NOT SIGNIFICANT:
THE MISGUIDED QUEST FOR DATA TO SHOW WHAT WE KNOW ISN’T TRUE

March 28, 2019
Students should be interculturally competent.

Intercultural competence (IC) can be acquired through ed. abroad.

Students should study abroad.

We cannot determine that IC has been achieved after ed. abroad.

Should we be assessing intercultural competence (IC)?
SESSION OUTLINE

- The Call for Assessing Intercultural Competence
- The Nature of the Concern for Assessing IC
- Table Discussion 1
- The Data Dilemma
- Case Study
- Table Discussion 2
- Implications
- Q&A
GROWTH OF STUDY ABROAD

Generation Study Abroad (2014, IIE)
- 2020 - Double participation
- 2M invested
- “Our moonshot”
2013 Forum, Lilli Engle

- “Moving beyond ‘It was great’” plenary address
- Called for increased rigor in instruction and assessment
- Others have echoed that call
Response has been mixed
A COMPELLING CONCERN?

- Why the mixed response?
- Isn’t developing and assessing intercultural competence a compelling concern?
- What makes some concerns more compelling than others?
A COMPELLING CONCERN?

Why the difference between universities and program providers?

Figure 7. Our institution or organization has an assessment plan to measure the extent the learning outcomes are achieved by our education abroad programs.

FACT: Money & staying in business is compelling
WHAT COMPELLING CONCERN LOOKS LIKE

U.S. Rankings: Most study abroad students

2004
1. N.Y.U.
2. Michigan State
3. U.C.L.A.
4. U. Texas, Austin
5. Penn State
6. U. North Carolina
7. U. Minnesota
8. U. Wisconsin
9. U. Georgia
10. U. Arizona

2018
1. N.Y.U.
2. Texas A. & M.
3. U. Texas, Austin
5. Ohio State
6. U. Michigan
7. Indiana U.
8. San Diego State
9. U. Minnesota
10. Michigan State

FACT: Reputation & competition are compelling
WHAT COMPELLING CONCERN LOOKS LIKE

FACT

Rankings are compelling

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
non-credit & int’l students in metric

Total Learning Abroad

Green - Open Doors mean; orange - mean; red - median
WHAT COMPELLING CONCERN LOOKS LIKE

FACT

Equity is compelling

Ethnicity: Study Abroad vs. total UG population

- White: 79%
- Black/African American: 8%
- Asian: 8%
- Hispanic: 8%

Study Abroad is inner circle

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
WHAT COMPELLING CONCERN LOOKS LIKE

FACT

Brand and reputation are compelling
### Distinguishing More vs. Less Compelling Concern for Assessing IC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGIN of concern</th>
<th>More Compelling</th>
<th>Less Compelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>institution</td>
<td>individual or unit</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS for concern</th>
<th>More Compelling</th>
<th>Less Compelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reputation, revenue</td>
<td>curiosity, program improvement</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORT for concern</th>
<th>More Compelling</th>
<th>Less Compelling</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>money, personnel</td>
<td>on your own</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSEQUENCE of fostering IC or not</th>
<th>More Compelling</th>
<th>Less Compelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reputation, revenue</td>
<td>better program, minimal consequence</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
IF THE CONCERN IS NOT COMPELLING...

We assert...

Unless there are compelling reasons for assessing SA intercultural competence

- institutional reasons
- resources
- significant consequences

...we may be wasting our time.
### TABLE DISCUSSION 1

What is the nature of your institution’s or organization’s concern for assessing intercultural competence and other study abroad outcomes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Person 1</th>
<th>Person 2</th>
<th>Person 3</th>
<th>Person 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Origin</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
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<tr>
<td>% chance you might be wasting your time</td>
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</table>
THE DATA DILEMMA

Should we invest resources in assessment of IC if results do not demonstrate meaningful “success”?
INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLE: HOW WE DEFINE SUCCESS

Intercultural Competency Measures

- Cultural Engagement
- Diversity Tolerance
- Knowledge of Host Country
- Ambiguity Tolerance
- Resilience
CASE STUDY – ACTUAL RESULTS

Intercultural Competency Measures

- Cultural Engagement
- Diversity Tolerance
- Knowledge of Host Country
- Ambiguity Tolerance
- Resilience
HOW MEANINGFUL IS SIGNIFICANCE?

Intercultural Competency Measures

- <2%
- <1%
- 45%
- <7%
- <1%

Cultural Engagement
Diversity Tolerance
Knowledge of Host Country
Ambiguity Tolerance
Resilience
SO, WAS IT WORTH IT?

What are the opportunity costs of assessing IC if results do not demonstrate meaningful “success”? 
Apart from intercultural competency, what other impacts can/should education abroad have, and how might they be measured?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Person 1</th>
<th>Person 2</th>
<th>Person 3</th>
<th>Person 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>program goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>how to measure</td>
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<td>resources/tools for measurement</td>
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<tr>
<td>realistic expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>importance of meaningful results</td>
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</table>
Participants in education abroad programs are not in a controlled experiment:

- The “treatment” (=program) varies widely in its design characteristics
- “Treatment dosage” is difficult to control and measure (for example quality or time of interaction with host nationals)
- Outcomes are difficult to measure
- Control groups are hard to find

Implications?

- Decouple intercultural competency from education abroad as a “required” outcome to justify the enterprise
- View education abroad as a “high impact practice” like internships that can have a variety of outcomes that may or may not be tied to intercultural competence
SA programs producing IC is not like chickens laying eggs:
- IC, unlike eggs, is not tangible or easily identified
- The development of IC takes time & is not predictable
- Chickens predictably take 2 weeks to lay a fertilized egg
  (about the same length as many SA programs)

Implications?
- Look for latent, indirect evidence rather than immediate, direct evidence of the effects of SA.
- Consider retrospective analysis of SA alumni
- Highlight the impact of SA in ways that enhance Reputation and Revenue
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March 28, 2019

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