



# Going Domestic: Importing The Study Abroad Experience. The Development Of A Multicultural New York City Study Away Program

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## Abstract

**PROBLEM.** Significant off-campus domestic study away experiences have been shown to be a transformative active learning environment for students and achieve similar learning outcomes as study abroad programs.

**METHODS.** This manuscript describes the conception, development, and pedagogical approach of a faculty-led domestic study away experience in New York City for pre-licensure and post-licensure nursing students as an active learning strategy for developing cultural competence. Students participated in service-learning activities that illuminated the realities and challenges persons from other cultures face as they interact with health care in a culture that is not their own.

**FINDINGS.** In partnership with New York Cares, students were immersed in well-established ongoing sustainable community-based projects. These experiences fostered reflective conversations between community members, student participants, and faculty regarding social factors, cultural issues and needs, and global issues and trends.

**CONCLUSIONS.** Through the New York study away program, students were able to broaden their perspectives about social factors and culture beyond geographic or ethnic boundaries and apply these service experiences to their nursing practice. Study away programs are an excellent strategy for nursing educators to prepare students for care of multicultural populations and for proficiency in cultural competency within the globalization of the United States.

## Introduction

Studying abroad has become a customary learning experience for many college and university students in the twenty-first century. Most publications and institutions of higher learning extol the value of long-term and short-term study abroad experiences for increasing cultural understanding and competence in student participants (Edmonds, 2010, 2012; Kohlby, 2016). Others have questioned the ethical consequences of unsustainable community interventions through study abroad programs (Caldwell & Purtzer, 2015). How often do we consider the benefits of domestic study away programs in meeting these same goals within a sustainable framework?

Significant off-campus domestic study away experiences have been shown to be a transformative active learning environment for students and achieve similar learning outcomes as study abroad programs (Hope, 2008; Sobania, 2015). Domestic study away experiences provide a new context to expand students' horizons. In this context, faculty members address knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to cultural understanding. Participants discuss social factors, global issues and trends, experience cultural diversity, and develop intercultural communication skills (Hope, 2008; Sobania, 2015). These learning opportunities enhance cultural competence in a multicultural society (Kohlby, 2016; Purnell, 2000, 2002). Nursing professionals in the United States encounter people from all over the world in a multicultural healthcare context. There is a curricular need for nursing students to increase understanding of this multicultural reality in which nursing practice is expressed.

## Background and Significance

Within nursing education, global learning and cultural competence are critical student learning outcomes. Currently, most bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) programs include global learning and cultural competency in the standard curriculum through didactic and clinical instruction. In order to reduce health disparities and meet the needs of patients and populations, both the Institute of Medicine (2002) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.) have recognized the need for healthcare providers to demonstrate cultural competence in the care they provide. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has also included cultural competence

in the Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing (2008a). The AACN (2008b, 2008c) recommends interactive learning strategies for developing cultural competence such as participation in cultural immersion experiences, participation in community-based service-learning projects, and experiences in cultural celebrations and/or traditions in order to understand the foundation of values.

What defines cultural competence? Cultural competence from a healthcare perspective has been defined as the ability to work effectively with people from other cultures taking into consideration their beliefs, practices, and values in the provision of care (Campinha-Bacote, 2011; Purnell, 2000, 2002). The nursing workforce remains mostly White and female, despite the increase in diversity over the past several decades (AACN, 2015). In 2013, approximately 10% of registered nurses were male (AACN, 2015; American Community Survey, 2013). Additionally, approximately only 19% of the 2013 registered nurse workforce were of racial/ethnic diversity (AACN, 2015). Study abroad has traditionally been one strategy to increase cultural awareness in nursing. Despite efforts by universities to increase diversity in the student demographics, participants in study abroad programs tend to reflect a lack of diversity with a higher number of participants being White and female (Open Doors, 2014). Study away programs may allow for opportunities for educators to strategically address this disparity and to plan ways to enhance achievement and access for these students.

In addition, most travel abroad programs focus on one particular geographic region and interact with a specific culture in its native environment. These types of experiences do not necessarily illuminate the realities and challenges persons from other cultures face, as they interface with health care in a culture that is not their own. It is this issue that nurses are confronted with on a daily basis and they need to respond to in a culturally competent manner. There is a curricular need for nursing students to increase understanding of this cultural reality in which nursing practice is expressed.

## Purpose

Due to the desire to enhance cultural competence for nurses, the concept of a domestic study away experience in New York City for pre-licensure and post-licensure students in nursing was conceived. The development and pedagogical approach of the New

York City study away program will be described in this article. For this article, study away refers specifically to domestic experiences and study abroad to international experiences.

### **From South Africa to New York City**

Our university, a regional public university located in a rural region of the Southeastern United States, strategically places a focus on global learning within all curricula. The university administration requested a summer study abroad experience be added to the nursing department's existing offering of spring break study abroad to Mexico. Our university had an existing relationship with a South African university and requested development of the study abroad to build upon this relationship. This proposed South African study abroad was developed and approved. However, recruitment was extremely difficult due to cost (US\$4,100) and lack of parental support. Only two students committed to attend the South African study abroad experience, necessitating cancellation of the trip.

### **Road Blocks: Barriers and Limitations**

Factors that were identified by students as barriers included the high cost of the experience, the length of time for participation, students' lack of comfort with travel to Africa, and parents' lack of comfort with student travel to a foreign country. During this time, the Ebola outbreak was occurring and parents and students both expressed health and safety concerns despite the fact that the outbreak was not located in the South African region. In addition to the expressed barriers from students within our university, there are some barriers and limitations to study abroad experiences. These considerations needed to be explored specifically when designing our immersion programs.

**Socioeconomic factors and rurality.** Finances associated with study abroad learning opportunities can be prohibitive for students. Due to the rising costs associated with study abroad experiences, it is difficult for all students to participate in international immersion experiences (Kent-Wilkinson et al., 2015; Sobania, 2015). While study away experiences are not without financial impact, most often these learning experiences cost significantly less than study abroad programs and achieve similar student learning outcomes with fewer expenses related to

airfare, passport fees, visas, and so on. For example, compared with the cost of US\$4,100 for a study abroad to South Africa, the study away to New York costs approximately US\$1,000. When developing immersion programs, establishing connections and mobilizing resources are critical to achieving educational objectives while keeping financial burdens at minimum for study away experiences.

Finances can play an important role in determining participant diversity (Sobania, 2015). Because study abroad experiences are more expensive, socioeconomic disparities can be seen within the statistics of those who participate. Students from higher socioeconomic status tend to have more financial resources and more social encouragement to participate in study abroad or study away learning opportunities, which create inequalities in the type of participants who participate in these programs.

In turn, students from rural locations or who have fewer social or economic resources may not be presented with the same opportunities or encouragement for long-distance travel. For example, many students enrolled in our rurally located nursing program have not traveled outside of their own home state. In addition, these students have never traveled via alternate forms of transportation such as airplanes, subways, or trains. Over the last several years, out-of-state students have been a minority within our nursing program, averaging approximately 2% or less of our enrolled students. These students with limited travel experience may have a more insular view of the world and lack role models who encourage engagement with those outside their own experience. Brown, Boateng, and Evans (2016) found that healthcare students' comfort with the language of the visiting country was a factor in deciding whether to participate in a study abroad program. Lower-cost study away programs may benefit lower socioeconomic status students by removing social and cost barriers to these learning opportunities and, in turn, increasing participation. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and/or rural locations could then share their experiences as role models to other students.

**Curriculum factors.** In addition to socioeconomic factors, nursing and other healthcare curricula may impede student's ability to study abroad. Normally, study abroad programs are longer in length as compared with study away program. These study abroad programs are offered as a semester abroad or during summer semesters. Mandatory clinical

requirements or summer course work make these programs inaccessible to students. In addition, many nursing faculty members recognize the benefits of student participation in clinical externships during summer breaks, resulting in less participation in study abroad programs. Thus, there is a need to offer study away programs that can be strategically planned to offer opportunities for achievement of these learning objectives without overloading the student's curriculum schedule.

Specific to the discipline of nursing, 60% of the registered nurse workforce receives their primary nursing degree in community college settings (Health Resources and Services Administration, 2013) and thus are often not exposed to study abroad programs. Study abroad experiences occur more often in 4-year university and college settings. Within our university, one study abroad experience is offered to Mexico annually. However, this experience only recruits students from the 4-year bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) program. Students enrolled in the online Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-BSN) program did not have opportunities with the Department of Nursing to participate in these types of experiences. Since these students are graduates of community college nursing programs, the vast majority of these students had not been offered study abroad or study away learning opportunities within his/her nursing curricula.

### **Paradigm Shift**

After a review of these expressed barriers, faculty members discussed their own concerns about study away experiences such as South Africa. For example, this 2-week learning opportunity to South Africa would only provide a narrow view of culture within South Africa. This brief insight into cultural practices may or may not be beneficial for nurses who are practicing in the United States who provide care to a multicultural population. While some of these cultural beliefs and practices may translate, individual variances in assimilation and acculturation may alter these practices (Buscemi, 2011). Other broader social factors issues such as poverty, homelessness, and addiction could be addressed that expand beyond race or ethnicity but are relevant issues for health care today (Law & John, 2012). While it is not feasible to completely know another's culture or to fully understand the complexity of social factors, exposure to multicultural experiences and a variety

of social factors begin to illuminate one's perceptions and begin a transformational process. Therefore, these considerations were perceived as being best met in a multicultural study away context in New York City in order to

1. offer an active learning multicultural immersion experience at a significantly reduced cost to students as compared with study abroad experiences,
2. provide opportunities for multicultural immersion experiences in a domestic context to enhance access for students related to international travel,
3. enrich both pre-licensure and RN-BSN programs through recruitment of students to participate in study away in order to increase the diversity of participants and the range of nursing experiences among students for enhanced learning,
4. convert students' tourist mindsets into service-minded community-based participants,
5. focus on experiences (see Table 1) that would provide insight into acculturation, language, and immigration challenges and barriers,
6. broaden student perspectives about culture beyond geographic or ethnic experience,
7. schedule experiences that would complement and co-exist students' course schedules and summer externships.

### **Welcome to New York**

The most critical aspects of the development of a study away program are the development of student learning outcomes (see Table 2) and matching the learning outcomes related to knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the program design (Salisbury, 2015). Critical reflection and evaluation of current curricula learning outcomes were used to develop the initial framework for the following study away student learning outcomes.

### **Program Design and Pedagogy**

The development of the study away program considered the theoretical approaches of Campinha-Bacote (2011) and Purnell (2000, 2002) and the work of Salisbury (2015). We applied the domestic study away program planning guide to the study away design (see Figure 1). Using Bloom's taxonomy (Cornell University, n.d.) and learning domains, student learning outcomes were aimed to meet complex

**Table 1. Service-Learning Activities and Targeted Populations for Achievement of Student Learning Outcomes**

Immersion experiences	Student service-learning activity/outcomes
Immigration	<p>Students interacted with people who spoke English as a second language</p> <p>Students practiced communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal</p> <p>Students developed communication skills with first-generation Arab-American men and women</p> <p>Students identified barriers and challenges for first-generation immigrants</p>
Poverty, elderly, and homelessness	<p>Students served in a soup kitchen in a variety of roles in a guest-focused format, providing a fine-dining experience for those in need</p> <p>Students interacted with over 350 individuals from within the community who attended the soup kitchen</p> <p>Students analyzed social work's perspective related to specific populations</p> <p>Students developed social connections with individuals that they served</p>
Immigration	<p>Students discussed a historical view of immigration in the United States, specifically in New York City through the tour of the Tenement Museum</p> <p>Students explored the life of an Irish immigrant family who lived in a predominantly German immigrant tenement building at the turn of the twentieth century</p> <p>Students reflected on similarities of the modern day immigrant experience to those of early immigrants as it relates to prejudices, health, and healthcare access</p>
Poverty and elderly	<p>Students packaged and distributed fresh fruits and vegetables through a mobile market in areas identified as food deserts to over 300 families</p> <p>Students developed communication skills through interaction with various populations</p> <p>Students applied concepts related to community assessments to outcomes and observations related to the intervention</p> <p>Students performed a community assessment</p> <p>Students evaluated resources and needs within the community</p>
Child poverty	<p>Students participated in a music class for children living within poverty conditions, specifically public housing</p> <p>Students practiced communication skills with children between the ages of 7 and 11 through song, dance, and interactive games</p> <p>Students assessed needs of the population through communication and interactions</p>
Children	<p>Students interacted with children of various cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds between the ages of 5 and 9 with a reading activity and related worksheets in a public school setting</p> <p>Students practiced communication skills</p> <p>Students compared and contrasted urban and rural school environments for children</p>
Addiction, poverty, homelessness	<p>Students participated in a street outreach project with a prevention and risk-reduction clinic</p> <p>Students, in collaboration with staff from the facility, distributed condoms and hygiene kits to individuals in the community</p> <p>Students observed the facility's staff interactions with residents of the community through needle exchange</p> <p>Students observed addiction, poverty, and homelessness in a community environment first-hand</p> <p>Students reflected on harm reduction efforts, the history of harm reduction movements, and the increased focus on community efforts to improve health and reduce risks for the population</p> <p>Students identified benefits and consequences of our current model of healthcare delivery</p> <p>Students recognized the role of community-based healthcare programs within our current healthcare delivery model</p>

**Table 2. Student Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills**

Student learning outcome	Learning domains
Critically reflect on the influence of values, beliefs, and ideas, and on individuals and communities from a multicultural global perspective	Knowledge and attitude
Evaluate the influences of the environment and social forces on health and well-being	Knowledge
Collaborate with New York Cares®, giving consideration to service activities that can provide exposure to a variety of cultures.	Skills
Integrate the influence of cultural beliefs and practices on health and healthcare needs as it relates to nursing practice	Skills
Relate healthcare needs, challenges, and global issues to variety of populations and communities	Knowledge
Demonstrate professional responsibility, accountability, sensitivity, and respect for personal and cultural differences	Skills and attitude

**Figure 1. Domestic Study Away Program Planning Guide (Salisbury, 2015)**

Complexity of intended learning outcomes	Program design				Student preparation	Program enrollment
	Length of learning experience	Culture gap	Depth of immersion	Pedagogical approach	Maturity and knowledge	Variation across participants
Simple (e.g., remembering facts)	Short and unrelated to any pre- or post-program experience	Largely similar across most dimensions	Distanced observer	Entirely passive	Young and naïve	Widely dispersed
						
Complex (e.g., synthesizing to create a new solution)	Long and integrated with pre- and post-program experiences	Clearly different across multiple dimensions	Embedded participant	Active and reflective	Older and informed	Tightly clustered

learning outcomes, specifically within the categories of application, analysis, evaluation, and creation. Active learning and service-learning opportunities were selected to support the achievement of these complex learning outcomes.

Due to the limitations associated with nursing curriculum requirements, we determined that a short learning experience with minimal pre- and postprogram assignments best met the needs of our students. The study away program was designed for a 7-day immersion experience occurring in the

weeks between the end of spring semester classes and the beginning of the first summer school session. Since global learning and cultural competence were the main foci of the experience, careful planning was considered to ensure that the planned active learning experiences provided a variety of cultural exposure and dimensions. Many times we would find ourselves asking, “Will this experience have students directly interacting with persons from outside their own culture? Will this experience place students out of their comfort zone? Will it expand their

understanding of the meaning of culture? Will it provide an opportunity for discussion of culture's impact on health and healthcare and the student's nursing practice?"

Cultural gaps and depth of the immersion experience were addressed in a number of ways. First, specific population exposure was targeted in the planning process. Participants of the study away experience were fully integrated and embedded into the planned activities. Educational strategies such as service-learning models and exposure to social factors and cultures through the process of cultural immersion can set the tone of appreciation for novelty and an awareness that the students' usual way of living is not the only way of living within the United States (Lane, Serafica, & Hodge, 2013). All activities included service-learning models in order to provide students with an active learning environment in order to reduce the participants' perceptions of being a tourist and encourage a sense of social action. Foronda and Belknap (2012) have identified that potential blocks to transformation within immersion experience include egocentrism, perceived powerlessness, and a vacation mindset. Consideration to these potential blocks was given in developing the New York study away.

### **Select Service-Learning Activities**

Service-learning activities included both healthcare and general community service with specific multicultural populations including communities with poverty, homelessness, immigration, and addiction. Activities occurred in a variety of boroughs within New York City to provide diverse geographic and cultural exposures. Students compared and contrasted observations and social interactions between neighborhoods. One activity that students reported as a meaningful experience included working in a soup kitchen that served over 350 individuals nightly. Students participated in various roles, including host/hostess, wait staff, food distribution, and kitchen service. This experience provided personal interaction to a wide range of service recipients. Nursing students also participated in a facilitated discussion led by the project's volunteer social worker. This discussion explored challenges faced by homeless populations based on community resources and structures as well as healthcare concerns of homeless populations. This interprofessional experience broadened students' understanding of provision

of care from a social work perspective within a community.

Another service-learning activity partnered students with an organization to distribute fresh fruits and vegetables within an identified food desert in New York City, defined by the organization as areas with limited access to fresh, healthy, and nutritionally adequate foods. Students packaged, sorted, and distributed food to over 300 families. Faculty members applied course content on community assessments and connected this experience to literature related to food deserts and the relationship between nutrition and healthcare outcomes.

Students had the opportunity to learn about and participate in a street outreach program sponsored by an agency providing local harm reduction services. Employees of the agency provided an orientation and overview of the mission, goals, and services within the clinic focusing on risk-related behaviors related to HIV/hepatitis and sexually transmitted disease transmission. Following orientation, students distributed condoms and hygiene kits within identified at-risk communities in conjunction with a needle exchange program operated by agency employees. This first-hand experience allowed students to observe homelessness, addiction, and poverty and explore the concepts of prevention and treatment within healthcare models including the harm reduction model (Des Jarlais, 1995) and behavioral change theory (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). Students identified benefits and consequences of our current model of healthcare delivery and developed an appreciation for community-based programs. Planned service-learning activities are further described in Table 1.

Second, consideration was given to location and subsets within the area. Third, meal and extracurricular event planning included cultural exposures as well. Students were exposed to authentic cultural foods including Irish, Thai, Mexican, Italian, and Indian foods as part of the full immersion process.

In addition to careful consideration to the type of experience and exposure, we carefully considered cost minimization for each planned educational and extracurricular activity including entertainment and meals. Examples from our study away program for minimizing costs included planned free entertainment such as tickets to television tapings, reduced student discounts for Off-Broadway plays and museum tickets, and participation as a volunteer in pre-established funded programs so that there was no added cost

for development of programs and/or provision of resources.

Critical consideration was given to the student characteristics. In order to create a more diverse group of students, students from both the BSN pre-licensure program and the RN-BSN program were recruited. Students who had not completed at least one course within the nursing curricula were not recruited due to the lack of nursing context in which to process the experiences.

Within our university, students enrolled in the BSN program mimic the current demographics of nurses in the United States (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2015) and are predominantly younger, Caucasian, and female. While students enrolled in our RN-BSN are also predominantly Caucasian and female, these students are often 5–10 years older than our BSN students and are currently employed as registered nurses in the workforce. By encouraging participation of students from both programs, we aimed to create diversity within the study away experience specifically related to age, maturity, and experience within the nursing profession.

### **Leaving on a Jet Plane (to New York City)**

Following the development of the framework for the student learning outcomes and critical reflection about the pedagogical approach, we considered locations that would meet these learning outcomes in a global context outside of the students' current rural environment. Barriers and limitations to study abroad programs were considered, specifically related to student cost and university resources. The university owns a communal living space in New York City, and therefore the cost per student averages a nominal US\$30 per day fee for accommodations, as compared with other locations for study away experiences that could cost the student up to US\$100 or more per day for accommodations. We reviewed community assessments for the New York City area and various boroughs within New York City with reflection specifically on healthcare needs, socioeconomic disparities, and demographics for the population. Additionally, public transportation was available at a nominal cost for the student. Airfare was also significantly less than international travel.

One pitfall of study away experiences is that programs that are not already developed may incur unforeseen challenges, may not run smoothly, and are not often sustained. After deciding on the

location for the study away experience, we completed a thorough search of organizations that provided services to the various boroughs. Based on our service-learning-based pedagogical approach to the study away experience, we partnered with New York Cares<sup>®</sup> (2016).

From our search, this organization provided the best opportunities to meet our student learning outcomes, provide students with a transformational embedded experience, incorporate service-learning, and complement our pedagogical structure for the program. This relationship also fulfilled a need for volunteers for the organization, provided valuable and necessary services to the communities, and could be developed into an ongoing relationship with future students participating in annual study away experiences. New York Cares<sup>®</sup> (2016) staff work "...with partner organizations to identify their most pressing needs, creates projects to bridge the gaps, and recruits, trains, and deploys teams of volunteers to make a difference." Since the New York Cares<sup>®</sup> organization had already identified service needs of its partnering agencies, we were able to be fully embedded in an ongoing project that was fine-tuned and sustained. By participating in a community and pre-existing programs, we were viewed like part of the community rather than strangers. Students were afforded the opportunity to be immersed in well-established ongoing projects rather than a provision of a one-time only service, reducing the participants' tourist perceptions. The ongoing establishment of programs created trust between the community members and the volunteers of New York Cares<sup>®</sup>. Partnered with the universal sense of trust of nurses, the immersion experience yielded an almost immediate relationship between student participants and the community members.

The faculty members that led the New York City Study Away Program used debriefing methods including journaling and facilitator-led small group discussions for formative evaluation of the students' experiences and achievement of student learning outcomes. Throughout the week, faculty used these student responses to tailor experiences and discussion topics in order to meet students' learning needs within the context of planned service-learning activities. Observing students' responses to the service-learning activities confirmed the faculty members' perceptions that the New York City Study Away Program was transformational for students in a variety of ways. These transformational experiences included exposure

to multiple cultures, enhancement of critical thinking, and development of openness to diverse populations. Together, these experiences have potential for positive impact on the nursing care provided by these participants in the future.

### **Discussion**

Globalization will continue to shape the world economically, politically, and culturally. In this way, globalization is inextricably coupled with the fabric of the United States—regionally, demographically, culturally, and socioeconomically. “It is our contention that all students regardless of where they study off campus, are engaged in global learning” (Sobania, 2015, p. 16).

...there is considerable empirical evidence that even well-intentioned whites who are not overtly biased and who do not believe that they are prejudiced typically demonstrate unconscious implicit negative racial attitudes and stereotypes. (Institute of Medicine, 2002)

Cultural competence is a universal standard in the nursing profession. While international educational experiences have been one avenue of addressing these learning outcomes, the emerging trend of domestic study away programs can also provide similar learning outcomes with fewer barriers. Through the development of the study away, nursing students may be afforded supplemental opportunities. Study away provides opportunity to experience cultural immersion, meet learning objectives, and address the multicultural needs of patients that they will most likely interact with in their future workplace.

The inclusion of RN-BSN students adds depth to the experience. Most of these students are working as nurses within healthcare settings and are facing challenges and barriers with patients of differing cultural backgrounds. Many of these patients are experiencing issues with acculturation and/or immigration, creating a need for increased active learning opportunities for the nurses that are providing care. By integrating pre-licensure and post-licensure nursing students, meaningful conversation, in-depth reflection, insight into other’s experiences, and achievement of student learning outcomes can occur.

Study away programs offer an active and reflective learning strategy for providing embedded immersion,

cultural exposure across gaps, and participatory experience. These learning activities enhance the nurse educator’s impact on cultural understanding and can extend into the classroom and/or clinical settings. These thought-provoking experiences, study, and subsequent guided reflections on the diverse health needs of our current population prepare a more culturally sensitive, client-centered nurse. The study away experience may contribute to the decline in the disparities of our current health care one nurse at a time (Long, 2016). More research is needed to determine short-term and long-term outcomes of study away programs. Participation with other disciplines and with other cultures offers healthcare students the opportunity to expand their knowledge and perceptions of one’s own current way of living.

Kent-Wilkinson et al. (2015) identified many benefits of cultural exposure for students, which includes aiding in the development of cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, and cultural safety; personal and professional growth; development of global citizenship; and impact on future practice. Study away experiences provide one type of active learning strategy to achieve these outcomes while addressing issues such as cost, diversity, faculty support, health and safety, and student access, which can often be potential student and faculty concerns for study abroad and overseas travel. By fully immersing the student outside his/her comfort zone, the student must learn to think differently. Learning to think differently creates an avenue for an open mind (Lane et al., 2013) and potential for improved patient care and healthcare outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Nurses and other healthcare providers must develop proficiencies in cultural knowledge and competence in order to provide the highest quality of care to a multicultural population. According to the 2004 report by the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce, steps must be taken to address the inequalities that exist in the care of minority populations to reduce health disparities. Study abroad programs have traditionally served as one avenue to meet these needs. However, study abroad programs may not be accessible or available to all healthcare providers.

Study away programs may be an additional solution for addressing these concerns. The New York City

study away program offered students in a 4-year university setting an opportunity for participation in an active service-learning multicultural immersion experience at a significantly reduced cost, which fits into students' rigorous curricula and schedules. In addition to the study abroad program to Mexico, the New York Study away program provided supplemental accessibility to students for achievement of multicultural-related student learning outcomes in a domestic context, therefore enriching the curricula for both pre-licensure and post-licensure students. Through this model of active learning, students may be transformed into service-minded community-based participants through experiences focused on acculturation, language, and immigration challenges and barriers. Through the New York study away, students were able to broaden their perspectives about social factors and culture beyond geographic or ethnic experience and apply these service experiences to their nursing practice. Study away programs are an excellent strategy for nursing educators to prepare students for care of multicultural populations and for proficiency in cultural competency within the globalization of the United States.

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