

Sigma's VIRTUAL 31st International Nursing Research Congress (Wednesday, 22 July - Friday, 24 July)

Cultural Immersion Experiences and the Impact on Developing Cultural Competence Among Baccalaureate Nursing Students

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Purpose: Nurses in the United States provide care for clients from all over the world who bring their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions with them. A challenge for the nurse is to be knowledgeable about diverse cultures and to bring about greater cultural competency and sensitivity. The United States (US) is projected to be more racially and ethnically diverse in the years to come. Over half of all Americans in 2044 will belong to a minority group and by 2060 almost one in five will be foreign born (Colby & Ortman, 2015). The changing ethnic demographics of the US will directly impact nurses in all areas of healthcare as they strive to provide culturally competent care for all clients. Cultural competency is an essential core curricular concept in nursing programs. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (2015), the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (2016), and the National League for Nursing Commission in Nursing Education (2016) require that all nurses are able to provide culturally competent care. Nurse educators have a responsibility to provide education for students to help them become culturally competent practitioners who provide more effective care and better outcomes for their clients (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008b). Most nursing programs include cultural content in didactic courses and clinical practice assignments to be done in culturally diverse communities. Cultural immersion experiences provide students with experiential learning. Experiential learning is a well-recognized method used to change attitudes; an essential component of cultural competence (Ballestas & Roller, 2013). A necessary and essential part of ongoing curriculum evaluation are to measure the effectiveness of cultural immersion experiences (Ballestas & Roller, 2013; Larson, Ott & Miles, 2010). The purpose of the study was to measure the impact of a required four-week cultural immersion experience abroad on baccalaureate nursing students' level of cultural competence.

Methods: The study employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental, one group pretest-posttest design. The convenience sample included 4th semester senior nursing students at a small, private university in the Seattle area who traveled to eight different locations around the world. The study used the Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competence Among Healthcare Professionals-Student Version (IAPCC-SV) before the cultural immersion experience and upon return. The IAPCC-SV is based on the model developed by Dr. Campinha-Bacote (2007), *The Process of Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Healthcare Services*.

Results: The null hypothesis was rejected. There was a statistically significant increase in IAPCC-SV total scores from the participant's pretest (M = 63.70, SD = 5.74) to the student's posttest of the cultural immersion experience (M = 68.74, SD = 5.60, $t(42) = -6.97$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). The mean increase in IAPCC-SV total scores was -5.04 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -6.50 to -3.58.

Conclusion: The results support adding cross-cultural education at the baccalaureate level in the form of a cultural immersion experience to improve cultural competence. The impact of developing cultural competence with cultural immersion experiences is far reaching and enables students and graduates to practice more culturally competent care.

Title:

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Keywords:

baccalaureate nursing students, cultural competence and cultural immersion

Abstract Summary:

Nurse educators have a responsibility to provide education for students to help them become culturally competent practitioners who provide more effective care and better outcomes for their clients. Cultural immersion experiences provide students with experiential learning and impact cultural competence.

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Author Summary: Erin-Joy Bjorge is the Dean of the Buntain College of Nursing at Northwest University in Kirkland, WA. Erin-Joy has been a nurse for over 30 years and a nurse educator for 25 years at the baccalaureate level. She is a Certified Nurse Educator and a Certified Online Instructor. Erin-Joy's passion in nursing are global health and transcultural nursing. She has travelled extensively and her most recent presentations were in Cuba, Kazakhstan, and Italy.