than five years	3 participants	8 participants

Of the 20 participants, most were between the ages of 20 and 25 years when they undertook their IFP (Table 4.2). While there was no rejection of individuals or groups, participants were Acadian and most were female (seventeen) because this is representative of the university and the field of study selected for this research project. One participant's placement was in Canada, but in a cultural context very different than her home community: she was an Acadian female assigned to a rural community in Northern Canada. While the placement was not completed abroad, the learning curve was similar to an IFP, for example, experiencing culture shock (Zapf, 1993).

All participants successfully completed their IFP during the final year of their bachelor's degree program. Nine participants had graduated within five years or less of the study, and eleven graduated more than five years after the study began. Eleven participants

completed a field placement in countries of the Global South (North Africa), and nine in

countries of the Global North (Western Europe + Northern Canada). Specific countries have

not been identified in order to maintain confidentiality. Also, some details of each story (e.g.,

number of colleagues traveling with them) have been modified to ensure anonymity.

Interviews were conducted between October 2012 and January 2013. Two interviews were

completed by telephone due to issues of distance. During their interviews, four participants

shared personal documents, including a field report emphasizing an intervention; another

shared photos that seemed to help jog her memory about events overseas.

Table 4.2 Demographic Information about Participants

Interviews	Name	Gender	Location	Time between IFP and interview
1	Alan	Male	North Africa	5 years +
2	Bianca	Female	North Africa	5 years +
3	Cassandra	Female	North Africa	5 years +
4	Georgina	Female	North Africa	5 years +
5	Irene	Female	North Africa	≤ 5 years
6	Jake	Male	North Africa	5 years +
7	Linda	Female	North Africa	≤ 5 years
8	Miranda	Female	North Africa	≤ 5 years
9	Normand	Male	North Africa	5 years +
10	Penelope	Female	North Africa	5 years +
11	Quincy	Female	North Africa	5 years +
12	Danielle	Female	Europe	≤ 5 years
13	Erika	Female	Europe	≤ 5 years
14	Francesca	Female	Europe	≤ 5 years
15	Helen	Female	Europe	5 years +
16	Katherine	Female	Europe	5 years +
17	Olive	Female	Europe	5 years +
18	Rachel	Female	Europe	≤ 5 years
19	Suzie	Female	Europe	≤ 5 years
20	Tania	Female	Europe	≤ 5 years

4.1 IFPs in North Africa

Each story will contain descriptions of events that occurred before, during and after the

IFP and will include details about the decision to undertake such a field placement,

preparation, travel to the host country, the time spent abroad, the return home and entering the

workforce.

4.1.1 Alan: An intense experience.

Before deciding to go abroad, Alan talked with students who had completed an IFP.

At that time, he was flattered that one professor had told him he was a "good candidate" for an

IFP in North Africa, and this prompted him to think more seriously about it. Many participants

going to North Africa received similar encouragement. However, he still had concerns about

finding work once he returned home. He believed that undertaking a field placement locally

provided better opportunities for obtaining a job. Despite his reservations, he believed there

was "a kind of prestige" that made students doing an IFP "stand out from the rest." Once he

decided to undertake an IFP, he put a lot of effort into preparation. As a result, he felt ready

but when he landed in the host country, reality hit him. He said:

> It's as if it was yesterday. . . I put my feet on the little steps to go down the plane, it
> was like, "Why did you come here for?" Immediately, the heat, there was a smell and I
> saw the scenery. . . the first 24 hours, it was hard as hell.

He worried about not knowing how to respond in this environment. Having a friend that

traveled and stayed with him for a few weeks helped immensely with the transition.

During the first month, Alan appreciated visiting a few agencies before selecting one

because he learned a lot about social work in the host country. However, it was frustrating to

search for an agency where he could do a field placement. Delays, tardiness, and uncertainty

about the process were difficult to handle. The process took about three weeks. Other participants in North Africa and Europe also felt challenged by this and worried that they would not attain their field placement goals. He was also confronted daily with new foods, extreme poverty, the treatment of certain groups, such as individuals with a handicap and foreign women, and stereotypes about North-Americans (e.g., all are wealthy). However, living abroad helped him understand that behaviours that went unnoticed in Canada took on a different meaning in the host country, for example, the wearing of a Palestinian scarf. It even provoked strong feelings of antipathy. As Alan said: "the little scarf" was put away "out of respect for these people" and because "I did not wish to die."

After two months, Alan experienced physical symptoms such as dizzy spells, headaches, and low energy levels. He said it marked a "turning point." It led him to talk with a professor who helped him grasp that he was suffering from culture shock. Similarly, other participants did not always understand what was happening to them until someone like a supervisor pointed it out. At the agency, support from a social worker was crucial since his supervisor was not very helpful. Although his supervisor had studied abroad, he was unable to grasp the nature of Alan's challenges. Alan also held unrealistic expectations about what he needed to learn. Alan said that he could not "relate with him [supervisor] at all." Overall, Alan did not believe his work at the agency was beneficial to his learning. He was fine with this, however, because the IFP was more a personal/individual learning experience. Confrontation with a different culture helped him to learn more than he ever expected about his own culture. Other participants who were unsatisfied with what they were learning at the agency also highlighted the importance of lessons learned at a personal level.

Another important moment of the IFP happened during the last month of Alan's stay. It coincided with l'Aïd, a major holiday in the host country. He realized that dealing with his loneliness and despair gave him tools to confront other difficult moments in life. He said:

> I was lonely, I had enough, and I wanted to leave. The weekend of l'Aïd. . . it was a little like Christmas back home. I never, ever, ever, ever felt so lonely in my entire life. I thought I would die. You can be sure I learned a lot in those two or three days!!

During this weekend, he thought he had learned all he could and wished he could leave. After he finished his IFP, he was very anxious to arrive home. After the initial joy of being back, however, he had to deal with culture shock again. He said: "It was the summer from hell at a personal level." This transition was a challenge because he was unprepared for it. At night, "a kind of agitation" came upon him so he had to take long walks to find calmness. Like Alan, other participants would have liked to hear more about reverse culture shock.

After two months, his life gradually started to fall into place. He knew he had gained a lot from his IFP. He felt a sense of accomplishment and confidence in his abilities. What is more, he learned to cope with unfamiliar environments (e.g., life in a capital city) without his usual support network. He became more open-minded and accepting of others. He gained so much more than expected, much of which was at a personal level. He said: "It is not something that can be learned in books. It is not something that can be learned in Moncton." He was really proud to have completed an IFP and felt that it was still of "great value." Many participants in North Africa felt they gained more at a personal than professional level.

After a few short-term contracts, such as a project to combat racism, Alan pursued graduate studies. When he again began looking for a job, he believed employers saw the benefits of doing an IFP in his maturity, ingenuity, outgoingness, and readiness to face difficult situations. During interviews, he spoke mostly about his work at the agency even if

that was not "the most important aspect of the experience." It took three years for him to find permanent employment, however. At the time, he wondered if the IFP had adversely affected his job prospects, but looking back, he now believes that "things fall into place" regardless of where students undertake a field placement. Unlike Alan, however, some participants who went to North Africa and Europe still believe that their IFP put them at a disadvantage when looking for work.

Alan is grateful that the IFP made him more open to world events and intensified his desire to learn from other cultures, such as hosting international students. He told this story of a visit with a social worker to explain what he brought back with him:

> We could hear something scraping the floor. Then we saw the old lady turn the corner. She was sliding herself on the floor. It stayed with me. It's clear, clear, clear in my head . . . the vulnerability of those people [who have a handicap]. It shocked me . . . I brought this back, and every day, it makes me want to help more.

4.1.2 Bianca: A place in her heart forever.

Bianca started her preparations a few months before going to North Africa. She was strongly influenced by a professor to select this location instead of Europe as she would be able to "live a completely different experience." Preparation included talking to people who had lived there and reading about culture shock to recognize the symptoms. She was hopeful it would be an enriching and fun experience. She had just gone through a separation so it was "the time to do it." She was looking forward to experiencing new situations, such as traveling alone to help "find herself." Likewise, other participants chose an IFP for personal development.

The first two weeks were amazing. It was like being "on a holiday." Bianca visited the city with Canadian colleagues who were also undertaking an IFP in the host community.

Initially, she familiarized herself with the neighbourhood and visited potential field placement agencies. As part of her orientation, she was invited to university seminars to learn about the country. When she started working at the agency, it was a frustrating experience because "everyone spoke Arabic including the clients," so it was impossible to communicate with them. It did not help that the supervisor seldom visited her to see how she was doing. Language barriers and inadequate supervision were two issues faced by other participants in North Africa.

Other challenges in daily life stemmed from being a Western woman in the host country. In one incident, "there were complaints that it was dirty to have a female" at the gym where she had just enrolled. She was told that men could not pray if she was there. On a few occasions when Bianca was walking in the city, young children threw rocks at her and shouted names in Arabic. She said: "It hurt. It was painful!" Then, there were men who started to follow her home. She explained: "I told myself, 'OK, I can live with that. Instead of rocks being thrown at me, I will take the flirting.' . . .When I was walking to my apartment, men would follow me." Neighbours began to complain to her male colleagues about the men following her. She said that she would tell her colleagues: "I ignore them but I am in the parking lot, what do you want me to say?. . . I have arrived home, I tell them to go, but they continue flirting." Bianca felt judged because she was unable to make it stop. Other female participants in North Africa have highlighted similar challenges with men in public.

A stranger started making inappropriate comments and then threats. This was the final straw. For her protection, she had to avoid being alone. She also had to switch field placement agencies so she could be with her Canadian colleagues. It was frustrating because there were restrictions placed on her as a woman that her male colleagues did not experience. As a

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woman, she did not feel that she could intervene with the youth, while her male Canadian colleagues could do whatever they wanted at work. There came a point when she found it hard to leave the apartment to go to the agency. She voiced her wish to go home but was told by the university to "tough it out." Thankfully, she received a lot of support from a Canadian colleague who also had difficulties with her IFP because of culture shock. Towards the end, Bianca and her Canadian colleague decided to shorten their stay abroad. It was only when she saw her parents at the airport that she finally felt safe.

Participants who suffered severe reverse culture shock like Bianca found the transition from host country to home quite difficult. Bianca had to cope with jetlag and health problems. Then, the university demanded that she submit extra written assignments in order to graduate. She was frustrated with this decision so she wrote "a lot of negative things" about the host country in her final report. The university responded by saying that the content "was a disgrace" and reflected her "closedmindedness" to the host culture. The lack of support and understanding on the part of the university was expressed by other participants in both North Africa and Europe. She added that, to her surprise, it was the people in her local community who were supportive. She said: "I had a lot of positive comments from the people I thought were closed-minded. I thought that the people at university were open-minded. It was them who judged me the most."

After graduation, Bianca's transition between university and employment went well. Her IFP opened doors because it showed she was courageous, independent and "unafraid of trying new challenges." However, it took many months to process her experience and become aware that she suffered from PTSD. She said: "It was the first time I was able to say it [being harassed] . . . After that, I started the process of healing but it took a year and a half." She

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added that it was only then that she started to grasp all she had learned during her IFP. After a few months working locally, she wanted to experience another cultural immersion. She felt "more ready" for this second adventure in Northern Canada. After two years, she found a job locally in which she is often assigned cases with people from various cultural backgrounds. Despite the challenges she faced, Bianca notes: "Each winter, I miss the host country and I want to go back. Even if I lived something very difficult, it represents an important part of my heart . . . I loved the place, I loved some of the people."

4.1.3 Cassandra: Finding herself.

As a child, Cassandra watched television shows about poverty in developing countries. As a result, she grew up wanting to help others. Her goal was to gain experience abroad so she could have an international career. In high school, she elected to study abroad for a few months. She learned to speak a new language and became more resourceful but the transition home was a challenge. The only way to cope was "to take it a day at a time" and to adopt an "easy-going" attitude. Despite those challenges, she wished to go abroad again. So when she started university, she decided to undertake her IFP in North Africa.

A few months prior to Cassandra's departure for North Africa, she learned a few words in Arabic. She spoke with professors and students who had travel experience and met with foreign students from the host country. This was the case for a majority of participants who went to North Africa. In terms of preparation, Cassandra spent "most of her energies" on the financial aspect. Applying for scholarships forced her to think about the reasons why she wanted to do an IFP. Unlike many participants who had limited travel experience, Cassandra held few expectations about the IFP. This helped her to avoid disappointment. While her IFP would allow her to learn about social work practice, what she really wanted was "to discover

herself." She added that "the more a social worker knows herself, the better she can accompany" people.

Cassandra spent two months traveling in Europe with friends before going to the host country. Similarly, many participants seized this opportunity to travel before the field placement started at the agency. Upon landing, she was surprised to have a welcoming committee composed of friends from the host country and her supervisor. The next day, Cassandra and her Canadian colleagues had help finding an apartment. The first landlord they met "did not look them in the eyes." Her supervisor explained that the landlord behaved this way because he was a devout Muslim. This came as a shock because the Muslims that Cassandra had met in New Brunswick did not behave this way. At the end of the first day, they found an apartment that "was not in a very nice place, it was really unclean, and super ugly. It probably had fleas." She described that day as harsh because "the street smelled, there was garbage everywhere, cats everywhere. People were intoxicated and slept by the side of the road and it was only 5 pm." Then, the Canadians were given a few days to adjust, explore the country, and visit potential field placement agencies. Cassandra chose to work with street children who had mental health/drug problems.

The transition from Canada to the host country was relatively easy, but the biggest challenge was taking public transportation. Many participants with limited experience in larger cities faced comparable challenges. The system was difficult to navigate and people were extremely aggressive about boarding. Also, as a white woman who looked European, she was seen as "easy," so men often touched her inappropriately. The second biggest challenge was corporal punishment of young boys at the field placement agency. This is an aspect she will never forget. She was shocked that social work practices were "not at all the same" as in

Canada. Thankfully, her relationship with her supervisor was "extremely good" because they had "a lot in common." While they talked about many topics, she did not always feel comfortable discussing topics such as corporal punishment and its underlying core values. She said: "You have to respect the culture and that's that. You are there to listen but you are not there to judge."

She also recounted two other challenging situations. When her aunt was visiting, Cassandra found it hard to handle her aunt's reaction to the fact that she had found a boyfriend from the host country who "wasn't white." The second incident happened at a checkpoint when traveling outside the host city. She was asked by a man with a gun to get out of the van and follow him inside a building to inspect her passport. They were screaming in Arabic so she did not understand what was going on. She explained:

> People at the corner of streets with machine guns. It's a country that was not really politically stable. You could not talk about politics. They were afraid of the president . . . We had to whisper because people hear . . . it leaves a strong impression.

While she cannot say that she experienced culture shock during her stay, she did observe colleagues having a difficult time, such as losing weight, feeling irritated, and crying a lot. It seemed like they believed "everything was negative and nothing was good anymore." She had to establish boundaries because she did not wish to be their "main source of support."

Cassandra had to adapt to a different style of supervision. In Canada, supervisors helped students to reflect on "what they learn and what they do." Abroad, the supervisor mostly read her projects and met with her for coffee in the evenings. It was through informal conversations with her Canadian colleagues and time spent writing in her diary that she was able to make sense of her IFP. Other participants, like Cassandra, indicated that they received

limited supervision. While she was fine with this, some participants felt they needed more local supervision.

When the time came to return, Cassandra did not want to leave. Once she was home, it was really difficult to adjust. She felt different, but "no one here seemed to have changed at all." She felt disconnected from people. Not many were interested in her experience. She said: "It feels like you are alone in the world. I think this is why I always found myself with people from the host country." Other participants experienced a similar lack of interest from their entourage (i.e., classmates, friends, and family members) and wanted opportunities to speak with people who had lived in the host country. To cope with the transition, Cassandra chose to do assignments at university on topics related to her IFP, such as culture shock. She also continued to eat food from the host country.

After graduation, Cassandra looked for work. She put the IFP on her CV but did not mention it at interviews despite the lessons she had learned there (e.g., having fewer stereotypes). It took eight months to attain a job. She never regretted doing an IFP, but because of this, she knew little about the work done by social workers at the Department of Social Development, which made it harder to pass their exam. She said: "It is not a problem anymore since I have other work experiences, but at first, I think it had a small impact." She held a few social work jobs before finding a permanent job. Other participants in North Africa and Europe expressed similar challenges at interviews and during their first few years of employment, for example, obtaining only short-term contracts initially.

4.1.4 Georgina: Knowing what she wants in life.

Georgina decided to undertake an IFP because she was inspired by a family member who had worked abroad. Also, she had no financial obligations, so it was a good time in her

life to go. When a classmate talked about going to North Africa, she agreed that it was an interesting idea. However, she had to convince her father to let her go—that it was not "an insane idea." She went "somewhat blindly" without specific expectations. To prepare, she mostly read a book about the country. She added: "I did not really think about where I was going, what it would look like, how I would live this experience. I told myself I would cross that bridge when I got there." Other participants also said that if they had anticipated what would happen abroad, such as culture shock and language barriers, they might have prepared more.

Before going to the host country, Georgina backpacked in Europe with friends for two months. She said: "It was a big advantage for me because my culture shock would have been greater than what it was." It also helped her to become resourceful and independent. When she arrived in the host country, her supervisor was there to meet her. Georgina had a week to explore the city. After the initial excitement, she gradually began to experience culture shock. She said: "I started to compare everything—'In Canada, it's better! . . . Ah, this is how we do it!' I began to feel homesick and wanted to go back." Georgina, like other participants, had some knowledge about culture shock but did not recognize it initially. She added that she did not know where to go for help: "I could not call my parents or friends because I wanted to avoid worrying them . . .There was nothing they could have done for me." Eventually, she talked about it with her supervisor who suggested she move in with his family to be in a more supportive environment.

Georgina appreciated living with a host family because she was able to "get to know their family, customs, experiences, values, ways of living, routine, and all those things." Staying with them helped her to realize that "families from one culture to another are still very

similar." She added: "You know, family unity is important to us all. There are problems in all families." Yet, life with a host family was sometimes difficult because she had to learn to bite her tongue when her host father expressed opinions about certain topics such as homosexuality. She had to tell herself: "We are from different cultures. I'm not going to change his way of thinking or the culture in general, nor the country about this topic." Another challenge had to do with communicating in French, and in particular, using standard French. Others in North Africa and Europe also identified challenges when speaking their mother tongue.

During her IFP, Georgina spent time in two agencies. She started working in an agency which served children, which was difficult because the only task assigned to her was observation. In addition, she felt children were disciplined without a valid reason, for example, being restless on their chairs during lunchtime. For these reasons, she asked for a transfer. Fortunately, at the second agency, she was allowed to work on some projects. However, this was not without challenges. Going to the agency each day required many hours aboard public transportation (5:45–8:00 am). What is more, the organizational culture of the agency was different. She said: "There was a word they used a lot—'Insha'Allah! God willing!' You could plan something and it would not happen. Appointments and meeting times were not respected." She described her supervision as *laissez-faire* with unclear expectations about IFP results. Contacts with the university at home consisted of two e-mails at midpoint and at the end of the IFP. Other participants in North Africa and Europe also mentioned similar challenges.

In her daily life, Georgina faced challenges such as understanding verbal and non-verbal language. She said: "Sometimes they raised their voices during a discussion where they

appeared really agitated with the hands moving everywhere. And you would tell yourself, 'Oh my god! They are fighting!'" Since she did not speak Arabic and was unaware of the context, she was unsure how to react appropriately. She also found it awkward to interact with individuals who asked for help to immigrate to Canada. Despite this, she built many friendships and received frequent invitations. On one occasion, she went for a meal with a friend who shared a one bedroom apartment with two girls. She described her feelings about the sparsely furnished apartment, containing little more than beds and a radio, like this:

> I really felt guilty at that moment. I thought about my room at my parents'. I had satellite TV, I had wireless Internet, I had a telephone. . . She had little and worked hard for it. It opened my eyes and [I felt] a real appreciation for what I had and how generous she was.

The most difficult aspect of living in the host country, however, had to do with gender relations. She explained: "White girls got noticed. The men flirted with us constantly. Constantly! Constantly!" Initially, she did not want to be impolite so she would talk with these men. By the third week, she was comfortable ignoring them. In the souks (the local markets), she also found it hard to deal with stall vendors. She added: "I was someone who liked to please others, you know. I didn't like to disappoint so I tried the dresses and told myself, 'You tried it so you have to buy it!'" At the end of her stay, she felt more confident and was able to be assertive when saying, "No". Many female participants in North Africa also mentioned becoming more assertive.

Georgina spent a week traveling before leaving the country. One of the places where she stayed had a heater only in the living room and the apartment was cold. This was a memorable event during her stay. The living conditions observed in North Africa encouraged many, like Georgina, to reflect on the material possessions in their lives. While she wanted to

make the most of her time, she was excited to return home. The happiness she experienced upon returning did not last, however. She had to revisit her decision to break up with her boyfriend and she had to reflect on her identity: "[Having] all my clothes again, it was as if I had found back a part of my identity. I don't know, it's bizarre." Despite challenges, the transition between university and work was easy. After graduation, she got a job as a social worker but felt unhappy, so she found a new job. She said: "Taking risks and just having faith. Here again, I think it had to do with the IFP. I would never have taken risks before."

4.1.5 Irene: Knowing herself better.

Irene explained that she was motivated to undertake an IFP for several reasons. She wanted to learn about the culture, to compare social work practice, and to step out of her comfort zone. Her participation in a mentorship program with foreign students on campus also motivated her to seek a similar experience abroad. She prepared for her IFP by meeting nationals from the host country, other social work students who had done an IFP, and members of the host family. Preparation also included handling her own family's reactions to going abroad. She said: "They pictured Arabs and thought immediately of terrorists." Then, there was preparing to live apart from her partner. Preparing loved ones was a common experience shared by those going to North Africa, those going alone, and those going with limited travel experience.

Traveling to the host country was a challenging experience. After a holiday with her partner in Europe, Irene flew by herself to the host country. This transition was emotional—it was difficult to say goodbye and make her way to the airport alone. Because she was unsure where to go, she cried while looking for assistance. In her head, she was thinking: "Where do I go? Why am I leaving? I am far away. . . I don't have my resources. I don't have the things

that are familiar to me." When she finally got on the plane and stopped crying, she said she felt ready to start her new adventure. Nonetheless, she was happy to have a few people welcome her with big smiles at the airport. Other participants who traveled alone to the host country with limited travel experience also found the journey stressful and appreciated having someone at the airport to assist them.

During her first week, Irene was ill due to the many changes in climate and food. It did not help that she tried to live like the host family by drinking tap water. At the beginning of her stay, she toured the neighbourhood with her host family and then she explored alone. She tried to create a routine "because it felt reassuring." In the morning, she would stretch, eat breakfast, and talk with the family about their plans for the day. Then, she spent the day at the agency. At night, she ate supper and watched TV with the host family. Afterwards, she liked to read and write in her journal. She added: "One thing I didn't think I would do is pray. I started to pray. Not to God, because I don't believe in that but I did a small prayer." Other participants also found comfort in a daily routine that included activities, such as journaling and praying.

Irene found the first month frustrating because the Internet was not always available and there were delays in obtaining a cell phone. While she was excited about being abroad, she wanted regular contacts with home. In addition, the process of finding an agency was not easy: she was frustrated with the tardiness of her supervisor when they had meetings. Furthermore, she had to spend a week in three agencies before selecting one. In the end, she believed it was a positive experience because she learned about different realities in the city. She said: "I wanted to start the field placement right away, but then, I realized that it was all part of the IFP." Not all participants facing delays saw this as a positive experience, however.

Before starting work at the agency, Irene had not anticipated facing major language barriers because everyone she met from the host country spoke French. But when she met single mothers at the agency, she realized that it would be difficult to communicate with only a few basic words in Arabic, such as greetings. It was then that she enrolled in an Arabic language course that was offered twice a week. She added: "At the beginning of my field placement, it was less hands-on with people. It wasn't one-on-one counseling because of the language." When her language skills improved, she visited families and other agencies. At the end of her stay, she said: "I could follow a conversation if they didn't speak too fast." Many participants in North Africa like Irene underestimated language barriers and their impact on learning outcomes.

The supervision was not of the calibre that Irene hoped for. She explained: "I was expecting more follow-ups, to have a clearer understanding about what I was learning . . . to reflect about what I was experiencing." She wanted more supervision. Fortunately, she could rely on other expatriates and her host family for support. She said: "We had good conversations at night on all kinds of topics even homosexuality. . . the questions asked really made me think." She also appreciated her time with students from the language class. She noted: "It felt so good to spend time with people that were not from the host country. I could talk about my experience."

Irene encountered challenging moments during her IFP that were gender-related. Once, three young men followed her in an alleyway. She panicked and ran home in tears. She recalled another incident: "Even a cop approached me on the street. He came to me and asked, 'Are you married?' Well, what kind of question is that?" She found it difficult to respond to such situations but became more assertive and developed coping strategies, such as wearing

sunglasses to avoid eye contact. She also faced hard times with regards to her health. She said: "You're not at home, you are in another country. You don't know the doctor. The treatment is not the same either." Near the end of her stay, she had difficulty dealing with the death of a family member. She explained: "I would have come back two weeks early. . . There were so many things I was experiencing and I didn't know what to do with all of it. I had deadlines. . . I felt so exhausted. . . I had enough!" She ended by saying, "I was ready to leave but I wasn't ready to return." The desire to go home before the end of the IFP was a common experience for participants who faced difficult challenges without adequate support.

Following her IFP, the transition from the field to the classroom was difficult for Irene. She said: "I had such a hard time to finish the last semester. I was ready to quit. I didn't want to do projects anymore . . .There were so many feelings, so many things." She would purposely arrive late to classes saying: "Insha'Allah! Listen, I got used to this during my IFP." While talking about her experience was helpful, it was not always easy to have unprocessed feelings. When she was asked to talk honestly about her IFP with other students, it was difficult because she had faced many challenges. She ended up presenting "all that was beautiful, all that was cute." However, it was easier to talk about her IFP with friends at a Welcome Home party they had organized for her. After graduation, she traveled for a few months, then looked for a job. At interviews, employers asked about what she had gained from her IFP. She would answer by saying that she had a better understanding of herself. Her first job was with immigrants and then with troubled youths. After two years, she realized that she was still processing negative events that happened during her IFP because she was having nightmares about it. Participants such as Irene and Bianca required a longer period to digest challenging incidents that happened abroad. She concluded by explaining that now when she

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faces challenges, she still tells herself what she repeated when she was doing her IFP—that things will eventually pass. She added: "I feel proud. . .although some experiences were negative, it changed my way of seeing the world."

4.1.6 Jake: Making a difference.

Initially, Jake had not planned on doing an IFP. He wanted to undertake a local field placement where he would eventually be hired permanently, but the more he heard about the IFP, the more interested he became. Jake chose North Africa because he wanted to experience a country totally different from Canada. Despite the differences, he had expectations of practising social work at the agency and traveling to places other than tourist destinations. He wanted to see all aspects of community life. Jake's preparation was not extensive. He spoke with a professor from the host country and students who had done an IFP there. He also applied for scholarships. Then, he had to handle his family's worries about safety. Jake was unconcerned because the country was politically stable, but he said: "Many asked if I was crazy, if I was afraid to go or if I had really thought things through with all the terrorists." Before leaving, he had to rethink the relationship with his girlfriend. He explained: "I made the decision to end the relationship before I left. I didn't want to have this tie with someone in Canada. I told myself that if I had such a tie, I would not be able to live fully the IFP experience." He is not the only participant who ended an intimate relationship before leaving home.

When Jake arrived abroad, he had expectations that the IFP would be better structured. He said: "They escorted us to our hotel. We had a small hotel. And then, they left us there for a few days. Trying to find an apartment in a large city, well, let's say it was not easy when not everyone spoke French." He added: "They tried to extort the most money. They told

themselves, 'Canadians are rich, we are going to make the most of it.' . . . I think it had to do with their culture to bargain like this." Once the apartment was found, they spent a few days visiting field placement agencies. Jake said that he chose a centre for youth from underprivileged families. He added: "I was lucky to have an Arab trainee from the host country . . . so, her and I, we worked as a team." Unlike many participants such as Irene, he enjoyed learning by himself and he required little supervision.

The biggest challenges had to do with transportation, communication, and the discipline used at the centre. First, transportation took 45 minutes by bus and 45 minutes on foot. He said: "It doesn't look so bad at first but when it's 40, 45 degrees outside, it's not easy." Second, there were confidentiality and reliability issues when communicating with an interpreter as Jake felt the content being reported was not always accurate. He added that he also needed to find other ways of communicating when the interpreter was not available:

> This little boy was mistreated by an educator. . . I played football with him for about an hour. I think it was the best gift I could give this child . . . to show him someone cared, to show him he was important. An intervention doesn't always require words.

The third challenge was observing certain disciplinary practices used like the *falaka*. He said: "They took the feet of the child, flipped him upside down in the air and beat him with a piece of wood under the feet so it didn't leave any visible mark." Because of this, Jake started having nightmares every night and problems sleeping. Such disciplinary practices in North Africa provoked intense feelings of discomfort among many participants.

Once he had finished his work at the agency, Jake usually returned to his apartment to eat. Other times, he would grab street food and smoke *chicha* (a pipe to smoke) with locals. He added: "I made myself some friends over there. And I often spent time with them talking and playing." Daily life held many challenging moments. He became the mediator between

the men in his neighbourhood and his female colleagues. He was asked by the men to intervene with regards to inappropriate behaviours. On one occasion during the Ramadan, he said: "[A female colleague] was wearing shorts and a tank top and that is not accepted in the culture over there. She was suffering from the heat. She didn't do this to hurt anyone but it was still a clash of cultures." He also played the role of protector when female colleagues were groped in public. This helped him to become aware of his privilege as a man. He said: "I could go anywhere I wanted but the girls could not. So it was difficult for them."

Having an intimate relationship with a girl from the host country contributed positively to his daily life. He said: "She brought me to many places. She was Arab. There were many doors that opened." Other participants in both North Africa and Europe spoke of the advantages of having close ties with locals. All aspects of Jake's IFP, both positive and negative, contributed to a beautiful experience. At the end of his stay, he felt pride that he went in public *incognito*. He noted: "They would take me for an Arab. I spoke Arabic. I had dark skin. I tanned easily. So, it was a kind of a success."

The transition back to Canada was the most challenging part of the IFP for Jake. This was a common experience shared by participants having made a life for themselves abroad. He said: "On the eve of my departure, I had this close relationship with a girl from the host country. We spent the evening together. She cried a lot; me, it was at the airport." When he landed in Moncton, he went to a relative's house. They reacted strongly to the fact that he smelled differently because of the spices he had eaten abroad. He explained: "They took my luggage and threw it in the snow. I was sitting at the table and they kept a distance. And then, 'Go wash!'" His family also wanted to discuss their fears about his conversion to Islam. He

said: "I started writing about religion in my e-mails to Canada. My mother, my uncle and my aunts started to think I was becoming a Muslim, an extremist."

Jake said that it was harder to come back to his old ways than to adopt those of the host country. Many participants, especially those in Europe, highlighted a similar challenge. During his final university semester, his neighbours were from the host country so he maintained some of his habits like smoking *chicha*. It helped with the transition. He said: "I missed a lot of what I had over there, even if it wasn't much. I lived on crumbs. But what I had over there, it seemed to be more than what I had here." He lost interest in activities he had previously enjoyed such as partying. After graduation, he felt confident about finding work. There were many job opportunities and he had a good network. During interviews, employers asked about his work experiences so he told them all he had learned during the IFP about ethics and values, such as respect and patience. Jake currently holds a permanent job in a traditional social work setting.

4.1.7 Linda: Searching for something.

Linda chose an IFP in North Africa because she had always been interested in Islam, and she wanted an experience that was really different. To prepare, she read tourism books on the country and she met social work students who had completed an IFP. Some nationals from the host country gave her contact numbers in case she needed help. Before leaving Canada, she said she felt ready but unsure, because she had limited travel experience. It was stressful to travel abroad alone between the capital city and the host community. When she arrived at her final destination, she felt relief. It was then that she became more aware of her surroundings. She said:

There were so many people. There were so many cars. The cars were all over the place. Finally, we find a taxi. We get in. I was sitting in the back. I was like, 'Where is the seat belt?' . . . I was certain we would hit a car or somebody.

Although she went abroad two weeks before the field placement to acclimatize, the transition was more challenging because of Ramadan. In the host family's home, she ate with the children during the day but outside the home, she did not eat in front of people. Despite challenges, she enjoyed the atmosphere at dusk which she described as: "a celebration on the streets. . . Everybody went out because they were all happy that nightfall had arrived."

Initially, Linda did not venture out alone. When she started working at the field placement agency, she began going out by herself. On the streets, she found it troubling when men approached her to get her phone number. The first time it happened, the man followed her home in his car. She explained: "I didn't understand why he was following me like that. I thought he wanted to kill me or something." Her host family laughed when she told them the story and explained that the man was simply interested in getting to know her better. Other female participants in North Africa shared the trauma they experienced when such incidents happened. After being followed, Linda started taking taxis to go to work even though it was a little more expensive. She added that her experience abroad would have been different if she were a man and could have spent time in cafés. She also noted: "I would probably have been more respected [in public]."

At the centre where Linda worked, the employees were kind and welcoming. They took time to explain the work of the agency. This was a common experience for many participants in both North Africa and Europe. Nonetheless, it was hard to adapt at the agency because the families receiving services did not speak French and interventions were different from those in Canada. For example, there was more directivity with the workers telling clients

what to do. Linda took language classes daily but it was insufficient for eliminating language barriers. She liked the supervision at the agency because her supervisor was a social worker from Europe who seemed to understand her situation. The supervisor had lived similar frustrations in the host country but Linda added that: "Sometimes it was too much for me [to hear the venting] because I respected the family I lived with and the people I met." The university back home could not help much with the challenges she faced as they did not really understand the context. Her family was not able to help either. She remembers one occasion when she reached out to her family for help: "They were frustrated. 'Why are you calling?' I was like, 'Well, if I don't call you about this, who do I call?' They said, 'We are stressed out! We can't do anything! What do you want us to do?'"

Linda lived with a host family. This family made sure she had a room that was comfortable and they respected her personal space. They taught her about respect for others and the impact of one's actions. She explained that her host family had "a girl who wasn't married yet. And if the family didn't have a good reputation because of me . . . it could have really harmed that girl." It made her more cautious about her actions. Like others in North Africa, she realized that the IFP provided many learning opportunities outside the agency.

Linda did not feel that she had finished seeing all that she wanted in the host country but she was happy to return home. The transition home required some adaptation, for example, having to take daily showers. She explained: "I didn't feel dirty. So, it was to relearn a bit how to live in Canada. It was funny coming back because I returned to my culture, I returned home, but I still had to relearn how to live at home." At first, it was fun that people were curious about her IFP so she was able to talk about it. As time passed, however, she did not want to annoy her friends and family members with her stories. She saw students from the host

country on campus and wished she could reach out to them. She described this transition period as a time of confusion, depression, and solitude. It was also stressful to think about finding a job after graduation.

When Linda took part in classroom discussions about the field placement, she was under the impression that she lacked knowledge about social services in Canada, which was a shared impression with other participants on IFPs in both North Africa and Europe. Like them, Linda came to realize that even if she knew little about services at home, she had developed a greater sensitivity to other people's experience. She said: "One time, a girl in class talked about negligence when parents cannot keep their children clean . . . I raised my hand . . . I said, 'I went to North Africa and I washed [took a shower] once a week. For sure, we washed differently but I didn't die'."

After graduation, Linda searched for work. This transition from university to work was challenging. When invited to interviews, she did not feel as prepared as she had hoped to highlight her skills. She also lacked knowledge about services offered by the Department of Social Development, which put her at a disadvantage because she got a lower score during interviews. Only making the B list meant she had to wait longer before being offered a permanent job, which she found upsetting. She chose to go on an IFP because she believed she would not be penalized by doing such a placement. Regardless of the hardships, however, she said: "I found a different way to live, a completely different way of thinking. I discovered more about myself."

4.1.8 Miranda: Developing awareness.

Miranda had always wanted to go abroad. When she was at university, she did not want to follow the same path as other students, of high school–university–work. Instead, she

hoped to have an IFP experience to gain exposure to new things. She said: "I wanted to see the difference and experience a shock, if you want. To say, 'There is no normal' . . . the way I grew up, it was normal for me but it was not normal for everyone." During the summer prior to going abroad, she lived in an apartment with three students from the host country, which gave her a feel for what it would be like abroad when building relationships. She realized that she would need to put aside her values. Unlike other participants, Miranda spent a lot of time learning the language, which helped with her integration.

When Miranda arrived in the host country with her Canadian colleagues, some local friends were there to welcome them. They spent one night at a hotel before moving into an apartment that had been provided for them. During the first few days, they spent most of their time together. While she had no previous travel experience, the transition between countries went smoothly. She explained: "I felt good. I was doing well compared to the others. I think I was where I was supposed to be." It took two weeks to find a field placement agency because they had to visit various agencies before choosing one. Many participants found this process challenging because they were kept waiting during each visit. She added that her personality type, calm and unconcerned, helped her to adapt to the delays and tardiness for meetings.

On a typical day, after her morning bath, Miranda would take a bus to her field placement agency in the city centre. The work there consisted of accompanying a social worker on family visits. Often, funny incidents happened on the bus to get there. On one occasion, she committed a faux pas with toilet paper. She was unaware that toilet paper was only used when going to the washroom. She said: "I asked [my Canadian colleague], 'Pass me the toilet paper.' So, she gets it out. The social worker is like, 'Ha! What are you doing! Hide the toilet paper!'" On another occasion, once she arrived at the family's house, she observed

attentively the nonverbal as the family only spoke Arabic. Learning the language beforehand was an asset as she had the ability to converse in their language. While the field placement was challenging, she found daily life, such as food and entertainment the most challenging. She said: "Not having a TV was the most difficult. But, at the same time, the fact we didn't have a TV forced us to go out."

Miranda met regularly with a local supervisor who had studied in Canada. She liked her supervisor, saying that: "I found that she understood us well." At the agency, the director was a French social worker who had also gotten her degree in Canada. Miranda explained: "She would often say, 'OK girls, you have to do this, you have to do that. This would be a good experience for you to go there.' She knew what we needed." Having knowledge about social work education and practice in Canada and understanding the expatriate experience were two aspects that participants in North Africa and Europe most appreciated about the supervision.

Two incidents at the end of her stay abroad provided important learning moments. Miranda spent the last week visiting the country. When one co-worker came to join her at a beach resort hotel, he was asked to leave. She said: "It was a really, really, really nice beach but it wasn't for them [citizens of the host country]. It was really for tourists." The second incident occurred before Miranda left. A co-worker and her daughter came to her apartment to decorate her hands with henna. Although the mother lived in the capital city, her apartment did not have electricity. So, to express her gratitude, Miranda asked the little girl to sleep overnight and have her first hot bath. She said: "The next morning, when I brought her back, the little girl didn't want to go with her mother. She wanted to come with me. I told myself,

'Ha! What have I done?'" Miranda felt torn because she had hoped to do something nice for the family but wondered about the impact of her actions.

When it was time to return home, Miranda wanted to stay longer in the host country. She said: "The plane took off. I cried and I cried. And a person from the host country [who was on board the plane] said, 'You will be OK! You will come back!'" Even though Miranda had prepared well for her arrival in the host country, she had not prepared for the return home. This transition was difficult. Other participants in North Africa and Europe had similar experiences. It was not helpful that some of Miranda's Canadian friends were not very supportive. She explained: "They were not there to listen . . . one day, a friend didn't want to hear me talking about it [IFP] so she brought me back home." Also, she did not feel as if her family and friends understood her reactions, for example, rejecting materialism. She described her culture shock as a dislike for her own culture and society. Fortunately, her boyfriend wanted to hear her stories. While she had contacts with the School of Social Work in Canada throughout the IFP, when she returned, there was not enough follow‑up. She said: "When I came back, I had one meeting to submit my IFP report, but it wasn't much!"

Miranda believed that an IFP presented some disadvantages when trying to integrate into the workforce after graduation. She noted: "It was not easy to make myself known and to know the resources in our region." While she was looking for work, she saw her former classmates find jobs quickly after their field placements. Despite this, she did her best to highlight the outcomes of her IFP in interviews, such as her newfound openness and respect for diversity. It took about five months to find work but it was not a job as a social worker. However, she found that this first job was helpful for finding future employment. She said: "I saw what child protection was all about and I understood better the other resources available . .

. It's as if I did my field placement with my first job." Two years later, she gained permanent employment as a social worker.

4.1.9 Normand: Learning to trust.

Normand's motivation to undertake an IFP was to discover a new culture (e.g., customs). He said: "It's hard to remember what my expectations were exactly but it was probably to discover about myself by being destabilized by another culture more than doing something in social work." One year before going abroad, he read and talked with a professor about the country. Financial preparation included applying for scholarships, getting a summer job, and organizing a bottle drive. He explained: "Just going from door to door, it takes time and at first it's a little embarrassing. But there were many houses that invited me to sit and talk about what I was doing." The night before his flight, he celebrated with friends, and the next day, his father drove him with his colleagues to the airport. He noted: "My father was by the window . . . I told myself, 'Maybe it's the last time you see him. Or maybe it's the last time he sees you.' I had a lump in my throat."

Like other participants who traveled abroad, Normand felt destabilized for the first time. During his stopover in Europe, he said that they took the subway without knowing where they were going. For the first time he dealt with people who did not speak his language. He added: "You know, you lose your reference points." Then, when they landed in the host country, he worried about the alcohol that he had purchased at a duty free shop. When he stepped outside the airport, he said: "Everything was different, the trees, the cars, there was nothing I recognized . . . There, they drive on the lines, on the sidewalks, on the tramway rails and on the other side." He described his first impression at the corner store: "There were two guys that approached us speaking in Arabic, and Mohammed [a friend of a friend where he

was staying temporarily] answered. I didn't know what they wanted and I didn't feel comfortable."

Normand found that many aspects of daily life in the host country required immediate adaptation, such as money, food, language, temperature, and lifestyle. Certain aspects were learned quickly (e.g., how to use the toilets) while others took longer (e.g., how to bargain when shopping and how to orient himself in the city). Like the two other male participants in North Africa, Normand found it took time to adapt to the way his female colleagues were treated. He also had to be patient about finding a field placement since foreign students had to visit about seven or eight agencies before making their final choice. He chose an agency for children with special needs. The staff seemed nice, but he was shocked that the children were called "mentally retarded."

Learning how to get to the agency was his first challenge. Despite having gone twice with his supervisor and being given instructions on how to get there, he became lost. He said: "I saw a bus with 25 on it. It's good! I jumped on . . .The bus continued a little while longer, then the driver stopped and made a sign for me to get off." Unsure of what to do, Normand called the centre for help. He was asked to describe his location, but there was only sand. He ran to a person and handed him his phone. Once the conversation ended, the stranger found a taxi and paid for it. He concluded: "So, that was my first day—how to get there." On the way back, he became lost again. The next day, he got lost again, but this time children threw small rocks at him while he waited at a bus stop. He said: "I didn't know how to react so I didn't do anything. I just stayed there . . .That was my second day." Similar incidents destabilized other participants in North Africa because they did not know how to respond to new situations.

At the agency, Normand shadowed one employee who was responsible "to change diapers, clean a little, and try to do some work with the children." He added that the children's schedule consisted mostly of sitting in a corner during the day and then going to bed. Normand wanted to help but no one told him what to do. He said: "They didn't say, 'OK, this is what you will do. This is your project and your ultimate goal is to get that or to do this or to change that.'" After observing the living conditions of the children on their soiled mattresses, he prepared a funding proposal with the assistance of a co-worker. This proposal was submitted to a diplomat at the Canadian embassy. Although funding was refused, he focused on interacting with residents, talking about Canada with the staff, and cleaning the centre.

Normand explained that learning about social work was a failure. However, he was fine with this because the work at the agency was just one aspect of the IFP experience. Another important aspect involved getting to know the citizens of the host country. He discovered that they had a lot of knowledge about the world and they could speak many languages. He also learned to trust the nationals he met despite his initial distrust of the other and his fear of the unknown. He added that while the IFP was well organized, it was not well supervised, which had a negative impact at a professional level (e.g., not learning enough about social work)—but a positive impact at a personal level. He described the positive impact this way: "You don't have a choice to become resourceful. You have to be organized . . .You have to be able to make your own decisions." He added: "I grew so much and I learned so much about myself during those four months." Lack of supervision and significant learning from this at a personal level were common themes expressed by participants in North Africa and Europe.

At the end of his stay, Normand did not want to return, yet he was looking forward to seeing his loved ones again. He described it as bittersweet. He gave away many things he no longer needed, such as clothes and food. He also went to have a last look at the cat he fed with fish heads during his stay. As he explained: "I think it's easy to get attached to things when you are over there." Finally, he said goodbye to the clerk he saw every day at the corner store. He was sad because it was a series of last times. When he returned home, he had to deal with the jet lag and the shock of being back. It was strange for him to adapt to the familiar.

After graduation, Normand worked for a few months so he could travel again. This second experience was different but contributed to his personal growth. He said: "You only realize [outcomes] after because everything is going so fast that you don't have time to realize what is happening." Subsequently, he wanted to continue traveling, however, his family life changed, so he needed to find a job. He said that doing an IFP did not disadvantage him: "I had a job like that [easily]. I am bilingual and a guy so I think it was to my advantage." Some participants in North Africa and Europe also found it advantageous to have done an IFP while searching for work as it demonstrated their resourcefulness, for example.

4.1.10 Penelope: Adopting their way of life.

Penelope had become interested in traveling at a young age, so her parents encouraged her to go on a school trip to Europe. When she decided to undertake an IFP at university, she enrolled in a course on intercultural social work, which helped her to see the importance of living "like a woman from the host country" and avoid packing inappropriate clothes such as tank tops. While she felt adequately prepared to leave, her boyfriend was less certain about joining her abroad. He was panicking despite the fact that he leaving in a few weeks. She said: "It was important that he come because I could not see myself living something I could not

share with him." Friends were happy for her but some worried about the dangers of going to the host country; others expressed negative stereotypes about its citizens. Something similar happened to others going to North Africa.

On the day of her departure, Penelope's boyfriend and parents drove her to the Moncton airport. It was difficult because she could see she was causing her parents pain. She described her first leg of the journey to the host country: "I cried really hard nearly all the flight." After boarding her second flight in Toronto, there was a long delay so she started to reconsider her decision to go. During the flight to Europe, she worried about not finding the gate and missing the next flight. On the last leg of her journey to North Africa, she was afraid that her supervisor would not be at the airport. Luckily, Penelope's supervisor was there at the airport to welcome her. Other participants in North Africa and Europe highlighted similar doubts and concerns about the IFP when they were leaving Canada or traveling to the host country.

Upon arrival, Penelope immediately moved into the apartment where she would live with her Canadian colleagues and spent a week exploring the city with them. She appreciated this because she did not feel comfortable walking alone. Following this, they spent time visiting governmental agencies to learn about social policies in the host country, then visited potential field placements. There was always something that bothered them, however. She explained:

> Children with hearing problems. . . are placed in orphanages. They do not go to school, they are just left there by the parents. They made small wallets and they sold them at the market. For me, it was exploitation of children.

She had to settle for her second choice because an employee at the first agency was harassing her with phone calls. She said: "I didn't feel safe, so I decided not to do my field placement there."

Penelope worked in a hospital with unwed mothers. She did not like that the social workers seemed to hate their jobs—instead of going to see the girls, they spent time "sitting in their offices reading their paper or talking among themselves or texting." As a result, she decided to do rounds with a doctor, which was challenging because the young girls did not want to speak. Describing one of the girls, she said: "On her face, you could see she was so happy that her suffering was over [as she had given birth]. She told me she could go back home [leaving the child behind] . . . I didn't know what to say, 'Ha! Congratulations!'" Often, Penelope wondered whether her work at the hospital was really helpful. She said: "The motivation to go to my field placement wasn't there a lot." Other participants also deplored the limited choices of field placement agencies and lack of motivation to go to the agency.

Fortunately, Penelope was happy with her supervision. She explained: "We were really, really, really well supervised. Our supervisor, he really pushed us to the limit, he really forced us to follow the ways of the host country." He not only taught them about cultural differences, such as perception of time and tardiness, but could be counted on if they had problems. She was grateful for her daily life, especially her relationships with nationals. Like many participants in North Africa, she enjoyed her daily life more than the field placement. Daily life offered a few learning opportunities. She said: "I was curious about speaking to the people over there, to ask many questions about their country." She liked the slower pace, where people took time to sit and chat. She concluded by saying that she really loved the host country despite hardships, such as being harassed on the streets. She said: "You always feel

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watched. You always feel like people are listening to what you say. You don't really feel like you are really safe. You walk and there are people speaking to you and saying, 'Hey, gazelle!'" Feeling unsafe was a challenge raised by other female participants in North Africa.

Not only did Penelope learn about the host country, but she also learned about Canada and herself. When observing the disorganization and lack of resources (e.g., children begging on the streets), she told herself: "Well, why don't you [host country] do things like that . . . why don't you get help from people from the outside, countries more modern to help you set up social [services]?" At first, she was critical of the host country and realized that Canada was not so bad after all. Then, she was forced to question some aspects of Canadian society, for example, the religious beliefs that she was exposed to when growing up. She learned the importance of becoming more diplomatic when facing value conflicts. At the end of the field placement, she traveled with her boyfriend to other North African countries. When she returned to the host country, she described her feelings this way: "It was like I was coming home after having done a trip." A friend, who was like a father figure and who had been helpful during her stay, was waiting for them. A few participants in North Africa and Europe spoke about the importance of the support received by such a parental figure, for example, providing useful information about the host country.

As the weather turned colder, Penelope looked forward to going back to Canada. However, when she returned she found the last semester at university challenging. It was difficult to spend time in the classroom. She said: "We were all tired of school. We were just sitting in class because we had to, that's it." Furthermore, she felt rejected by her classmates as few of them spoke to her—she believed that her Canadian colleagues had told them about conflicts that occurred between them when they were abroad. She felt silenced in this

environment. It made it more difficult to put into words what she had learned for her final report. Penelope also worried that she may not be ready to be a social worker. She said: "I was too young . . . I missed having practical experience. I never regretted my field placement, but I told myself, 'I think that if I had done a field placement in Canada, I would have been more ready.'" After graduation, she pursued her studies and applied for a job with newly arrived immigrants. At the interview, she said that her IFP allowed her to understand what they were experiencing during their adaptation and integration, especially with regard to culture shock—and she was hired. Penelope concluded by saying that despite the challenges she faced, she enjoyed doing an IFP. She said: "I really, but really, really liked the experience. It's a small country where each city is different . . .People are really, really, really warm and welcoming."

4.1.11 Quincy: Enriching her life.

Quincy chose an IFP in North Africa because she was fascinated by the culture. She wanted to learn about the realities of Muslim women. She added that it was also an opportunity "to live a unique experience that would be destabilizing." She hoped for positive outcomes on both a professional and personal level. In order to prepare, she read a lot and developed friendships with immigrants from the host country who helped to make contacts to "guide me, help me if I had difficulties." She also participated in sessions for students going abroad. The most challenging aspect of preparation was handling the reactions of loved ones about health and safety issues. Her family, for example, tried to convince her not to go.

Quincy was happy to have friends from the host country traveling with her because she experienced her first shock as the plane landed—a common experience expressed by others such as Alan. She said: "I had my culture shock and the plane had not yet landed. I saw what was on the ground. I saw totally different sceneries and felt the heat." When she saw that her

supervisor was not there to pick her up at the airport, she panicked. She realized she had to

make her own way to the host family with the help of her friends. Describing her first

impressions stepping out of the airport, she said: "All the buildings were the same color. And

there were men sleeping on the ground just like that. Children were playing outside all alone

without supervision at 3 a.m. It was so different." That first night, she cried like a baby.

Quincy quickly began the process of finding an agency. When talking about the

orphanage she visited, she said: "It looked interesting but I didn't get answers. It took time.

They had to call this minister because I was a Canadian. They wanted to know who I was and

why I wanted to do a placement." Like other participants in North Africa and Europe, Quincy

was disappointed with the field placement. She was not always sure what she was learning,

but felt that it was a significant experience. She said: "What I was living, it had an impact on

my openness, on my capacity to adapt, on my ability to change my way of thinking." She had

to adapt to spicy foods and deal with different standards of cleanliness, which was difficult

because she described herself as a clean freak. After this phase of adaptation, she said it went

well: "I got used to the smells. . .I got used to the little things around me, to do things

differently." She added: "You learn to live with what you have, to be resourceful with what

you have. In Canada, we have been raised in a society where everything is so easy."

Quincy's new life comprised certain challenges. For example, the cross she wore to let

people know she was a foreigner put her safety at risk. She explained: "It put me in danger

once because there was a group of extremists outside that was not happy." Living in a more

traditional neighbourhood proved difficult, especially during Ramadan. She was unable to

drink water during daytime and had to cover herself from head to toe. This did not stop men

from following her, however. She said: "I was often considered like a prostitute in the smaller

neighbourhoods because I wasn't a virgin." Her friends were mostly young men because fathers did not allow their unwed daughters to develop friendships with her.

During Quincy's stay abroad, her relationship with her host brother was the most frustrating. She often felt rage towards him when he tried to convince her to convert to Islam and wear a veil. She said: "I am Catholic but I don't go to church every week. It still challenged me in my own culture, who I was, what my religion was, what I believed in." Furthermore, she felt confused about how to respond to some behaviours adopted by her male friends especially when they raised their voice when speaking to her. She added:

> My own values clashed with the reality of the host country. I am a feminist so when you tell me it's the husband that choses if the woman works. . .there are still forced marriages. . . I became frustrated. Then, I would calm down.

This led to rewarding discussions with her host mother that forced Quincy to develop a deeper understanding of certain practices and caused her to question her life, culture, and values. Other participants in North Africa also highlighted deeper understanding of certain realties.

Quincy appreciated that her friends spoke French even if there were language barriers, due to the vernacular spoken or their limited vocabulary. She was also grateful to have a wonderful host mother, without whose openness, understanding, and support Quincy would not have survived. However, she wished that the university at home had initiated more contacts. It would have been helpful to have support when she faced challenges, such as culture shock. She said: "I would have liked to feel more support. . . that I wasn't alone and it was OK to feel that way." Fortunately, she met great people who contributed to a wonderful stay.

Because of visa problems, Quincy returned to Canada a few weeks early, which made it more difficult to find closure. It took about three weeks before her life came back to what it

had been. She felt sad and somewhat withdrawn during this transition period. She said: "I got

used to my lifestyle in the host country." She added: "I think I was very emotional, in part

because I felt like I didn't accomplish what I wanted." It helped that she was able to talk about

her IFP. Many were curious, but they tended to ask more sensationalist questions about her

experience and the danger she faced. Quincy did not have enough opportunities to find

closure. There were some unresolved issues that she needed to talk about, such as situations

when she screamed at her host brother out of frustration. After graduation, she secured a job as

a social worker in a traditional setting and is still working there.

It took about one year to process aspects of her IFP experience. Quincy said: "It was

only after that I could really connect things with my IFP and how it had an impact on me."

First, it allowed her to see both what she wanted to keep from her culture and what she wished

to let go, for example, friendships with weak connections. Second, the IFP helped her to

replace some of her previously-held values with new ones, for example, being less

materialistic by buying fewer gifts for Christmas. Third, it forced her to revisit certain

behaviours in Canada, such as piercing of babies' ears or alcohol consumption. Finally, she

became aware of her opportunities in Canada. Other participants in North Africa said that it

also took a few months to process the IFP experience. At the end of the interview, Quincy

noted: "I met marvellous people with big hearts. People that made my stay a good one."

4.2 IFPs in Europe

4.2.1 Danielle: Stepping out of the mould.

Danielle first thought about going abroad before entering university. She said: "I

wanted to go but I was too shy. Also, I was from a place where no one had done something

like this before." Once she was studying at university, she went to South America. After this

short trip, she wanted to do an IFP in North Africa because she was "curious to learn about another culture" and she wanted to be exposed to a different way of seeing the world. After hearing negative stories about the IFP in North Africa, she chose to go to Europe instead. After arriving in Europe without pre-confirmation of lodging and a field placement agency, Danielle realized that she was not ready. Despite this lack of preparation, she said: "I don't know. I wasn't that stressed out. I told myself, 'Everything is going to fall into place. It will just take time.'" She added that even if "a hundred people" told her to prepare more, she would not have done so.

In her daily life, the transition went well despite some adaptation, such as eating later in the evening. Initially, everything was new and exciting. She said: "Everyone [at work] wanted to meet Canadians." In spite of this, Danielle found it difficult to make friends. Other participants in Europe shared a similar experience. Many of her colleagues at work were busy with their families and spent most of their weekends in the countryside. Also, activities organized for students required a student ID card which she did not have, and her student dorm was far from the city. She added: "As much as people from the host country were welcoming, they were very much cold in the beginning." As a result, she felt lonely for most of her stay. Fortunately, in the last six weeks, her supervisor invited her to spend weekends at her country home. She said: "I was not a city girl, so I had missed that [countryside]."

During her IFP, Danielle wanted to be exposed to other ways of seeing life. She was happy that her time with staff at the agency provided opportunities to discuss different social work practices. Her IFP was positive except for one incident where she said she encountered a problem regarding power issues with a professional: "It really affected me. I think that from that day on, I was really looking forward to go home." When she returned, she said: "I knew

what to expect. It was not a shock, it was not anything much. Nothing special happened." She

was simply excited to spend Christmas with her family—a common experience with a few

participants returning from Europe and North Africa.

In January, Danielle returned to university and received mixed reactions from her

classmates and friends. She said, "Well, before we left, everyone said: 'You are lucky to go

there! You are courageous!'" Yet, when she came back, family and friends showed limited

interest in her IFP. She explained: "They were not interested after 15 minutes." Classmates

mainly asked questions about traveling and partying. They did not seem to recognize what she

had accomplished. In fact, none of them attended her presentation about the IFP. Other

participants mentioned a similar lack of interest in their field placements.

Danielle's transition from university to work was not easy. One month after

graduation, she took part in interviews with community organizations, which went well as

interviewers seemed to understand "the positive aspects" of an IFP. However, the experience

with other employers was not as positive. She explained: "When it came time to find a job, I

had a few doors close because of that." She felt frustrated because she believed her field

placement was "equal to any other field placement." It was then that she stopped talking about

her IFP during interviews. She said: "It was the time when doors were closing and I just didn't

want to talk about it anymore." One employer told her it was a shame she had not done a field

placement with them because they would "hire her right away", which she found upsetting.

After working briefly with a community agency, she received a call about a social

work position. At the interview, the social workers asked questions about her IFP because they

were under the impression that she had only been an observer at the agency. Participants in

both North Africa and Europe also mentioned that misconceptions about their IFP were

expressed at interviews. Danielle told interviewers that she had gained so much from her IFP experience, such as adaptability, open-mindedness, organizational skills, and resourcefulness. She explained:

> At the first interview, I was disappointed by people's reactions so I did not focus on this experience. But it was an important experience, so this time I placed emphasis on it. I finally got the job and I am providing the same types of services [as abroad].

Now, she is very proud of her IFP and has no regrets, describing it as "a beautiful experience" that was a significant opportunity for learning.

4.2.2 Erika: Seeing herself through other lenses.

In preparation for her IFP, Erika searched the Internet for information. She had to find her own field placement and this involved looking for a contact person, sending the necessary documents, and explaining the process to them. She described the host city as "a really good community that was halfway between a city and a very small community." Before leaving, she remembered that "I was not sad at all. I was not feeling stressed out . . . everyone was sad and I was like, 'Oh my god!' I was excited!" Lack of financial resources created problems when she traveled to the host community because she had to pay for an apartment in two places. In transit, she learned that the airport closed at 11 p.m., but she did not have money to stay in a hotel. She said: "I was alone. I did not know what to do. Finally, I started to talk to people and there was a woman who offered that I stay at her house for the night." Other participants in North Africa and Europe also mentioned unexpected events in transit.

Upon arrival, Erika had many expectations about the host community, the resources available, the ways people would treat her, and the supervision offered by the agency. She quickly realized, however, that "it was not at all" what she had thought. This was a common theme with other participants. She took the weekend to explore the community before starting

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work at the agency. She said: "I took pictures everywhere because I was amazed that they had Reeboks, they had Nikes, and this was a surprise." She explained that having a friend living in this city was also helpful: "I felt a little more comfortable to step out of my comfort zone."

On her first day at the agency, Erika met her supervisor and was given a list of things to do. Unfortunately, she was unfamiliar with many of the terms used, so she was unsure of what was required of her. It was a common theme for other participants in Europe and North Africa. She said: "My supervisor came in, gave me a pile of paperwork and said, 'OK, these need to be done. You have till the end of the week. I will come see you on Wednesday.'" The beginning of her field placement was a challenge. She did not receive any orientation, then was asked to perform a job without any "idea about what to do" and without supervision. She was lucky to develop a good relationship with a co-worker, who became her "go-to person." She said: "It was her I would go and talk to if I had internal conflicts about the culture, if I felt uncomfortable, or when there were obstacles." She explained further: "Well, a child of five walking alone to school, it would not happen. We [Child Protection] would be called. So there were a lot of things like this happening that was a huge culture shock."

In her daily life, Erika described herself as eager and impatient to get involved as a volunteer in the community because she knew that she would only be there for a short stay. She said: "Four months, it's not long to get to know people. Usually, it can take a long time before you build relationships. . . I just wanted to do everything." She explained that an important aspect of daily life was being an outsider: "I was so afraid of offending people. I did not know how to express myself. I did not know what words to use." She was also trying to maintain ties at home, which was difficult because of the time difference. She was comfortable

with phoning every three weeks, but it was different when she faced problems. She said: "The only time I felt lonely and wanted to talk to people was when something was difficult."

Erika wished she had enjoyed more long-distance supervision than the three phone calls she received at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the stay. Despite limited support, the IFP changed her perceptions about social work. She explained:

> You learn stuff at school. You try to apply this and focus a little too much on, 'OK, well, I have to say this. I have to do that like this.' But at the end of the day, sometimes it's just your presence and compassion for someone that can make a difference.

The most difficult part about Erika's IFP was leaving the host community. She cried a lot on the plane ride back. She said: "It was harder to leave the host community than it was to leave my home to go there." This transition was very difficult. Other participants having created close ties abroad also found it hard to leave the host community.

Erika hated being back in Moncton because she felt so lost. It took two months to get settled back again. In the host city, it had been a novel experience with challenges, but at home, she was "back to the same boring environment, back to her routine." She said: "It took me some time to get used again to my routine and find a balance." Fortunately, a few students were really interested in learning about the experience so it encouraged her to talk about it. She wished she had known students who shared a similar experience. While she could talk with someone who had done an IFP in North Africa, her experience in Europe was so different. It helped that she could talk with members of the host community with whom she kept in touch.

When Erika took part in job interviews, she talked a lot about her IFP. She said: "You have to sell yourself. So, one of the things I talked the most about was my field placement." Unlike other participants, Erika found that her IFP was always seen in a positive light; people

were interested in learning about it. Erika felt that it showed "initiative, the fact that you are resourceful, that you can adapt to your environment, that you are open to do any type of work." She added: "You do not realize what your culture is until you find yourself in another culture, that you see yourself through other lenses." After graduation, she secured a job as a social worker in Northern Canada.

4.2.3 Francesca: Gaining so much more than expected.

Francesca decided to undertake an IFP in a destination where she could step out of her comfort zone to some extent—but not too much. Also, the country chosen had innovative social work practices in her area of interest. In order to prepare, she had to make travel arrangements and attend an orientation session. Sadly, she said that the session "seemed more appropriate for those who were going to Africa." Preparation also required writing a report on the host country and one's expectations about the IFP experience, and while this was helpful, she said there were always unexpected events, so "you adjust as you go." Applying for a scholarship was also demanding. Francesca and her colleagues often felt discouraged by the quantity of necessary preparation, but in the end she saw the benefits of learning about the country. She added: "I don't think we would have bonded as much together during the experience if we did not start out this way."

When Francesca and her colleagues arrived in Europe, the local field coordinator met them up at the airport. It was a relief to have help with language barriers and local currency. Many participants traveling alone and having limited travel experience appreciated having a welcoming party upon arrival. Arrival was described as a "big shock." Fortunately, they encouraged each other by saying: "OK, we can do it! It's four months. We will get through it. It's not so bad. We are going to support each other." While life in the host country required

adjustments, such as taking the train and bus for the first time, it was exciting to explore the community. She said: "We walked the streets, we got lost. I think it's the best way to find yourself when you get lost." They met many people including first year students who helped them with their adaptation by giving helpful advice—where to shop for cheap household products. She noted: "We made ourselves a little family." She explained that it helped to develop a routine "to integrate and absorb the culture there so we took the time to really visit and sit and live like they lived [in the host country]."

Francesca's adaptation at the agency was more challenging than her adaptation to daily life. Other participants in Europe echoed this sentiment. The first day at the agency was stressful. She worried, for example, about being unable to answer questions about social work in Canada. She also had doubts about having the required knowledge to do a field placement in the host country. Despite her initial fears, however, all went well. She said: "The people were amazing so it really, really went well." The supervisor made time each morning to answer questions. Francesca added: "She took an hour per week if I had questions and if I really wanted to discuss a specific issue." The local field coordinator also met with her twice during her stay.

In Francesca's daily life, one challenging aspect involved witnessing incidents of violence, for example, a homeless person being beaten up. Another had to do with the frustrations she experienced when she spoke with nationals because of different word usage and level of familiarity used—*vous*. She explained how she felt when they commented on the way she spoke: "You took it in with humour. But then, with time, you became frustrated . . . But you tell yourself, 'OK, you are in another country. You have to adapt to them.'" It was especially frustrating when they switched to English because her accent and ways of

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expressing herself were different from theirs. It annoyed Francesca when people on the streets heard her accent and asked if she was a *Québécoise*. After saying that she was not from Quebec, some told her: "You are not Québécoise! But, where do you come from?" Those frustrations with language and mistaken identity were common themes highlighted by participants in Europe.

At the end of the IFP, Francesca said goodbye to everyone, which was the most difficult part of the IFP. She explained: "I think it's the time I cried the most. I was back home. I was like, 'I'm home but I don't feel at home.'" During the first week, she slept a lot. Coming back was a bigger shock than going abroad. She became aware that she needed to readapt to the culture here. During this time, she thought: "Oh my god! No, no, no! I still want my little coffee in the morning at the corner . . . I won't be able to have them now. It's so far. When will be the next time I go back?" She also realized that she had changed—in particular by developing an interest in politics.

The first month of repatriation was difficult for Francesca. She tried to talk to people closest to her, but this was not the same as talking with people who had undertaken an IFP. Questions about the IFP often centred on generalities, such as what they liked abroad. Individuals also referred to her IFP as traveling. She explained: "It was not just traveling . . . it was a new culture. To adapt, to live there . . . it's difficult to express fully how valuable our experience was." Since she had limited opportunities to talk in-depth about her experience, she felt like she had to keep things bottled inside. She was grateful to have colleagues who did their IFP in Europe and who understood the value of her experience. At interviews, it was important to talk about her IFP. When asked questions about her ability to adapt, she was able to provide examples to demonstrate this. Although she found a job as a social worker in a

traditional setting, Francesca went back to school a few months later to study community development. Participants in North Africa and Europe also found the job search easier when they could highlight outcomes.

4.2.4 Helen: Meeting great people.

Helen decided to do an IFP after hearing about the opportunity during a university presentation. She said: "They talked about it and said, 'Is there anyone interested?' So I raised my hand immediately without really thinking about it." Before leaving, she explained that she did not prepare a great amount: "We prepared our suitcases and we left." Some classmates thought she was courageous; others worried because she did not speak the language. While Helen did not have great expectations, she hoped to gain greater understanding about social work in both Canada and the host country. It seemed easier to leave because she was not currently in a relationship and she had no children.

Even though traveling to Europe went well, it was stressful. In the host country, Helen and her Canadian colleague had to take a train to get to their host community. She said:

> The train station in the capital city, it's not the train station in Moncton. There are rows of trains and they don't speak a lot of English so you try to manage. You are carrying two big suitcases with you because you're there for four months.

They spent two nights at the field coordinator's house, then received an orientation of the city and university campus before moving into a dorm. Living on campus helped with her integration and she made friends from many countries. Other participants in Europe who lived in a dorm also found it useful to develop friendships. To facilitate the transition, two social work students were asked to assist them. Helen described them as super. She said: "They did many things with us and this helped. We even went backpacking for a weekend with one of the guys."

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After her first day at the agency, Helen made her own way with a bicycle borrowed from her supervisor. At the agency, she liked eating with the staff and children who received services. They were "like a family." She was impressed by the resources and money that were allocated to social workers for their work with families. Many citizens spoke English as a second language, but the young children did not. As a result, language barriers presented a challenge when taking part in staff training. While she was exposed to the culture and social problems, she was disappointed because she would have learned so much more if she had spoken the language. She could only "go with the flow" and ask many questions. She added that it was also difficult at the agency because "the people didn't open up to me because I was the foreigner, so as much as I learned, I wasn't able to do many interventions." She spent every day with a social worker observing her interventions but could not understand what was said. She was also responsible for working with a young girl using play therapy. Communicating with her was challenging. She said: "Even if we did not understand each other, we succeeded in building a relationship. I had my little dictionary and we said things to each other . . . at the end, the girl and I had a really good relationship." Others, like Helen, expressed a sense of accomplishment at handling communication barriers.

Helen indicated that supervision was fine. She explained: "Any question I had, they answered or found an answer for me. They checked on us." She also said she had contacts with the university back home: "We communicated by e‑mails and with regards to that, I have nothing to complain about." She expressed gratitude towards the university for helping her book flights and for providing financial assistance with health costs that she incurred after an accident. But she found it difficult to complete her reports because there did not seem to be a lot to write about with regards to her work at the agency. This was a common theme expressed

by those who were not fluent in the language spoken in the host country and were unsure about what they were learning at the agency.

Helen was happy to have another Canadian colleague with her in the host country. She said: "It's always easier to have someone here from where you're from." At first, they spent time together, but then they each started to build their own network of friends. She remarked:

> Our gang, it was incredible. I think we always had supper together. We visited together. We complained together. We laughed together. We cried together. We did everything together . . . I had never lived this kind of experience before. This type of bond with people so quickly in so little time and as intense as it was.

Knowing that she might not see these friends again made Helen's transition back to Canada difficult.

During Helen's stay abroad, there were two memorable aspects. First, she said she was touched by the generosity of citizens she met: "We didn't want to buy a TV for four months . . . I had mentioned that . . . and the next day, we had a TV in our room. You know, it was like that. Anything we asked, we got." The other memorable aspect had to do with terrorist activities in Europe. She said: "I remember, we went on the Internet. I spent the evening sending e-mails to everybody and waited for answers. Everybody was worried." The next day, the sirens rang in the city. She added: "It's an alarm if something happens, an attack, a disaster or something . . . and it will be heard all over the city. Well, the next day, they tested those alarms but I did not know it was a test." It took a few days before she calmed down.

On coming back to Canada, Helen felt like she had not left at all. She explained: "The semester started. Everybody wanted to see my pictures and they had many questions . . . and then, the students doing an IFP the following year came to see me." After graduation, she applied for a job in Northern Canada because she wanted another challenge. The IFP was an

asset—it demonstrated to future employers that she was open and could adapt. She explained: "You live in the heart of another culture, in their community. So, you need to have more than social work knowledge to be able to work there and survive." Helen felt that her IFP "made it easier" to adapt to life and work in another cultural setting. Other participants who ended up working in Northern Canada after the IFP also mentioned this.

4.2.5 Katherine: Doing it on her own.

Initially, Katherine did not apply to participate in an IFP, but when the School of Social Work asked if she was interested, she decided to go. She had traveled before and had a taste for adventure. As she said: "It was not as much at a professional but a personal level that I was going since I always loved to travel." Despite her personal motivation to travel, she was professionally motivated to see different social work practices and to put into practice what she had learned at university. She selected a French-speaking country in Europe to facilitate communication at the agency. Other participants chose a country in Europe for the same reason. Because she read about the country, she felt ready to live abroad. She did not feel as prepared for her field placement because she did not have confirmation of a field placement from an agency.

Before going abroad, the field coordinator in the host country had agreed to pick up Katherine and her Canadian colleagues at the airport and bring them to a youth hostel, where they were to stay for a few days before moving into a dorm. However, when they called the coordinator from the airport, they were told that they would have to find temporary lodging for a few weeks because the dorm was under renovations. Then, they were told by the coordinator to make their own way by train to the host city. When they arrived at the youth hostel, there was no room reserved for them and it was full. While this made the transition more difficult,

she said: "it was still a beautiful experience because we became friends with the staff [at another hostel] over there and it was people from all over."

Katherine's next hurdle was tinding a field placement. She said: "She gave me a binder with all the places in the region and I had to call so it took some time . . . I was afraid I would fail my IFP because it took a long time to find something." When she made calls, they did not know what she wanted because of her accent. Many were offended that she did not use the proper form of address (i.e., *vous*) so they hung up the phone. She finally found an agency, but not in her field of interest: this agency helped individuals with a handicap to integrate in the workplace. She added: "With them, it was hard with my accent because they already had difficulties understanding people." During the first month, even though everyone was very patient, communication was a challenge. However, Katherine had an opportunity to learn sign language. She said: "The first time I was able to have a conversation with a deaf person, I was really proud. I learned then that I was able to do anything." Like many participants, she faced various language barriers even though she was doing an IFP in a French-speaking country.

At the agency, Katherine had two supervisors. She explained: "One was super nice and the other, you could see she didn't want a student . . . She told me, 'It's easier for me to do it by myself than to show you how to do it.'" Fortunately, she developed a friendship with a colleague who taught her a lot about social work. Many participants like Katherine found it difficult being a student trainee in another country where the organizational culture was different. For example, she had to maintain a hierarchal rapport with the staff because she was part of management and could only eat lunch with managers. She said: "You don't want to step on people's toes. You see that hierarchy, it's really important. So, sometimes I just wanted to hide somewhere, observe and learn by simply looking at them."

Katherine's contacts with the School of Social Work in Canada were fine but the supervision in the host country was a problem. She said she was not well supervised: "I had questions and it seemed like they were not always able to answer me." She also blamed the field coordinator in the host country for the loss of her scholarship. She added: "I felt like I was a burden for her, as if she didn't want to be responsible for the Canadian students . . . maybe her role was different than the field coordinator's at home . . . I was there four months and she still thought I was a *Québécoise*."

Overall, Katherine believed that she learned more at a personal level than at a professional level. As she explained: "Professionally, I had a hard time to put into practice what I had learned because it was a different work context, you know, hiring people." When a conflict happened between workers, Katherine's supervisors "had a hard time" letting her resolve the problem as part of her field placement because they preferred handling the situation themselves. In spite of this, she said she learned a lot at a personal level, such as resourcefulness, patience, and independence. She said: "When I traveled, I traveled alone most of the time. So you learn to know yourself, you learn your limits." She really appreciated that nobody knew her: "I didn't worry about what people thought of me. There was no one who had expectations towards you when you are there. So you are really yourself one hundred per cent." The positive outcomes of traveling alone was a common theme for many female participants.

As for her lodging experience, Katherine said that it was fun to have a room on a floor with students from many countries: "I didn't meet as many people from the host country because of that, but it was another type of experience." Meeting these students helped to change her views, especially the stereotypes she held about Muslims. She added: "Before

going to the host country, I always had problems with Islam but I became really good friends with a guy over there, a Moroccan who wasn't traditional." He did not impose his religious beliefs on her so she realized that not all Muslims "forced it on other people." Katherine appreciated the lifelong friends she made. At the end of her stay, although she missed home, at the same time she did not want to leave—and this was a common theme highlighted by others in Europe and North Africa.

She was happy to spend Christmas with her family, but said: "I had a bit of the blues, I missed them [friends]." Enrolled in three university courses, she spent much time at her apartment alone. This feeling of being somewhat isolated made the transition at home a little harder for Katherine and other participants. After graduation, she wanted to find a job quickly, so she was willing to accept a job anywhere in Canada. During interviews, she expressed pride in her IFP and was sure that it opened doors for her. She told potential employers: "If I am able to go there and figure out how it works, I can learn how your workplace works." She secured a position as a social worker in a traditional setting.

4.2.6 Olive: Letting people voice their needs.

Olive had always loved to travel, so she appreciated the opportunity of an IFP. Since it was a last-minute decision, she had little time to think about it. She chose Europe because she wanted to do more traveling in that part of the world. This was a common theme among participants who chose Europe because of the travel opportunities. Moreover, Olive was more interested in discovering herself and her strengths than learning about social work. Her life had been so structured until then that she enjoyed not knowing what to expect. Preparation consisted mostly of reading about the host country. When she arrived, the transition was

difficult because of thesending university's lack of involvement and its disorganization. She explained:

> We had to find our own housing . . . It seemed like the people in charge at the Université de Moncton really didn't do their job. We had to do everything ourselves from A to Z. Make the contacts with the university over there, make the contact to find a field placement. Nothing had been done.

She added: "You're tired and you don't know what to do. You don't know the city."

Olive had doubts about her ability to complete the IFP. She said: "I told myself, 'Well, nothing has been done! How will I do it? Where do I go?'" Since the university let them go abroad without a student visa, they had to find an agency quickly. She added: "If the embassy had not helped us like they did, we would not have had a field placement. They would have returned us to Canada without a field placement and without credits. We would not have graduated." Olive was happy when a field placement was finally provided but it was not in her field of interest. At the agency, she conducted one‑on‑one interventions with a caseload of about 50–60 people. While these interventions were less formal than in Canada, they seemed more helpful when responding to people's needs, such as going to the shelter with them. This required adaptation.

As she knew little about social work in the host country, such as the levels of government services and programs available, Olive had a lot to learn. The people who asked for assistance had useful knowledge about the country, so it forced her to see them as experts of their lives. As she explained: "It gave me the opportunity to say, 'OK, so can you explain . . . Or, how can I help you?' Simply, it was giving a voice to the client." When describing the supervision, she said that her supervisor was "really nice. She came to get me at night for meals. She made sure to show me the city . . . even her boss invited me to all kinds of

meetings." She added that they always asked: "What do you want to do? What do you think? What do you do in Canada? How could we do it here?" However, as expressed by other participants, long-distance supervision from Canada was lacking.

Olive identified other challenges during her IFP, including the lack of closeness in relationships and language barriers. She explained: "You don't know anyone, no one knows you. So you spend a lot of time by yourself even if you are among many people. You don't connect with anyone at an intimate level." She also had to deal with language barriers at the agency, since most of the people asking for services were immigrants who did not speak French, one of the official languages of the country. Fortunately, the IFP afforded her opportunities to travel to other countries during her free time on evenings and weekends. She said: "I left Friday mornings at about 10 or 11 a.m. and was gone until Monday morning." When not traveling, Olive spent time with her European roommate and friends. She had no time to be homesick. It helped that she talked with her parents every three days and that she saw them when they came for a holiday.

Olive found that the IFP was different than her other experiences traveling abroad. She explained: "I took my life in my hands, you know. I was able to decide, 'No, this is what I want. Those are my goals. Those are my objectives. This is what I want to do.'" She came to realize that if she was able to complete an IFP, she would be able to accomplish anything else she wanted. She felt confident and invincible. As she said: "Look, I went to the other side of the world and I was able to do all that." While she does not believe that the IFP changed her, it did help her discover who she was—and this self-knowledge is essential for a social worker. Other participants in Europe and North Africa mentioned the importance of such personal outcomes for practice.

At the end of the IFP, Olive was not ready to leave. She said: "I didn't want to come back. I remember that I even called the university to see if it was possible to finish my studies in the host country." She was bored with life at home, and the idea of returning to university in Moncton was dreadful. Transitioning back was difficult. She said she missed her European lifestyle: "I'm back home again. I'm with my family. We don't drink wine at lunch. You know, it's really different." She applied for work in the host country, and once she obtained a job and had her visa, the transition seemed easier. But she still needed to complete her last semester. At university, she did not frequently discuss her IFP out of fear that she would be seen as bragging since not many students could afford such a field placement. When Olive did talk about her IFP, however, it was frustrating to hear classmates' comments about going abroad to party and the inability to find work when returning home. Others heard similar comments and this did not help with the transition as it increased their level of stress.

While the IFP did not help her to learn about social work in Canada, for example, its services, note taking, and computer systems, Olive said it was the best experience. After graduation, falling in love changed her plans to return to the host country and she ended up looking for work locally. It was a difficult time as the government had made a number of cutbacks. She said: "There were no jobs anywhere. If you found work, it was a maternity leave or you had a few weeks here, a few months there." She followed up on a tip about a job opening and found employment in which she occasionally works with immigrant and Indigenous families. Olive found the transition from university to work relatively easy.

4.2.7 Rachel: Broadening her life options.

Before deciding to undertake an IFP, Rachel had not traveled a great deal. In order to prepare, she took part in a variety of presentations, meetings, and workshops organized by the

International Mobility Service and the School of Social Work. She said: "It was more preparing mentally. But what I remember the most about the preparations were things like tickets and insurance." Preparation was stressful and time-consuming, but she did it one step at a time. It helped that she was organized and respected deadlines. She looked forward to going abroad, but worried because she did not know what to expect. Since she had just broken up with her boyfriend, she said: "I found it was somewhat of a destabilizing moment." Thankfully, her parents were supportive and encouraged her to go.

Before leaving, Rachel felt anxious about going abroad because she had never left New Brunswick for more than two weeks. She said: "I think the day before we left, if someone had said, 'You are not going!' I would have been like. 'OK! I'm not going!'" Despite her fears, everything went well when she and her Canadian colleagues traveled to Europe. After landing, she was unable to reach the local field coordinator so she called her supervisor. The supervisor told them how to get into the city and gave them a place to stay for a few days before moving them into a dorm. She said no one had warned her that she would be staying with her supervisor, but "except for that, everything went well . . . we were tired, we were hungry, but that was the biggest stress." After a few days, the field coordinator showed them around the city. Talking about the transition, she said: "I found it was well organized once we were there."

Rachel's field placement was in a community development agency. Among other activities, she organized workshops with vulnerable groups and participated in awareness campaigns on austerity measures in Europe. There was no typical day. Initially, she wondered if she was really learning about social work because it did not seem like the work she did constituted an intervention. She said:

> You respond to the needs of the people you meet. So, if their needs are to go grocery shopping, that's what you do. Now, I see it more like interventions. I think that when I was in the host country, I saw it a little [that it was social work] because of my first field placement.

She added: "I did my two field placements in community development. I had difficulties. . . I was like, 'Am I or am I not doing social work?'" In Canada, Rachel had been exposed to models that differed from those at the agency in the host country. While this transition between countries was not easy, she appreciated the supervision provided by the agency. She concluded by saying: "Even with the UdeM, I found they were accessible . . . There was always someone there for us." She was proud to have given her one hundred per cent during the IFP. She also appreciated the recognition that she received from the staff, especially being told that she was liked by the people she helped. Other participants in Europe and North Africa also mentioned the importance of this recognition.

Rachel said that her IFP was a beautiful experience for two reasons: her travels and the people she met. She enjoyed making many small trips to visit famous markets, for example. There was no time to feel lonely because there were always interesting activities to do and she made friends easily. She explained:

> One evening, we were sitting . . . in a bar, sharing. We were talking and I remember being like, 'I am lucky! I am sitting in Europe and we are chilling out with beer' . . . there were people from France, from Portugal. It was cool.

In addition, her supervisor's family became like an adoptive family to her. Their children helped her to make friends with other young people. Living in a dorm for foreigners was also an asset as she was able to spend time with students from many countries who lived a similar experience. Participants living in dorms appreciated the support received by other foreign students.

Rachel also reported some challenges during the IFP. One of the biggest was not having a washer and dryer. She said: "I know it's stupid but we washed our clothes by hand. I hated washing everything, everything, everything by hand." She also missed the personal computer that she had left at home. Missing some of the comforts from home was a theme highlighted by other participants as well, especially those in North Africa. Another challenge was budgeting money with so many places to visit. She explained: "I know that I would have spent less money if I understood then how things worked. I would have planned my trips." But at the same time, she added: "This was the beauty of the trip. We really just plunged in. None of us ever planned anything and we just went anywhere at any time."

At the end of the IFP, Rachel did not want to return home. It was difficult to say goodbye to her friends. When she had arrived abroad, she experienced homesickness for only three days. While returning to Canada was not a big culture shock, the transition was very challenging. She noted:

> It was coming back that I found most difficult . . . you're over there four months. It's like a high, everything is new . . . you discover new things. Everything is fun but you come back and the people continued on with their lives.

It was fortunate that her Canadian colleagues who had gone to the host country understood exactly what she was living. In spite of this, however, the transition home was difficult. There was not enough time to settle back between leaving the country and returning to the classroom. She also had doubts about working after she graduated. First, she did not feel ready to be a social worker. Second, she wanted to explore new opportunities, such as graduate school. Rachel said:

> I seemed to think that there was only one thing I could do. I was going to find a boyfriend, I was going to get married and have children. I would have a nine-to-five job. Well, I realized that there was more and I think it's because of my field placement

and my other experience in Latin America. I was like, 'There's more than my little town . . . there are more opportunities in life.'

She added: "It seemed to have broadened my perception of what I could do in life." Other participants in Europe and North Africa highlighted this aspect (e.g., possibility of work abroad).

4.2.8 Suzie: Stepping out of her comfort zone.

To prepare for her IFP, Suzie took part in meetings and training sessions offered by the university. She added: "We also met students that had gone the year before to receive advice and help to better prepare to leave." She hoped to have opportunities to visit a few European countries. Since she had not traveled a great deal, she believed that the IFP would be a practical experience that would allow her to learn skills for future jobs, in spite of differences between Canada and the host country. She also wanted to learn more about herself because this was essential for success as a good social worker and for helping others. This perception was shared by other participants. After listening to a presentation by students who had completed an IFP in Europe the year before, she told herself: "Why not go there also?" It required less preparation because they would have contacts there. Some participants were influenced to select a specific destination after hearing stories from other students about their IFP experience.

Initially, Suzie's family and friends were excited about her IFP. As her departure approached, however, they seemed to become more anxious, which she found stressful. On the morning before her flight, she went upstairs to pack. While she was upset about leaving, she did not want to show her emotions. She said: "I could not cry in front of my parents because then, they would have said, 'Don't leave! Stay with us!' And I would probably have stayed."

When Suzie boarded the plane, she felt prepared but she had to tell herself repeatedly that everything would go well because the locals spoke French. She still had mixed feelings—stressed out and excited at the same time. When she arrived abroad, she said that reality hit her: "You realize that even if you speak French, there is no one whot understands you." There were many things to learn, such as how to flush the toilets. Despite such challenges, the first few weeks were euphoric. She explained: "You are kind of on cloud nine. Everything is new, everything is fun. You learn so much." She added, "I loved it. I didn't feel lonely at all. I made friends easily." Other participants also talked about the joy experienced at the beginning of their stay.

Suzie's transition at the agency went smoothly. The work day was not structured the same way as she was used to: there was no set time to come to work, but that was fine. Employees often talked for one or two hours about their weekend/evening before working. When a client called and wanted to talk, Suzie said: "Well, we got in the car. We went to see them. Our day was never too structured." At other times, they had appointments one after the other and finished late. It was helpful that her two supervisors had previous experience with Canadian students. They had knowledge about Canada and the social work program at the Université de Moncton. Prior knowledge by the field placement agency was identified by participants in both Europe and North Africa as important to their integration at the agency.

While the agency offered good learning opportunities, at first Suzie held back in order to observe. There were many things she had to learn before working with clients, such as social interactions, laws, and services. She added:

> It was really basic things I was learning over there. I felt that in Canada, if I had started a field placement, those were all things that I already knew. So, I would have

accomplished this quicker . . . at a personal level, I was learning tremendously but at a professional level, I didn't feel it was moving forward fast enough.

Fortunately, her supervisor respected her rhythm, prepared her gradually, and spent a lot of time answering questions. She did not mind that the supervision was less structured than at home. As she explained: "For me, it was excellent because you can't expect to have supervision like a placement in Canada, for example, where it's more structured, where you meet the supervisor at a specific time, and you have points to cover." It was also not problematic to have less frequent contacts with the university at home as she enjoyed the freedom to live abroad independently.

Suzie faced a few challenges during her IFP. One of the biggest was the language barriers; for example, she mistakenly used rude words at the agency and did not know the language when traveling to other countries. It was also challenging to deal with the intensity of the ups and downs of the IFP. She said: "If you're sad, you're more sad than usual. And when you're happy, it's such little things that make you happy." In spite of the stress of these challenges, she appreciated that they forced her out of her comfort zone. Suzie also found that travel was one of the most memorable aspects of the IFP. She said: "I had a good field placement and I made many friends but there is nothing like traveling. There is nothing like seeing other countries, seeing other cultures, meeting people." Like Suzie, other participants in Europe who traveled to neighbouring countries found that travel was an important aspect of their IFP.

The transition home was extremely difficult because Suzie did not want to return. She explained: "I adapted to the lifestyle. I made friends . . . the bonds formed quickly because you were so far away." When her mother met her at the airport, she thought Suzie was crying

because she was glad to be back, but instead, she was upset about having left the host country. She added: "It's crazy how a foreign country that is out of your comfort zone becomes a place where you are in your comfort zone. And your country where you always lived kind of becomes a foreign country." Her culture shock was so severe that she worried that she would not finish her final semester. She said: "Instead of going out with my friends that I had not spoken to in four months, I stayed in my room. I would take out the computer and write to my friends in the host country." She felt like she was growing apart from her friends in Canada.

Her parents were baffled by what was happening to her. Fortunately, two classmates who had completed an IFP in the host country knew what she was experiencing. She felt homesick for the host country and worried about not having learned as much as students who had done a local field placement. In the classroom, when she listened to students talk about their field placement, she believed she was at a disadvantage on a professional level. She said: "I can't say I was disappointed but I would have liked to have done a placement that would have better prepared me for intervention." Nonetheless, she believed that she had gained more than other students on a personal level, such as open-mindedness.

Suzie returned to the host country after graduation. She said: "I needed that. I don't know how to explain this . . . my head was still there, my heart was still there." But before she obtained a work visa, she was offered a contract as a social worker in Canada. When she started to work, she realized that she knew more than she expected, and with time, she believed she was better equipped to handle daily challenges at work. She noted: "For somebody who has not really had a chance to step out of her comfort zone, it becomes stressful . . . I am able to tell myself, 'Well, listen, I did it before. I will do it now.'" Other

participants, like Suzie, who were concerned about what they had learned during their IFP, came to think differently after some time in the workplace.

4.2.9 Tania: Feeling free.

Tania had considered undertaking an IFP for a long time. She finally followed through because she wanted a unique experience and an opportunity to travel in Europe. In preparation, she did some research about the country. She said: "At the university, we had a lot of sessions to help us prepare. We had many meetings with the field coordinator who asked us to do projects." She also watched movies from the host country to familiarize herself with the local accent, from which she realized that she would probably face language barriers, even if it was a French-speaking country. She had no expectations, but hoped to have a beautiful experience. While her friends were glad that she was doing an IFP, her parents were not very supportive. They believed that doing an IFP would limit her chances of finding work after graduation. This made the transition more difficult, because she had doubts about her decision.

Going abroad was not what she expected. She said: "Even if I told myself I was ready, I experienced a shock arriving there." This was a common theme identified by participants in Europe and North Africa. She added that upon arrival "you realize that you are never totally ready until you live it, until you are there." When she arrived in Europe, she found that public places were very crowded. Finding her way in the subway was challenging. A few days later, she traveled to the host community for her IFP.

Tania's Canadian colleagues who were on an IFP in the same host community were already there. They showed her around the city and gave helpful advice, such as bringing her own shopping bags when buying groceries. She said: "I had one week before starting my field placement. I really liked it because it gave me a chance to explore, to get used to the city, to

see what there was. It was very relaxing." Participants, like Tania, who arrived a few days early found it helpful to acclimatize. Before starting her field placement, she visited the agency. She said: "They gave me an idea of what was coming in the next few months. They were very welcoming and nice. I saw that I would have a good team. I found it helped a lot."

During this transition period, Tania had to adapt to the agency. For example, she had to handle the reactions provoked by her accent—nationals often laughed when she spoke. She explained: "We had to repeat ourselves often. I found that a little hard even if we speak the same language, to always have to repeat and reformulate sentences." Other participants mentioned similar language barriers. Tania also said she had to adapt to a different rhythm at work: "Them, it's a little more relaxed. Us, we are always in a hurry; time is important." She usually worked from nine to five at the agency. This included group work with regards to human rights, community awareness, and recreation. She explained: "I was able to take part and help in many groups . . . but it was a lot, a lot, a lot of learning at first." She described her IFP as follows:

> I won't say it wasn't good at all but with regards to what I should have learned for the second field placement, I found it wasn't as in depth with regards to social work . . . I did more animation than [one-on-one] intervention. I learned a lot and I saw that there was a social work aspect to the human rights' group.

As for supervision, Tania enjoyed the contacts with professors back home and her assignments as part of the long-distance supervision. It helped her to reflect about her IFP, something that she did not do at the agency. She said: "The assignments really forced us to think, 'OK, I did that today. How is it linked to social work? How was the relationship with the people? What was the nature of the intervention?'" More recent participants who had long-distance supervision also found it beneficial to link theory and practice.

Travel and relationships abroad contributed positively to her IFP. Weekends were set aside for traveling outside the city. Tania said: "We traveled a lot. I really loved that you could take a train and in a few hours, you were at the other side of the country or in another country." She explained how she often traveled with an expat friend: "We had the same style of traveling. We stepped out of the train, nothing was planned. Not even a map most of the time." Friendships that she developed in the community and with service users and volunteers at the agency also enriched her experience. She found it inspiring when people had "such a willingness to help others" regardless of their difficult situations, for example, having poor health. She added: "It really gave me a desire to do volunteer work and help, to help others more. It left a strong impression. The people with whom I did my field placement, they really changed me."

When it came time to leave, Tania did not want to come home, so she stayed a few more weeks. She said: "I had made myself a life over there. I had my little routine. I had my friends. Also, I had a boyfriend over there so leaving was difficult." Participants in Europe and North Africa who liked their daily life and had developed close ties with nationals found it harder to leave. Once she arrived in Canada, she slept a lot for a few days. She felt a little depressed and missed the lifestyle of the host country. After she returned to university once the holidays were over, she said: "Coming back wasn't so difficult. The only thing that was difficult was the people who didn't always necessarily want to know the details of our field placement." At that time, she felt the need to speak about her IFP. She added: "You want so much to talk but there isn't always someone that wants to listen." This was echoed by other participants.

Before the end of the semester, Tania applied for a job in another province. She said: "I jumped at the opportunity to work again in another culture . . . I needed another adventure like I had over there. I needed a change." At the job interview, the people hiring her asked about her ability to adapt to another culture because she did her IFP in a country similar to Canada. They were unsure that she was prepared to work in Northern Canada, but she was able to convince them to give her a job. She concluded by saying that her IFP represented "the most beautiful months of my life." While Tania said she learned a lot on both a personal and professional level, there were some disadvantages: "I did not do a field placement at the Department so I'm not really on the inside . . . With regards to jobs here [in New Brunswick], it can be a little more difficult after." This is a common theme expressed by other participants in Europe and North Africa.

4.3 Chapter Summary

Many transitions observed during an IFP required adaptation and integration into new environments, such as country-to-country and university-to-work. A few transitions seemed more difficult for some participants than for others; these included challenging situations such as telling family and friends about their decision to undertake an IFP, saying goodbye to loved ones, leaving home for the first time, adapting to challenging conditions in the host country, experiencing culture shock when returning home, and transitioning from university to the workplace after graduation. Participants in both North Africa and Europe mentioned learning moments as a result of these challenges. However, while those in North Africa emphasized learning moments from daily life, for those in Europe the learning moments came from travel abroad and the field placement at the agency.

Participants in North Africa found it more difficult than those in Europe to adjust when abroad. However, many participants from both regions faced difficulties adjusting during their transition back to Canada due to hardships in the host country and/or leaving behind special relationships developed abroad. The participants who received little support from the university upon returning home found the transition challenging, for example, coming back before the expected date. Recent graduates provided greater details than those further away from graduation about the transition into working in the profession. Newer graduates (i.e., three participants in North Africa and six participants in Europe) expressed lower levels of discontent about contacts with their home university and long-distance supervision. Female participants in North Africa had more stories than did their male participants about gender-based transition challenges. Female participants in North Africa also had more stories about gender-based challenges than did female participants in Europe.

While all participants in North Africa and Europe identified personal and professional outcomes, a few put more emphasis on personal transformation; the location of the IFP did not seem to be an influencing factor. Participants with more than five years to digest the IFP (eight in North Africa and three in Europe) and a few years of experience as a social worker provided more examples of learning moments and outcomes for their individual social work practice as a result of the IFP. In the next chapter, an analysis of the data will provide insights that have implications for social work education and IFP planning, which will then be addressed in the final chapter in the section on recommendations.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

5.0 What Do Stories Reveal About the IFP Experience?

Students undertaking an IFP have learning opportunities during key steps or moments along the way. In this study, while students described similar experiences, they also depicted different challenges because of personal identities, past experiences, languages spoken, and the location of field placement. For example, the degree of difference between the home culture and the host culture in terms of political and economic contexts provided different learning conditions. Those variations led to different learning moments, which for some resulted in better outcomes than for others. In this chapter, I will present the paths taken by students and how they relate to outcomes. The examination of those various paths provides many insights about IFP processes and outcomes for professional practice.

5.1 IFP Process Model: An Experience of Continuity

The IFP process model emerged from the data as participants provided detailed stories from the moment they thought about undertaking an IFP to the beginning of their first jobs upon their return home. Participants explained how they experienced learning moments, not only during time spent at the agency but throughout the overall experience. Their stories recounted what they had learned before, during, and after the IFP. It became evident that outcomes resulted from a complex and dynamic process that extended beyond the four months spent completing a field placement at an agency abroad. Not only did each step provide learning moments, but each was interrelated and had an impact on the overall experience resulting in outcomes for their social work practice. There were seven key moments where students experienced learning that led to personal and professional outcomes: 1) thinking

about doing an IFP, 2) making the decision, 3) preparing to go, 4) leaving home and arriving

overseas, 5) doing the field placement, 6) returning home, and 7) entering the social work

profession. The analysis that follows presents each moment or step of this IFP (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: IFP **-** A Process Model
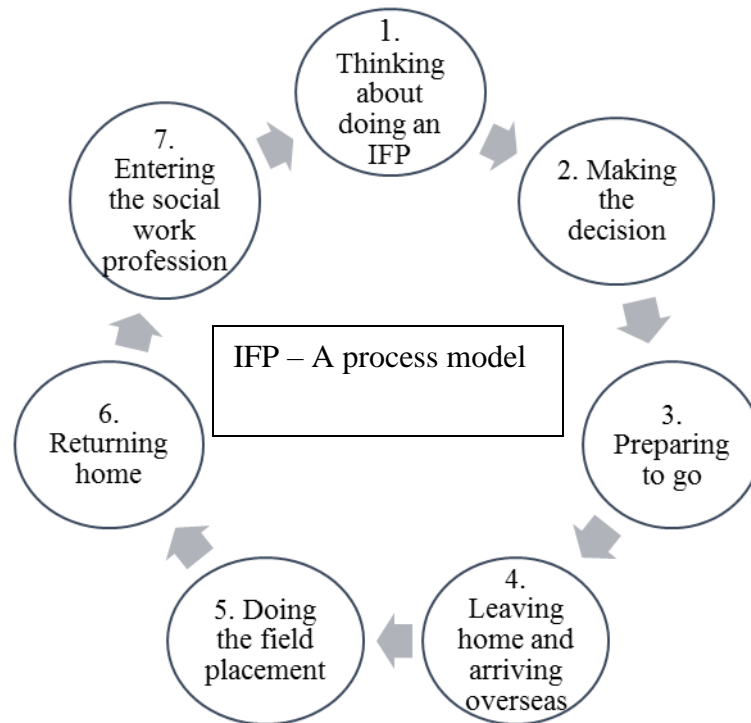
5.1.1 Thinking about undertaking an IFP.

While a few students started exploring the idea of an IFP in high school or in

university because they had a lifelong dream of traveling, most contemplated an IFP only

when they had to select their field placement a few months before going abroad. There were

many aspects to consider: funds required, relationships with loved ones, countries available for

a placement, future plans, and personal concerns. They debated the advantages (e.g., travel

opportunities) and disadvantages (e.g., limited occasions to network at home) of doing such a

field placement. While the motivation to go abroad constituted an essential component of selecting the placement, for participants, the driving force was multi-layered, encompassing factors, such as prior travel experience, social ties, timing, and financial aid. These factors can be divided into external and internal sources of motivation.

Among the external influences that sparked students' interest in going abroad for an IFP, social ties weighed heavily. Three themes emerged. The first was stories from acquaintances, such as foreign students that currently lived abroad. These stories gave some students a taste of the experience. For example, one student noted, "It motivated me to hear them speak about their experience when they came" (Irene:4). A second influence was encouragement by role models such as professors who had traveled abroad. As one participant explained, "It was a little flattering that a university professor tells you, 'You are a good candidate!'" (Alan:1). Help from friends and family, both socio-emotional and financial, was the third influence; without this, it would have been hard to follow through on an IFP. External influences provided students with information about the nature of the IFP experience, such as the type of experience, its benefits and challenges. The students indicated that outcomes outweighed challenges, resulting in high expectations about the overall experience.

Participants' selection of a country for their field placements was also influenced by other people. Some students chose a specific destination because of recommendations made by a professor or because fellow students had returned from placements abroad and told stories conveying images of attractive landscapes or cultural experiences about a select country. Highly positive images of specific destinations or IFPs created expectations about learning moments and outcomes and these influenced the decision to go. In contrast, other students were discouraged about a specific country because of stories they heard. As one

participant explained, "I seemed to feel put off a little [by the country] because her experience had been a little difficult" (Danielle:5). It appeared that receiving information in advance could be either negative or positive, but in either case, the information influenced the student's decision. Negative information about the challenges faced abroad, such as harassment, dissuaded students. Positive information planted a seed so that students started thinking about an IFP. Participants who did not know people with experience abroad still benefited from information provided to them by individuals, such as professors or field placement coordinators. They exposed students to the idea that it was possible to undertake an IFP even if they had limited financial resources or had never traveled before.

Participants expressed many reasons for being internally or personally motivated to undertake an IFP. It offered opportunities to travel, to experience daily life in another country, and to practise social work in a different cultural context. One participant explained the internal push to go abroad this way, "I thought that it was such a beautiful opportunity . . . I felt such a drive, I absolutely had to do it" (Rachel:2). Participants described their desire to explore an area of personal interest, such as living in a different continent or getting to know the realities of women in an Islamic country. While they hoped to learn about social work, more importantly, they saw it as a way to gain self-knowledge. As one participant so insightfully explained, "Discovering another world, it is also discovering yourself" (Danielle:3). They were motivated by the potential for self-growth and how it would benefit their professional practice.

Students who had internal or personal sources of motivation also desired to grow at a professional level. They wanted to acquire skills, values, and knowledge that would enable them to meet employment goals. This was particularly relevant for one participant who

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indicated, "My goal was always to work abroad as a social worker" (Cassandra:2). They believed that exposure to different perspectives abroad would be helpful for their future practice. For example, one participant revealed, "I will be able to find out from people 'OK, what is your normal? What is your culture?'" (Miranda:3). They were highly motivated by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for professional growth. The opportunity also appeared at the right time in their lives when they had few obligations, and for some, it provided hope to move forward after a breakup. Others saw it as a way to travel. While they expressed more than one reason to do an IFP, participants principally framed their internal motivation as desiring to experience difference and to step out of their comfort zone.

Most participants described their desire to do an IFP in terms of experiencing difference and the potential for learning. As one participant revealed, "It was a way to see situations differently. . . be able to take a step back to better analyze or observe things and after that, intervene better also" (Danielle:2). They were seeking a field placement that was different from one in Canada, or different from the placements of the majority of students. They were eager to learn about another way of life. Some students who were first-time travellers selected Europe to achieve this goal. A placement in Europe provided sufficient cultural distance for the students without the fear of not being able to manage. Others were attracted by the strangeness, unfamiliarity, and exoticism of the host country. One participant revealed, "I was always interested . . . in the Arab culture, it was always something that was strange, mysterious . . . especially with women who wear the veil" (Quincy:1). Those selecting North Africa wanted a country that was different from home. For example, one participant noted, "The culture was different, it was an Arab country. The religion was different"

(Normand:3). These students seemed to require greater cultural distance between Canada and the host country in order to experience difference.

A few students wanted an intense experience that forced them to step out of their comfort zone. Being abroad was described by these participants as living in an environment of destabilization and discomfort. Some who had never left Canada before, selected Europe as the environment in which to experience this discomfort. As one participant explained, "I really wanted to leave my home and experience discomfort, step out of my comfort zone" (Francesca:3). Others chose North Africa to attain a similar goal. It was a region of the world with a greater degree of cultural difference from Canada. They wanted "to experience this clash to really be destabilized" (Irene:2). They were motivated by a desire to test their limits, seeking a challenge so they would learn about themselves from difficult situations. They wished to experience and be tested by uncertainty. As one participant explained, "I don't know what to expect. Let's go and I will see! Let's see what I am made of" (Olive:2–3). They believed that the country they selected had the potential for maximizing their personal growth. Often, it only was in hindsight that they realized the level of discomfort that stepping out of their comfort zone would require.

In considering an IFP, students were motivated by both external and personal/internal influences. Interactions between these influences may have resulted in students selecting IFPs that were a poor fit for them. External influences such as parental pressure led students to undertake an IFP in specific locations abroad; some felt another location would have been a better fit for them because of personal or internal influences. Some students were encouraged by others to go to North Africa because it was less expensive than Europe and the university offered better scholarships. Personally or internally, however, these students had wanted to

experience difference without stepping too much out of their comfort zone. These internal and external influences on students' motivations are outlined in Table 5.1. These influences had an impact on the suitability of fit between the student and the IFP, which in turn had implications for the success of their IFPs.

Table 5.1 Motivations for Undertaking an IFP

Sources of motivation	Types of motivation	Impact of motivating influences
External influences	Who? - Acquaintances - Role models - Friends and family	Decisions: - Doing an IFP - Location of the IFP
Internal/personal influences	What? - Opportunities to travel - Experience daily life abroad - Practice social work in another country	Decision about location: - Location where they experience difference - Location where they step out of their comfort zone

5.1.2 Making the decision to undertake an IFP.

As they made their decision about an IFP, students were encouraged to examine their expectations. Field coordinators provided some opportunities to discuss both the students' expectations and those of the School of Social Work. They were encouraged to consider the overall experience, including travel opportunities, daily life, and practising social work at the agency. Participants' enthusiasm toward an IFP was accompanied by high expectations about one or more, but not all, aspects of the experience. For example, one participant noted, "I didn't expect people to pick me up at the airport" (Cassandra:2–3).

Two themes emerged with regards to high expectations. First, students held high expectations about what the overall experience would be like and this was depicted positively. One participant noted, "My expectations were somewhat high because I told myself that it would be great . . . we are going to have so much fun . . . an experience out of this world"

(Bianca:1). They were aware that the experience abroad would have a meaningful impact on their lives. Another participant noted, "I had expectations that it would be something big in my life, but I didn't know what" (Georgina:3). Students who decided to end an intimate relationship before going abroad had high expectations about their newfound freedom and the potential for new beginnings.

Second, participants had high expectations about learning outcomes—both personal and professional. Personal expectations consisted of learning about oneself, putting values aside, and gaining a greater openness about cultures. They hoped they would learn to put their personal values aside and avoid creating relationship problems abroad, for example, not going out alone at night if the host family disapproved. This ability would be beneficial when working as a social worker. Gaining greater openness about other cultures was another personal expectation. As one participant noted, "I hoped it would change me as a person, to have a greater openness towards other cultures" (Quincy:2). A majority of participants believed that the IFP would have an impact on them as individuals and contribute positively to their social work practice. Those beliefs are reflected in the following statement:

> It was more at a personal level to learn [about myself]. We often say that it is important to know yourself as a person so it was a lot about learning to know myself, to know my limits so it would help my professional practice. I didn't really have expectations about what I would learn professionally. (Suzie:2)

Those going to a country with a high degree of difference from the home culture generally had great expectations about personal outcomes. Many participants who wanted to undertake an IFP in North Africa were motivated by these personal outcomes.

They also possessed high expectations at a professional level. First, they wanted an opportunity to put theory into practice. One participant said, "I expected to be able to put into

practice what I had learned [at university]" (Katherine:3). This sentiment was shared by both

students who stayed in Canada and those who went abroad. A second expectation was that

they would learn how social work was practised in different cultural settings. As one

participant revealed, "[I wanted to] learn about social work, more precisely, see the differences

between Canada and other countries" (Helen:2). They wished to compare social work in

Canada to social work abroad. A third expectation of participants was "to see if I could

practise social work in another country, another culture, the same way I would in Canada"

(Jake:4). Those going to a European country similar to Canada had higher expectations about

professional outcomes and were not as worried about the transferability of learning to a

Canadian work setting upon returning home. Those who went to North Africa or those who

had previously traveled abroad tended to possess lower expectations about the professional

benefits of the IFP. As one student explained, "I wasn't going there to learn how to be a social

worker in Canada" (Olive:2).

　　　　High expectations about daily life abroad, the field placement at the agency and

professional outcomes were not always realistic. Students tended to underestimate the

difficulties that they would face, particularly culture shock and language barriers. Roskell

(2013) observes that students often find the challenges faced abroad more difficult than

anticipated. Unrealistic expectations about the overall experience prevented them from

planning adequately. Unrealistic expectations had to do with a lack of information about the

host community, as reflected in this statement from a participant going to a remote region in

Europe:

> I thought I would have to live on canned goods . . . I thought there were no stores
> where they sold clothes and I expected to live in the middle of nowhere with little

material resources. I thought I would get insulted since I was a woman from another culture . . . I actually expected to be supervised. (Erika:2)

Unrealistic expectations were also the result of misinformation provided by immigrants and foreign students regarding their country— all citizens understand French or everyone welcomes foreigners.

While information provided by students returning from an IFP was extremely positive, it did not present a balanced view of positive and negative stories and supported unrealistic expectations (Table 5.2). Students' unrealistic expectations had an impact on their preparation. They underestimated their language proficiency and failed to take language lessons or improve skills in their native language. Many waited until they arrived overseas to study the language and develop strategies to communicate, believing it would be easier in an immersive setting. In French-speaking countries, especially in European ones, most students did not expect significant language barriers and did not prepare sufficiently by becoming familiar with professional terminology in the host country. This had a negative impact on the success of their IFPs.

Table 5.2: Expectations that Influence Decision to Undertake an IFP

Overall experience	- High expectations
	- Unrealistic Expectations
Expectations about personal learning outcomes	- Learn about oneself
	- Set values aside
	- Greater cultural openness
Expectations about professional learning outcomes	- Put theory into practice
	- Learn about social work in another country
	- Learn the same as students staying in Canada

5.1.3 Preparing to go.

To prepare students for the overall experience and help them more fully understand what to expect, many factors were involved. There were two aspects of preparing for an IFP:

participants making choices about what preparations to make, and participants building a support network to assist them with preparation.

5.1.3.1 Making choices about what preparations to make.

Before going abroad for their IFP, students had to perform many in order to prepare for travel, the country, and placement at the agency. Preparations included reflecting on reasons for going, fundraising, gaining knowledge about the country, becoming acquainted with the language, arranging travel and accommodation, finding a field placement agency, and tying up loose ends at home (e.g., preparing loved ones or breaking up with a partner). Participants spoke about the time spent on specific aspects of preparation. Little time and effort were spent on some tasks such as language preparation, while other tasks like fundraising or planning travel, required more time. As one participant explained, "I had a lot of time to do research and check all the trips I wanted to do" (Tania:3). Steel and König (2006) observe that students often show greater concern about performing tasks that will address their immediate concerns with regards to IFPs.

Preparation involved a range of tasks, from minimal to comprehensive. Personal traits influenced each student's level of preparation. Students who liked being organized wanted to be well prepared or feel as though they were ready for the experience. They paid attention to details and had back-up plans, for example, having contact numbers for emergencies during travel. Others did not believe it was possible to fully prepare ahead of time. One student noted, "There is only so much you can do to be ready. You cannot live the experience before going" (Alan:19). These students recognized the limits of preparing for all eventualities. Another participant explained, "There are always unexpected events, surprises, things that go well, things that go wrong . . . you adjust as you go" (Francesca:1). Personal traits had an impact on

preparation but there were other aspects that influenced a student's level of preparation, as well.

Participants with less experience traveling abroad and those going alone wanted to gain more knowledge about the country. Arriving abroad for the IFP and needing to find temporary lodging, for example, was often scary for these participants who had limited travelling experiences. Information about the country allowed them to feel better prepared. When they could secure a placement at an agency before leaving for the IFP, they had time to research and find useful information, but this was not always possible when a country preferred to wait until the students arrived.

Participants going to a country with a greater degree of cultural difference from home, such as North African countries, often carried out significant research about the country. This provided them with some reassurance and changed misconceptions they had due to a lack of information. While most students gathered information on the country, only a few set aside a significant amount of time to study the language. One of the participants prepared extensively by helping students from the host country, sharing an apartment with them, and developing tools to learn the language. She noted, "I started making my own dictionary. I could not write Arabic so I wrote words using sounds" (Miranda:2). Language preparation was useful to participants because it helped them not only identify potential language barriers, such as vocabulary, accents, idiomatic expressions, and conversation tone, but also build on their language skills.

Some participants in a relationship with an intimate partner had to tie loose ends before leaving for the IFP. They had to think about the impact of being away, which led them to revaluate their current relationship. A few decided to put an end to their relationship: it did not

seem fair to put a partner through the challenges of long-distance relationships as they did not see the potential for a long-term relationship. Those who decided to maintain a relationship had to discuss expectations with their partner and establish a plan to make it work despite the distance. These plans included such things as regular communication, a visit abroad, or diary sharing.

Those with limited funds spent a lot of their preparation time fundraising for their IFP. One participant noted, "We organized activities to collect money, applied for scholarships" (Alan:1). This applied to a majority of participants who were already relying on summer jobs and loans to pay for the costs of going to university. They spent time dealing with financial aspects to cover the costs of staying abroad and to put money aside for short trips or a ticket for a loved one to visit. As travel was a motivating influence for those undertaking an IFP, most wanted to set aside sufficient money for this.

The participants' efforts focused more on immediate concerns such as securing travel, lodging, and a field placement agency than on their adaptation and integration in the host country. For example, they did not spend much time preparing for the ways that citizens in the host country would treat them (e.g., handling harassment in public). The academic institution and the School of Social Work were more concerned about preparing students with regards to safety issues, such as the dangers presented to foreigners and young women. The School of Social Work also wanted to cover issues of power, privilege, and oppression that might arise abroad, including the risk of harm generated by a Canadian student doing an IFP in a country of the Global South with a history of colonialism. Because the students had different concerns from those addressed by the academic institution and the School of Social Work, they did not

always perceive the orientation as useful. This has implications for IFP planning as students may ask for help for immediate concerns at the expense of security concerns.

5.1.3.2 Building a support network to assist them with preparation.

After students decided to go abroad and the School of Social Work approved their IFP, the field placement coordinator encouraged them to create a network to help with preparation and provide assistance while they were overseas. The field placement coordinator played a central part in the network, providing a list of contacts in Canada and abroad. Other individuals from the School of Social Work, such as professors or student colleagues, became a part of the network and provided names of other individuals that could give assistance, as did family members, partners, or friends. Furthermore, many students who had recently completed an IFP connected participants with locals abroad. As the network grew, students had access to a greater number of individuals. Many people in their network also had useful knowledge that they had gained from previous stays abroad, or they assisted in other ways, such as providing emotional support. The network fulfilled four functions: problem solving, counselling, sharing of cultural information, and mentoring. While the most common function in this study was problem solving, each function will be explained with examples to highlight variations among participants.

In their preparations for the IFP, participants sought aid in solving problems from a number of individuals. These included the Canadian field placement coordinator, professors, students and social workers having done an IFP, and immigrants from the host country. Participants asked for help when confronted with certain challenges such as locating a host family or finding an apartment or when looking for the names and contact information of problem solvers abroad. These locals were often available upon arrival and during the

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orientation to the host city. As one participant recalled, "I don't think they would have understood me easily if I had called by myself. So, it was Aziz who called" (Quincy:3). Schwartz, Kreitzer, Barlow and Macdonald (2014) identify as *Sherpas* these individuals who assist students with their IFP.

Participants looked for counsel from family members, partners, friends, and fellow students going abroad with them. While these individuals often lacked experience abroad, they provided a supportive environment that included validation, encouragement, and reassurance. When participants dealt with doubts, discouragement, or isolation during the preparation phase, they went to these people for emotional support. These individuals were empathetic, caring, and concerned; they helped deal with racist comments expressed by loved ones towards citizens from the host country, worries about finding a job after graduation, and disapproval expressed by family, friends, and classmates. Individuals in one's network confirmed the value of doing an IFP and encouraged participants to pursue their dreams. One participant explained, "They [parents] were very supportive. They were like, 'Do it! Oh my god, we want you to enjoy your youth'" (Rachel:2).

Participants asked for cultural information from students, professors, and acquaintances who were born in the host country or had lived there briefly. When participants had questions, these individuals within their network provided insider information about etiquette at the agency. They also modeled expected behaviours such as standards of greeting according to gender. As one participant explained, "I observed those roles, a man's role and a woman's role . . . this was the way I prepared" (Miranda:1). Individuals in one's network answered participants' questions and shared tips on how to discuss topics, such as sexual orientation, food restrictions, or personal space. Those with a larger network of informants

accessed a greater variety of perspectives about preparation and tips like, for example, bringing a wedding band to North Africa to avoid harassment.

Those going overseas sought guidance from individuals, such as seasoned professors or students acting as mentors because of their experience living/traveling abroad. The students valued the information that these mentors possessed and looked to them for guidance. One participant said, "He [professor] had recent information about the country and was able to guide us to have a better idea of where we were going and what we were getting into" (Bianca:1). Another participant described the assistance provided by student mentors: "The best information, it was the students that went just before us. It was them that helped me the most to prepare" (Irene:1). They needed guidance that went beyond tips and advice regarding what to bring or what to visit. They looked up to mentors as role models who could share their past experiences with them, such as leaving a partner behind.

There were some variations among participants with regards to building a support network. Not all students required an extensive network to help them during the preparation phase (See Table 5.3). Participants with experience abroad tended to be more self‑reliant but still appreciated cultural information about the country. They had acquired useful knowledge during trips abroad so they did not require a large network to help solve problems, such as arranging an airport pick up late at night. Those with limited travel experience appreciated having problem solvers and mentors. They valued a supportive environment because preparation was a stressful time. One participant noted, "You are really nervous. I had never traveled" (Rachel:2). Furthermore, they enlisted assistance from individuals who could provide cultural information and support their decision to undertake an IFP. Participants going to a country with a greater degree of cultural distance from Canada sought a larger network of

individuals to provide information and social support. They often found multiple informants in order to collect as much information as possible, and they appreciated their help in solving problems related to the placement. Those traveling alone also created a network to assist them before and during their stay abroad. When family and friends questioned their decision to go overseas alone, it was important to have individuals who could provide emotional support.

Table 5.3: Preparation to Go Abroad

Making choices about preparations	Tasks - Reflect on reasons to go - Fundraise - Gain knowledge about country - Learn the language - Make arrangements for travel and accommodations - Find a field placement agency - Tie up loose ends
Building a support network to assist with preparation	Functions - Problem solve - Counsel - Share cultural information - Mentor

5.1.4 Leaving home and arriving abroad.

This step included many activities from the time leading up to their departure until they arrived in their host community. This took one or two days if students travelled directly, or as long as a few weeks if they travelled independently first. Many students decided to travel abroad beforehand in order to adapt to the climate in the host country, for example. In spite of their preparation, they all dealt with the uncertainty of travelling far away from home and the absence of their usual support network. Four challenges emerged during the travel phase that promoted learning moments resulting in personal and professional outcomes: confronting last-minute doubts, feeling intense emotions when saying goodbye, facing challenges en route, and experiencing independence when travelling.

5.1.4.1 Confronting last-minute doubts.

Some participants experienced last-minute doubts before leaving for the IFP. They felt nervous—even jittery—and wondered if they were doing the right thing. These doubts sometimes manifested themselves in restless nights and tears during brief meltdowns as they confronted certain fears, such as being unable to adapt overseas. Last-minute doubts were related to three aspects: facing hardship abroad, leaving a partner behind, and finding a job as a social worker after graduation.

Doubts about facing hardship abroad were particularly intense among those with limited travel experience and those going alone. They often heard stories of doom and gloom about situations going wrong overseas, stories that forced them to appear brave and hide any misgiving. While on one hand these doubts made them question the decision to go, on the other hand they increased the students' determination to prove that they could succeed. Last-minute doubts were often related to relationships with family and friends. While they were excited to go, they worried about how the IFP would impact their ties with loved ones. As one participant voiced, "I worried a lot about how to share with my partner. How will he understand what I experienced without living it?" (Helen:24). Last-minute doubts were also related to finding work as a social worker. Their doubts were amplified by the comments of colleagues, loved ones, and potential employers about future networking challenges in Canada. These comments forwarned the lack of a local field placement and, consequently, the possible inability to find work. As one participant was told, "You won't get a job here when you graduate" (Danielle:19). Such comments conveyed a strong message about the negative impact of the IFP.

Participants who had doubts prior to travel often continued to experience doubts during transit, as stated by one participant, "Ok, what do we do? Do we go back? Do we give up or do we continue? " (Francesca:5). Even upon landing in the host country some participants revisited their decision. Confronting last-minute doubts represented a significant learning moment about decision-making for these participants. Those who received encouragement prior to travel found it easier to deal with their doubts and apprehension. Many participants not only experienced doubts but felt intense emotions with regards to goodbyes.

5.1.4.2 Feeling intense emotions when saying goodbye.

Many intense emotions surfaced when students said goodbye. They were torn between the excitement of leaving and feelings of worry or sadness. Often, they were apprehensive about not seeing loved ones again, worrying that something would happen to them or to their loved ones while they were away. They expressed concerns about their absence at significant life events at home and felt sad about leaving loved ones behind. Farewells represented memorable moments that they still recalled vividly. As one participant expressed, dealing with sadness at the airport was difficult: "I saw that my parents were taking it hard . . . I cried" (Penelope:5). The experience of saying goodbye varied between the type of person and the nature of relationships. Participants who were more empathetic than others to the grief of loved ones and those who had stronger ties with loved ones staying behind found it more difficult to say goodbye. Likewise, those who had less travel experience or who were going to a country with a greater degree of cultural distance from Canada felt intense emotions, which added to the stress of travelling and required coping skills to handle the situation. These experiences provided learning moments at a personal level because students became aware of their strengths in dealing with such emotions.

5.1.4.3 Facing challenges en route.

All the students were confronted with challenges when travelling to the host country, which required them to be self-reliant and find solutions quickly (e.g., finding out how to use the subway if no one picked them up at the airport). A few participants felt more destabilized than others facing certain challenges en route. Also, the emotions experienced en route had an impact on the way they handled these difficult moments. Three patterns emerged among the students as they faced the unknown of a new context, dealt with unexpected events, and handled the uncertainty of outcomes.

The most common challenge involved dealing with the unknown of a new context when being in transit abroad. Coping with new places en route represented a source of excitement and possibly anxiety. Often, travel was full of possibilities: many focused on the positive aspects, such as leaving the airport to explore a new city while in transit. Travelling in groups provided helpful social support for those who felt more anxious about being in a new place. Two common tasks were identified—finding their way and finding temporary lodging. Students often had to find their way using an unfamiliar transit system with no familiar points of reference. Lacking mastery of the language presented another challenge. Some reported travelling from the capital city to the host community was scary because they did not speak the official language in the host country. Those travelling alone with less experience in larger cities found it harder to orient themselves or use public transportation.

Another challenge related to dealing with unexpected events, such as dishonest taxi drivers. Finding lodging in transit or upon arrival was also stressful. Due to airport closures, one participant had to find temporary lodging with someone she had just met. Others were faced with the loss of their lodging upon arrival. These situations were even more stressful if

they had a limited budget or had certain personality traits, such as a propensity for rumination or rigid thinking. Participants who were plagued with negative thoughts found it difficult to focus on solutions. Unexpected or last-minute events, such as flight delays, caught them off guard. As one participant recalled, "I had a lot of stress because I knew I would miss the next flight . . . I told myself, 'If I arrive at two or three a.m., will they be there?'" (Penelope:6). Those travelling alone, unable to speak the language, or with limited travel experience had to face their fears, be resourceful, and take calculated risks. These experiences provided learning moments for stress management and problem resolution.

Students also dealt with uncertainty of outcomes, including getting in trouble with citizens in the host country and confronting bureaucratic problems. A few participants travelling to North Africa were concerned about offending citizens by demonstrating various Western behaviours, such as eating on public transportation during Ramadan. One participant worried about facing problems with local authorities because of the alcohol he had bought at a duty-free shop. Another participant in Europe said she feared for her personal safety when travelling, "I remember being at the train station and I was panicking. I was holding my luggage in each hand. I was afraid that someone would rob me" (Tania:4). For many, dealing with uncertainty when they travelled alone, did not speak the language, or were unsure of laws, norms, and customs undermined their confidence. It meant that more support was needed. Sometimes, support was provided by the field program coordinator in Canada or abroad when participants requested help.

Participants found it difficult to deal with bureaucratic problems. Those who had to visit many agencies before selecting a field placement or who had to find their own placement upon arrival feared that the local red tape and procedures would take too long. While they

always complied with what was required, they needed reassurance from the field placement coordinator. It took time before their anticipated fears dissipated and they stopped worrying about the potential failure of the field placement. Sometimes, visa regulations limited the time spent abroad so they worried about not attaining learning goals because of delays. As one participant noted, "I was afraid I would fail my field placement" (Katherine:2).

5.1.4.4 Experiencing independence when travelling.

Kim (2015) indicates that students frequently describe their IFP experience as transformative. In this study, the IFP was transformative as it allowed many students to discover what it meant to travel alone and be independent. Participants talked about this in two ways: travelling without a companion and travelling without the assistance of their usual support network. When travelling abroad, the first group quickly realized they had to rely on their own resources, such as managing the washroom alone with large suitcases. Furthermore, they could not depend on advice from a traveling companion. As one participant indicated, "I was lost. Nobody wanted to help me. The people were not very friendly. And then, I experienced the shock, '*Ok, now, I am here, what do I do?*'" (Irene:6). The second group consisted of those who were accompanied by one or two Canadian colleagues but still saw the experience as travelling alone. They could not depend on the emotional support of family and friends to sort out problems.

Independence was experienced both positively and negatively. Those who felt positively about their independence talked with pride about their accomplishments. It felt like entering adulthood, with the freedom to take risks. One participant remembered thinking, "Maybe I will go by myself . . . instead of listening to that little voice, always do what my parents taught me to do since I was a young girl. To never take risks, to never do things alone"

(Georgina:35). Acting as they wished without worrying about what others would be thinking was empowering. They learned to believe in themselves and trust their decisions, such as deciding how to secure a safe passage. Young women travelling alone for the first time considered it a feat in terms of independence, self-reliance, and resourcefulness.

Participants who felt negatively with regards to their independence when travelling alone expressed fears about their ability to cope. They felt lonely and isolated, so attempting to resolve problems without support or direction was scary and destabilizing. While some worried about making mistakes that would lead to negative consequences, others were concerned about their security and threats of personal violence from locals. As a result, participants experienced various levels of anxiety.

Table 5.4 Leaving Home and Arriving Abroad

Types of challenges	Examples
Confronting last-minute doubts	- Facing hardship abroad
	- Leaving partner behind
	- Finding a job when returning home
Intensity of emotions when saying goodbye	- Positive: excitement
	- Negative: worry, sadness, apprehensiveness, and concern
Challenges en route	- Facing the unknown
	- Dealing with the unexpected
	- Handling uncertainty of outcome
Experiencing independence	- Travelling without a companion
	- Travelling without their usual support network

5.1.5 Undertaking the field placement.

When going abroad, participants had different interests with regards to the field placement. While some were interested in travel, others were focused on their field placement at an agency. Nonetheless, levels of interest often decreased from both positive and negative forces at play. An invitation to explore an exotic location sparked a desire to travel. Language barriers faced at the agency dampened their enthusiasm about learning about social work at the

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agency. Harassment on the streets curbed their interest in experiencing daily life in public. For many participants, the IFP represented more than time spent at the agency—other aspects provided learning moments at a personal and professional level. Three aspects emerged about doing the field placement: touring abroad, savouring the experience of daily life, and learning about social work at the agency.

5.1.5.1 Touring abroad.

Touring represented a significant aspect of the IFP as students travelled for pleasure and visited many places before, during, or at the end of the field placement in both the host and neighbouring countries. Three themes emerged about touring abroad: 1) adapting to an urban setting, 2) pushing oneself out of their comfort zone, and 3) finding an oasis during difficult times (i.e., finding a safe space).

5.1.5.1.1 Adapting to an urban setting.

Going abroad forced participants to adapt to urban living, such as finding lodging or using public transportation—urban as compared to Moncton, New Brunswick where they studied. Since many possessed limited experience in larger cities, they had to experiment with a new lifestyle. Upon arrival, some participants recalled feeling as though they were on a vacation. As one participant explained, "It was as if I was on a trip. So, I explored, I found it beautiful; it was amazing . . . little problems . . . didn't bother me" (Bianca:3). Students explored a new city and took part in activities for the first time, such as taking a sauna or spending time in a café smoking *chicha*. As they faced language barriers, mistrust of strangers, harassment on the streets, and challenges when using public transportation, their adaptability increased. Those raised in rural areas learned a lot from navigating complex public transportation systems in Europe and North Africa. It was a big learning curve, but the

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confidence they gained helped them to further explore the cultural and geographical diversity of the country.

5.1.5.1.2 Pushing oneself out of his/her comfort zone.

Touring abroad also pushed participants out of their comfort zone as they found themselves in situations that involved risk-taking. Examples included going to the host country without the required student visa (which could be a bureaucratic nightmare), sleeping on the streets from lack of lodging, and making unplanned trips to new destinations. These experiences were learning moments. Through these challenges, students were forced to overcome their fears when evaluating new situations and making decisions about ways to respond. How students experienced being pushed out of their comfort zone depended on location. In Europe, for example, female students felt comfortable travelling alone because of the political, economic, and social contexts. They felt a great sense of pride when going alone. One participant noted, "I went to the Alps one time, all alone. I made many trips by train all alone" (Katherine:14). In North Africa, students had various opportunities to try different foods or participate in activities that few people would ever experience, such as sacrificing a sheep during a ritual for Ramadan. Experiences like these propelled students out of their comfort zone.

5.1.5.1.3 Finding an oasis during difficult times.

Touring allowed students to find an oasis[1] from the challenges faced at the agency, in the host family, or in the community. They sought an oasis to become centred and cope with

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[1] The idea of naming this process "an oasis during difficult times" came from Dr. Ross Klein.

the feelings they faced abroad. When they felt overwhelmed, travelling alone or with expatriates provided them with the freedom to act differently from expected cultural norms. For example, there, they could drink alcohol or wear shorts. Sharing cultural references with others helped students to deal with homesickness. Some left the host country to find an oasis where they could take a break and reconnect with the familiarity of home, such as being able to use a Western toilet. Others travelled shorter distances inside the country. One participant spoke of an oasis as allowing her "to really disconnect; to live in the host country, but not the field placement. To see the South, the desert; to be with girls that were not from the country" (Irene:19). Participants in North Africa who experienced significant culture shock or who had challenging living conditions because of conflicts with housemates especially appreciated touring.

Students did not always have to tour to find an oasis, however. Sometimes, they took part in activities alone or with other expatriates in the community. For one participant, her oasis from the host family was in spending time on the street away from family tensions, "My Arabic course ended at six‑thirty . . . I stayed on the street alone to wait, to read a book, or to simply look at people interacting instead of going home" (Linda:17). Finding an oasis made students aware of the importance of having a safe haven in difficult times, through which they gained a different perspective on problems and reflected on learning moments. Such awareness could not otherwise be achieved. An oasis allowed students to take a step back for a short time in order to better handle challenges. The oasis provided by touring was not accessible to everyone in the same manner, however. Sometimes, the location of the IFP made it unsafe to tour. They also had to limit travels because of a lack of funds, lack of a travel companion or lack of travel experience.

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5.1.5.2 Savouring the experience of daily life.

Savouring the experiences of daily life was a central aspect of the IFP. As participants faced challenges overseas, such as role changes, language barriers, and cultural fatigue, they developed two strategies to help themselves adapt and integrate into daily life in the host community: 1) building good relationships with people in the host country and 2) developing a routine outside the field placement agency.

5.1.5.2.1 Building good relationships with people abroad.

There were many reasons why participants felt the need to build good relationships with people abroad. To begin with, they knew few people overseas and did not always have strong bonds with their Canadian colleagues. Upon arrival overseas, they were compelled to break their isolation by building a support system, which had an impact on their experience of daily life and the success of the IFP. Living arrangements often contributed to variations in relationship building. Those who stayed with a host family or those who lived on campus with expatriates spent time with many non-Canadians. Those who lived with Canadian colleagues and spent most of their time with them had fewer occasions to meet or to develop strong relationships with citizens in the host country. As one participant noted, "The only regret I had was staying with my colleagues . . . it didn't allow us to go out, meet many people" (Danielle:27).

All the participants built good relationships overseas with a least a few individuals, such as Canadian students, foreign students, expatriates, or locals. Canadian students often constituted the nexus of participants' social life because a lot of time was spent in activities or travelling together. A few participants developed stronger ties with foreign students or expatriates, and these relationships helped them deal with culture shock or homesickness. It

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also raised their awareness about the importance of social resilience. Friendships with foreigners living in the host country helped participants gain knowledge about global diversity. Other participants developed relationships mostly with citizens, for example, a host father or a neighbour playing a parental figure. Those relationships opened doors to privileged spaces. As one participant explained, "They brought me into the part of the souk that was really a bordello . . . it's a Muslim country, but they wanted to show me how it was" (Normand:23). Participants with previous travel experience and those who felt dissatisfied with the learning outcomes at the agency appreciated forging bonds with locals, who shared knowledge about their country. Good relationships with citizens increased social networks as participants also developed ties with the citizens' family and friends. Through these bonds, participants were able to savour daily life and learn about the country. Blanchy (2009) and Roskell (2013) highlight how these interactions with individuals in the host country are helpful to students because of their role as cultural mediator.

While all the participants intended to build good relationships once they arrived abroad, not everyone realized that it would require changes in their way of interacting with people. As they started a life abroad, they had to reconsider how to respond to citizens. Being a good guest needed more adaptation and flexibility than they initially thought and required adjustment to different cultural behaviours. Three strategies were deployed by participants: (a) showing restraint and diplomacy, (b) constructing a different identity, and (c) highlighting an aspect of identity.

Participants learned about restraint and diplomacy when feeling frustrations about their experience in the country, for example, handling tardiness. Overseas, they avoided value-laden discussions (e.g., gay marriages) when they believed it could offend the host family, the

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supervisor, or a friend. They also had to re-evaluate what they considered acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, such as children staying out late. They could not always respond in the same way that they would at home. This is evidenced in the following statement, "When I lost my scholarship, I was frustrated . . . you can't go at the school and start giving them a hard time because you are a guest" (Katherine:21). In North Africa, showing restraint resulted in students accepting behaviours between men and women they would not have tolerated at home. As one participant said, "My male friends grabbed me by the arm . . . they spoke roughly, something I would never let a man do in Canada but you are in another country" (Quincy:8). Because of the cultural differences, students found themselves in situations where they needed to show diplomacy. While the intent to be a good guest was universal, not all were prepared to handle the challenges. They found it harder than they had foreseen to be culturally sensitive. Since preparation before going abroad did not always prevent cultural faux pas, a need for more extensive training and supervision may be necessary.

The participants' second strategy for building good relationships was to construct a different identity. Some chose to manage perceptions about their identity before going abroad by changing their appearance; others constructed another identity once they were in the host community as a result of problems they experienced with relationships. This strategy was found mostly with participants in North Africa, who decided to hide aspects of their identity, such as their nationality, sexual orientation, and relationship status. They wore local clothes to blend in and limit hassles and chose not to reveal their sexual orientation. As one participant revealed, "Homosexuality is not accepted. That was a challenge, in fact, to hide my homosexuality" (participant:17). Some single female participants wore a wedding ring to hide the fact they were single and so avoid harassment from local men.

For some, the third strategy—highlighting a part of their identity—was useful for building good relationships. Some highlighted their Canadian nationality to avoid problems. One female participant in North Africa did this to avoid being mistaken for a French woman and suffer more harassment by men in public places. She said, "I started always wearing my T-shirts with CANADA written on it" (Bianca:11). Others elected to showcase their identity as an Acadian and member of a minority group. One participant, for example, introduced herself as a member of a linguistic and ethno-cultural minority in order to establish bonds with locals in Europe who shared a similar identity. The participant added, "[They] lived something similar to Francophones in New Brunswick. I think it created bonds when I spoke to them about it" (Katherine:5). In North Africa and Europe, students felt that it was important to affirm their Canadian and Acadian identities, especially when they were mistaken for a European or *Québécois*. As one participant explained, "You end up wanting to explain to people where you are from and that develops your identity" (Francesca:11-12). Affirming one's Canadian and Acadian identity dispelled misconceptions and amplified feelings of pride in their ethno-cultural origins.

These strategies provided learning moments. They helped students experience aspects of their identities in different ways than they had previously known. In Europe, some participants discovered that they had fewer privileges than students doing a field placement in Canada as they had to find their field placement. They also had to adapt to different hierarchal relationships at the agency as a student trainee. In North Africa, students witnessed how multiple aspects of identity interacted (e.g., Westerner, young, single, man, and high socioeconomic background) and how these identities had an impact on the way they were treated. Female participants faced additional barriers as women, such as being banned from

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working with males because of their gender. They also observed how women were treated

differently depending on their perceived marital status. The strategy of constructing a different

identity has implications for the preparation of students for their IFP, and therefore needs

further study. Those who denied a part of their identity (e.g., sexual orientation) or those who

pretended to be something they were not (e.g., married) to avoid problems abroad may have

felt they were untrue to themselves and others. This needs to be discussed with those finding it

difficult to handle identity issues when abroad.

5.1.5.2.2 *Developing a routine outside the agency.*

Participants developed a routine outside the agency in order to enjoy daily life abroad.

This routine included going to the gym, eating a meal with expatriates, chatting in a local café,

talking at night with the host family, writing in a diary, or praying at night. Sometimes, the

routine replaced activities they missed from home. For example, one participant noted, "In the

morning, I rode in the van [at work] just for the drive. It was a treat for me. There are things

like that, routines that I created" (Georgina:22). These routines not only allowed students to

learn about daily life in the community, but also generated a sense of normalcy and stability in

their new environment. The routine—kind of a mundane reality—became a coping strategy

and helped to handle hardships like culture shock.

As the participants established routines, they often made changes to some of their usual

habits. Changes varied along a continuum, from making small changes to "going native."

When leaving home, most students packed only the essentials in compliance with airline

luggage allowances. The belongings left behind were often part of what defined them, such as

clothing aligned with their identity as a hipster. Also, they had to select clothes that they

considered more appropriate for the country or agency where they would be doing their field

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placement. Many female participants going to North Africa packed clothes that were less revealing than the clothes they might have worn at home, out of respect for citizens in the host country. Unforeseen situations also required that they make changes when they arrived abroad. One male participant discovered that his Palestinian scarf was seen as offensive by some locals so he put it away for the remainder of his stay. Two female participants downsized the possessions they brought when they discovered the host family lacked space in their home. They were forced to adapt to a foreign place without the comfort of their personal belongings. Such changes were harder for some participants than others as is demonstrated by this statement, "I had nothing from Canada . . . Every day, everything I saw, what I ate, what I heard on the radio, on television, the people that spoke around me, everything was different" (Linda:14).

Both in North Africa and Europe, their new life forced students to make important behavioural changes, especially in the way they communicated, to avoid making linguistic faux pas. Some words, such as *donner un suçon à un enfant* have a different meaning in the host country (i.e., give a hickey to a child) than in Canada (i.e., give a lollipop to a child). At the onset of the field placement, most felt self-conscious when talking because they often received both negative and positive comments about their idiomatic expressions, vocabulary, and accent. Even if French was spoken in many of the selected countries, there were socio-linguistic differences compared to the French spoken in Canada, such as accents, sounds, tone, pitch, and non-verbal cues. Gradually, many participants changed the way they pronounced certain words and/or modified their accent to help locals understand them, so by the end of the stay all felt more confident in their ability to communicate with locals.

Some participants went abroad intending to be fully immersed by living like citizens in the host country as much as possible. Those going to a country with significant cultural differences from Canada had to gain knowledge about the country. In North Africa, female participants had to learn about suitable ways of dressing to avoid being disrespectful of citizens. As one female participant noted, "It's not true that I arrived there with spaghetti string tops and little shorts" (Penelope:33). Immersion required that students learn about other aspects of daily life, for example, when eating, to leave food on the plate as a way to refuse more food. Despite preparation, participants had to adapt and make changes with the help of locals once they were in the host country. Those living with locals received instructions on how to perform daily chores. One participant noted, "I know how to clean! Well, not the way the host mother or the family cleaned the floor" (Irene:17). They observed those in their circle and behaved as much as possible like locals.

Nonetheless, participants still committed faux pas because they often lacked awareness about inappropriate behaviours, for example, using toilet paper to wipe a runny nose in public. Sometimes, they underestimated the negative reactions that certain behaviours would provoke, such as wearing a tank top, especially during Ramadan. For some, the desire to "go native" resulted in behaviour that was sometimes harmful. Two participants became ill from eating certain food and drinking the tap water. While many students acted the way they would in Canada in their private lives (e.g., having a beer at their apartment), many opted to live like citizens in the host country in their public lives (e.g., not drinking alcohol in a restaurant). As one participant explained, "Once we were out the door . . . it was, 'OK, I am not at home anymore'" (Miranda:14).

Participants learned a lot from adapting to a new lifestyle. Arriving in Europe and North Africa without a TV, computer, or video games required seeking entertainment elsewhere. As one participant explained, they met new people "because there weren't all those little gadgets, I had the chance to go and see people" (Miranda:11). While they tried many different activities, for example souk shopping, some activities were not always pleasant or easy at first. In North Africa, some participants found it initially difficult to be confronted with harassment on the streets or haggling in shops. It forced them to look at their assumptions and change their perception about haggling as the power to negotiate a lower a price instead of haggling as the experience of being cheated. With time, through changes in habits and customs, they developed assertiveness as can be noted in this statement, "I was able to be firm, something I wasn't able to do before" (Georgina:27). Those who suffered health problems had to make additional changes in habits, such as adopting an alternative mode of transportation because they had broken an arm or a leg. They had to develop resourcefulness and problem solving skills.

5.1.5.3 Learning about social work at the agency.

The participants were offered opportunities to gain knowledge about social work at the field placement agency with its different organizational culture and terminology. They took part in various activities involving group work, one-on-one intervention, education, research, and community organization. Three themes emerged with regards to achieving learning outcomes at the agency: (a) sharing with colleagues, (b) building relationships with service users, and (c) contributing to change as a social worker.

5.1.5.3.1 Sharing with colleagues.

The participants learned the importance of exchanging with colleagues at work. Indeed, the success of their IFP depended on relationships with colleagues who could provide opportunities to acquire skills, values, and knowledge. Participants asked them questions to obtain information about services or better understand social work practice. As one participant explained, "I had many discussions with them about the interventions they did. I learned like that" (Irene:13). Colleagues at the agency who took an active role in the students' learning process were very helpful, assisting with translation during a meeting or providing cultural insight after a family visit. They often extended invitations to students to take part in various activities at the agency, such as community meetings. When participants who were facing significant cultural and language barriers in North Africa and Europe shared with colleagues at the agency, they found it easier to achieve their learning goals. These exchanges are important, as an IFP requires more significant time spent observing before being asked to intervene (Mercure, 2017).

5.1.5.3.2 Building relationships with service users.

The participants learned the importance of listening carefully to what individuals wanted. Because they knew little about the country and its people, they paid greater attention to what service users had to say. When facing language barriers, they developed creative ways of communicating their concerns, such as playing soccer or drawing pictures. They became aware of their cultural lenses and the ways that they influenced perceptions about situations. Instead of judging parents for letting children play on the streets late at night, for example, they needed to look at the local context to help understand their behaviours. They gained empathy for the realities faced by underprivileged populations, often feeling intense emotions

about the well‑being of these populations. As they got to know citizens from the host country, students became more emotionally invested. They were profoundly changed by the extreme vulnerability of the individuals they met, whether seniors, orphans or individuals with a physical disability. Not only were they exposed to people living in difficult conditions, but in North Africa they also got to live in those similar conditions. They felt the harshness of winter without central heating or hot water. As one participant noted, "It's one thing to see images or to know that people live in such conditions. But to live it…" (Georgina:29). Firsthand experience of the living conditions amplified concern for the well‑being of citizens in the host country.

5.1.5.3.3 Contributing to change as a social worker.

The IFPs encouraged participants in North Africa and Europe to make a difference in the lives of people who had experienced a violation of their human rights. Students' work at their agency exposed them to global issues, such as the impact of austerity measures on the poor. Those whose field placement was with a community organization learned about working for change in solidarity with groups locally and globally. The social problems observed and the limited services available in the host community compelled students to find ways to improve the lives of people, such as advocating for better resources at the agency. This is demonstrated in the following statement, "The purpose of my placement was to make links with the needs of the centre . . . it was to obtain better mattresses for residents" (Normand:20).

Participants also challenged the authority held by some professionals in the decision‑making process. On some occasions, students protested the abuse of power, such as withdrawal of services to a family as retaliation for a social worker's actions. They expressed disagreement about certain practices that they observed between colleagues and service users.

For example, one participant observed, "They hit children as a means of discipline and it was intolerable for me . . . so I stepped out" (Cassandra:8). Yet, not all were able to challenge practices that they perceived as harmful. Some believed speaking out was inappropriate since it could be interpreted as a sign of disrespect towards the local culture; they did not have enough information to properly grasp all the ramifications. A few felt powerless to challenge authority because of prevailing attitudes in the country towards themselves as a trainee or as a woman. As one participant explained, "I always had to be the little submissive woman . . . I didn't have the right to intervene" (Bianca:7). At the end of the IFP, those who had felt powerless to make changes in clients' lives wanted to make a difference when they returned home.

Supervision during the IFP had an impact on students' learning outcomes at their agencies (Table 5.5). When they are in the host country, supervision is essential for the development of knowledge, values, and skills for social work practice (Gilbert et al., 2012). In North Africa, participants who suffered severe culture shock spent time away from work and as a result experienced tensions at the agency. In North Africa and Europe, those for whom specific tasks were not assigned at the agency and who, therefore, needed to create their own projects, felt insecure about achieving their learning goals. Furthermore, high expectations about learning outcomes at the agency created some disappointment among students. As a result, students found it challenging to put into practice what they had learned in Canadian classrooms in an agency abroad with different practice theories or social worker roles. Supervisors abroad did not always help students address such learning gaps. In addition, students did not always believe that the knowledge acquired abroad was relevant to a Canadian context, for example, learning about documentation. One participant explained,

"That practical aspect, I didn't gain anything" (Alan:4). Such a perception could be explained by the fact that students do not always see the interventions in the host country as effective in that sociocultural context because they are different from what they have seen or learned in Canada (Mercure, 2017).

Table 5.5 Learning Moments When Doing the Field Placement

Touring abroad	- Adapting to urban setting	- Experiment a new lifestyle - Participate in new activities - Navigate complex public transportation systems
	- Pushing oneself out of comfort zone	- Take risks - Overcome fears
	- Finding an oasis during difficult times	- Become centred - Cope with feelings - Handle culture shock - Gain a new perspective on difficult situation
Daily life	- Building good relationships with citizens	- Show restraint and diplomacy - Construct a different identity - Highlight an aspect of identity
	- Developing a routine	- Change usual habits - Make important behavioural changes - Fully immerse
Social work at the agency	- Sharing with colleagues	- Colleagues teach skills, values, and knowledge - Colleagues translate - Colleagues provide cultural insight
	- Building relationships with service users	- Listen to clients - Communication despite language barriers - Empathy - Emotional involvement towards clients' well-being
	- Contributing to change as a social worker	- Desire to make a difference - Work in solidarity - Improve lives of clients - Challenge authority

5.1.6 Returning to Canada.

At the end of their IFP, as participants prepared return to Canada (Table 5.6), they needed to finish projects at their field placement agency, say goodbye to their coworkers and friends, and pack their belongings. They did not always realize that coming home was sometimes a difficult experience: it required adaptation and could take weeks before they were reintegrated into life at home. This was especially the case when they had idealized the idea of

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going home and had high expectations about returning to friends they imagined wanting to

hear about their IFP. There were three phases to returning: (a) preparing to leave, (b) returning

home, and (c) reintegrating life.

5.1.6.1 Preparing to leave: Leaving a home to return to their homeland.

Towards the end of their IFP, participants were busy tying up loose ends at the agency

including closing files, finishing projects, writing final reports, and bidding farewell to

colleagues. They also had to say goodbye to housemates, their host family, friends, and

acquaintances; they needed to decide what to bring back as mementos and what to leave

behind for locals,like clothes or food for families in need. Many took a last opportunity to

travel before leaving the country.

During this transition period, participants often simultaneously experienced a pull to

stay in the host country and a pull to go back home. For those who had built strong ties with

locals such as an intimate partner, a friend, or a host family member, the pull to stay was

stronger. For some, the host community had come to feel like their home. As one participant

explained, "I felt connected . . . this was my home. And now, I had to leave" (Erika:21). They

had created a life abroad and a few received job offers if they wished to stay. Many hoped to

come back someday to visit or to work, which made the idea of going back to Canada

somewhat more palatable. At the same time, they feared that once they left the host country,

the chances of returning were slim. Not all felt this pull to stay overseas, however, especially

those who had dealt with challenging experiences, such as severe bouts of culture shock. They

often felt happy or relieved to leave the host country.

The desire to stay was counterbalanced by a pull to return to Canada. Participants

waited with anticipation to see loved ones but did not realize that loved ones would not always

understand what the participants would experience on return in terms of reverse culture shock. Those who had concrete plans for the future, such as pursuing graduate studies, doing more travel, or starting a job as a social worker, were excited to go back; they had high expectations about the future and looked forward to their return home. Most did not realize the likelihood of reverse culture shock as is reflected in this statement, "I was so happy about the life I was going back to . . . pizza, let's go. I was coming back to my roots, and to have reacted like that [suffering from severe culture shock when returning home]..." (Alan:6). Those who were uncertain about future plans did not feel as strong a pull to return; they were concerned about what awaited them and lacked strong ties pulling them back, such as a boyfriend or girlfriend or job interviews lined up. The nature of daily life that awaited was unappealing.

5.1.6.2 Returning to Canada: Mind the gap when arriving.

Upon arrival in Canada, participants had to handle cultural adjustments. The old became the new and home felt foreign. This was disorienting because it was unexpected. Re-adaptation was often eye-opening as one participant explained, "You don't think the same way anymore. I learned there was something more" (Cassandra:16). What they took for granted had changed. They learned about the shifting meaning of home and they questioned who they were and what they wanted. Often, materialism was usurped by a broader world view. For some, this was a time of mild discomfort. Others suffered intense culture shock after re-entry and were taken off guard by these new challenges. Gaw (2000) explains how reverse culture shock is a significant aspect of the experience of returning home. Some students questioned the value of an IFP. One participant noted, "At first, I didn't talk a lot about it and I didn't necessarily see my field placement as a positive experience" (Bianca:12). But others found it difficult to let go of the life they had created overseas. Their integration abroad made it more

difficult to come back; they were homesick for the host country and often compared lifestyles there and here. The intensity of feelings depended on their perceptions of loss with regards to daily life abroad, social status, relationships, and travel opportunities. Those returning from North Africa often felt like strangers at home because of the cultural difference with Canada, and did not feel like they fit in anymore.

Returning participants experienced a rollercoaster of emotions with ups and downs. As one participant exclaimed, she felt joy to see loved ones: "I was happy to see my boyfriend" (Danielle:15), and she was very happy to take part in activities that they had missed, such as walking their pet. Female participants returning from North Africa appreciated their freedom of movement in Canada and feelings of safety to go anywhere they wanted alone. At the same time, participants missed aspects of their daily life abroad—the food, interactions with people, and the rhythm of life. It was a time of conflicting emotions when they felt transformed by the IFP. This meant that they also saw loved ones differently. Participants came back changed by their experience, while those left at home, including loved ones, appeared unchanged. Time seemed to have stopped while they were away, so it seemed as if they were rewinding the clock and returning to life prior to the IFP. These personal transformations made it difficult to reconnect with family and friends because they felt somewhat out of synch with their old life.

A majority of participants experienced disappointment because they did not always feel understood by relatives andfriends. As one participant explained, "I try talking with my parents, but it is not the same thing as speaking with someone who really lived it" (Francesca:17). Friends and family did not grasp the meaning of the IFP; they realized neither what the participants had learned nor the losses they had suffered. Participants were frustrated when friends and family had little or no interest in hearing about their life overseas when they

themselves were so keen to talk about it. As one participant revealed, "We just wanted to talk about our field placement" (Francesca:16). As a result, returning home for some participants was an isolating experience for the first few months without adequate support to debrief.

5.1.6.3 Reintegrating life in Canada: Back to an old lifestyle or a new one.

Reintegration into Canadian life became another period of transition that demanded changes of the participants. Many described this transition as relearning how to live at home. One participant noted, "It was then that I cried the most, it was at home. I was like, 'I'm at home but I do not feel like I am at home'" (Francesca:15). They came back with new values, attitudes, ideas, perceptions, tradition, habits, and customs that they learned from the host culture, such as how to greet people with *la bise* or take time to enjoy a meal with friends. They let go of some of these customs or habits more quickly than others, such as speaking with a European accent or buying food daily, but they stayed connected to the host culture by maintaining certain habits such as eating spicy food or smoking *chicha*. In this reintegration process, they often reflected on lifestyles at home and overseas and selected what they wanted to keep from both.

Whether they established a new routine or went back to their old one, participants faced challenges when reintegrating into life in Canada. Participants who adapted well to the host community, who developed strong ties with locals, and who created a meaningful life abroad found the return home more challenging than the others. One participant revealed, "I couldn't live here anymore, I needed to adapt, to adapt to my own culture. I had to put aside the culture I was exposed to over there and I needed to adapt" (Francesca:16). Yet, students who had prior experience with relocation, because they spent a school year abroad, for example, found it easier to navigate the transition. While counting on family and friends also

helped with the transition, a few were not so fortunate. Their loved ones did not know how to respond to the changes they noticed or the feelings they observed, and especially to the intensity of the grief from being back home. Participants also found that their loved ones did not always support their new priorities or views about the world, such as their openness to Islam.

Concerns about the future and fears of not finding a job quickly added to the challenges of repatriation. One participant admitted, "My parents were kind of right. I didn't have the same network of contacts as others" (Tania:18). Participants worried that the IFP put them at a disadvantage when attending job interviews because they lacked important knowledge, such as practice theories or community resources relevant to the Canadian context. It helped when they could see both disadvantages and the many advantages of doing an IFP. But they needed time to reflect on outcomes and gain a new perspective about ways of transferring the knowledge learned. As one participant explained, "When you have a chance to take a step back, you realize many things" (Tania:10).

During reintegration, participants had to deploy strategies in order to facilitate their return. Some kept in contact with people from the host community and developed friendships with immigrants from the host country. Others maintained ties by listening to music, eating certain foods, or taking language classes. As one participant recalled, through such activities,

> We got closer to them. It helped a little. Instead of coming back, and nothing more, I had that connection. We went to eat with them, we did activities together, we got that link with our field placement by integrating [with individuals from] the North African community here. (Georgina:36)

Time for self-care or discussions with people who had lived through similar experiences was helpful as well. Many of these had acted as mentors or provided support during the preparation phase.

Within a year following the placement, a majority felt rooted back in the community and were involved in new projects. At one end of the continuum, some settled back after one or two weeks. One participant indicated, "University started and I got back in the groove of things quickly" (Danielle:15). At the other end were those who required months to mourn the lost lifestyle overseas or people they had left behind. One participant admitted, "It took me two months. When I came back, I felt lost. I hated the city, I felt like I had no connection. I didn't feel like it was my home anymore" (Erika:22). The transition period was necessary for those who had unresolved emotions with regards to events that happened either abroad or in Canada, such as a partner being unfaithful during their absence. Time was required not only for the completion of courses but also for closure.

Table 5.6 Returning to Canada

Preparing to leave	Activities to tie up loose ends - Finish projects - Write reports - Bid farewell
	Experiencing a pull - To stay - To go home
Returning home	Intensity of experience - Disorientation - Roller coaster of emotions - Intense culture shock
	Feelings - Happy to be back - Disappointment with family and friends - Misunderstood - Isolated
Reintegrating life	Activities to reintegrate life - Relearn to live at home - Negotiate the new and the old (ideas, values, customs, etc.)

	- Maintain connection with host country
	- Establish a new routine
	- Handle concerns about the future
	- Reflect on outcomes
	- Deploy strategies to facilitate return (eat food from host country)
	- Set aside time for self-care
	- Share stories of the experience
Time needed	
	- A few weeks
	- Several months

5.1.7 Entering the social work profession.

After graduation, most participants wanted to enter the social work profession (Table 5.7) and they were usually open to moving in order to find work. It helped when their experience of relocation for the IFP was mostly positive. It was also an asset when their first field placement had been in an institutional setting or they had developed a network to help with their job search, such as a person to write a letter of reference. In interviews, many participants talked of the benefits from an IFP. One participant noted, "I made a point of saying, 'Yes, I can adjust. This is an example. I did an IFP in this field . . . I worked with women that lived this. So I can easily adapt'" (Francesca:21). Employers usually saw the benefits of the experience and appreciated the skills (e.g., communication), knowledge (e.g., intercultural) and values (e.g., respect for diversity). Some interviewers asked questions to ascertain if the student had gained enough experience conducting one‑on‑one interventions despite language and cultural barriers. Participants needed to highlight IFP outcomes and show that they possessed sufficient social work experience that was relevant to local practice. They also had to show their knowledge of the organizational structure of the agency and community resources.

Some participants took more than a few months after graduation to transition into the social work profession. By choice, they decided to delay entry into the profession in order to travel or volunteer in another province or country. They wanted to undertake postgraduate studies as part of their long-term career goals. Others were unsure about the future and a transition period gave them time to make plans. A few who were unable to immediately find employment as a social worker accepted jobs as paraprofessionals (e.g., youth worker) or in another field. Since students who had not undertaken an IFP did not seem to face similar hardships, participants felt penalized. Even though they had learned a great deal during the IFP, for example, relationship-building skills, this did not seem to be recognized by employers. The longer it took to find a suitable position, the more their confidence eroded. This was especially the case for a few participants returning from North Africa. Popadiuk and Arthur (2014) note that the transition for students from the host country to the home country frequently includes periods of unemployment, underemployment, transitional work, and additional training.

Table 5.7 Entering the Social Work Profession

Entering the profession directly	- 1st job as a social worker (temporary employment or permanent position)
Transition before entering the profession	- 1st job in another field - Travel (national or international) - Studies

This present study revealed seven key moments or steps that are integral to the learning process. Table 5.8 provides a summary of these phases along with the essential tasks specific to each one that contribute to the learning process. While all participants who took part in this study went through these seven steps, the information provided for each reveals some of the

variations among participants in terms of the outcomes that have implications for field

education. In the following section, a summary of personal, professional, and global outcomes

stemming from this seven-step process will be presented (Figure 5.2).

Table 5.8 IFP Process Model

Phases of the Process	Steps	Tasks Involved
Phase 1	Thinking about doing an IFP	- Explore sources of motivation (i.e., external/internal)
Phase 2	Making the decision	- Identify expectations (overall, personal, and professional)
Phase 3	Preparing to go	- Make choices about what preparations to make - Build a network to assist with preparation
Phase 4	Leaving home and arriving abroad	- Process last minutes doubts - Deal with intensity of emotions when saying goodbye - Face challenges en route - Experience independence

Phase 5	Doing the field placement (touring abroad, daily life, and social work at the agency)	Touring abroad
		  - Adapt to urban setting
		  - Push oneself out of comfort zone
		  - Find an oasis during difficult times
		Daily life
		  - Build good relationships with citizens
		  - Develop a routine
		Social work at the agency
		  - Share with colleagues
		  - Build relationships with service users
		  - Contribute to change as a social worker

Phase 6	Returning to Canada	- Prepare to leave - Return home - Reintegrate life
Phase 7	Entering the social work profession	- Enter the profession directly - Do a transition before entering the profession

Figure 5.2 Long-Term Outcomes
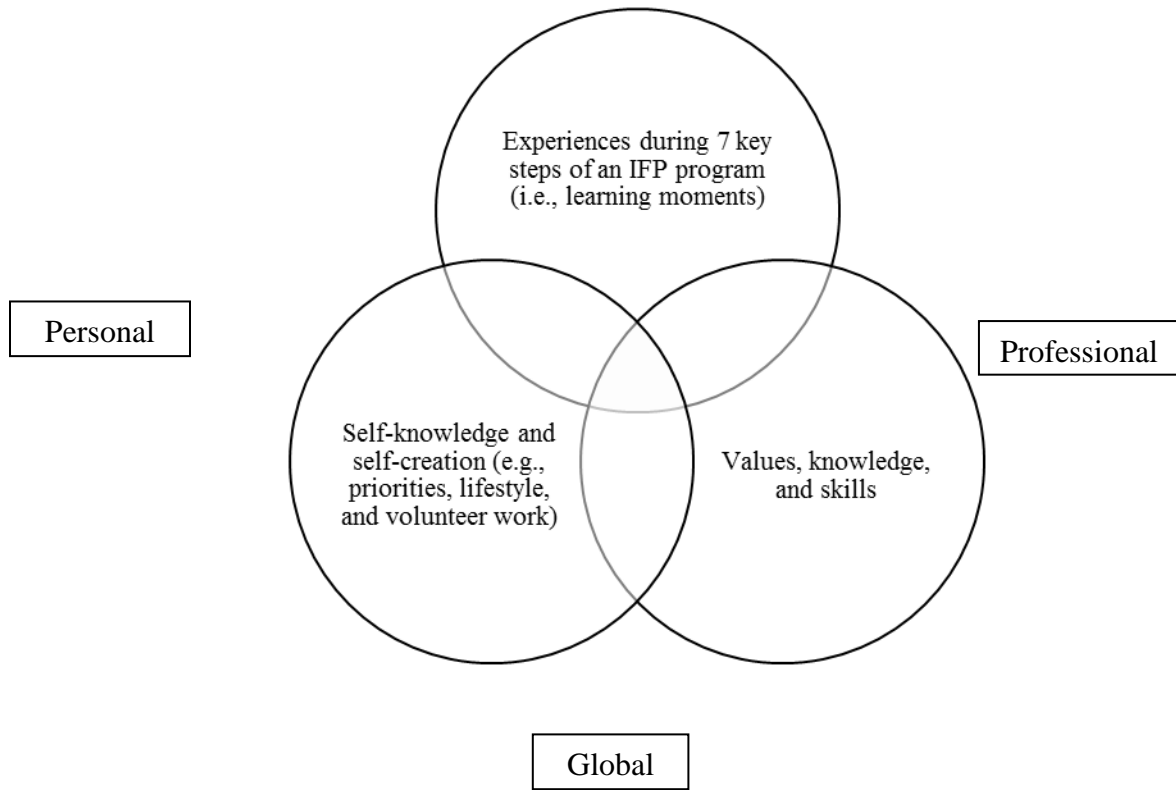
5.2 Outcomes After an IFP: An Experience that Continues to Impact Their Lives

While participants identified many outcomes from their IFP, not everyone found it easy to speak about the gains. As one student explained, "I am not sure we are all aware of what we bring back and how it shaped us" (Alan:10). Initially, those with negative experiences abroad were unable to talk positively about their experience and its outcomes. One participant indicated that, "[It took] two years, before I saw the positive impact of having gone; to see how much I had evolved as a person" (Bianca:13). For the majority of students, distance from the IFP, in terms of both physical space and time, was required for them to process their experiences and put them into perspective in order to gain insights about personal, professional, and global outcomes. Generally, those who went to North Africa felt a great

sense of accomplishment about the overall experience and identified many personal outcomes. Those who went to Europe were also very proud of their accomplishments but highlighted both professional and personal outcomes. Few participants mentioned global outcomes. Some did not believe they had gained as much as they had hoped in terms of professional outcomes. Students' concern with "knowledge and skills application within a circumscribed knowledge frame suggests the dominant influence of scientism and competence-based practice in social work" (Lam, Wong & Tse Fong Leung, 2007, p. 92).

5.2.1 Personal outcomes and their impact on social work practice.

Participants identified many personal outcomes from an IFP. Taking part in an IFP transformed their lives: theybelieved they had changed while they were abroad and felt the need to let go of friendships from Canada upon returning home. Priorities in their life changed, which resulted in a lifestyle with fewer possessions and a stronger focus on loved ones. Participants discovered new strengths or further developed some that they already possessed. The IFP altered their perception about hardship which they learned to see as temporary. One participant noted, "During difficult moments, I told myself, 'Its only four months'" (Irene:37). Hardships could be transformed into positive outcomes, such as perseverance and adaptation skills: overcoming hardships gave them confidence that they could do it again. One participant revealed, "To be able to deal with challenging moments . . . you are better able to engage in other types of challenges on a daily basis [as a SW]" (Bianca:7). For some participants, the level of growth was significant as they overcame shyness. Many described it as life-changing because of the self-knowledge, self-reliance, and self-confidence gained. In Thörn's study (2010), students identified personal development as the most significant aspect of the IFP. In this study, participants described it as an intervention on themselves that, in turn, had an

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impact on them as a social worker. As one participant concluded, "It's a job where you as a person, your values, and your beliefs have an impact on your intervention" (Helen:29). This self-knowledge was essential for them as social workers and for their practice.

5.2.2 Professional outcomes and their impact on social work practice.

For most participants, an IFP was an amazing experience that had long-lasting impacts on their social work practice. As one participant explained, "It still has a direct effect on the work that I do now" (Bianca:9). It changed their perspective about parents with limited means who are providing for their family. One participant remarked, "So what if there are holes in the jeans and they are a little dirty . . . Does he have clothes? Does he have food?" (Jake:16). Going abroad also fostered an interest in helping foreign students looking for an international experience in Canada. All participants successfully completed their IFP and attained similar learning goals as students who remained in Canada with respect to values, knowledge, and skills.

5.2.2.1 Social work values: Putting them into practice in a different context.

Unlike most students who completed a field placement locally, participants had to put into practice many social work values— empathy, openness, non‑judgment, and respect for difference—in an intercultural context. When participants were abroad, they often stood out from locals because they were an audible or visible minority. Many were treated differently because of this. One participant noted, "You didn't fit in at all. You were the outsider" (Olive:19). For Saito and Johns (2009), occupying the position of outsider provided a space to reassess their own values as well as the ones in the host country. Being seen and treated as the Other stayed with them when they returned to Canada. It enabled them to have empathy for people in similar situations and an openness towards people who did not share similar values,

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practices, or customs. An IFP provided occasions for students to re-examine their views about the world and the relativity of what it meant to be punctual or independent. It became easier to respect people who adopted different lifestyles or behaviours that varied from the norm, for example, respecting the wishes of an elderly person to sleep in a chair at night instead of her bed. Participants challenged social workers' practices that could result in the loss of parental rights. In one example, social workers in child protection made derogatory comments about mothers that further stigmatized them and negatively influenced the decisions being made about them. One participant had spoken up when social work colleagues made such comments as "She's so stupid . . . she shouldn't be with him" (Erika:34). The fact that the participant had been stigmatized and treated differently during her IFP because she was an outsider reinforced her desire to make a difference.

Completing an IFP did not mean that every participant returned home open-minded, non-judgmental or free of biases. Some realized that it was difficult to be open-minded with those who were intolerant towards certain groups (e.g., LGBTQ+). Two female participants recognized how negative experiences abroad provoked temporary biases towards certain groups: one initially had a negative perception about North African men upon her return to Canada and another, about men generally. She explained, "Because three men followed me . . . I was close-minded about men when I came back" (Irene:31).

5.2.2.2 Knowledge to work with people in an intercultural context.

Through the IFP experience, participants gained knowledge about the host country, its mores and its social work practices. This helped them identify the differences and commonalities between both countries (Dominelli & Thomas Bernard, 2003b). While some students who stayed in Canada were exposed to international and intercultural issues, they did

not acquire firsthand knowledge of adaptation and integration processes in a new country. Participants had to deal with linguistic barriers, different social conventions and practices, and cultural fatigue on a daily basis: also, they needed to build a new social network within their host community. As a result, they gained useful knowledge about interacting with families from various ethno‑cultural backgrounds, who do not speak French or English. As one participant explained, "When I see an [Indigenous] mother and grand‑mother speak another language, I don't panic . . . I don't jump to conclusions [because I do not understand what they are saying]" (Bianca:15).

Participants acquired knowledge about forms of oppression—violence, discrimination, marginalization or cultural imperialism—that impede the inclusion of individuals belonging to certain groups, such as visible or sexual minorities in society. Those who had an IFP in North Africa, especially the female participants, faced stereotypes (e.g., generalizations about Westerners): prejudice (e.g., that they lacked sexual morality), harassment (e.g., experiencing unwanted touch by local men in public), xenophobia (e.g., being disliked because they were perceived to be a negative influence), and discrimination (e.g., being excluded from a gym). Such learning moments provided a better understanding of oppression, power, and privilege when multiple identities intersect in a country with a long history of colonialism.

The IFP allowed participants to develop two strategies for obtaining knowledge about people in intercultural contexts: gaining cultural expertise and seeing diversity among ethno‑cultural groups. Before going abroad, participants read and talked to key people about the host country and its history. Nevertheless, during their stay abroad, they needed to acquire more knowledge about the country to make sense of situations encountered. As one participant noted, "It's easy to judge at first glance . . . it is necessary to dig deeper. They often have ways

of doing, cultures, rituals, things we don't know that can explain an event" (Quincy:17). Some knowledge acquired centred on commonalities. One participant explained, "For them, it's unacceptable that you stand over someone when you speak to them" (Cassandra:23). Some knowledge centered on differences among individuals belonging to the same group. Eventually, once they were employed as a social worker, they would read about the country of origin of their service users, or they would speak with colleagues who had valuable experience working with immigrants. They wanted to build bridges. One participant indicated, "When I have clients from a country I don't know, I will read about that country . . . the more knowledge I gain, the more I can meet them where they are" (Bianca:15). They co‑constructed knowledge with clients to learn about them and their needs. The same participant remarked, "I let them speak to me about their culture" (Bianca:16). It was important for the participants to reach out to people in order to grasp their perspective.

5.2.2.3 Skills learned.

The IFP experience allowed students to learn new skills and put into practice previously acquired skills through the use of role play, observation, or co‑intervention. As was the case with students doing a field placement in Canada, those completing an IFP wondered if they would develop the required skills to be a social worker. This type of questioning occurred when supervision did not address the transferability of skills or when participants had limited exposure to one‑on‑one interventions during their time at the agency. Despite these challenges, participants identified two categories of skills gained from their IFP: general skills (e.g., relationship-building, coping, adaptation, and self‑reflection) and intervention skills (e.g., observation, interviewing, communication, and centring oneself). While all the students

developed these skills to some extent, participants in an IFP learned to use these skills in an intercultural context.

Participants developed relationship-building skills with a culturally diverse population. As one participant explained, "If I had not gone there and I wasn't exposed to so many different people . . . it forced me to come out of my shell" (Erika:26). Since the richness of the experience abroad depended largely on participants' abilities to establish relationships with citizens from the host country, they had to experiment with various ways of reaching out to people regardless of their cultural and language barriers. They found creative ways to interact, such as playing sports, making jokes, or using photo albums to get to know each other. Often, they relied on observation of their surroundings to know how to behave in new situations. As one participant suggested, "Not only pay attention to the language but observe the body" (Miranda:21). In these ways, they gained confidence in their relationship-building skills despite the challenges they encountered. While Hachey (1998) highlights the skills that can be learned by students abroad, Mathiesen and Lager (2007) indicate that students sometimes face challenging situations that hinder their ability to learn certain skills; for example, students facing conflicting values that they feel they cannot address during their time abroad are deprived of opportunities to learn conflict resolution.

Both in Europe and North Africa, participants improved their communication skills. When confronted with a challenging situation, such as communicating with a person who spoke only a few words of French or English, they needed to utilize multiple verbal and nonverbal strategies simultaneously: reformulate, smile, sign, touch, mime, play. They learned about using simple words, speaking in short sentences, repeating often, and verifying the

comprehension of messages. Now, they feel less apprehensive about cultural and language

barriers because they know that communication simply takes time and patience.

While many studies focus on the short-term impacts of studying abroad, few examine

itslong-term impacts. In this study, I have explored learning moments and personal,

professional, and global outcomes beyond the immediate return from the host country. Not

only has the study demonstrated evidence of outcomes, it has provided information about both

the participants' achievements as a result of those outcomes and their relevance to their

individual social work practice.

5.2.3 Global outcomes and impact on their social work practice.

International experiences also allow students to gain international knowledge, which

Zemach-Bersin (2007) describes as *global literacy*. In this study, the students developed a

better understanding of international issues and their impact on people's lives. One participant

explained, "It helped me to understand better what was really happening there . . . You know,

it's hard sometimes to really grasp the magnitude of something if you haven't lived it"

(Jake:24). When returning home, some of the students whose IFP had been in North Africa

addressed the challenges of "de-stigmatis[ing] the people of Africa, and rais[ing] awareness

about global politics and economics" (Sewpaul, 2003, p. 327). Students also learned key

principles for global skills for working with cultural minorities, immigrants, and refugees,

such as demonstrating cultural humility, seeking assistance from a cultural guide, or becoming

a cultural mediator. In the words of one participant:

> They will dress in a shirt and shorts in the middle of winter in their apartment because
> they put the heating on high. And then they are hot. What do you do when it's too hot
> at home, you open a window. So they do it here also. This creates conflicts with the
> landlord and they call us. I try to explain, 'They don't understand. You know, I

encourage you to go see them and explain, not scold them or treat them like they are idiots, but to explain how things work.' . . . I defend them all the time. (Penelope:27)

Some participants adopted different values that translated into obligations as global citizens to take action on international issues. For example, some tried to avoid over-consumerism and buy fair trade products. These values also translated into increased ability to intervene with people from other cultures in the context of volunteering at the local, national, and international level. One participant recalled one of these international experiences when she volunteered:

> My role as a social worker was to tell them the results of the test and do educational work with them. Small children, six or seven years old, walking miles and miles to get tested. They were like small adults . . . so, talk about being out of your comfort zone . . . . every day, always being checked for bombs . . . there, never feeling safe. (Cassandra: 33-34)

5.3 Analysis: Five Themes with Implications for Social Work Education

Certain trends became evident from the participants' stories. Two factors influenced the IFP experience of students resulting in greater challenges during the IFP. These factors were personal and contextual. While these factors did not automatically limit outcomes, they definitely made the transition periods more difficult. Personal factors included limited travel experience, personality traits (e.g., inflexibility, rigidity, and propensity to worry), and identities (e.g., gender and sexual orientation). Contextual factors consisted of a lack of support from parents or an intimate partner, a difficult break-up before leaving, challenges in finding an agency (e.g., the agency was not their first choice), harassment when living abroad, personal or family issues while away (e.g., when a loved one was sick), inadequate supervision, severe culture shock, and returning to Canada early.

While one factor may be sufficient to destabilize a student during a specific transition period, for example, the transition from home to host country, a culmination of several situations put a strain on their learning processes. Yet, other factors served to mitigate these processes and helped students thrive during their IFP: previous travel experience, realistic expectations, financial support, sufficient preparation, and adequate support before, during, and after the IFP. Five important aspects with implications for social work education and IFP planning emerged from the data: 1) expectations about being out of one's comfort zone, 2) identity, 3) touring abroad, 4) the student's identification of personal and professional outcomes, and 5) the meaning of stories. These five aspects were identified in stories that described IFP settings, the unexpected situations that participants found challenging, the ways they responded to these situations or events, and the repercussions of participants' choices and actions, which Souto-Manning (2006) describes as "the major building blocks tellers use in composing storylines" (p. 67).

5.3.1 Expectations about being out of one's comfort zone.

Participants wanted their IFP to take place in Europe or North Africa because these countries were culturally different from Canada. They desired to take a leap of faith and see how they would handle situations in a new milieu. They saw the benefits of taking risks and confronting their fears. Many talked about it as stepping out of their comfort zone—a popular metaphor that is also found in the literature about studying abroad. It is founded on the assumption "that when placed in a stressful or challenging situation people will respond, rise to the occasion and overcome their hesitancy or fear and grow as individuals" (Brown, 2008, p. 3).

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When participants arrived in the host country, they expected to be stepping out of their comfort zone, but they often underestimated the intensity of the experience. They had expected to adapt to new customs and practices, for example, to follow the appropriate dress code and not wear tank tops in North Africa. However, they underrated the challenges of following unspoken rules and expected behaviours, such as avoiding being seen through their apartment window when wearing a tank top. Facing challenges away from the support of loved ones was more difficult than expected. Not only were there significant quantities of information to process, but the participants also needed to deal with language barriers without having been sufficiently prepared. They handled with unexpected situations that sparked disorientation, embarrassment, and frustrations. These situations included overcoming language barriers with nationals speaking English or French, reactions of nationals in more traditional neighbourhoods, and challenges with Canadian colleagues suffering from severe culture shock. Many were taken off guard by the intensity of their experiences. Smaller incidents often felt like major ones to students when they were overwhelmed by a roller coaster of emotions.

However, most participants did not expect to be stepping out of their comfort zone before going abroad or after returning home from the field placement. Preparation before departure was more challenging than anticipated, for example, preparing loved ones for the separation, handling racist comments about the host country, and facing doubts about going abroad all took a toll. Many IFP participants found it difficult not know the location of their field placement beforehand. Often, host countries elected to confirm placements once a student had arrived in the host city, in order to ensure a more suitable match. In some cases, the students themselves had to contact agencies to find their own placement. These delays

created problems during the preparation phase because it was difficult to find adequate lodging beforehand that was cheap and near the agency. As a result, participants experienced higher levels of stress as they feared that such delays could prevent them from successfully completing their IFP. All of these uncertainties pushed many out of their comfort zone. In the same way, participants did not expect that the reintegration process on their return home— dealing with homesickness for the host country or trying to unpack events that happened abroad—would also force them out of their comfort zone.

Being forced out of their comfort zone provided students with learning moments from which they were able to, among other things, develop better coping strategies. Of course, not all participants saw these moments as "peak learning experiences" (Brown, 2008, p. 10). As Brown (2008) explains, significant changes occur "when participants feel safe, secure and accepted" (p. 11). Many learning moments encountered by students during their IFP did not happen in such a context. Students doing an IFP are often

> under intense pressure to feel that they are having a great learning experience, pressure that is enhanced by the romanticism about the field experience that pervades development discourse. What about those students who feel guilt at not achieving the vaunted epiphany, or who cannot shake off their depression, loneliness, and culture shock in the field? What about those who suffer a terrible experience such as an assault or an extortion attempt or (often most painful) bald ingratitude and who find it hard not to blame `them` for their misery? . . . How ethical is it to leave our students without a formal, structured opportunity to reflect honestly upon such alienation as they have experienced in the field? (Epprecht, 2004, p. 700)

Challenges faced by students abroad have implications for IFP planning, more specifically in preparation and supervision. First, coordinators need to ensure that they provide students with a field placement agency and accommodations that will guarantee a sense of safety. This is important as students find it difficult to learn in an environment which is not conducive to learning. Guidelines need to be established in order to facilitate the transition when students

are en route, such as having a person to call in the event of problems and making sure they have someone to welcome them upon arrival. The coordinator also needs to provide additional support to facilitate the settlement process, for example, when there is a problem finding a field placement agency or securing accommodation because of unexpected events. Second, students need a supervisor who will assist them in processing uncomfortable experiences, for example, not feeling accepted by employees at the agency.

5.3.2 Identity.

The IFP is described as a meeting with oneself, "particularly one's identity—in a context that may stimulate new questions and new formations of that self" with regards to identity (e.g., national identity) (Dolby, 2004, p. 150). Canadian students studying abroad, for example, frequently experience being a visible minority for the first time. In this study, participants' stay in their host countries raised many issues with regards to their identity. While prior to the IFP some had already faced misunderstanding or prejudgment because of their identity as a minority (e.g., Acadians and sexual orientation), during the IFP many were treated differently because they were a visible and audible minority. Participants' narratives showcase four aspects that emerged related to identity issues: (a) the experience of difference, (b) being the other and having double or multiple minority statuses, (c) othering processes, and (d) the development of an ethno-cultural identity.

Participants highlighted a variety of identity-related reactions that they encountered during the IFP as a result of their difference. More often than not, locals were interested and curious about them. This was not always the case with all citizens in the host country. Legault and Rachédi (2008) propose that immigrants in Canada experience disqualifying moments in a new country in three ways: citizens ignore the newcomers' difference (e.g., citizens assume

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that the way they see parental roles is universal), citizens treat the newcomers' difference negatively (e.g., citizens discriminate against newcomers when they try to rent an apartment, such as having to pay a bigger damage deposit), and citizens exploit the newcomers' difference (e.g., citizens treat immigrants as cheap labour). In this study, being a foreign student translated into two types of reactions from nationals in the host country. Some students were treated differently because of their difference, either negatively (e.g., ostracized because of their difference) or positively (e.g., being given certain privileges). For others, their difference was ignored in the host country. Because of this, some supervisors evaluated them as deficient because they did not attain the same goals as local students. Supervisors also judged these students' performance without taking into consideration the culture they were experiencing. Furthermore, supervisors underestimated the learning curve needed to transpose the knowledge and understand new ways of practising social work.

During their IFP, participants went through difficult moments as a result of being the other, such as being feared, avoided, judged, or objectified. Only one participant in Europe highlighted problems with being feared by service users at the field placement agency because she was a foreigner. It was primarily the participants in North Africa that provided examples of being the other, for example, a female participant was grabbed by men on the streets and a male participant was struck by children throwing small rocks at him. When one minority identity (e.g., being a foreigner) intersected with other identities based on age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, etc., participants' experience in the majority culture was even more challenging (e.g., being young – a woman – single – a lesbian). When witnessing the treatment of their Canadian colleagues, participants also gained greater awareness of the impact of identities. Male and female participants going to the host country together found it easier to

identify differential treatment because they could witness, for example, the males having

greater access to certain spaces than the females. Also, female participants were often

surprised by gender relations. Their experience with men from the host country living in

Canada was different from their experience with men from the host country. Furthermore,

male students had to adopt different roles, such as mediator and protector with their female

colleagues in the host country in response to various incidents; for example, men in one host

community asked a male participant to intervene with his female colleagues in order to stop

behaviours that were seen as culturally inappropriate.

The participants' stories also revealed information about othering processes. Narratives

produced by participants included categories such as "them and us" when they were talking

about the IFP. More often than not, participants compared various aspects of life using these

categories. One participant noted, "For them, it's important that you accept [when they offer

you something to drink]" (Cassandra:23). While there were comparisons made, participants

usually did not rank one group as superior to another. However, in some narratives, they

explained how they had initially seen the differences as negative, but with time their

perception changed. One participant noted:

> Well, the children of seven–eight years old are out at 2:00 am. It's part of the culture
> [there]. It's part of the community because there is still daylight outside. It is unsafe
> when it gets dark. And when you think about it, you go home when it's dark. Well, for
> me, it was a big shock because it's a way of life that is different from mine [that is
> different from here] . . . It means that the values are different. A child will miss a week
> of school to go learn how to fish and it is part of the culture. It's part of the North and
> it's okay. (Erika:14)

Some participants identified the differences observed in the host country as positive

compared to their experience in Canada. One participant said:

> Like the fact that these people [them], they welcomed us in their home, in their
> personal space. You know, I found it nice. I think that on our side [us], we would be
> more inclined to put them in a hotel and make an appointment to go pick them up the
> next morning. I found it was very, very nice of them. (Helen:4)

In one or two narratives, the opposite was the case. Aspects of the host country were described

negatively in comparison to Canada. One participant said, "Social work in Europe [there] is

not the same as it is here. It is years and years behind [us]" (Olive:2). Similarly, another

participant provided this comparison between Canada and North Africa:

> Sometimes, you complain about this country, here [Canada], that things are done badly
> . . . there is poverty . . .You see another country [North Africa], where it is even worse.
> It is chaotic. They are disorganized. Little children who beg . . . so you start to realize,
> 'Yeah, finally our country is maybe not that bad'. (Penelope:15–16)

While both provided negative comments about social work and social problems in the host

country, their narratives about the host country and its people were mostly positive.

Finally, the students' narratives revealed that going abroad contributed to the

development of their ethno-cultural identity. Before leaving for the host country, participants

often identified with a region or city: coming from a Northern region (e.g., *je viens du nord*) or

being a Monctonian. Some identified with the language they spoke (e.g., *je suis française*).

When participants travelled outside of Canada for their IFP, locals were sometimes confused

about the students' ethno-cultural identity when they said that they were *French* instead of

francophone. They were also repeatedly mistaken for Anglophone or *Québécois* because of

their accent, which often became a source of frustration. While Acadians and *Québécois* share

a language, they have a different history and traditions. Such interactions were learning

moments for participants as they strengthened their ethno‑cultural and linguistic identity as

Acadian and Francophone. For Dolby (2004), going abroad transforms a potentially passive

identification of their nationality to a more active process because national identity is

constructed inside as well as outside the state. Dolby (2004) calls it a "critical encounter" with a national self (p. 171).

5.3.3 Touring abroad.

In social work practice and education, providing individuals with a safe space is important (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015). A safe space includes a physical space to be heard and reflect on what is happening without judgment or censorship where individuals have the freedom to say what you think and feel. As Kisfalvi and Oliver (2015) explain:

> Providing a space and building a container for such deep learning is essential. It facilitates those transformative "aha" moments when students realize that they did not see something important, or have a sudden flash of insight about their personal or social worlds. (p. 735)

Participants of this study discovered the value of travel or touring to create a safe space. Not only did travel allow them to gain knowledge about another part of the world, for example, nationalism in certain countries or the Schengen zone, it also provided learning moments for developing certain skills, such as communication, adaptation, and problem solving. Participants also discovered that touring enabled them to find an oasis when they experienced hard times. Taking a break, such as a holiday, constituted a useful way of coping. Irwin (2007) writes that as individuals live abroad, they begin

> to understand and negotiate the new symbolic environment, the new meanings start to take over. One's "native" meanings can become confused with the new meanings, producing an identity crisis of sorts. Taking a holiday re-grounds one in one's "native" symbolic world. (para. 33)

For participants, touring provided an oasis or place of respite from the craziness of life (e.g., conflicts with the host family and harassment in public), the boredom of the daily routine, and homesickness. It provided enough comfort and security to recharge their batteries and feel ready to confront their numerous challenges.

5.3.4 Student's identification of personal and professional outcomes: Knowledge, skills, and values.

The IFP both exposes students to knowledge about different practice methods, new values, and skills to "be innovative and creative in new ways" (Matthew & Lough, 2017, p. 19). However, when initially questioned about outcomes, participants did not always find it easy to provide an answer. Nonetheless, significant knowledge, skills, and values emerged from the stories told about IFPs a few years after the experience. Personal, professional, and global outcomes occurred as a result not only of the time participants spent at the agency but also from the experience of daily life abroad and when touring.

With regards to their social work practice, participants gained intercultural, cross-cultural, and global knowledge. Participants expanded their knowledge of culturally different service users and the way in which culture shaped their lives. They observed that despite differences among cultural groups, there were many similarities across cultures. They learned about global issues, the interconnectedness of the world, and various topics, such as history, politics, economy, culture, and geography (e.g., host country and relationships with other countries in a region).

In terms of skills, participants developed both general and specific skills for social work practice. Resourcefulness and adaptability were two important skills that were gained by all. They developed greater awareness about their own culture and its influence on their work with people from different cultural backgrounds and learned about building relationships with culturally different individuals and ways of showing respect for difference. Their ability to communicate and intervene in an intercultural context improved, especially when faced with language barriers, such as observing interactions and looking for social cues—silences,

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laughter, facial expressions, and body movements. They also adopted a positive attitude towards different behaviours encountered among individuals.

During their IFPs, participants' learning process started "with personal awareness and new attitudes before it [could] be translated into professional learning" (Mercure, 2017, p. 101, author's translation). On a personal level, this translated into an increased ability to identify the important values that guided them in life. For example, the IFP provided participants with many occasions to reflect upon the values they wanted to have that would serve as an internal compass upon returning home. These included personal values, such as appreciation, compassion, curiosity, determination, open-mindedness, and perseverance. With regards to professional values, their reflections revolved around the two core values found in the Code of Ethics: "respect for inherent dignity and worth of person" and "pursuit of social justice" (New Brunswick Association of Social Workers, 2007). Participants recognized the need to respect diversity in society and to fight against prejudice and discrimination. Hence, their experiences abroad reinforced both a desire to help vulnerable populations obtain access to needed resources and a determination to make a difference in their community. This increased awareness of one's values is an integral part of a social work student's education that contributes to a greater well-being for the people who receive services (Tartakovsky, 2016).

5.3.5 Meaning of stories.

Souto-Manning (2006) explains that stories allow the storyteller to "provide some order" of what happened to them (p.67). From this process of making sense and finding meaning in their IFP experience, two important storylines were noted in this study about moving forward in their life and about future IFPs.

5.3.5.1 About moving forward in their life.

Participants' stories illustrated how a philosophy of life developed as a result of the IFP. Four themes emerged about ways in which this philosophy of life influenced them personally and professionally: (a) overcoming hardship, (b) breaking away from the group, (c) looking for happiness in new places, and (d) being philosophical about what cannot be controlled. Many stories conveyed the meaning of overcoming hardships during the IFP. When participants were abroad, they faced hard times and this required hard work and dedication. As a way to cope when facing such hardship, they tried to see the situation as temporary. This way of seeing life is reflected in the following statement, ''During difficult moments, I told myself— its only four months'' (Irene:37). Challenges overseas helped them to believe in their ability to face hardship. Hardship was worthwhile and could be transformed into positive outcomes. After returning, many thought that if they were able to overcome such hardships abroad, they could do it again. For Irene, for example, it became a philosophy of life that is still helpful when facing challenges or assisting others to do the same.

Some stories about IFPs showed how participants learned about breaking away from the group in order to live as they wished and remain true to themselves. One participant explained, ''I want to live my life like I want and not like others want'' (Francesca:27). At a professional level, this philosophy of life translated in feeling comfortable expressing their individuality at work, for example, being informal when building relationships with service users. Breaking away from the group also meant being at ease to challenge practices that went against social work values, such as the abuse of authority. Some believed it was preferable to do what was right rather than bend to pressure from colleagues. One participant said, ''It's not

easy being bullied or influenced by others [colleagues], but you have to be firm and stick to your values'' (Erika:27).

Participants' stories conveyed a desire to look for happiness in new places after returning from their IFP. A shift in perspective happened to many participants when they witnessed the living conditions in North Africa, such as seeing a car as a luxury item. They tried a lifestyle with fewer material possessions when they were abroad and this brought them a lot of happiness. One participant mentioned, ''I lived on crumbs but what I had there seemed to be more than what I had here'' (Jake:21). Upon returning home, many missed their life abroad. They had developed an appreciation for a simpler life. Quincy, for example, described this new life after her IFP as less superficial and more centered on relationships than material possessions.

Participants also conveyed in their stories how they became more philosophical about their ability to change what was out of their control. Abroad, they needed to deal with many frustrations as a result of unexpected events, bureaucracy, or delays. In many instances, they had little control over events, such as long delays waiting for the approval of an agency director for a project. They had to be philosophical and accept there was nothing to be done except remain calm. After returning home, being philosophical allowed them to cope with many realities at work. When they learned about harsh realities experienced by service users, they did not feel so overwhelmed. One participant explained that it was important he did all he could for families but could not feel responsible for outcomes out of his control. He said, ''If I see traumatizing situations or unacceptable ones [child abuse] . . . I give the maximum of myself to make a difference. I am able to live in peace with that'' (Jake:33).

These stories illustrate how participants moved forward after their IFP. It is possible to see how participants found meaning both in positive and negative experiences during their IFP which they then integrated in their personal and professional life in a positive way. Niehaus, Reading, Nelson, Wegner and Arthur (2018) highlight the importance of ''cultural mentoring'' to help students ''find meaning in their study abroad experience and transfer the compentencies gained from the experience into their interactions with others'' (p. 79).

5.3.5.2 About future IFPs.

Participants who took part in this study wanted their stories to encourage future students to undertake a similar experience. One participant said, ''I don't know what you [researcher] got from our meeting, but I hope that future students will think about doing an IFP, that they will want to do it'' (Penelope:33). Despite what the researcher would write about IFPs, the participant hoped that her story would convey the value of undertaking such an experience. She added, ''If it [my story] can encourage people to go live something else in another country, you know, I am happy to talk about it'' (Penelope:35). Another participant conveyed something similar when she said, ''I consider that [the IFP] the most beautiful moments of my life. You learn a lot about [social work] practice, about yourself. You see a lot of things. I recommend an IFP to anyone'' (Tania:18).

Other participants wished that their stories would allow students to better understand the nature of the IFP experience. This is illustrated in the following statement when Linda said, ''I would encourage everyone to go abroad, however, you have to know that things can go wrong . . . I had a good experience but I also had ups and downs when I was there . . . especially if you go alone'' (Linda:32). Similarly, another participant wanted to encourage future students to do an IFP even if they heard negative stories similar to some of the ones he

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told. He said, ''If you want to go, go ahead. Don't base your decision on what I say . . . You will regret it if you don't go'' (Normand:44). Follow-up questions asked by the researcher during the interview may have influenced the construction of such narratives.

Other participants conveyed the importance of doing an IFP and illustrated the need to provide better support for students. One participant mentioned, ''Those [international] field placements are important. I don't know how they are now, but from my experience, they need more *encadrement* . . . It is so important to live such an experience. This should be encouraged more'' (Irene:40). By referring to the ways IFPs were sometimes handled in the past, she structured her story in order to express concern about problematic practices that occurred then, such as the lack of *encadrement* without being too openly critical of current ones. She conveyed two important messages— while current IFP practices' may have changed from previous ones, she still emphasized the importance of providing more support to students. Similarly, another participant expressed her desire that the story she told would contribute to change. She said, ''I hope that it [my story] can bring about changes with respect to the development of better field placements. To understand that an IFP is more than a trip'' (Francesca:28). Not only did she want to see changes in practices, she also wished to change misconceptions about IFPs. A few participants recognized the importance of receiving support even if they had not felt like they had needed it during their IFP. This is illustrated by Suzie when she said, ''Maybe a person who didn't have a good experience, they would have wanted more contact . . . I didn't feel the need . . . I needed to feel that I was far away and that I was able to do my things. I needed to be given that freedom'' (Suzie:8). It is possible that Suzie wanted to convey the need of providing more support because she had witnessed other students facing hardships alone.

Some stories portrayed dissatisfaction towards the academic institution with regards to IFP preparation, supervision, and debriefing. This can be noted in a statement made by a participant when she said, ''Zero *encadrement* from Canada. Zero. Zero. Zero. We didn't have communication with the university at all. Our supervisor [in the host country], sometimes he talked with a professor [from Canada] . . . to see how things were going'' (Penelope:17). Another participant expressed something similar when she talked about her feelings towards the academic institution, ''I was angry, I was frustrated [by my experience] and I didn't understand why the university didn't provide me with more support'' (Bianca:8). One participant said, ''If there is one thing, it's the *encadrement* from the Université de Moncton . . . it's awful . . . You can't send two students from the Université de Moncton in Europe empty handed, blindly'' (Olive:27-28). One participant conveyed his concerns with sending students in North Africa because of the rise of religious extremism in the recent past. He said, ''I don't understand why the Université de Moncton sends students [there]'' (Jake:3).

When participants like Olive, Bianca, Penelope, and Jake expressed concerns with IFPs, they structured their stories in a way that did not place blame on the School of Social Work, on the coordinator, or on the long-distance supervisor as they referred to ''Canada'', the ''university'' and the ''Université de Moncton''. Few stories mentioned the coordinator in Canada but when this happened, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the role she played. For example Katherine said, ''It was Zola who was the coordinator at the time. She checked on us. She sent us e-mails. It was more e-mails...I was satisfied'' (Katherine:17). Two reasons may explain why some participants who were critical mentioned the university when talking about problems with IFPs: they did not see the necessity to blame specific individuals

in order to identify problems or they believed it was the university who had the responsibility to ensure the safety/security of students.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented analytical themes that emerged from the stories shared by participants about their IFP experience and its continued impact on their professional practice. Themes reveal a process that begins with the idea of undertaking an IFP and ends with the integration of the experience within their social work profession. This continuity of experience allows for insights that have implications for social work education and IFP planning. In the next chapter, some recommendations that stem from these analytical themes are offered to provide a framework for IFP planning.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

The chapter begins with a presentation of the answers to the research questions, followed by recommendations, and a discussion of the implications of the study for social work education and practice. Next, a framework for IFP planning will be outlined; and the final section will examine the limitations of the study.

6.1 Answers to Research Questions

This study was an examination of personal, professional, and global outcomes for social work practitioners who completed an IFP. As the researcher is a social work educator at the Université de Moncton's School of Social Work and involved with IFPs, answers to the research questions were professionally relevant. Research findings can provide insights for improving field practice for students going overseas. The study aimed at answering the following questions:

- What do the stories about the personal, professional, and global outcomes gained in an IFP tell us about how participants negotiate the transition between various contexts, and the knowledge, skills, and values transferred from one social practice to another?

- What do these stories reveal about the value of these experiences for their individual social work practice?

- How do these stories contribute to social work education and IFP planning?

6.1.1 How did students negotiate transition between various contexts?

As a result of their IFPs, students needed to transition from various social work contexts. Having studied social work in a Canadian post‑secondary institution, they then spent a semester on a field placement in an agency overseas. Upon returning to Canada, they then needed to integrate back into the social work profession after having learned values, knowledge, and skills in an international and intercultural context. This process required them to bridge gaps (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Mind the Gap: Transition Between Canada and the Host Country
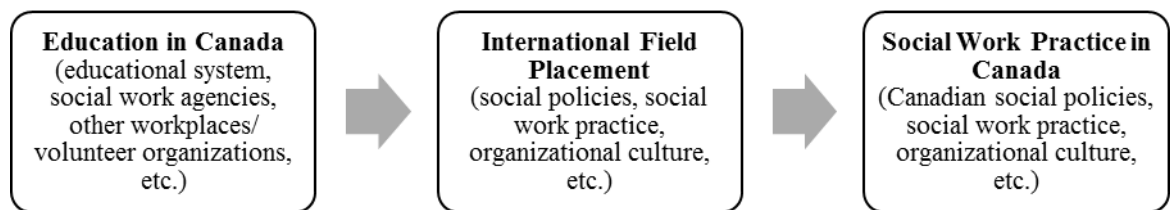
Furthermore, students needed to invest time and effort in transitioning between other types of contexts, such as different social, cultural, political, or economic contexts (e.g., transitioning from a larger social network at home to a limited one abroad). This required frequent adjustments at many levels during the IFP in addition to their integration within an organizational context at the social work agency in the host country. In their decisions to undertake an IFP, students focused on the challenges of transitioning from Canada to the host country and quickly discovered the need to make changes and adjustments—some expected, some unexpected—before, during, and after the IFP. The new contexts provoked destabilization, but with time students developed sufficient mastery to cope with these changes, such as preparing family members for departure, reaching learning goals, picking up life where they left off, and finding a job.

The transitions were challenging as students had to adapt to new contexts. Most students experienced a fluid transition between these different contexts, even if they experienced highs and lows during these periods of change. Some transitions were more turbulent than others, especially if they faced many problems, for example, having to change a field placement agency, suffering from culture shock, and going to live with a supervisor because of problems with Canadian roommates. With time, most students developed proficiency in handling such challenges. Students who already possessed an ability to adapt to new values and behaviours, either as a result of personal inclinations or past experiences with transition, fared better with the learning curves. In addition, people who served as informants or mentors were helpful in assisting with many new things that students had to learn.

Not all students experienced a fluid transition from one context to another, however, because it depended on the situations faced during the IPF. Certain events, such as intense culture shock during and after the placement, made for a bumpier transition. Furthermore, the transition became more challenging when students were confronted with uncertainty and delays, including situations, such as a lack of awareness about the impact that a separation would have on their relationships with loved ones, the inability to find housing before going overseas, the delays in obtaining a field placement upon arrival, and uncertainty about the future plans when leaving the host country.

Differences in transition among students were linked to their expectations, their preparation time, and their support network. Students had different expectations about the overall IFP experience: Some were high while others were low. They also had specific expectations about such things as how challenging it would be to adapt to language barriers in the host country, how amazing it would be to return home at the end of their time abroad, and

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how quickly they would find a job as a social worker after graduation. While aware and prepared for difficulties they had to face when transitioning to the host country, students tended to underestimate the level of difficulty with other transitions that were also part of the IFP.

Students who did not spend sufficient time and effort preparing for all the transitions faced more unsettling transition periods when they encountered a significant challenge or, as was more often the case, multiple ones. Furthermore, students who prepared mostly for the transition from Canada to the host country were not sufficiently ready for the other transitions they would encounter as part of the IFP experience. As a result, some students were surprised to experience culture shock during their transition back to their home in Canada. Similarly, others often found the transition from university to the workforce more challenging than expected, because they lacked knowledge about community resources in Canada and they lacked a network to help with their job search. Bumpy transitions were sometimes tainted with feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and disappointment. A lesson learned from these transitions is the importance of preparing students by discussing all transitions and coping strategies with the field coordinator during the preparation phase.

The lack of an adequate support network contributed to more challenging transition periods during the IFP. When loved ones disapproved of the decision to undertake an IFP, it was more difficult for participants to ask for help and support in difficult times, such as when they experienced fear about going overseas, when they felt sad about ending an intimate relationship in the host country, or when they faced doubts about finding their first social work job. Moreover, students found handling transitions from one world to another to be challenging if they did not have individuals, such as classmates, friends, and acquaintances

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who understood these transitions. Notably, students experienced bumpier transitions when supervision was insufficient to meet their individual needs, for example, the supervision consisted of few hours and it was informal/unstructured. An adequate support network, including supervision from the School of Social Work, was necessary to handle various challenges that arose during IFP transitions, such as planning delays, saying goodbye to loved ones, handling cultural/linguistic barriers, facing isolation and loneliness, experiencing culture shock/cultural fatigue, dealing with harassment, coping with an unstructured field placement, feeling homesick, saying farewell to citizens in the host country, adapting back to life at home, and finding a job.

6.1.2 What knowledge, skills, and values were transferred from one setting to another?

All students completing a social work field placement in Canada needed to transfer the knowledge, values, and skills from the classroom to the agency where they undertook a field placement, and then later on to their social work practice (Figure 6.2). Students often found it difficult to transfer what they had learned in one context to another especially when these contexts were quite different, such as a hospital setting to a feminist organization. Similarly, it was challenging for students to transfer knowledge, values, and skills from a field placement in Canada to a field placement overseas.

Figure 6.2 Social Work Settings in a Canadian Field Placement
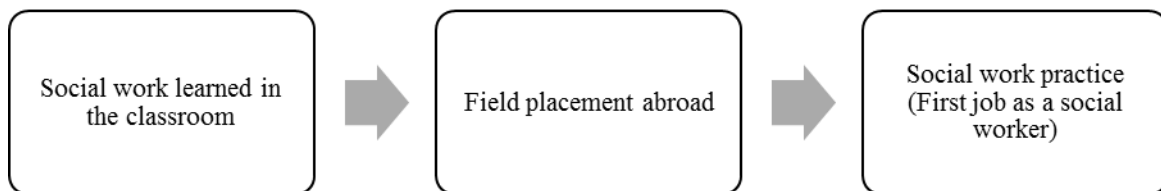
In a Canadian field placement many students find it challenging to transfer knowledge learned in the classroom to social work practice, for example, how to identify the leadership styles in the workplace that were taught in the classroom. They experience difficulties in seeing the usefulness of skills learned in one context in another context, such as how to use the interview skills during a research project for an intervention. Also, they often find it easier to transfer core skills learned, such as conflict resolution and problem solving, than specific skills, such as agency-based skills to perform intakes or assessments. In terms of values, students learn about professional values and how to put them into practice in different settings. This is difficult because not all institutions/organizations had the same policies and procedures.

During an IPF, however, students were not always exposed to the same knowledge, skills, and values as students doing a field placement in Canada. Initially, they relied on knowledge (e.g., theories on child development) learned at home in order to understand various populations and processes (e.g., grief and loss) in the host country. With time, students realized they had much to learn about social problems, laws, policies, programs, and services locally, such as the care provided to seniors in institutions. Upon returning to Canada, they undertook a similar process of determining the usefulness of the knowledge they had gained. For example, knowledge about approaches to substance abuse was more useful than knowledge gained about resources offering services in the host country.

Students taking part in an IFP had many opportunities to transfer intervention skills that they had learned in the classroom, such as communication skills, conflict resolution, and problem solving skills, to their experience abroad in the field placement, daily life, and touring. To handle language barriers, students needed to use not only verbal and non-verbal

communication to understand others and be understood, but often they also had to use their skills of reformulation and clarification to communicate. Similarly, while students utilized conflict resolution and problem solving skills in the host country to handle daily problems encountered abroad, they often had to adapt these skills in ways that were contextually appropriate. Sometimes, through trial and error, they learned that discussing a problem directly with the director at the agency instead of writing a formal letter, for example, was not the best way to resolve a situation. When students returned home, they were able to transfer their intercultural skills to social practice in Canada.

In Canada, students learned about social work values and how they translated into practice. In the host country, they were exposed to professional values, such as integrity, confidentiality, and respect. While professional values in Canada and abroad were often the same, guiding principles that oriented professional conduct sometimes varied. As students in a new environment, they were not always aware of the guiding principles and how these were applied, for example, what to do when there was a request from a police officer about client's attendance to a program.

The IFP forced students to evaluate their ethical obligations in a very different setting (Figure 6.3). To determine their obligations, students drew upon knowledge gained from past experiences in Canada and social work practice abroad. Upon returning home, they had improved their ability to transfer what they learned during the field placement to their social work practice. They felt more comfortable confronting individuals or institutions that did not respect social work values, for example, confronting a social worker who expressed disrespectful comments about a family receiving services.

Figure 6.3 Social Work Settings in an IFP
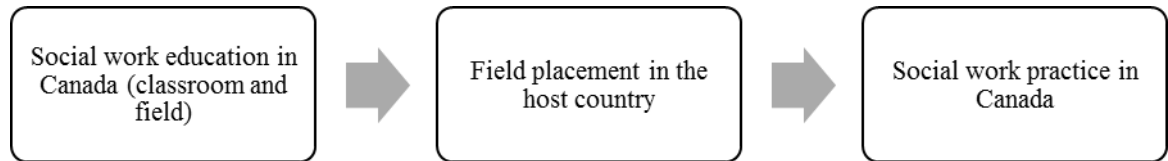
Due to the nature of the field placement, social work students on an IFP needed to bridge a gap between knowledge, values, and skills learned in Canada, both in the classroom and the field practicum, and knowledge, values, and skills used in social work practice overseas. They had to gain knowledge about the organisational culture at the agency (with regards to greeting colleagues daily with a kiss and shaking each child's hand before group sessions), social work terminology, practice theories, policies about confidentiality, report writing, and metaphors to explain concepts (for example, that teamwork is like a bicycle). Therefore, they needed to bridge a gap not only when they went overseas but also when they returned home as their IFP was often very different from their first field practicum in Canada. To bridge the gap, students were required to reflect upon the usefulness of what they learned and how to transfer this to new settings.

6.1.3 What was the value of the IFP experience for their social work practice?

The field placement was a memorable experience for many social work students during their bachelor program. While this was the same for students who had completed an IFP, some aspects were different. Through immersion, they experienced significant professional and personal growth. The IFP required them to adapt considerably in order to integrate into their social work agency in a new country without their usual support system. They had to cope with high levels of stress, step out of their comfort zones, face uncertainty about handling

problems, witness challenging situations (such as economic deprivation), learn empathy for people who had different values, interact with a variety of people in the host country from Western and non-Western cultures, etc.

While some students had cultural contacts during a local field placement, they remained in the dominant culture even if they were immersed in another culture for short periods of time. Cultural contacts domestically are like being in a fish bowl where students gain insights into one's culture and other cultures. But those on an IFP were removed from the dominant society they knew and placed in a different sociopolitical context where some experienced the daily fear of censorship. They were confronted with the disorientation of culture shock. They also faced dilemmas that helped them to see the world in new ways. As outsiders during their stay, they developed greater empathy for individuals who experienced similar situations on a daily basis.

Being exposed to different social work practices with unfamiliar responsibilities and a new social identity as a foreign student, participants needed to demonstrate adaptability, innovation, and a sense of independence. They developed a greater respect for difference and desire to promote change, which was valuable for their social work practice in terms of offering culturally competent services and engaging in social justice.

Students who took part in an IFP gained cross-national and cross-cultural experiences. Their awareness of ethnocentrism and their ability to see the strengths of individuals who are different from them were assets. The values, knowledge, and skills developed overseas enabled them to offer more culturally appropriate services, which was valuable when they took part in international projects, such as humanitarian mission overseas or international student exchanges. These also became assets when they collaborated at home in Canada by

sharing with colleagues what they gained during their IFP, for example, tips on ways of establishing a relationship with a senior from the Maghreb.

Those who undertook an IFP had a social work practice that was embedded in a social justice framework. This was valuable for their practice. Many students gained greater empathy for the underprivileged during their stay overseas as a result of being the other, developing ties with locals, and witnessing the struggles of certain populations. Upon returning to Canada, this translated into a desire for change that lead to acts of resistance in the workplace, big and small, to defend the rights of clients in an organizational/institutional culture that was oppressive to service users, such as belittling certain individuals. Sometimes, they continued to fight for social justice outside of office hours in a volunteer organization to combat unfair treatment and to advocate for access to services. While the nature of their work was often focused on the micro level (i.e., individuals and families), at a meso level, they sometimes took action to change policies, procedures, and practices that were unjust in their workplace, such as ageism towards service users. This type of change had wider implications. A few also applied social justice principles in their social work practice at a macro level to make political and structural changes. Some lobbied to obtain better services, for example, by writing a letter or signing a petition.

6.1.4 How do these stories contribute to social work education and IFP planning?

Stories told by participants about the IFP point to critical issues for planning purposes that need exploration. They produced information about a diversity of both problematic situations during placements and ways to respond. They also provided useful information for strengthening social work education and IFP practice planning.

The stories confirmed the need for academic prerequisites prior to undertaking an IFP, such as a mandatory course on intercultural social work or ISW. There is an obligation to provide greater exposure to non-Western-based knowledge and include knowledge on colonialism, ethnocentrism, and racism in IFP students' preparation. While accredited programs in social work offer such content, it appears insufficient. Participants confirmed the need for students to successfully complete such a course before embarking on an IFP.

The research also provided insights about the need for more integration, linking classroom and field learning. While some integrative seminars were offered by post-secondary institutions abroad during the IFP, most field placements (i.e., internationally and locally) did not include them during the field placement. Furthermore, participants revealed that the needs of those who took part in integrative seminars overseas or upon returning home were often unmet. They highlighted that they did not always relate to the experiences shared by classmates because they lacked understanding of social policies abroad and, hence, often remained silent in the classroom. They also feared that they would be seen as privileged for having the financial resources to go overseas. Therefore, there is a need for Schools of Social Work to offer integrative activities that encourage IFP students to reflect about their experiences and share them with others both during their stay abroad, for example, through long-distance exchanges with professors and when they return to Canada.

This study offered useful information for IFP planning in order to avoid some pitfalls. Stories highlighted the generosity of overseas partners in spending time and resources in helping Canadian students find housing, obtain a placement, provide supervision, and take part in various cultural/social activities. Nonetheless, in spite of these efforts, students still encountered problems, such as loss of housing, changes in security levels imposing restrictions

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for Canadians travelling abroad, and supervisor going on sick leave. These stories highlighted the necessity of improving communication between Canadian coordinators and overseas coordinators to jointly address some of these pitfalls. However, communication is not enough to solve the problems that frequently arise during IFPs. It is also important to build stronger ties between countries by promoting greater reciprocity between Canada and its overseas IFP partners. Constraints with regards to human resources and finances, such as lack of stipend for field instructors abroad often limited reciprocity. While it may not be possible to welcome students from host countries every year, it is necessary to maintain a level of exchange. For example, Schools of Social Work need to promote various strategies with overseas partners, such as sending a faculty member overseas to provide social work training, offering scholarships to international students, sharing promotional ideas, accepting foreign students for a field placement or study-abroad program, and setting up meetings with local practitioners during visits of faculty members or students.

According to the students, the IFP was more than a four-month experience abroad. It required early exposure (one or two years before departure, for example) in order to effectively plan and prepare. Stories highlighted that successful IFPs required involvement of staff and faculty members at Schools of Social Work in the form of an IFP committee to promote participation in all aspects of the IFP process: before (e.g., recruitment, selection, pre-departure preparation, and travel to the host country), during (e.g., field placement at the agency), and after (e.g., returning home and entering the profession). This will be discussed further in the recommendation section.

6.1.5 How did postcolonial, intersectional, and critical theories help understand findings?

The theories favoured by the researcher were invaluable in understanding findings in this study. Postcolonial theories highlighted the importance of looking at individuals' representations of the other when they described an experience. These othering narratives, produced by a group (e.g., the students doing an IFP) about another group (e.g., the citizens in the host country) based on their differences, provided information about "the meanings that they make of their experiences" (Moosa-Mitha, 2015, p. 84). The narratives of participants in this study illustrated examples of representations that need to be deconstructed with students when they take part in an IFP. Intersectional theories were also useful in exploring the different experiences that participants shared during their interview—being single and female was more challenging in North Africa than in Europe. These intersectional theories helped the researcher to explore the experience of oppression and privilege "as it exists within, between, and in relation to social identity categories in their multiple interactions with the changing structural, political, and cultural levels of society" (Moosa-Mitha, 2015, p. 86). The researcher attained a better grasp of the multiplicity of experiences of oppression and privilege when individual students face racism or heterosexism, for example, and its implication for IFP planning during the phases of preparation, supervision, and debriefing. Furthermore, the researcher chose critical theories because of their emancipatory aims. These critical theories influenced the study in two ways. First, findings needed to illustrate concrete experiences of oppression that participants lived during their IFP in the host country, such as harassment in the host country and revictimization at home by the School of Social Work. Second, it was expected that the outcomes of this study would bring about changes to "the material realities"

of students on an IFP (Moosa-Mitha, 2015, p. 75). These theories helped the researcher pay

greater attention to the frustrations expressed by some participants about the lack of support

received in order to address their needs when doing an IFP. The theories allowed the

researcher to grasp the impact that the lack of resources for IFPs at the university had on

students' ability to reflect on outcomes and to transfer outcomes to their social work practice.

6.2 Implications of Findings

The study illustrates many challenges faced by students going to countries in the

Global North and Global South for IFPs. While past studies have tended to focus on

challenges associated with the time spent in the host country, this study identified difficulties

faced during transitions between all phases of the IFP, from the time students began thinking

about it to making the decision to go, preparing to go, leaving home and arriving abroad,

participating in the field placement, returning home, and entering the profession. Examining

all phases of the IFP has implications for social work education and IFP planning.

Schools of Social Work need to provide students with a supportive structure

(*encadrement*) such that they receive accompaniment (*accompagnement*) during all phases of

the IFP, on both a personal and a professional level. Schools of Social Work also have to

provide pedagogical support (*supervision*) to assist students with learning goals before, during,

and after the IFP. Findings also have implications for providing appropriate support when they

are in the host country. Unfortunately, not all field placement instructors overseas fully

comprehend the nature of the IFP experience or possess knowledge of social work practice in

Canada. As a result, they may find it challenging to help students reflect on the transferability

of what they have learned in the host country to a Canadian context. Schools of Social Work

need to ensure that both staff at the agency and the supervisor understand issues that may arise

during the IFP experience, such as absenteeism at work or taking longer weekends to handle cultural fatigue. Unlike a field placement in Canada, the Schools of Social Work have a greater responsibility towards students, not only during their time at the field placement agency, but during all their time spent abroad as this type of experience is a 24/7 experience. When students undertake an IFP, the boundaries of their professional life and their personal life are not always clear. As a result, the role of Schools of Social Work is different for students doing a field placement in Canada than for students doing an IFP. Therefore, students must be made aware of this during the selection and preparation phase.

Studies on IFPs have tended to focus on positive outcomes. In contrast, the findings of this study also reveal negative outcomes, such as the challenges students face in identifying knowledge, values, and skills gained from their IFP; reintegrating into life in Canada; entering the social work profession; and transferring what they learned in the host country to various social work contexts in Canada. Such findings are important when planning seminars, workshops, and assignments for students that will provide guidance and enable them to integrate the IFP experience. These negative outcomes need to be addressed to assist students during their transition into the social work profession. A framework for IFP planning is suggested in the next section.

6.3 Framework for IFP Planning

Findings in this study could be used to improve the overall IFP experience, in order to maximize benefits for students and limit negative consequences to stakeholders, for example, local supervisors and host communities. Implementation of the following recommendations by faculty and staff at Schools of Social Work would provide adequate *encadrement* (i.e., accompaniment and pedagogical support) of students during all phases of the IFP.

6.3.1 Recruiting.

Schools of Social Work have to spend time recruiting candidates for IFPs, not only to attract a large number of students, but also to provide information to help students decide whether this would be a suitable field placement option. Honesty about the nature of this educational experience in the promotional tools used and the portrayals of IFP destinations is crucial. While the IFP is life-changing for many, students require a better understanding of both the positive aspects (e.g., learning about themselves, meeting wonderful people, and immersing in a new lifestyle) and negative aspects (e.g., the financial costs, cultural fatigue, and the challenges of language barriers at the agency). Furthermore, students need to be more than simply adventurous or have a love of travel: They must possess important personality traits to be good ambassadors for Schools of Social Work, including adaptability, respectfulness, patience, diplomacy, open-mindedness, and independence. The latter is especially important due to the level of autonomy that IFP requires.

6.3.2 Selection: Group and individual interviews.

The selection process has two purposes. First, students need to gather information about the nature of an IFP and be able to reflect on the suitability of this experience for them, paying particular attention to factors, such as types of agencies open to a field placement, lodging options, availability of integrative seminars abroad, etc. It is important that students hear stories from various sources, for example, the field coordinator, faculty, and former students who completed an IFP, to create a more complete picture of what the IFP entails. Content discussed within the interviews must allow students to reflect on their strengths (e.g., their ability to step out of their comfort zone) and limitations (e.g., difficulty dealing with challenges and managing stress) and how these will influence the attainment of learning goals.

Questions asked by interviewers must help students explore their motivations and their expectations about the IFP experience.

Second, the interview process serves to select students for an IFP. It is helpful to use more than one method of interviewing, including both group and individual interviews. Group interviews enable interviewers to simulate situations that students will likely encounter abroad, such as experiencing language barriers, eating unusual foods, exercising different etiquette, and encountering stressful situations. These role plays allow interviewers to observe students as they discuss potential clashes of values, share their thoughts, and ask questions about the IFP. In group interviews, it is helpful if interviewers identify aspects that may require further exploration during individual interviews, for example, being withdrawn, not eating the food, high expectations, and unwillingness to go if their friend is not also selected. During individual interviews, interviewers need to explore any red flags raised during group interviews and concerns that have been identified by interviewers. Questions about such things as a student's motivations, expectations, strengths and limitations, preferred destination, and the reactions of loved ones provide interviewers with better understanding of the needs of students during the pre-departure training.

6.3.3 Pre-departure preparation.

Pre-departure preparation is another important phase of the IFP (Table 6.1). During this phase, students make choices about what and how to prepare, so it is important that the field placement coordinator and faculty members responsible for long-distance supervision establish a good relationship with students. Students need assistance in identifying tasks that will need to be done before going abroad and will need to develop a support system to help them with their preparation. This support system needs to be comprised of individuals who

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can problem solve, counsel, share information, and mentor the students. In addition, this is a time when the field placement coordinator and faculty members can discuss both immediate concerns (e.g., difficulties in finding lodging) and longer term concerns (e.g., finding work after graduation). Assistance during this pre-departure preparation phase is crucial for students who need more support, such as those having limited travel experience, those going alone, and those going to a country whose culture differs significantly from Canada.

Pre-departure preparation also needs to include the completion of the IFP contract, which includes a listing of student responsibilities (e.g., tasks required and a timetable), a communication protocol (e.g., guidelines about the nature and frequency of contacts with the field placement coordinator and long-distance supervisor), a list of recommended reading (e.g., articles about culture shock), meetings with key informants (e.g., former students having completed an IFP and immigrants from the host country), pre-departure workshops (e.g., culture shock) and assignments on important topics (e.g., the resolution of ethical dilemmas and social work in the host country). Completing these tasks would enable students to be better prepared for the other phases of the IFP. To adequately prepare students, Schools of Social Work need to provide information about the preparation required during all phases of the IFP, for example, ways to handle culture shock abroad and strategies for developing a network when looking for work after graduation. Workshops in which students develop individualized plans and key informants share their IFP experiences would be essential. After this initial contact, students will then be able to follow up with the informants if they have further questions or need advice. Students are also encouraged to ask them about the positive and negative outcomes of their IFP.

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Assignments about the host country and the host city (e.g., oral presentations and written reports) allow students to gain more in‑depth knowledge, and enable students going to the same destination with opportunities to get to know each other before leaving.

During pre‑departure preparation, it is important that the field placement coordinator and long-distance supervisor be available for students who have any questions or face challenges. Students will be more inclined to share difficulties at a later date if they have developed a good working relationship with these people before leaving Canada. Coordinators need to ensure that a field placement is secured before students leave; or, when this is not possible, coordinators need to make arrangements with the partners overseas to ensure that students are not left to their own devices in securing a field placement at an agency.

Table 6.1 Pre-Departure Preparation Topics and Content

Topics covered during pre-departure preparation	Content for workshops
1) Contacts with the coordinator/supervisor in the host country	a) Letter of motivation and an international résumé (e.g., visa status, language proficiency, cross-cultural training, and international experience) b) Advice about lodging (e.g., costs and benefits of different types of lodging) c) Questions about language proficiency; etc.
2) Paperwork and logistic required	a) Scholarships (e.g., other funding strategies) b) Safety plan requested by the university (e.g., tips for filling out forms and deadlines) c) Visa/flights/housing; etc.
3) Knowledge about the host city/host country	a) ISMs (e.g., colonialism and ethnocentrism) b) Respect for local customs c) Following rules and expected behaviours (e.g., drinking and making out in public and taking photos) d) Information about the city/country (e.g., emergency measures in the event of a nuclear meltdown, need to register at the municipality upon arrival, and closing times); etc.
4) Health matters and safety issues in host country	a) Forwarding travel plans when overseas b) Emergency phone numbers (e.g., coordinator, supervisor, and other nationals) c) Travelling buddy d) Necessary medication/prescription e) Lodging (e.g., living in the old medina)

	f) Safety issues (e.g., terrorism, disease, discrimination, crime, continuum of violence – leering, catcalls, verbal assaults, physical assaults); etc.
5) Things to bring from home (e.g., having something familiar from Canada)	a) What to bring (e.g., photos, music and comfort food/items) b) Packing (e.g., packing tips); etc.
6) Language preparation	a) Challenges encountered (e.g., impact of limited proficiency for social work practice and problems of communication using mother tongue) b) Ways of preparing (e.g., take a course, watch movies, make personalized dictionary, read expatriate blogs, and familiarize with professional terminology) c) Strategies to handle language barriers (e.g., nonverbal); etc.
7) Bucket list abroad	a) Travel (e.g., discover the diversity among regions in the host country; travel in the host country vs travel in neighbouring countries; tourism vs immersion) b) New hobby; etc.
8) Communication protocol	a) Who? (e.g., university, school, field coordinator, and long-distance supervisor) b) When? (e.g., natural disaster in host country and unplanned trip outside host country) c) How? (e.g., e-mail, Skype, and phone); etc.
9) Strategies to deal with challenges (e.g., before leaving, abroad, and upon returning)	a) Challenges that they may encounter before leaving (e.g., saying goodbye to loved ones; travelling alone; preparing family for IFP—knowledge about reverse culture shock; problems with different types of accommodation abroad) b) Challenges abroad (e.g., initial adaptation—holidays and closing times, public transportation, crossing the street safely; strategies to deal with homesickness; frustrations; unmet expectations; cultural fatigue; stereotypes and clichés about Canadians and locals in the host country; supervision; gender roles; harassment; being the other—identity issues and spaces; coping with Canadian colleagues having problems—culture shock and venting about nationals; gender roles; independence; prepare to come back) c) Challenges upon return (e.g., readapt, make changes in life, adopt new values, and let go of friends) d) Strategies to deal with challenges (e.g., develop a support system, personal care, journaling, finding an oasis/safe space, and develop a routine) e) Individual plan (e.g., who to contact in case of problems); etc.
10) Learning goals, practice theories, and ethical issues	a) Learning goals (e.g., agency, daily life, community involvement, and educational trips) b) Prepare a summary of useful practice theories c) Ethical issues (e.g., ethical dilemmas and tools for resolution) d) Learning from colleagues abroad (e.g., tips to build

	relationships with them); etc.
11) Transfer of knowledge, values, and skills	a) Issues of transferability (e.g., challenges); b) Questions to ask former students having done an IFP (e.g., ways to find a language teacher); etc.
12) Networking here and abroad	a) Individuals that help (e.g., friends in the host country of former students having done an IFP) b) How individuals in the network can help c) Questions to ask them (e.g., strategies to handle language barriers); etc.
13) Useful tips	a) "It does not always make sense" b) "Let go of expectations" c) "Live in the moment and make the most of it" d) "Take a chance" e) "Look again, look deeper" f) "Breathe deeply and remain calm"; etc.

The transition from home to host country is stressful. As the time to leave approaches, students often have last-minute doubts and experience intense emotions when saying goodbye to loved ones. They can also encounter challenges en route or upon arrival, such as lost hotel reservation. Consequently, the field placement coordinator needs to pay attention to the needs of those travelling alone and those with limited travel experience in the event of an emergency. Making sure they have a welcoming committee upon arrival and sufficient time to acclimatize is also helpful.

6.3.4 Supervision.

To bridge learning gaps, it is useful that Schools of Social Work assign a faculty member to provide long‑distance supervision, such as weekly communication and feedback on critical incidents in an IFP diary. This person can assist students in their reflections about the field placement agency (e.g., relationships with citizens, contribution to the agency, diplomacy when facing problems, etc.), daily life (e.g., importance of developing a daily routine and good relationships with citizens; identity issues, cultural sensitivity, and cultural faux pas), and touring abroad (e.g., diversity among regions and finding an oasis during difficult times).

Before the students return home, it is important that a faculty member assist them with their preparation for the transition home, addressing various issues, such as saying goodbye to friends, tying up loose ends at the agency, having expectations about being back in Canada (e.g., loved ones interested in hearing about their IFP experience), handling reactions of the entourage when they are back, finding strategies to handle reverse culture shock, and having a return date that provides sufficient time to acclimatize before returning to university.

6.3.5 Debriefing upon return.

While returning home can be a smooth process for many students, a few find it extremely difficult because of reverse culture shock. Also, students often have to deal with the repercussions of events that happened while they were abroad, such as an unfaithful partner, an accident while touring, or a break-up with a local. Therefore, students need support in order to face this challenging transition. For example, a student may decide to let go of some friends in order to move forward with his/her life at home. As a result, it is helpful to set time aside for debriefing with students shortly after they return to Canada and during their last semester at university to handle strong emotions they may be experiencing, such as homesickness for the host country and frustrations with material consumption at home.

Students return home with a need to talk about their IFP experience, but unfortunately, they often face a lack of interest from their entourage. Schools of Social Work can help with this by offering multiple opportunities for students to talk about their IFP, through discussions with the coordinator and presentations to classmates, for example. These experiences allow them to reflect about outcomes and unpack further their experience abroad. It helps if they are asked questions about positive outcomes (e.g., skills, values, and knowledge learned) and

negative outcomes (e.g., limited networking opportunities and lack of knowledge about local resources).

Furthermore, students require assistance with their transition into the social work profession. It is helpful to ask them questions about their plans for the future to see if they want to work, travel, or continue studying after graduation. Students who will soon enter the social work profession may need assistance in learning about ways to showcase the IFP experience to prospective employers, such as outcomes, transferability, and value of the IFP. Student will benefit from receiving useful tips for their job searches, for example, consulting with a career advisor, preparing a CV and cover letter, networking with social workers, and contracting informational interviews with social workers to gain knowledge about various workplaces.

It is useful if Schools of Social Work help students learn how to showcase the knowledge, values, and skills acquired during the IFP experience as a result of overcoming societal differences in daily interactions, learning how to show respect cross‑culturally, dealing with unexpected events that require resourcefulness, and overcoming language barriers (e.g., adapting their language to the context and being tactful). This would be a vital step toward achieving success in their job search. Time can also be used with students who need help in identifying questions that employers may ask in interviews, such as what motivated them to do an IFP, why they chose their specific location, and what their involvement was in the community outside of the field placement agency. It is also important that Schools of Social Work provide information to employers about the value of an IFP and its relevance within a Canadian context at events such as employment fairs or campus visits.

While there are many aspects of the IFP experience that can be neither anticipated nor prevented (e.g., natural disaster), Schools of Social Work have a role to play in continuously listening to stakeholders, especially students, in order to increase the potential benefits of IFPs and avoid pitfalls. Recommendations formulated from stories told by students will hopefully enhance the experience of other students who will undertake an IFP (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 IFP Recommendations

	Strategies
Recruiting	**Why?** • Develop a curiosity to learn more about the IFP experience among all students (e.g., advantages and disadvantages) • Provide information about the nature of this experience (e.g., rewards and challenges—delays finding placements, scholarships available, supervision, and types of agency) • Spark interest in this type of field placement and locations available (e.g., Global South and Global North) • Explore personality traits/aptitude for an IFP (e.g., suitability) • Promote reflexivity to consider if such an experience is beneficial for them (e.g., outcomes, transferability of knowledge, values, and skills) • Answer questions (e.g., concerns, fears, and doubts) **What?** • Presentations to high school students during visits with information about IFPs (e.g., open day) • Presentations by students who did an IFP in the classroom and at Schools of Social Work events (e.g., networking day with employers and lunch and learn) • Presentations by international students studying at Schools of Social Work to talk about their experience in Canada • Presentations by the field placement coordinator about opportunities overseas (e.g., orientation day for students entering the program) • Materials prepared by former students about their experience abroad to distribute (e.g., pamphlets and posters) and put on Website (e.g., videos and PowerPoints)
Selection	**Why?** • Provide information about the nature of the experience (e.g., intercultural communication, culture shock, and ethical dilemmas) • Get to know students before selecting those going overseas • Discuss individual strengths (e.g., adaptability, openness, and creativity) and limitations (e.g., need for structure) • Explore motivations, expectations, and commitment to undertake such an experience (e.g., time required for sessions to help prepare) • Promote reflexivity to determine if the experience is for them (e.g., level of discomfort they want to experience) • Facilitate exchanges between students who want to go overseas with individuals who did an IFP • Answer questions (e.g., travel arrangements and visas)

	Strategies
	What? • Letter of motivation • Group interviews (e.g., activities and discussions to process what they learn about the IFP and themselves and presentations of individuals having done an IFP) • Individual interviews (e.g., discuss preoccupations)
Pre-departure preparation	**Why?** • Give information about important aspects of preparation (e.g., language and funding) so each student identifies what and how they will prepare (e.g., develop a support system and strategies to handle language barriers) • Provide a list of reading materials on IFPs (e.g., phases of the IFP and challenges) • Develop a working relationship so that students feel comfortable to reach out to coordinators/professors when they need assistance overseas • Establish ties between students going to the same host city • Encourage exchanges between students and individuals having international experiences (e.g., immigrants from the host country) • Promote reflexivity about preparation and the field placement experience such as fears, doubts, expectations, or preoccupations (e.g., minority status overseas and culture shock) • Answer questions (e.g., modalities of evaluation during placement and lodging options—host family vs. dorms) • Prepare loved ones for departure (e.g., discuss fears) • Discuss field placement options and supervision needs **What?** • Contract including student responsibilities, assignments, and information (e.g., timetable and information about supervision locally) • Field placement confirmation • Reading assignments (e.g., articles about IFPs and manual for those doing a placement overseas) • Written assignments about the host country/destination city (e.g., geography, history, politics, religion, economy, and current events) to be presented orally during workshops • Two or three workshops covering various topics: preparing loved ones, knowledge about the host country, ethnocentrism, culture shock, modalities of evaluation, security issues (e.g., harassment), positive and negative outcomes, and knowledge transfer (e.g., 1st to 2nd field placement) • Personal diary to reflect on process
Supervision (local and long-distance)	**Why?** • Provide support (e.g., discuss conflict resolution, suggest resources, talk about concerns, and develop coping strategies) • Provide long-distance supervision to assist students in identifying learning moments (e.g., field placement, travel, and daily life), outcomes, and transferability of outcomes to other contexts • Promote reflexivity regarding adjustment (e.g., unmet expectations), critical incidents and outcomes (e.g., learning from culture shock, gender relations, conflicts with colleagues, othering processes, and multiplicity of experience of privilege/oppression) • Prepare for returning home (e.g., procedures with landlord, saying goodbye, know resources available for handling reverse culture shock, strategies to deal with doubts about the value of an IFP, and opportunities available after the IFP) **What?** • Weekly communication (e.g., Skype, e-mails, phone calls, video messages, and

Strategies	
	pictures)
	• Reflexive journal bi-monthly
	• Personal diary
Debriefing	Why?
	• Share stories about their experiences—positive and negative
	• Discuss about critical incidents/unresolved incidents
	• Examine outcomes and transferability to a Canadian context
	• Provide information to help with transition (e.g., reverse culture shock and job interviews)
	• Promote reflexivity about transitions between the host country and home; their field placement and classroom setting; and university and first job (e.g., adaptation process and impact of othering processes for social work practice)
	• Answer questions
	What?
	• Individual and group meetings to discuss about their experience
	• Internship report
	• Presentations of their IFP to other students
	• Schools of Social Work survey to evaluate the IFP
	• Assignment on the IFP for the integrative seminar or thesis on a topic related to their IFP
	• Consultation with career advisors to market IFPs and prepare for job search (e.g., cover letter, CV, and interviews)
	• Networking with social workers having done an IFP (e.g., discuss ways to prepare for job search)

6.4 Limitations of This Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Research limitations have the potential to impact the researcher's capability to answer

research questions and, therefore, may have repercussions on the quality of findings.

Limitations for this study include impact of time on participants' memory, an inability to

interview each participant in person, social desirability, and participants' number/gender and

transferability to other disciplines or contexts. Each of these limitations is discussed in the

following section, along with justifications for the choices made to avoid damaging impact.

6.4.1 Impact of time on participants' memory.

The time that elapsed between the completion of the IFP and interviews may have had

an impact on the ability of participants to recall events or experiences. Some participants had

completed their IFP more than 20 years ago. Memory can be unreliable and offer only a partial

view of events or their sequence. In addition, participants' stories depend on how they make

sense of what happened and the frequency of the retelling of their stories. Regardless of the

potential fallibility of memories, participants' stories still provide rich insights about the IFP

experience. To overcome this limitation in this study, the researcher suggested that

participants bring mementos of their experience, such as photos, art, and personal diaries into

the interview.

6.4.2 Inability to interview all participants in person.

While most participants in this study were interviewed in person, because of both

financial and weather constraints, two were interviewed over the phone. The latter situation

could yield both challenges and benefits. While the researcher may have missed non-verbal

cues, the situation may have created a more relaxed atmosphere that would encourage the

individuals to divulge information that they may not have felt at ease revealing in a face-to-

face encounter. On the other hand, it may have created social distance less conducive to

disclosure. As well, time is important for building rapport prior to interview. In this study, the

two participants who did interviews over the phone knew the researcher beforehand in her role

as professor at the university, so to compensate for the absence of visual cues, more attention

was given to other cues (e.g., sighs).

6.4.3 Social desirability.

Social desirability may have impacted the participants' self-reports. They may have

attempted to present information in a way that presented themselves in a positive manner, such

as omitting certain incidents (e.g., inappropriate drinking in the host country). As participants

in this study were former students of the School of Social Work and the interviewer a

researcher and faculty member, this may have influenced disclosure, for example, avoiding

criticism about field placements. To address this issue, participants needed to have completed their IFP for over a year to ensure that they were no longer students at the School of Social Work. Participants were also queried about aspects of improvement for future IFPs.

6.4.4 Participants' number/gender and transferability to other disciplines or contexts.

In this study, 20 Francophones (i.e., Acadians and *Brayons*) from New Brunswick were interviewed about their IFP at the School of Social Work, Université de Moncton. Since the total number of social work students having completed an IFP at this university was 60 at the time of the interviews, the number of participants who could be asked to participate was rather limited. Nonetheless, in spite of the size of sample (n = 20), the research does provide useful insights that may be transferable to other Schools of social work in minority contexts.

This study fills a gap in the literature with regards to long‑term outcomes of this type of field placement. Furthermore, the study was conducted with Francophone participants in a minority context, which offers a different perspective to the hegemonic knowledge found in social work education. As such, it provides different cultural understanding to the social work literature. Future research needs to fill other gaps in the literature regarding IFPs, including the perspectives of field placement coordinators here and overseas, LGBTQ+ students, students with a handicap, employers, and professors who offer integrative seminars.

6.5 Conclusion: To Send or Not to Send Students Abroad for an IFP?

In order to expose students to global realities, Schools of Social Work in Canada have promoted the internationalization of their programs by including courses on ISW and IFPs. Findings in this study have identified key aspects of the IFP process that hold significant implications for IFP planning. First, the findings show the continuous nature of the experience

before, during, and after the IFP that extends beyond entry into the profession and demonstrate

that students require assistance that goes well beyond their stay abroad, encompassing help in

preparation, debriefing upon return, and transition into the profession. Second, the findings

enabled the researcher to identify essential components of each phase of the IFP process; for

example, daily life, the field placement at the agency, and touring are three important

components of the IFP. As a result, to assist students in maximizing their IFP experience, field

placement coordinators need to provide students with supervision not only to process their

field placement at the agency, but also to process their daily life and touring experiences.

According to Bogo and Vayda (1998), through reflection

> the student's feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptions are made explicit and subjected
> to critical thinking about their impact on interactions with the clients or participants in
> the practice situation, on assessments and judgements being made, and on the
> effectiveness of plans and interventions. (p.10)

Third, the findings also highlighted the necessity of providing adequate *encadrement*—

accompaniment and pedagogical support—for students throughout all phases of the IFP.

Essentially, an IFP requires a greater level of accompaniment and pedagogical support than a

field placement in Canada. This *encadrement* enables students to discuss challenges faced in

their daily lives, such as their homesickness and language barriers that might be more difficult

to discuss with most people because they do not understand the nature of the IFP experience.

Hence, Schools of Social Work have to ensure that universities provide sufficient resources to

address the needs of students not only during the time spent in the field placement abroad

(e.g., the security of students especially female students), but throughout the entire IFP process

as well. Universities benefit from such study-abroad programs: Students who go abroad

contribute to the recruitment of foreign students, becoming "valuable foreign policy assets" as

they "make friends abroad and promote goodwill toward their home country through these relationships and patronages" (Zemach-Bersin, 2007, p. 25).

IFPs raise ethical issues when there is a lack of concern for students' well-being or when there is inadequate provision of resources for such field placements. The risks faced by students doing an IFP have sometimes resulted in the imposition of (ineffectual) bureaucratic controls (Epprecht, 2004). It is therefore important when offering IFPs to constantly ask "pointed questions about course structure and evaluation, marketing, the nature of the pre-departure preparation, fundraising, the placement itself, re-entry and follow-up, and possible political engagement beyond the institutional cocoon of the program" (Epprecht, 2004, p. 704). The stories shared by participants in this study highlight the importance of addressing problematic issues that occur during IFPs with regards to health, safety, and security by establishing criteria to determine when it is necessary to stop sending students in a host country, removing a country from the list of available host countries when there are health/safety issues, and asking many questions as problems arise with IFPs. Schools of Social Work also have to make sure that students are not exploited, the same way that they have a responsibility to make sure that students do not exploit people in the host country.

While IFPs have become a popular and easy way of internationalizing social work, the experience did not result in successful completion or gains for everyone. It did, however, promote "a greater degree of exploitation to occur alongside opportunities for closer collaboration" (Dominelli & Bernard, 2003a, p. 7). In some instances, the host country may have invested a great deal of resources in accommodating a student, while the student may have offered very little in return. Students may be unable to share knowledge about the Canadian system or daily practices with supervisors and social workers in the host country

(Myles, 2003). Many exchanges are seen as "colonizing activity in their efforts to learn and glean from the other" and promote dominant ideologies, giving back little that is useful (Razack, 2002, p. 253). Payne and Askeland (2008) warn of the dangers when international relationships waste resources, exploit or patronize people in the host country. Mutually satisfying relationships do not always "develop because of differences in power, resources, culture and language" (Payne & Askeland, 2008, p. 132). Also, priorities and expectations of Western universities that send students abroad create tensions or difficulties because contextual aspects are being ignored, such as the pace being dictated by season or religious practices. To increase reciprocity with the host country, it is important for partners to provide gains "without incurring unacceptable costs" (Ogden, 2007, p. 43).

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Appendix A: Letter to Recruit Participants

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the chairperson of ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

> RE: Study about International/Intercultural Field Placement Outcomes and Professional
> Practice of Social Workers

My name is Isabel Lanteigne. I am currently teaching at the Université de Moncton and enrolled at Memorial University in Newfoundland for my PhD. As part of my doctoral research, I am interested in interviewing social workers who have completed an international/intercultural field placement as part of their undergraduate social work degree. I seek to discover the long-term outcomes of an international/intercultural field placement and implications it has had on their practice.

I am currently searching for participants to take part in this study which will be conducted in 2012/2013. If you agree to participate, you will need to answer questions concerning your experiences during the field placement as well as questions related to what you feel you have gained or developed in terms of skills, knowledge and values from these international/intercultural experiences. Also, you will be asked questions concerning the transfer of those skills, knowledge and values to various social work settings.

I am looking for 3 recent graduates (less than 5 years), 3 less recent graduates (more than 5 years), 3 graduates having done a field placement in the Global North (i.e. Finland, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia, etc.) and 3 graduates having done a field placement in the Global South (i.e. Tunisia, Morocco, Cuba, Peru, etc.).

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You will be invited to take part in an individual interview of about 2 hours at the location of your choice. A follow-up interview may be set up at a later date if you wish to add more information. Here is what you need to know before you **accept** or **refuse** to participate:

1) Voluntary participation: You are under no obligation to take part in the study. If you accept, you have a right to stop participating at any time.

2) Confidentiality/Anonymity/Privacy: Your identity will be kept confidential and content removed to protect your anonymity and privacy (i.e. location and year of field placement).

3) Use of information (dissertation, presentations, articles): Information collected during interviews will be used for my thesis. Content of interviews found in the thesis may also be utilized during presentations or articles published at a later date. All information used will always protect your confidentiality/anonymity/privacy.

4) Questions about the research: You are encouraged to ask questions you have about the research process at any time and for any reason.

5) Withdrawing from Research/Removal of Content: You may decide to withdraw for any motives during this study. You can also remove/modify information provided during interviews, after interviews or after transcription.

6) Cassettes/Transcripts: Tapes, transcripts and computer files will be kept in a secure location. Data collected will be kept for a minimum of five years in accordance with Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

7) Benefits to you and others: You may gain new insights about previous experiences. Also, sharing your stories and insights with other social workers/social work students will promote reflexivity about social work practice. It will also provide useful insights for international field education practices and integrative seminars.

Sincerely yours,

Isabel Lanteigne (R.S.W.)

PhD student, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Appendix B: Information Pamphlet About Research

INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL FIELD PLACEMENT RESEARCH

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the chairperson of ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

Research Process: The research will be conducted in the following phases: a) individual interviews to collect information; b) follow-up interviews if you wish to add information; c) transcription of interviews; d) analysis of content; and e) report writing.

What can you do to help? You will be asked to participate in a 2 hour individual interview. You may choose to bring documents pertaining to your placement such as your field journal, photos or *momentos* to jog your memory. You may contribute further to the research process by taking part in a follow-up interview to add more information. You will receive a copy of the transcript allowing you to remove or modify some of the information provided. A copy of the analysis and results section will be available for comments.

Voluntary Participation: You have the right to decline participating in this study. You also have the right to stop participating at any time by calling or e-mailing me at: isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca or tel. (506) 858-4013 (workplace). If you decide to withdraw from this study, tapes of your interview will be erased and transcripts destroyed.

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Confidentiality/Anonymity/Privacy: All information will be kept confidential. Your name will be removed from material and a pseudonym will be assigned to protect your identity. Assistants will be hired to transcribe interviews but they will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality. Any information that could identify you will be removed from transcripts. Throughout the process of data collection, you have the right to remove or modify any part of the stories.

Research Results: The information you provide cannot be traced back to you. Your name will never be revealed to anyone, anywhere and at any time in publications/presentations resulting from this study. Information collected during interviews will be used for the dissertation as well as in future presentations or publications.

Potential Risks: Sharing your international/intercultural field placement and social work experiences may bring up difficult/unresolved/painful/traumatic feelings. If you want or need to speak with an experienced professional, a referral will be made for you.

Potential Benefits: By sharing stories, you may gain new insights about past experiences. This information may benefit others who have already done an international/intercultural field placement in the past or who will someday take part in such a placement (i.e. insights into the transferability of outcomes from one social work setting to another).

Research Proposal Approval: This study was approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland and the ethics committee at the Université de Moncton. If you have any ethical concerns about the research (i.e. rights of participants, treatment during the research process, complaints about the study), you may contact the ICEHR by e-mail at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

Contact Information: If you wish to take part in this study, have questions or concerns about the study, please send me an e-mail or leave me a phone message. My work number is (506) 858-4013 and the e-mail address is isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca. My research supervisor, Dr. Ross Klein, can also be reached by e-mail at rklein@mun.ca or by phone at (709) 864-8147.

Appendix C: Phone Call Checklist

_____ Introduction

_____ Review content of letter/pamphlet

_____ Questions about study

_____ Concerns about study

_____ Location of interview

_____ Best way to reach person

_____ Thanks for their interest

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Appendix D: Letter of Thanks

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

RE: <u>Study about International/Intercultural Field Placement Outcomes and Professional Practice of Social Workers</u>

Dear (NAME),

Thank you for demonstrating an interest in taking part in this study about international and intercultural field placements and outcomes for practice. However, your name has not been retained for the study.

> Due to time constraints, I had to limit the number of participants interviewed. As mentioned previously in the information letter you received, a total of 12 social workers needed to be chosen using the following categories:

> - 3 recent graduates (less than 5 years)

> - 3 less recent graduates (more than 5 years)

> - 3 graduates having done a placement in the Global North (i.e. Belgium, Spain)

> - 3 graduates having done a placement in the Global South (i.e. Tunisia, Cuba)

Since a great number of social workers have showed an interest in participating, it was necessary to select the first twelve candidates who corresponded to these categories.

Sincerely yours,

Isabel Lanteigne (R.S.W.)

PhD student, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland

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Appendix E: Advertisement to Recruit Participants

*HAVE YOU DONE A FOUR MONTH INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL
FIELD PLACEMENT IN SOCIAL WORK?*

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the chairperson of ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

Research topic:
A study on international/intercultural field placements and outcomes for professional practice is being done in 2012/2013 with former students from the School of Social Work at the Université de Moncton.

Interviews: Participants will take part in a 2 hour interview.

Participants needed:
Recent graduates (less than 5 years)
Less recent graduates (more than 5 years)
Graduates having done a placement in the Global South (i.e. Tunisia, Morocco, Cuba)
Graduates having done a placement in the Global North (i.e. Belgium, Spain, Finland)

Type of questions asked during the interview:
Some questions will be asked about the international/intercultural field placement, career trajectory, outcomes of placement, and transferability of outcomes to different work settings.

Benefits of taking part in this study:

By sharing stories, you may gain new insights about these experiences. This information will benefit others who have done an international/intercultural field placement in the past or who will someday take part in such a placement. It will also provide useful insights to social work educators into international field placements and curriculum development of integrative seminars.

Contact information:
If you would like more information about the study or want to participate, you can call or e-mail me at:
isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca or (506) 858-4013.

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Appendix F: Consent Form for Research Participants

Long-term Outcomes of an International Field Placement Experience

on a Social Worker's Practice

Isabel Lanteigne

School of Social Work (isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca)

CONSENT FORM

Copy of participant   **____**

Copy of researcher   **____**

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the chairperson of ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at (709) 864-2861.

This consent form provides you with information about the study. The goal is to explain what will happen if you choose to participate so you can make an informed decision. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign the consent form and will receive a copy.

1. What should you know before making a decision? Please read this form carefully before signing. If something is unclear, take as much time as you need to ask questions. If you do accept to participate in the study now, you have the right to quit at a later date for any reason.

2. What is the goal of this study? The goal of this study is to find answers to the following question: *What are the personal, professional and global outcomes gained from a four month international field placement? What are the skills, knowledge and values transferred from the international/intercultural placement setting to the social worker's subsequent practice settings? How do participants negotiate transition between various contexts? What is the value of such experiences for their individual social work practice?*

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3. How many people will take part in the study? Twelve social workers who have completed an international/intercultural field placement will participate in this study. They will be selected according to the following criteria: recent and less recent graduates (5 years or more) and graduates having completed a placement in the Global South and Global North (i.e. Tunisia, Belgium, Spain, Nunavut, etc.)

4. If you agree to join this study, what will you need to do? If you accept to join, you will take part in <u>one interview</u> of about 2 hours in length. You may also participate in a follow-up interview if you wish to add more information. <u>You can decide to stop for any reason</u>. You may modify or remove content after transcription of interviews and before content is included in the dissertation.

5. What are the potential harms or risks if you join this study? After the interview, **y**ou may feel you have shared more than you had wanted to so you may remove or modify the transcripts after you have received a copy. Sharing these experiences may bring up difficult/unresolved/painful/traumatic feelings. If you want or need to speak with an experienced professional, a referral will be made.

6. What are the potential benefits if you join this study? The potential benefits to you are: a) sharing stories that may not have been told because of a lack of interest among colleagues, friends or family members, b) gaining new insights about your experiences, which can contribute to professional growth.

7. What are the potential benefits to others if you join this study? To share your stories with students who will take part in international/intercultural field placement so they gain insights into short-term and long-term outcomes of doing an international field placement. It will also provide useful insights to social work educators on international field placements and curriculum development of integrative seminars.

8. How would your identity be kept confidential? All tape recordings/transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet and transcripts will be saved on secured computer files (i.e. password protected). Data collected will be kept for a minimum of five years in accordance with Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. Your name will not appear on any of the research data. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity. To maintain anonymity, the results published will not use any information that may identify you. Research assistants will be used to help with transcription but they will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality. They will not divulge information about the content of tapes to a third party.

However, <u>I may need to reveal information you give me with others if</u> it is required of social workers by law when: a) a child under 16 years old is victim of abuse; b) you or someone else could be harmed.

9. How will the research results be used? Information collected during interviews may be included in the dissertation as well as future articles and presentations. Direct quotations may be taken from your interview but identifying information will be removed or modified to protect your identity.

10. Who will have access to the information collected? Research assistants will only have access to the tapes while they are transcribing information collected during interviews. Some parts of the data found in transcripts will be shared with PhD supervisor and peer auditor. However, all information that could identify you will be removed from this material.

11. Will I be paid to participate in this study? You will not be paid to take part in this study but you will receive a gift card (25$) to thank you for your participation.

12. Who do you contact in case of emergency or in need of support? In case of emergency or in need support, you can contact the provincial crisis phone line CHIMO which is accessible 24 hours/365 days at the following number: **1-800-667-5005**

Who do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a participant?

If you have questions or concerns with regards to your rights as a research participant, you can call the following number: **(709) 864-2861**

13. Can you stop if you are participating in this study? It is your choice to change your mind at any time during the data collection process including after you have received a copy of the transcript. However, once the analysis has begun and the results are written up, you cannot request that your data be removed. There is <u>no penalty/harm for withdrawing</u> from this study. If you choose to withdraw, your tapes will be erased and transcripts destroyed.

14. What does your signature of this consent form mean? Your signature on this form means that: a) you have read the information pamphlet; b) the study process was fully explained; c) you have had the opportunity to ask all the questions needed for you to make a decision; d) you are aware that all your future questions about the study will be answered; and e) you know your rights as a research participant.

<u>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</u>

	YES	NO
I agree to participate in the interview.	____	____
I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.	____	____
I agree to the use of quotations.	____	____

_____   _____   _____

Name of participant   Signature of participant   Date

<u>SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER</u>

I have fully explained the research process and answered all questions so that the participant could freely choose to take part in this study.

_____   _____   _____

Name of researcher   Signature of researcher   Date

Do you wish to receive a copy of your interview transcript?

Yes_____   No_____

Do you wish to receive a copy of the summary of analysis/results?

Yes_____   No_____

What is your e-mail address? _____

Appendix G: Interview Guide for Research Participants

- Introduction

- Consent form

- Answer questions before starting the interview

SECTION A: Timeline

1) Please describe your career trajectory starting with your international/ intercultural field placement.

Probes: Pre-departure preparation; international/intercultural field placement; re-entry period; work experiences in various settings (1st job, current job); future employment

SECTION B: International/Intercultural Field Placement

1) Please talk about the significant moments with regards to your field placement.

Probes: Pre-departure (preparation), placement (supervision), re-entry (debriefing)

2) Can you describe your work during your field placement?

Probes: Agency (nature, purpose); similarities and differences with Canadian placement

3) Please describe your daily life in the host country.

Probes: Similarities and differences

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SECTION C: Field Placement Outcomes

1) What were the outcomes of this 4 month field placement upon return?

Probes: Personal life (knowledge of self); professional life (career trajectory); life as a citizen (volunteering)

2) How have you incorporated these outcomes (skills, knowledge and values) in your workplace?

Probes: 1st job, other jobs, current job, future jobs

3) How did your international/intercultural field placement influence your learning?

Probes: After the field placement; now

SECTION D: Social Work Practice

1) What were the similarities and differences from one work setting to another?

Probes: Nature of social work (What? When? Where? How?) and purpose (Why?)

2) Please talk about the tensions created by these differences.

3) How did your international/intercultural field placement influence your ability to move from one context to another?

Probes: Canadian context/host country/Canadian context; international/intercultural field placement/1st job; job 1/job2; last job/current job

Probes: Applicability, transferability

4) How did your international/intercultural experiences (field placement/living abroad) have an impact on your social work practice?

Probes: Paid work, volunteer work, educational activities

5) How does telling these stories help you to make sense of your social work practice?

Probes: Think about social work; feel about social work; do social work

- Debriefing statements:

      Thanks

      Information about transcripts

      Confidentiality issues

      Withdrawal from study

      Questions about study/process

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Appendix H: Protocol Form for Note Taking

Date: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Recent/Distant Experience: _____

North/South: _____

CONTENT:

Does participant wish to do a follow-up interview? YES or NO

Time/location of next interview: _____

Wants to read transcript?   YES or NO

Wants to read analysis and results?   YES or NO

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Appendix I: Oath of Confidentiality for Transcribers

I _____ (Print Name) will transcribe tapes for Isabel Lanteigne, a faculty member at the Université de Moncton, who is conducting a study on the outcomes of international/intercultural field placements.

The issues of confidentiality have been explained to me. By signing this form, I agree to maintain the privacy of participants whose information I am transcribing. This means that I will never divulge any information about the content of tapes I am transcribing or show the content of transcripts to a third party.

Isabel Lanteigne is the only person I will have any conversation regarding the content of tapes/transcripts.

By signing this oath, I also agree to keep tapes, transcripts and computer files in my possession while I am transcribing in a secure location. When I have finished my work, I will return ALL copies of tapes and transcripts to Isabel Lanteigne in a timely fashion. I will also erase all documents stored in computer files.

SIGNATURE OF TRANSCRIBER

_____   _____   _____

Name of transcriber   Signature of transcriber   Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

_____   _____   _____

Name of researcher   Signature of researcher   Date

Appendix J: Full Ethics Clearance Information

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

Memorial University

ICEHR Number: 20130391-SW

Responsible Faculty: Dr. Ross Klein, School of Social Work

Annexe A : Lettre pour le recrutement de participants et de participantes

Cette étude a été approuvée par le Comité éthique interdisciplinaire portant sur la recherche avec les êtres humains et conforme à la politique sur l'éthique de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Si vous avez des préoccupations éthiques à propos de cette étude (p.ex., votre traitement ou vos droits comme participant ou participante), vous pouvez téléphoner au (709) 864-2861 ou vous pouvez envoyer un courriel à l'adresse suivante : icehr@mun.ca.

(Date)

(Nom)

(Adresse)

OBJET :   Étude sur l'impact à long-terme d'un stage international/interculturel et les enjeux pour la pratique professionnelle du travailleur social et de la travailleuse sociale

J'enseigne présentement à l'École de travail social de l'Université de Moncton et je suis également étudiante aux études doctorales à Terre-Neuve. Dans le cadre de mes études, je désire interviewer des travailleurs sociaux et des travailleuses sociales ayant complété un stage de formation pratique dans un contexte international/interculturel lors de leurs études au baccalauréat. J'aimerais me pencher sur l'impact à long-terme de ces placements et les enjeux pour la pratique professionnelle de ces diplômées.

Je suis donc à la recherche de participants et de participantes désirant prendre part à cette étude qui va se dérouler en 2012-2013. Si vous acceptez de participer, vous aurez à répondre à des questions portant sur vos expériences durant le stage. Vous aurez également des questions à propos de ce que vous pensez avoir acquis ou développé davantage en ce qui a trait aux vos savoir-être, savoir et savoir-faire en travail social par le biais de ces expériences internationales/interculturelles. D'autres questions porteront sur le transfert de ces savoirs acquis dans un contexte international/interculturel à d'autres milieux de pratique.

Pour cette étude, je désire interviewer :

- 3 personnes qui sont diplômées depuis moins de 5 ans
- 3 personnes qui sont diplômées depuis plus de 5 ans
- 3 personnes qui ont complété un stage dans «les pays du Nord» (p.ex., Finlande, Espagne, Belgique, Suisse, Australie, etc.)
- 3 personnes qui ont complété un stage dans «les pays du Sud» (p.ex., Tunisie, Maroc, Cuba, Pérou, etc.).

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Vous serez donc invité à participer à une entrevue individuelle d'une durée d'environ deux (2) heures dans un lieu qui vous convient. Un suivi à cette entrevue sera effectué à une date ultérieure si vous désirez fournir d'autres informations. Voici ce que vous devez savoir avant **d'accepter** ou **de refuser** de participer à cette étude :

1) Participation volontaire : Votre participation est entièrement volontaire. Si vous acceptez de prendre part à cette étude, vous avez le droit de vous retirer en tout temps.

2) Confidentialité/anonymat/vie privée : Votre identité ne sera pas dévoilée et l'anonymat sera préservé en retirant ou modifiant des informations (p.ex., lieu et année du placement). Tout contenu pouvant porter atteinte à votre vie privée sera également retiré.

3) Utilisation des informations fournies (p.ex., thèse, présentations et publications) : Les données recueillies durant les entrevues seront utilisées pour la rédaction de la thèse. Le contenu de ces entrevues pourra également être utilisé ultérieurement lors de présentations ou publication d'articles. Tout contenu utilisé protégera votre identité et assurera la protection de votre vie privée.

4) Vos questions quant à cette étude : En tout temps vous êtes invité à poser vos questions ayant trait au processus de recherche.

5) Retrait de l'étude et retrait du contenu : Vous pouvez choisir de vous retirer de cette étude peu importe le motif. Vous pouvez également éliminer ou modifier les informations fournies durant l'entrevue, après l'entrevue ou après avoir reçu une copie de la transcription.

6) Enregistrement/transcription : L'enregistrement, la transcription et tous les documents sauvés à l'ordinateur seront conservés dans un endroit sécuritaire. Les données recueillies seront conservées pour un minimum de 5ans telle que prescrit par la politique sur l'éthique en recherche de l'Université Memorial.

7) Bénéfices de participer à cette recherche : Il vous sera possible d'acquérir de nouvelles perspectives sur les expériences vécues. Le partage de vos histoires et apprentissages favorisera un processus réflexif chez d'autres travailleurs sociaux et travailleuses sociales ayant pris part à une expérience similaire. Ces histoires seront également bénéfiques pour les étudiants et les étudiantes désirant faire un stage international/interculturel. Votre participation permettra également de réfléchir aux enjeux de la formation pratique lorsque celle-ci s'effectue dans un contexte international/interculturel et de fournir des pistes de réflexion pouvant améliorer les séminaires de synthèse.

Au plaisir d'échanger ensemble,

Isabel Lanteigne, TSI

Étudiante au doctorat,

Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve

Annexe B : Pamphlet à propos de l'étude

Étude portant sur le stage de formation pratique effectué dans un contexte international/interculturel

Cette étude a été approuvée par le Comité éthique interdisciplinaire portant sur la recherche avec les êtres humains et conforme à la politique sur l'éthique de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Si vous avez des préoccupations éthiques à propos de cette étude (p.ex. votre traitement ou vos droits comme participant ou participante), vous pouvez téléphoner au (709) 864-2861 ou vous pouvez envoyer un courriel à l'adresse suivante : icehr@mun.ca.

Étapes du processus de recherche :

a) Entrevue individuelle

b) Rencontre supplémentaire si vous désirez fournir d'autres informations

c) Transcription des entrevues

d) Analyse du contenu

e) Rédaction du rapport

Comment pouvez-vous contribuer? Vous êtes invité à participer à une entrevue individuelle d'une durée d'environ deux (2) heures. Si vous le désirez, vous pouvez emporter des photos, des souvenirs ou des documents écrits tels que votre journal de bord pour vous aider à remémorer les expériences vécues. Il est possible de participer à une deuxième rencontre si vous voulez ajouter d'autres informations supplémentaires. Vous recevrez une copie de l'entrevue retranscrite afin d'éliminer ou de modifier les informations fournies.

Participation volontaire : Vous avez le droit de refuser de participer à cette étude. Vous avez de plus le droit de cesser cette participation en tout temps en me téléphonant au (506) 858-4013 ou en envoyant un courriel à l'adresse suivante : isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca. Si vous désirez vous retirez de cette étude, l'enregistrement et le document sauvé à l'ordinateur seront effacés et la transcription de votre entrevue sera détruite.

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Confidentialité/anonymat/vie privée : Votre identité ne sera pas dévoilée. Votre nom sera omis de toutes les informations recueillies et un pseudonyme sera utilisé pour protéger votre identité. Les assistantes de recherche embauchées pour retranscrire les entrevues devront signer un formulaire de confidentialité. Toutes les informations pouvant vous identifier seront retirées ou modifier pour votre protection. Durant le processus de collecte des données, vous aurez le droit de retirer ou modifier les informations fournies.

Résultats de la recherche : Les informations recueillies seront utilisées pour la rédaction de la thèse et pourront servir également à la rédaction d'autres publications ou être partagées lors de présentations. Les informations fournies ne permettront pas de vous identifier. Votre identité ne sera pas dévoilée dans les documents écrits ou lors de présentations publiques.

Risques potentiels : Le partage de vos expériences de stage international/interculturel peut soulever des sentiments non résolus pouvant être pénible ou même traumatique. Si vous ressentez le besoin de parler de ces expériences difficiles, vous serez référé à un professionnel dans la communauté.

Bénéfices possibles : Il vous sera possible de faire un retour sur vos expériences et d'acquérir de nouvelles perspectives quant aux expériences vécues. Ces informations que vous partagerez pourront être bénéfiques pour d'autres ayant participé à un stage de formation pratique dans un contexte international/interculturel ou pour les personnes désirant un jour prendre part à une expérience similaire (p.ex., réflexions sur le transfert des acquis d'un milieu à un autre).

Approbation reçue pour effectuer cette recherche : Cette étude a reçu l'approbation du Comité éthique interdisciplinaire sur la recherche portant sur les êtres humains à l'**Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve** ainsi que le Comité éthique de l'**Université de Moncton**. Si vous avez des préoccupations éthiques concernant l'étude (p.ex., droit des participants et des participantes, traitement durant le processus de recherche, plaintes à propos de l'étude), vous pouvez téléphoner au (709) 864-2861 ou envoyez un courriel à l'adresse suivante : icehr@mun.ca.

Pour de plus amples informations : Si vous désirez participer à cette étude ou si vous avez des questions ou préoccupations concernant celle-ci, prière de m'envoyer un courriel (isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca) ou me laisser un message téléphonique (506-858-4013). Vous pouvez également rejoindre mon superviseur, Dr. Ross Klein, en téléphonant au (709) 864-8147 ou en envoyant un courriel à l'adresse suivante : rklein@mun.ca.

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Annexe C : Points à aborder lors de la prise de contact par téléphone

_____ Introduction

_____ Révision du contenu de la lettre/du pamphlet

_____ Questions à propos de la recherche

_____ Préoccupations à propos de la recherche

_____ Lieu où vont se dérouler l'entrevue

_____ Comment vous rejoindre?

_____ Remerciements

Annexe D : Lettre de remerciement

(Date)

(Nom)

(Adresse)

Objet : Étude portant sur le stage de formation pratique effectué dans un contexte international/interculturel

Cher/Chère (NOM),

Merci pour l'intérêt démontré à cette étude sur les stages effectués dans un contexte international et interculturel. Cependant, votre nom n'a pas été retenu pour cette étude.

Étant donné des contraintes de temps, je dois me restreindre à des rencontres avec douze participants et participantes. Comme mentionné ultérieurement dans la lettre que vous avez reçu, ces personnes ont été sélectionnées à partir des critères suivants :

- 3 personnes qui sont diplômées depuis moins de 5 ans

- 3 personnes qui sont diplômées depuis plus de 5 ans

- 3 personnes qui ont complété un stage dans «les pays du Nord» (p.ex., Finlande, Espagne, Belgique, Suisse, Australie, etc.)

- 3 personnes qui ont complété un stage dans «les pays du Sud» (p.ex., Tunisie, Maroc, Cuba, Pérou, etc.).

Puisque de nombreux travailleurs sociaux et travailleuses sociales ont manifesté un intérêt à participer aux entrevues, j'ai choisi les douze premières personnes répondant aux critères ci-haut.

Sincèrement vôtre,

Isabel Lanteigne, TSI

Étudiante au doctorat

Memorial University of Newfoundland

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Annexe E : Publicité pour le recrutement des participants et des participantes

Avez-vous complété un stage de formation pratique dans un contexte international/interculturel?

Cette étude a été approuvée par le Comité éthique interdisciplinaire portant sur la recherche avec les êtres humains et conforme à la politique sur l'éthique de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Si vous avez des préoccupations éthiques à propos de cette étude (p.ex., votre traitement ou vos droits comme participant ou participante), vous pouvez téléphoner au (709) 864-2861 ou vous pouvez envoyer un courriel à l'adresse suivante : icehr@mun.ca.

Thème de cette étude : Une étude portant sur le stage international/interculturel et enjeux pour la pratique professionnelle sera effectuée en 2012-2013 avec des anciens et des anciennes de l'École de travail social de l'Université de Moncton.

Participants et participantes recherchées : Récents diplômés (moins de 5 ans) et anciens diplômés (plus de 5 ans) ayant effectués des stages dans un contexte international/interculturel (p.ex., Tunisie, Belgique, Espagne, Nunanvut, …).

Engagement demandé : Participer à une entrevue d'une durée d'environ deux (2) heures.

Types de question qui seront posés: Vous aurez à répondre aux questions portant sur votre stage international/interculturel, votre trajectoire professionnelle par la suite, vos acquis suite à ce stage et le transfert de ces acquis d'un contexte international/interculturel à d'autres contextes de pratique.

Bénéfices de participer à cette étude : Il vous sera possible de faire un retour sur vos expériences et de possiblement acquérir de nouvelles perspectives sur celles-ci. Ces informations que vous partagerez pourront être bénéfiques pour d'autres personnes ayant complété un stage de formation pratique dans un contexte international/interculturel et pour les personnes désirant un jour prendre part à un tel stage. Votre participation permettra également de fournir des pistes de réflexions à propos de nombreux enjeux liés à la formation pratique et au développement d'autres contenus à inclure dans le séminaire de synthèse.

Pour de plus amples informations : Si vous avez des questions à propos de cette étude ou désirez y participer, vous pouvez me rejoindre à l'adresse courriel suivante : isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca ou par téléphone au (506) 858-4013.

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Annexe F : Formulaire de consentement pour les participants et les participantes

Impact à long-terme d'un placement international/interculturel
et les enjeux pour leur pratique professionnelle

Isabel Lanteigne

École de travail social (isabel.lanteigne@umoncton.ca**)**

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT

Copie du participant/de la participante _____

Copie de la chercheure _____

Cette étude a été approuvée par le Comité éthique interdisciplinaire portant sur la recherche avec les êtres humains et conforme à la politique sur l'éthique de l'Université Memorial de Terre-Neuve. Si vous avez des préoccupations éthiques à propos de cette étude (p.ex., votre traitement ou vos droits comme participant ou participante), vous pouvez téléphoner au (709) 864-2861 ou vous pouvez envoyer un courriel à l'adresse suivante : icehr@mun.ca.

Ce formulaire de consentement contient des informations vous expliquant le déroulement de la recherche. Si vous désirez participer à l'étude, ces informations vous permettront de prendre une décision éclairée. En acceptant de prendre part à cette étude, vous serez demandé de signer ce formulaire de consentement. Vous en recevrez une copie pour vos dossiers personnels.

1) Que devez-vous avant de prendre votre décision? Prière de lire attentivement ce formulaire de consentement avant de le signer. Si vous êtes incertain/incertaine, prenez le temps nécessaire pour poser vos questions. Si vous acceptez de participer à cette étude maintenant, vous avez le droit de vous retirer plus tard.

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2) Quel est le but de cette étude? Trouver des réponses aux questions suivantes :

Quel est l'impact d'un stage de formation pratique complété dans un contexte international/interculturel au niveau personnel, professionnel et global? Comment s'effectue le transfert des savoir-être, savoir et savoir-faire d'un contexte international/interculturel à d'autres contextes de pratique? Comment les participants et participantes négocient ces transitions entre différents contextes? Quelle est la pertinence de ces expériences internationales/interculturelles pour la pratique professionnelle du travailleur social et de la travailleuse sociale?

3) Combien de personnes vont participer à cette étude? Douze participants et participantes vont prendre part à cette étude dont des récents diplômés (moins de 5 ans) et anciens diplômés (plus de 5 ans) ayant effectués des stages dans un contexte international/interculturel (p.ex. Tunisie, Belgique, Espagne, Nunavut, etc.).

4) Qu'est-ce qui vous sera demandé si vous prenez part à cette étude? Si vous acceptez de participer, vous aurez à prendre part à <u>une entrevue individuelle</u> d'une durée d'environ 2 heures. Vous serez invité à participer à une deuxième entrevue afin d'ajouter d'autres informations.

<u>Vous pouvez décider d'arrêter votre participation en tout temps.</u> Vous pouvez modifier ou retirer le contenu partagé lors de l'entrevue, une fois l'entrevue terminée et après en avoir reçu une copie. Cependant, il n'est plus possible de modifier le contenu de l'entrevue une fois que la rédaction de l'analyse a été entamée.

5) Quels sont les risques possibles de participer à cette étude? Il est possible que votre participation suscite un sentiment d'avoir trop partagé ou dévoilé de vous-même. Après avoir reçu une copie de la transcription de votre entrevue, vous pourrez modifier le contenu de l'entrevue. Si les expériences partagées soulèvent des sentiments pénibles ou non résolus, vous pouvez demander à être référé à un professionnel.

6) Quelles sont les bénéfices potentiels de votre participation à cette étude? Les bénéfices comprennent : a) l'occasion de partager des histoires qui ont été peu ou pas encore racontées en raison d'un manque d'intérêt ou d'incompréhension de la part de votre entourage (p.ex., collègues, amis, membres de la famille); b) acquérir de nouvelles perspectives à propos d'expériences vécues qui peuvent contribuer à votre croissance professionnelle.

7) Quelles sont les bénéfices potentiels pour d'autres si vous participez à cette étude? Cela permettra aux personnes qui désirent prendre part un jour à de telles expériences de tirer profit de vos réflexions quant à l'impact à court-terme et à long-terme d'un stage international ou interculturel. Vos réflexions pourront servir également de pistes au niveau des enjeux pour la formation pratique et le développement de contenu pour les séminaires de synthèse.

8) Comment votre identité demeurera-t-elle confidentielle?

Tous les enregistrements et les documents transcrits seront gardés dans un endroit sécuritaire alors que les documents sauvegardés à l'ordinateur seront protégés par un mot-de-passe. Les données recueillies

seront conservées pour un minimum de 5ans telle que prescrit par la politique sur l'éthique en recherche de l'Université Memorial. Votre nom n'apparaîtra pas avec les données recueillies. A cet effet, un pseudonyme sera utilisé pour protéger votre identité.

Pour préserver l'anonymat, les résultats publiés ne comporteront pas des informations pouvant vous identifier. Les assistantes de recherche embauchées pour retranscrire les entrevues devront signer un formulaire de confidentialité. Ces assistantes ne seront donc pas autorisées à dévoiler le contenu des enregistrements à une tierce personne.

Limites à la confidentialité : Je devrai briser la confidentialité si les informations fournies concernent (a) un enfant de 16 ans et moins qui est victime d'abus; (b) vous ou toute autre personne est en danger.

9) Comment les résultats de cette étude vont-ils être utilisés?

Les informations recueillies pendant les entrevues pourront être inclues lors de la rédaction de la thèse. Elles seront également utilisées lors de publications ou de présentations futures. Des extraits verbatim seront utilisés cependant les informations permettant de vous identifier seront omises ou modifiées. Les informations utilisées protégeront votre identité.

10) Qui aura accès aux informations recueillies lors de votre entrevue?

Les assistantes embauchées pour la transcription auront seulement les enregistrements en leur possession le temps nécessaire pour y transcrire le contenu. Certains extraits des entrevues seront partagés avec mon superviseur et un collègue pour vérification externe de l'analyse. Par contre, les informations pouvant vous identifier auront été retirées ou modifiées.

11) Est-ce que vous allez recevoir une compensation pour votre participation?

Vous ne serez pas payé, mais vous recevrez un certificat cadeau d'une valeur de 25.00$ pour vous remercier de participer à cette étude.

12) Qui devez-vous téléphoner en cas d'urgence ou pour du support?

En cas d'urgence ou pour du support, vous pouvez téléphoner la ligne provinciale de crise CHIMO qui est disponible 24 heures/365 jours au **1-800-667-5005**.

Qui devez-vous téléphoner concernant vos droits comme participant et participante? Si vous avez des questions ou des préoccupations concernant **v**os droits comme participant et participante, vous pouvez téléphoner au **709-864-2861.**

13) Pouvez-vous vous retirer de cette étude si vous avez accepté de participer?

Si vous choisissez de vous retirer de l'étude, vos enregistrements seront effacés et la copie papier détruite. <u>Vous pouvez vous retirez de cette étude en tout temps sans encourir de perte ou dommage.</u> Vous avez le droit de demander que des informations soient enlevées pendant l'étape de collecte des

données et après avoir reçu une copie de la transcription de l'entrevue. Par contre, une fois la rédaction de l'analyse et des résultats entamée, vous ne pouvez exiger que les informations fournies soient retirées ou modifiées.

14) Que signifie votre signature sur ce formulaire de consentement?

Votre signature signifie que : a) vous avez lu le pamphlet d'information; b) vous avez pleinement compris le processus de recherche; c) vous avez eu l'occasion de demander toutes les questions nécessaires à votre prise de décision; d) vous êtes au courant que toutes questions à venir à propos de l'étude seront répondues; et, e) vous connaissez vos droits en tant que participant et participante à cette étude.

SIGNATURE DU PARTICIPANT/DE LA PARTICIPANTE

	OUI	NON
a) J'accepte de participer à cette étude.	____	____
b) J'accepte d'être enregistré lors de l'entrevue.	____	____
c) J'accepte que la chercheure utilise des extraits verbatim.	____	____

_____   _____   _____

Nom du participant   Signature   Date

SIGNATURE DE LA CHERCHEURE

J'ai pleinement expliqué le processus de recherche et j'ai répondu aux questions du participant et de la participante afin qu'il et elle puisse consentir de façon éclairée à participer à cette étude.

_____   _____   _____

Nom de la chercheure   Signature   Date

INFORMATIONS SUPPLÉMENTAIRES :

Désirez-vous une copie de l'entrevue retranscrite?	**OUI**	**NON**
Désirez-vous une copie des chapitres portant sur l'analyse et les résultats?	**OUI**	**NON**

Quelle est votre adresse courriel ? _____

Annexe G : Guide d'entrevue

- **Introduction**

- **Formulaire de consentement**

- **Répondre aux questions du participant/de la participante**

SECTION A : Ligne du temps

1) Peux-tu décrire ta trajectoire professionnelle depuis ton stage de formation pratique international/interculturel.

(Préparation pré-départ; stage international/interculturel; retour; expérience de travail dans différents contextes – 1er emploi, emploi actuel, emplois futurs)

SECTION B : Stage international/interculturel

1) Peux-tu me parler des moments importants du stage.

(Préparation pré-départ, supervision durant le placement, retour)

2) Peux-tu me décrire ton travail durant le stage.

(Nature et but de l'organisme, aspects communs et divergents avec le stage canadien)

3) Peux-tu me décrire la vie quotidienne dans le pays d'accueil. (Similarités et différences)

SECTION C : Impact du stage

1) Quels étaient les acquis de ce stage internationale/interculturelle au retour du stage?

(Vie personnelle – connaissance de soi; vie professionnelle – trajectoire professionnelle; vie citoyenne – services à la collectivité/engagement social)

2) Comment as-tu intégré ces acquis (savoir-être, savoir, savoir-faire) de stage dans ton travail?

(1er emploi, autres, actuel, futurs – innovations, contenu international/interculturel)

3) Comment ce stage international/culturel a-t-il influencé tes apprentissages?

(Après le stage, maintenant)

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SECTION D : PRATIQUE PROFESSIONNELLE

1) Quelles étaient les aspects communs/divergents d'un milieu de pratique à un autre?

(Nature – quoi, quand, où, comment; fonction – pourquoi?)

2) Peux-tu me parler des tensions crées par ces aspects divergents.

3) Comment ton stage international/interculturel a-t-il influencé ta capacité de faire la transition entre un milieu de pratique à un autre?

(Stage/1er emploi; 1er emploi/emploi 2; dernier emploi/emploi actuel)

(Utilité, transférable)

4) Comment tes expériences internationales/interculturelles (stage et vie dans le pays d'accueil) ont-elles eu un impact sur ta pratique professionnelle?

(Travail rémunéré; travail bénévole; activités éducationnelles)

5) Comment le fait de raconter ces histoires contribuent-elles à donner un sens à ta pratique professionnelle?

(Concevoir le travail social; émotions ressenties à propos de la pratique)

> **Mot de la fin :**
>
> - **Remerciements**
>
> - **Informations à propos des documents transcrits**
>
> - **Enjeux de confidentialité**
>
> - **Retrait de l'étude**
>
> - **Répondre aux questions du participant/de la participante**

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Annexe H : Formulaire pour la prise de notes

Date : _____

Pseudonyme : _____

Stage récent/distant : _____

Pays du nord/sud : _____

CONTENU :

Désire participer à une deuxième entrevue?   **OUI**   **NON**

Heure et lieu de la deuxième entrevue : _____

Désire une copie de la transcription?   **OUI**   **NON**

Désire une copie de l'analyse et des résultats?   **OUI**   **NON**

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Annexe I : Formulaire de confidentialité pour les assistantes de recherche

Je _____ (NOM) vais transcrire les enregistrements pour Isabel Lanteigne, professeure à l'École de travail social de l'Université de Moncton, dans le cadre de son étude portant sur l'impact à long-terme du stage international/interculturel.

Les enjeux liés à la confidentialité m'ont été expliqués. En signant ce formulaire, j'accepte de respecter la vie privée des participants et des participantes lorsque j'effectue la transcription de leurs entrevues. Cela signifie que je ne vais jamais divulguer aucune information à propos du contenu des enregistrements ou permettre à une tierce personne de consulter les documents ou les informations sauvegardées à l'ordinateur.

Isabel Lanteigne est la seule personne avec qui je vais avoir des échanges concernant le contenu des enregistrements.

En signant ce formulaire de confidentialité, je consens à m'assurer que les enregistrements, transcriptions et documents sauvegardés à l'ordinateur ou en ma possession soient conservés dans un lieu sécuritaire. Je m'engage à retourner TOUT le matériel à Isabel Lanteigne dans les délais requis et à supprimer tous documents sauvegardés ayant trait aux enregistrements.

SIGNATURE DE L'ASSISTANTE DE RECHERCHE

_____   _____   _____
Nom de l'assistante   Signature   Date

SIGNATURE DE LA CHERCHEURE

_____   _____   _____
Nom de la chercheure   Signature   Date

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