



Riomaggiore, Cinque Terre, Italy

An Exploration of Italian Social Services

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Gondola ride. Venice, Italy.



Tuscany, Italy.

Location: Tuscany, Italy:

Tuscany is located in Central Italy. The region is over 8,000 square miles and home to 3.75 million people. It is believed the national language, Italian, was born in Tuscany. Native born Italians account for 93% of the regions population. Nearly 85% of citizens are Roman Catholic, however there is a growing population of Muslims and Buddhists.



A common Italian lunch. Viareggio, Italy.

Activities:

Over the course of my two-week special studies project I had the opportunity to speak with representatives from five social service agencies. The organizations and key highlights include:

- Santa Rita: Founded on the principles of dignity and respect, this organization provides transitional housing and helps individuals obtain appropriate education, and mental health services.
- Gruppo Giovani e Comunita Lucca: The agency supports people experiencing drug and alcohol addiction through rehabilitation facilities.
- Villa Marene: A residential treatment facility for older adults with either mental or physical health diagnosis.
- Gruppo Pediatrico: Dr. Vigilotti discussed America's tendency to overpathologize children.
- Caritas: Inspired by Christian values, the organization is active in peace and justice, poverty reform, immigration, mental health, and homelessness.



The Amphitheatrum Flavium. Rome, Italy.

Connections:

Classroom:

- SW 612: Mental Health and Mental Disorders of Children and Youth

The course increased my knowledge of mental disorders in children and youth, as well as the impact of such disorders on family structures. The coursework allowed me to engage in critical discussions regarding child and youth functioning and mental health classification systems with Italian doctors, social workers, and educators.

- SW 521: Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families and Small Groups

This course introduced skills essential to interpersonal practice concerning community, organization and policy. The course helped me explore ways to apply practice within intersectional identifies of race, gender, sex, socio-economic status, religion, ability and so forth. I accessed this information to consider a multi-faceted, person-in-the-environment perspective when discussing Italian social structures.

Career:

I chose to craft my own special studies experience, highlighting social service sectors of particular interest. Each interview was selected to gain an Italian perspective on specific aspects of my professional goals. I hope to develop an outreach center to provide crisis intervention to families experiencing poverty, lack of educational attainment, and inability to access mental health and behavioral health resources.

Skills Developed:

Through my global special studies experience, I:

- Increased assertiveness and confidence when asking uncomfortable questions
- Strengthened independence, resourcefulness, and problem solving skills
- Developed rapport and relationship building skills
- Practiced patience and active listening
- Increased understanding of global, economic, and political matters
- Enhanced comprehension of the Italian dimensions and social work interventions
- Observed and critically analyzed social roles and hierarchies

Lessons Learned:

- Social work is more than crisis intervention: Observing a culture's healthy relationships, value systems, traditions and historical footprints is necessary to address social issues competently.
- Flexibility is key: Schedules change and Italian culture largely views time spent as less important than the relationship created.



Interview with Dr. Angelo Vigilotti. Prato, Italy.

- Body language is powerful: As I am not bi-lingual, I relied heavily on an open and welcoming demeanor to develop a rapport with community members.
- Journaling is crucial: Recording observations allowed for critical self-reflection and a detailed account of experiences I may have otherwise forgotten.

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