Intercultural Competence:
A Quantitative Study of the Significance of Intercultural Competence and the Influence of College Experiences on Students’ Intercultural Competence Development

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Abstract

This research is a detailed look at intercultural competence, an issue showing escalating importance in today’s higher education and the society at large. In this study, intercultural competence was defined in light of the concept of culture and the contact hypothesis. Person-environment interaction theory and college impact theories were incorporated as theoretical foundations for the operationalization of this research. The development of students’ intercultural competence was examined from two perspectives--intercultural competence is viewed both as a desirable outcome of college education and as an active environment component that exerts important influence on students’ self-reported gains.

Findings of this study evidenced that a variety of college activities, especially those emphasizing cooperative and associated learning, play important role in students’ intercultural competence development. Intercultural competence, in turn, has substantially positive effect in student gains in multiple realms. The intrinsic influences of student characteristics were also examined. In the end, previous research was drawn upon to scrutinize the findings of this study. Implications to future practice and policy as well as the values and limitations of this study were also presented.