Critical analysis of “doing good”

Critical ethnographic analysis of “doing good” on short-term international immersion experiences

**Short title:** Critical analysis of “doing good”

**Author information:**
Michelle L. Elliot, Ph.D. OT (C)
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, Scotland

**Contact information of primary author:**
Queen Margaret University
Division of Occupational Therapy and Art Therapies
Queen Margaret University Drive
Edinburgh, Scotland
EH21 6UU
[MElliot@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:MElliot@qmu.ac.uk)
Phone: +44(0) 131 474 0000
Fax: +44(0) 131 474 0001

**Research Funding**
Doctoral Fellowship from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

**Citation**
Critical analysis of “doing good”

Keywords:
Critical analysis; expectations; reciprocal partnerships; moral incentive

Abstract
Reciprocal partnerships are growing alongside the rise of international learning and “doing” experiences for students and clinicians. This paper questions how global citizenship, the acquisition of awareness and skills to sensitively navigate through a rapidly globalized social world, is cultivated amidst international partnerships focused on short term immersion opportunities. Using an ethnographic methodology to examine the experiences of occupational therapy students abroad, this article addresses the potential for competing agendas when the motivation to participate within these partnerships is driven in part by a desire to “do good.” The empirical lens was directed toward the students’ verbal, written and enacted narratives rather than the socio-cultural realm of the sending institution, the host organization or the occupational realities of the local communities, therefore is limited in discursive scope. Nevertheless, the need is great for further critical appraisal of objectives and expectations by all parties to foster a partnership culture of reciprocity and equality and to diminish the neocolonial legacy of Western expertise dissemination. By examining how the stated and implied desire to “do good” exists alongside the risk to do harm to individuals and international networks, the conclusions can be extended locally to highlight the challenges to “partnering up” between clinicians and patients.
Critical analysis of “doing good”

Introduction

In order to examine occupational therapy global partnerships it is pertinent to question what constitutes a “global citizen.” This phrase is readily adopted in the marketing lexicon of a multitude of international opportunities for students and professionals alike (see Breen 2012; Cameron 2014; Wearing 2001). It infers a desirable, if not idealized, set of attributes and perspectives necessary to successfully travel through and respond to our rapidly globalized social world (Cameron 2014; Tiessen and Huish 2014; Tuhiwai Smith 2012). Global citizenship is presumed to arise from opportunities to step out of one’s home community into the lived world of another (Cameron 2014), yet it remains sufficiently vague in both theory and practice (Tiessen and Huish 2014). The Global South, understood as “nations around the world that are rooted in the history of colonization and Western imperialism” (Thomas and Chandrasekera 2014: 108) is frequently the destination where this citizenship is sought. Participation in an institutional or organizational project is a primary route by which global citizenship is cultivated. Strong and established international partnerships fostering the reciprocal exchange of strengths, resources and knowledge are therefore valued and encouraged. They have the potential to facilitate the creation of networks of globally-informed individuals and communities (Cameron et al. 2013; Suarez-Balcazar et al. 2013). The participants themselves however, may have limited appreciation for the extensive and sustained time and energy such partnership cultivation necessitates.

Furthermore, it cannot be ignored that the vast majority of health and social science literature recognizes “global citizens” as individuals from more affluent nations traveling in pursuit of cultural differences; connection to an “other” (MacDonald 2014; Tiessen and Huish
2014). The reality is that many host or partner countries have not previously offered the specialized programs the participants are affiliated with. For example, there are few, if any, locally-trained occupational therapists working in these regions (Njelesani et al. 2013). This further tips the balance of citizenship toward those who have the resources to go abroad and return home in order to translate learning and insight into action supporting health and daily engagement. True collaborative partnerships do not reap benefits solely for “Western” members; they endorse and cultivate the reciprocity of teaching and learning (Njelesani et al. 2013). While this paper does not give voice to the less acknowledged partners, it does serve to highlight the link between these global alliances and the personally derived moral pursuits of individual participants; those wishing to enable or foster greater community engagement and everyday participation.

Hammell (2013), with respect to client-centered practice, argued that the occupational therapy profession and practice relies heavily on historical rather than critical foundational claims. I contend that these arguments can and should be appropriated into the discourse of the globalization of the profession by addressing the wide institutional support for experiential opportunities afforded through international sojourns, along with the intention of creating global citizens (Morgan 2010; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2013). As “an intellectual practice that challenges assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of thinking, and seeks to expose linkages between ideologies and power” (Hammell 2013: 175), the use of critical thinking here is intended to ensure that personal, professional and institutional levels of partnership (i.e. Crump and Sugarman 2008; Green et al. 2009; Metzl and Hansen 2014) are present in this important and timely dialogue. The implementation and sustainability of global connections is a complex process whereby multitudes of perspectives and intentions are considered therefore an expansive
Critical analysis of “doing good”

disciplinary and critical purview is required. This paper contributes to the conversation with the inclusion of reflections derived from a year-long ethnographic study of occupational therapy students who traveled to the Global South for a short term immersion as part of their professional education.

The expectations of occupational therapy students, these global citizens in the making, who benefit from the development and evolution of these established partnerships, are the primary focus of this paper. International fieldwork or service learning experiences of students and clinicians have been well documented across the occupational therapy literature (Barker et al. 2010; Humbert et al. 2011; 2012; McAllister et al. 2006; Mu et al. 2010; Simonelis et al. 2011). There is also a growing movement toward the critical examination of these experiences, from travel and tourism (Decamp 2007; Guttentag 2009), anthropology (Fisher 1997; Green et al. 2009) and higher education (Breen 2012; Ouma and Dimaras 2013; Tiessen and Huish 2014).

It is necessary for occupational therapy to contribute to this critical perspective if the profession, with its historical roots connected to its branding as a profession that “reaches for the heart as well as the hands” (Carlova and Ruggles 1946: 69), is to continue to endorse the value gained from international participation in the promotion of health and well-being. Such an approach does not seek to silence or condemn but rather to deepen and expand current practices (Guttentag 2009; Hammell 2013) with respect to transparent learning objectives and measurable outcomes.

A secondary aim of this paper is to more closely examine the articulated objectives of the students whose interactions in these partnerships do not directly align with the curricular or professional learning outcomes [i.e. cross-cultural communication; clinical reasoning; leadership skills]. The underlying desire to participate in a global immersion experience in order to satisfy a
Critical analysis of “doing good”

A profound desire or altruistic need to “do good” in the world was not always directly verbalized, but appeared to be deeply rooted in some of the students’ experiences abroad and at home. For whom then, is the “good” done? An expanding body of literature on nongovernmental organizations and charity affiliations suggests that the “good,” the moral drive to make a valued contribution to the human struggle for equality and acceptance (Decamp 2007), is not always equitably shared between partners. Thus it is the provider rather than the recipient of this action that benefits and reflects the power inherent or disparate across involved parties (Cheong and Miller 2000; Green et al. 2009; Jakubiak 2012; Levi 2009).

Furthermore, “doing good” without equal weighting of the prevention of “doing harm” (Cameron 2014) has the potential to alter what it means to effectively “partner up” (Lawlor and Mattingly 2014; Mattingly 2010). This latter phrase, adopted in the Boundary Crossings longitudinal ethnographic research on health disparities among African American families with children with disabilities, is the intersubjective coming together of individuals or collectives (health care teams, clinics, universities). Ideally, partnering up supports the acknowledgement and consideration of expertise and experience from all involved parties (Lawlor and Mattingly 2014). By engaging in a process of mutual sharing of resources and knowledge, global partnerships embody the occupational therapy tenet of “doing with” rather than “doing for.” It is my contention that the expectations of students who participate in global opportunities might not always be founded upon a vision of shared learning and resource exchange. In other words, the basis from which the partnerships between institutions or nations arose may not always possess the same inherent aims that inspire individuals and groups to take up the mantle of practice within this partnership.

Study background
Critical analysis of “doing good”

Population

Recruitment for this research commenced following institutional review board approval. Convenience and snowball sampling through verbal and electronic word of mouth was utilized from a subset of a class of second year master’s level occupational therapy students at an American university, who were committed to traveling to West Africa for a two week period as part of their final year professional development. In total, 24 students, roughly two thirds of the larger travel group, consented to participate in the study. Primarily female, ranging in age from early 20’s to late 40’s, this research population represented a relative diversity of spiritual beliefs, travel experience and preferred clinical practice settings. By consenting to participate in this study, these students agreed to involvement in multiple audio recorded interviews, sharing of written and photographic documentation of their experiences and the presence of the researcher in the role of participant observer while abroad.

The primary partnership between this institution and organizations in West Africa evolved from a personal affiliation with the trip organizer to a more expansive association between universities, rehabilitation programs and annual trips by American students and therapists. This partnership is not the central unit of analysis here nor was it within the research itself. Nevertheless, it is a discursive component, for the narrative legacy of this international opportunity, the host site and the ongoing partner development served to catalyze interest for many of the occupational therapy students. The “doing” component of the immersion included advocacy, consultancy and collaborative skill development with community rehabilitation professionals in higher education settings, medical facilities, primary schools and village centers. Even with the established partnership, the daily realities and opportunities the students
Critical analysis of “doing good”

encountered, traveling in pairs or small groups, were highly unique and frequently uncertain. Each day was planned and enacted on that same day, thus the need to be flexible was theoretically understood in advance and practically experienced in the field.

To broaden the empirical reach beyond a single institution, further purposive sampling drawn from institutional networks was used to recruit faculty members from several other American universities, each with their own established affiliations in the Global South. The participation of these individuals introduced reflections from members of non-affiliated institutions and highlighted the narrative representations of their experiences supporting students abroad as part of small group fieldwork or service learning projects.

Methods

Of interest to this research was the narrative construction of the students’ experiences abroad, characterized by Bruner (2011) as inclusive of the anticipated or imagined, lived and then retrospectively recalled. The design and theoretical framing was undertaken to explore the influences of space, place and time in shaping an event – the international immersion – as significant or even life changing. Narrative phenomenology (Mattingly 2010) and person-centered ethnography (Hollan 2001) provided conceptual tools by which to study the micro details of the students’ personal experiences while locating each individual amidst their broader social, cultural and institutional contexts. The critical perspective presented here emerged from the data in an iterative manner, not explicitly sought in the empirical questions yet undeniably important to explore further in the analysis. The work of scholars across several social science fields proved informative in the multi-faceted construction of a more critical analytic gaze (i.e. Bruner 1991; Fisher 1997; Frank 2012; Hammell 2013; Laliberte Rudman 2013.)
Narrative approaches to the exploration of experience recognize the fluidity of temporal bounds (Mattingly 2010), thus expectation as a thematic construct was evident across all phases - anticipation, participation and reflection - and modalities of the study – interviews and small group meetings, all audio-recorded and transcribed, observation and written documentation. Stories told by former participants, by university faculty and staff and by therapists in the community planted the seeds of expectation for these students; seeds that were cultivated in the pre-departure phase of the study.

Students who were interested in the West Africa immersion opportunity were required to write an application essay outlining what they would bring to the experience as well as what they hoped to gain. Once confirmed as a member of this group, these students were required to submit their written rationale for seeking an overseas rather than local learning context to the affiliated course; students traveling abroad were a subset of a larger student group enrolled in the same class with the same curricular objectives. During narrative interviews with the students and in these preliminary essays, anticipated goals, learning objectives and global intentions were therefore solicited.

Field reflections and observations were collected during the brief participatory immersion period. Following return to the students’ university, follow up interviews, essays and photographs were collected for roughly five months. The multiple written reflections and essays were a requirement of the curriculum and not the research; not all students provided copies of each to the researcher. In total, 96 interviews, inclusive of individual, partner and small groups, and 74 essays were amassed over the duration of the ethnographic study.

The content of the stories and reflections shared became only one dimension of the narrative analysis of this data; how a story may be heard and how it is situated within the larger
Critical analysis of “doing good”

life history of the individual was of important consideration (Birch and Miller 2000). The nature of the sustained involvement with the research, across different landscapes and time, permitted various levels of thematic revelation to emerge. In particular, the expressed and implied wishes to “do good” suggested that some students’ moral incentive to participate in this global partnership was predicated on both a partnered “doing good with” and a benevolent “doing good for” motivation. The ethnographic positionality of the researcher as both a participant observer and a neutral witness permitted a unique empirical stance from which to document this perceived “doing good” tension.

Analysis of Results

The analytic process incorporated thematic and narrative strategies (Riessman 2008) whereby each data point was initially coded and charted and thereafter analyzed within and across participants and time frames. Supplementing these thematic charts were personal field notes and subjective impressions, essential tools to foster a reflexive approach to the data. Furthering the trustworthiness of the study design and analysis was the intentional inclusion of multiple sources of data (verbal, written, observation) alongside the analytic expertise shared during data analysis meetings with narrative research scholars and students. Amidst reflections, challenges and moments of learning and even enlightenment, the student findings illuminated themes consistent with the dominant discourse of international immersions. These included: awareness of enablers and barriers to cultural sensitivity, contestation of assumptions, examples of strength, resiliency and resourcefulness of cultural partners and the personal development of cross-cultural and interpersonal communication. The narratives also revealed the subjective dimension of wanting to “do good,” and perhaps by extension wanting to “be good,” in the world by doing and being of service to others. From the
perspective of global humanitarianism, this pursuit is a noble and honorable ambition, one that is to be embraced and applauded. However, through the lens of critical social science, such an objective would benefit from an exploration into its potential to marginalize or even harm the intended recipients (Cameron 2014; Decamp 2007; Fisher 1997; Friedman 1962; Levi 2009). This risk could impede the development of open and reciprocal working relationships across geographic and cultural lines. The absence of this perspective on “doing harm” in the collected narratives does not suggest this was a overlooked consideration from the students. It does however invite a query as to why it is not more explicitly articulated in the research encounters, written reflections or in the preliminary and field observations. What follows are excerpts and a discussion about how the anticipated or desired opportunity to “do” was narratively represented across their experiences in West Africa. All names presented are pseudonyms.

The hope of “doing good”

In their curricular essays, many students wrote of their desire to travel abroad because of the strength of the pre-existing institutional partnership between the host site and their school. Thalia’s application essay highlighted the genesis of her awareness of the global possibilities of occupational therapy. “I remember feeling my heart skip a beat with excitement” upon being informed of the association between her school of interest and an organization in West Africa. She recounted her impression that this was “an amazing opportunity to serve the world and make a lasting difference on a global scale!” Her narrative continued into the present with her current belief that

“the role of education and empowering local leaders to take on that caretaker role that can be lasting to their community is of great importance. I would grow in my role as a leader in equipping local people with the ability to sustain services long after we head back to America.”
Critical analysis of “doing good”

Phrases such as wanting to “serve,” “to enable strengths of others,” and her desire to leave a legacy after her departure suggest a blending of professional and personal aspirations. Enabling participation in meaningful activities through partnership with local leaders, community-based rehabilitation workers with whom the originating global partnership has extended, has the potential to foster continual capacity growth in the West African communities. This objective highlights a perceived benefit to the host institution and the people it supports with the recognition of locally sustainable interventions. We must also consider how this intention is nested in Thalia’s desire to “make a lasting difference.” It is within this resonant desire that I have framed the pursuit of “doing good” on an international stage.

For some students like Thalia, a faith practice and tradition fueled their spirit of service abroad. While not a requirement for participation in this immersion opportunity, nearly half of the students in the research study identified as Christian. Many articulated in writing or conversation, that their desire to work with and for others was a fundamental representation of their religious convictions. Bridget “felt moved by the fact that [she] would be able to help those who do not have the same opportunities as many do in America.” These words from her application essay imply a “doing good” gesture she hoped to realize while in West Africa. They are, however, in contrast to the more objective tone of her course-based essay. “It is especially important to me to work towards enabling access to occupation for individuals with disabilities living in less industrialized countries where resources, medical and technological advancements, and social acceptance are particularly limited.”

The semantic and motivational distinction between “being moved by the opportunity to help” and “working towards enabling occupation” is significant. It could be argued that the practice of occupational therapy, itself historically grounded in “enabling occupation”
(Townsend and Polatajko 2007) is by nature a helping profession. Are the means important to consider if the ends are achieved?

“… I feel frustrated when we drive through all these villages. Like I just want to get out there and like help. … I want to go and build a house or something. I just want to be doing more.”

This sentiment by Kendra seems to straddle this divide; her desire to “do” is decontextualized by a lack of recognition of what might meaningfully be “done.” It suggests that a tangible outcome (house) and an objective action (building) aligns with an expectation for “doing” abroad, despite the reality that over the two week immersion period no discussions about the need for more housing were identified as a priority by the partner organizations.

Returning to Thalia, with this in mind, my observation of her enactment of “doing good” was evident on the final day of village visits. She was part of a small group of students who were invited to engage with teachers at a rural school. Unfortunately, time was constrained by the pre-arranged transportation schedule. After 15 minutes at the back of the classroom, she was asked to share her perceptions, feedback and suggestions to enhance the learning potential of children with difficulties. Buoyed by her service-minded passion and enthusiasm for seeing village life first hand, she recounted this consultancy opportunity with pride.

“So I just got up and I was like, ‘do you want me to give you some recommendations?’ And she [teacher] was just like, there were three teachers. They just all stared at me. So I was like okay well, and I kind of said a few things. And I was like, ‘do you guys have any questions?’ And they were like, ‘we have very limited resources. We need money.’ And I was like, ‘okay, well um, if you don't have any more questions, I'm going to go.’”

Through this brief encounter, Thalia was meeting the objectives outlined by her course and by her own admission - she was providing an occupational therapy-informed consultation to local teachers. The suggestions offered by Thalia and her peers at this village school included the seating arrangement of children in the space, the supportive acknowledgement of the current
practice of child involvement in the lessons, and the potential benefit of grading different lessons to reflect the diversity of learning needs.

As an observer, I was struck by Thalia’s final line in her recollection of the day’s events. The response she received to her invitation for questions was mired in the socio-political context of a region economically ill-equipped to adequately provide the resources the teachers needed. How could this enthusiastic student fully appreciate the complexity of such a statement, “we need money” in the brief period of time she had been with the teachers and even in the country? Similarly, the role Kendra was playing in her interactions with community workers was not appearing to meet her imagined contribution. She wanted to “get out there and help.” My interpretation of these brief excerpts, reflective of more students than those included here, is that within the desire to “do good” during a short-term trip, there may be limited space to re-frame “doing” toward learning and understanding rather than solely showing and demonstrating. The reciprocity of shared expertise allows both partners to develop and benefit and is predicated upon interpersonal relationship building, trust, respect, and cultural or contextual familiarity. From my field observations, brief immersions with objectives to “do” are not typically structured to permit the slowed pace of cross-cultural engagement necessary for sustainable partnerships; arriving onsite with time constraints alongside an intention of “doing good” infers a more unilateral rather than transactional dynamic to potentially emerge.

**Wondering what we are doing**

Voula, a woman with a social science background, said she was traveling to West Africa with the voice of her best friend in mind.

“She's like ‘don't go over there having that save Africa idea in mind.’ She's like ‘you need to respect their culture and realize you are not better than them. You may be providing information, but you need to only have them take what information they want to take.’”
Critical analysis of “doing good”

At the time of this interview, several weeks before departure, this reminder was central to her anticipatory narrative. Analyzing Voula’s interviews across time, this preliminary perspective seemed to dissipate in the hot African sun. Mid-way through the immersion, she commented to me that she wished she “had more of an opportunity to prove herself,” to showcase “what knowledge and advice I have to offer. … It would have been great to be someplace where people needed something from us.” The language of expectation or “doing good” is not explicit here, though the implication is apparent. Despite being encouraged to travel without any perceived agenda or objective, Voula’s sentiments while abroad conveyed that very same desire, to provide a service and feel as though some good was shared and received.

Prior to departure, fellow student Amelia expressed her uncertainty over the immersion objectives at the student, university and host organization level. What were they traveling across the world “to do?”

“Who are we to just go in there and say ‘this is the right way to do it, this is how you have to do it. Here, we're going to come help you.’ You know? And that's why I am curious, what's already there? What's set up? What do they have going on? That's what I really want to learn, and learn from that. And not just assume that these poor…it's so easy to fall into that, ‘these poor kids in Africa that we're going to help.’”

A close reading of the transcripts, field notes and Amelia’s own reflective essays does not reveal any resolution to these questions. In both the field and post-trip interviews, she returned to themes of what she could feasibly do in her time abroad and what the longer-term benefit might be. In her words, “to get the most long lasting effect we just need to be working with our [community rehabilitation worker],” to foster the knowledge exchange in the partnership seemed to be the best avenue for “doing good” even if it was not experienced as such at the time.

Discussion
Critical analysis of “doing good”

These different examples, in conversation and in writing, reflect different imagined and experienced narratives and highlight the reflective work the students were doing in how their own personal experiences were situated in colonial legacy and societal discourse. While evident in these latter excerpts, not all students permitted me to enter their critical reflective realm where they examined their own motivations, objectives and possible positional biases as experts and outsiders. Even for Voula and Amelia, this conversational thread was not taken up more broadly across subsequent interviews and conversations, an insight and point of realization noted in several of my field notes. Furthermore, it is consistent with many of the students’ reliance on the history of the partnership as their cultural grounding, in contrast to the sociopolitical history of the country. Ada said days before flying home, “I definitely want to read more about the history … I kind of wish I had done that before I came.” Failure to understand the lived contextual reality in addition to a failure to question the desire to “do good” for others without an accurate understanding of what good is welcomed, is to overlook foundations from which the supporting international partnerships arose.

It is critical to account for the variability in personal and institutional objectives, where the student’s desire to help intersects with the broader advancement of supporting localized resources and opportunities to participate meaningfully in daily occupations. When the drive to “do good” is not sufficiently tempered with the graduated learning process of contextual and cultural understanding, the risk of “doing harm” is elevated (Cameron 2014). This in turn presupposes that good is needed to be done, a perspective that minimizes the current and creative efforts already undertaken without involvement from the Global North. Such an oversight can affect the advancement of existing or the establishment of new global partnerships on account of an imbalanced relational incentive.
Critical analysis of “doing good”

Analysis of my own recorded reflections over the course of my secondary involvement with this international collaboration has resulted in a deeper sensitivity to the array of variables converging and colliding at multiple levels. The guiding principles, partner responsibilities and shared objectives exist to inform the operation at the ground level. The respective local contexts must also consider that the individuals working within and for them may arrive with their own personal learning goals and intentions that do not always directly emulate the original vision. Wanting to “do good” may be part of the human condition for those drawn to international learning opportunities or even to professions such as occupational therapy. In order to advance the critical scholarship of the field, at home and abroad, it is prudent to investigate how such a position might naturally create hierarchical structures or even categorization of doers and receivers.

Implications for Practice

Henry David Thoreau once conceded that “if I knew someone was coming over with the expressed intention of doing good, I would flee.” I have not adopted such a harsh stance in this paper in part because “doing” is at the heart of occupational therapy practice and global partnerships. The nature of that action, the beneficiaries and the providers, the cultures and the contexts are all social practice variables that become subsumed in the experiences of each individual (Mattingly 2010). The critical question of “what are we doing here?” brings the examination and understanding of “doing” within and across international networks to different levels of consideration. Furthering the complexity is the addition of the moral commitment to “do good,” the intention that seemed most repugnant to Thoreau. I contend that a critical, reflective and ongoing examination of actions and goals as well as intentions might provide
Critical analysis of “doing good”

richer reciprocal partnership experiences for all involved participants and in the globalization of our empirical and practice-based scholarship.

The motivation to partake in a personal and professional development opportunity to West Africa with a subtext of “doing good” invariably becomes entwined with the learning objectives outlined by the profession, the institution and therefore the affiliated associates. It also exists at the crossroads of social values and the perceived importance of acquiring experiences abroad through global citizenship. It does not always reveal the enactment of individuals in the Global South realizing their occupational potential in a sustained manner. How then can programs respond in order to mitigate the possible risk of doing harm? The following questions should be considered and actively discussed:

1. Are all participants, at home and abroad, clear about the goals and objectives for the international opportunity? Have the partner organizations ensured that their own objectives are understood by the students and clinicians (or local workers)? What assumptions are embedded in the objectives of fostering global citizenship?

2. How do the objectives align with the duration of the immersion opportunity? How are the objectives evaluated?

3. How are students supported to engage in critical reflexivity prior to the trip, during the trip and following the trip? Who might facilitate pre/post discussions around questions such as: “what are we there to do?” or what is the difference between “doing good with” and “doing good for?” How can students explore their personal motivations in light of the professional expectations?

4. How are power hierarchies within and across institutions managed? What can be done to support participants or stake holders to feel safe to question the objectives or practices in advance, in the field or after the fact?

The transformation of international immersions from perceived replications of colonialism toward equitably and consciously constructed partnerships has commenced but there remains much work to be done. This research project spanned the temporal range of preparation, participation and reflection and reveals the importance of attending to each phase of the
international opportunity directly. Anticipatory reflection, where the exploration of fears or uncertainties, objectives, motivations or desires can be expressed, can be a beneficial component to the overall learning experience for students (Anderson et al. 2012; McAllister et al. 2006). In this case, perhaps questioning the composite elements of what each party will “do,” what is acceptably acknowledged as “good” and how personal and professional interests may need to be reviewed. Students, faculty, institutions and global partners might each engage with such a process independently but it is the challenge of ensuring safety in sharing these collectively which must be delicately managed.

Equally valuable is the supported reflection and debriefing process while abroad and following the return (Cameron et al. 2013). In order for global partnerships to continue to evolve and expand into further regions of the world and with different populations, it must be understood that institutional partnerships are comprised of people as well as ideology. In much the same way, the translation of inclusive social policy requires the daily work of realizing its potential and influence at the individual level. Extending the global reach of the learning environments and the professional practice must coincide with the adoption of a more critical examination and transparent reflection of the intentions guiding these actions. There is much “good” to be gained from the presence of equitable partnerships and much “harm” done when historical dynamics are recreated. There is also much to learn about what it means to “partner up” on the ground when there is a wish by one side, new to the contextual and socio-cultural-political nuances, to “help” or “to serve.” In that sense, international immersions and local encounters do not widely differ.
Critical analysis of “doing good”

References


Critical analysis of “doing good”


Critical analysis of “doing good”


Critical analysis of “doing good”


