



Fortalecimiento De La Autonomia De La Mujer

Araceli Whitwam-Sell

University of Michigan School of Social Work

Classroom Connections SW 651: Planning for Organizational and Community Change

This course affirmed the importance of participatory planning process with marginalized and oppressed groups (e.g., age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender identity and marital status).

The course readied me to:

- Examine and understand my privileged identities.
- Continually question my motives to ensure they reflect the voice of those I serve.

Santiago, Chile

- The city of Santiago, Chile's capital, has an estimated population of 17 million. It is located in South America's southwest coast, bordering the South Pacific Ocean as well as Argentina, Peru and Bolivia.
- Chile is one of the most socially conservative countries in Latin America. Divorce was illegal until 2005. The World Economics ranks it in 91st place on women's equality issues. Disregard towards women's issues is common. Abortion is outlawed in all circumstances, and crimes against women frequently go unaddressed.
- Michelle Bachelet, the country's first female president, has increased the National Women's Service (SERNAM) budget. Through SERNAM, domestic violence centers, located throughout Chile, known as La Casa de La Mujer, work to assist women experiencing interfamilial violence and link them to community resources.

Placement/Project Information

My field experience was with El Centro de La Mujer de La Florida in Santiago, Chile. The organization's mission is to provide support for women impacted by interfamilial violence. A staff comprised of attorneys, psychologists and social workers provide clients legal advocacy, support groups and counselling services. Additionally, they work towards eradicating violence perpetrated against women. In this manner they empower, mentor and provide services to participants with hope for a better future.



Career Connections

Serving as the first global social work intern at El Centro de La Mujer de La Florida gave me the opportunity to work shoulder to shoulder with a staff willing to facilitate my learning and give me freedom to explore how I initiated and fostered relationships with service participants and the community.

Skills Utilized/Developed

From the global field placement, I increased my ability to:

- Leverage the support of stakeholders
- Engage in multilingual, multicultural organizing efforts
- Appropriately advocate for my clients
- Appropriately use assertiveness

Outcomes

In the course of my sixteen-week global field placement, I had the opportunity to engage and collaborate with various professionals and service participants using multicultural and multilingual community organizing approaches.

My major accomplishments include:

- Research on international best practices on increasing the autonomy of women of Latin America through the formation of self help groups.
- Developing and assisting with the implementation of the Graduate Service Participant self help group.
- Training service participants to participate in the newly created Community Mentor Program.

Lessons Learned

- The autonomy of community members must be respected and encouraged.
- I am not the expert, but rather I am an ally.
- Cultures other than my own hold a different perspective towards life. Their perspective is not wrong. It is simply different from that of my own.

Advice

Do not berate yourself for feeling frustrated or overwhelmed. Instead, breathe deeply, reach out to your support network and take joy in the experience.



Acknowledgments

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