

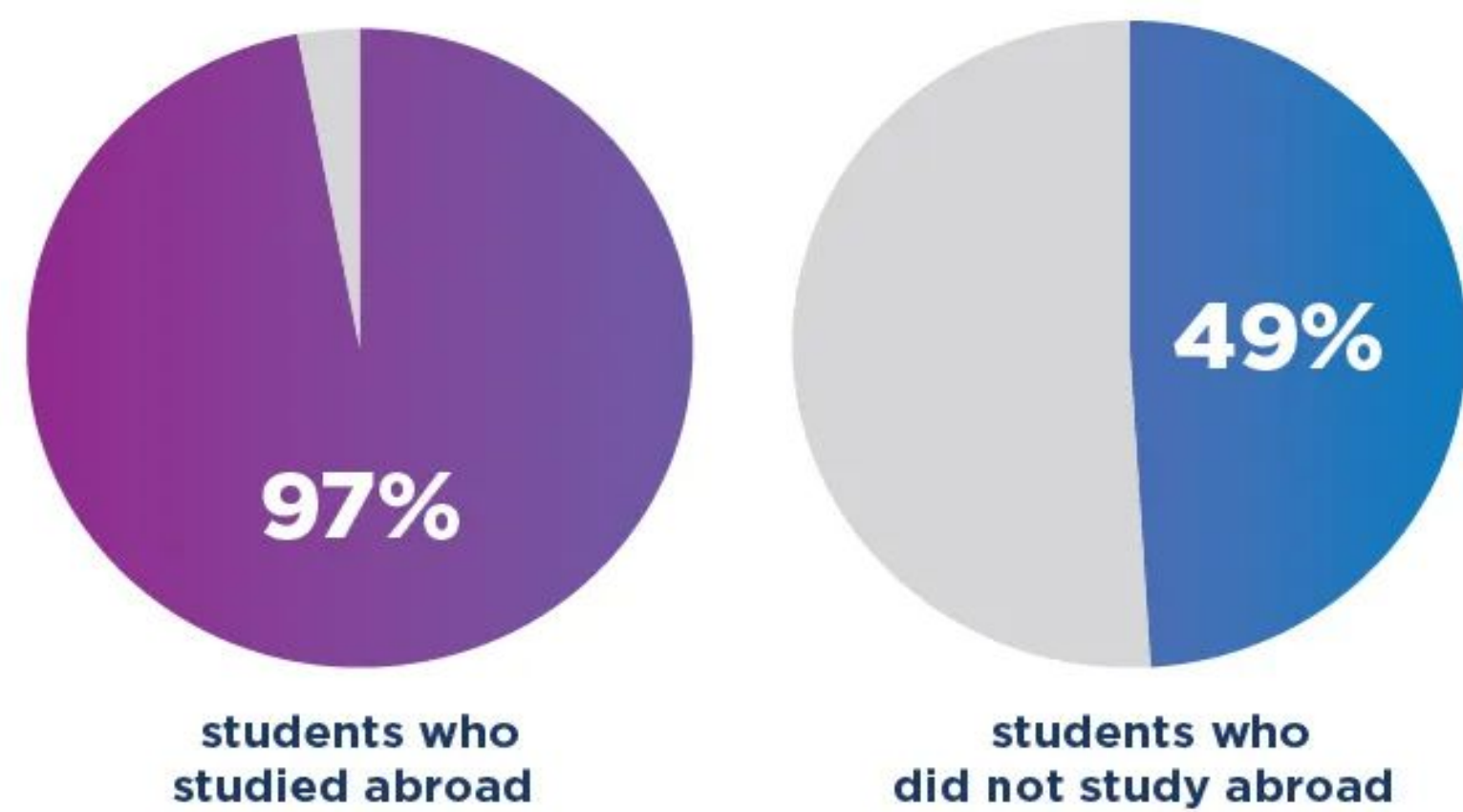


Understanding Intercultural Competencies and How to Develop Them in Gap Year and Study Abroad Program Experiences



Abigail Arrieta, Keagan Barrett, Mariajose Ladera
Benjamin Warren Oliver
Florida State University College of Education

Employment within a year of graduating from college



Abstract

Our research focuses on understanding Intercultural Competencies (ICC) and how to develop it in gap year and study abroad program experiences at FSU. “Intercultural competence(ICC) can be defined as a complex of abilities that are needed to interact with people from other cultures adequately and effectively” (Wolff., & Borzikowsky, 2018). In this study we examine ICC in two experiences: “study abroad” (i.e. an academic experience outside of a student’s home country) and “gap year” (i.e. an experience taken in lieu of an academic experience to bolster a students’ interest in a career choice, rid themselves of burnout, help others, or other personal reasons). Our study compiled articles, found via a convenience sampling, written about developing ICC within study abroad and gap year experiences to note the importance of increasing intercultural competencies by connecting skills gained through both experiences. We found that through defining and understanding what Intercultural Competence was and why it was important, we were able to better understand what attributes in Gap Year and Study abroad programs would be more effective. Which we then collected and noted in our research and discuss in our findings.

Research Questions

- What are intercultural competencies and why does higher education find them important?
- How do study abroad programs promote learning intercultural competencies?
- How do gap years promote student development of intercultural competencies?

UNDERGRADUATE PARTICIPATION IN U.S. STUDY ABROAD



1 in 10 U.S. undergraduates studies abroad before graduating

Method

The research was developed through the investigation of academic research, articles, books, and journals. Our project was to investigate what educational programs develop more intercultural competencies and how. Also, we seek to investigate the differences in doing study abroad programs or taking a gap year(s). Therefore, the research concludes by analyzing what international program would be the right one for each student depending on the experience and what skills and competencies they expect to acquire.

Results / Discussion

- Through our research we have come to define Intercultural Competence as the ability to develop a complex of abilities and attitudes that allow you to more effectively and appropriately communicate in intercultural interactions (Wolff, F., & Borzikowsky, C., 2018), (Deardorff, D.K. 2009).
- Developing Intercultural Competence is important because it prepares graduates to live in a global world, tracking and resolving global challenges by changing prejudices (Pinto, S., 2018).
- Study abroad programs promote learning intercultural competencies exposing students to a new culture and new language (Sobkowiak, P., 2019)
- Gap years promote student development of intercultural competencies through giving them different perspectives, skills, and traits they lacked (Nieman, M. M., 2012, November 30)

Similarities

- Study abroad and Gap years develop ICC.
- Both programs expose students to interact with different communities.

contrast

- Study abroad: Focused on a specific culture and language (sense of intercultural awareness, and competence) (Soria, K. M., & Troisi, J. 2014).
- Gap years: Focused on global/international competencies
- Gap years is more accessible, efficient, and less expensive than doing study abroad.

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