Making Meaning of Assessment: Recognizing the Impact of National Identity

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Session Objectives

1. Participants will understand how student national identity development relates to international program student outcomes.

2. Participants will recognize the relationships between student national identity development and student emotion and behavior while abroad.

3. Participants will understand how assessment can be used in program design and implementation.
Theory of Identity Development

- Erikson’s process
- Marcia’s four statuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploration</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffusion</td>
<td>Foreclosure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Ethnic/National Identity Development

- Ethnic Identity: Phinney and others
  - First for “out-groups”, but then dominant

- Measuring American Identity
  - Phinney in new Americans
  - Meyer-Lee and Evans, in study abroad (experienced as salient by returnees)
American Identity Measure

- I think of myself as being American
- Being American plays an important part in my life
- I have a strong sense of being American
- I have spent time trying to find out more about what being Am..
- I have thought about how my life will be affected by being Am..
- I have talked to other people about being American
- I understand pretty well what being American means to me
- I have done things that help me understand my American ...
- I have wondered about the implications of being American
- I feel a strong attachment towards my American nationality
  - Psychometrically 2 constructs in factor analysis, high alphas
Acculturation Concepts

- **Acculturation**: Changes that occur as a result of continuous first-hand contact between individuals of differing cultural origins (Ward, 2001).

- **Acculturation stress**: Stress reactions in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation (Berry, 2005).
ABC’s of Acculturation

- **Affect**
  - Psychological adjustment, stress appraisal, coping, well-being

- **Behavior**
  - Adaptation, “Fitting in” culture-specific behavioral learning

- **Cognition**
  - Social identification, beliefs, values, in-group/out-group information processing

(Ward, 2001)
Figure 20.1  Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Acculturation and Adaptation.
AIM Changes: Study Abroad vs Home
Results

- Study Abroad students showed Achieved identity before, disrupted after
  - Study Abroad Commitment/Affirmation rose significantly

- Home students showed Foreclosed identity both times

- For all students higher Commitment/Affirmation was associated with higher well-being (lower anxiety and depression, higher positive affect)

- Study Abroad higher Exploration/Search was associated with higher well-being

- Home higher Exploration/Search associated with lower well-being
Discussion

- Study Abroad students over-focused on host culture, unaware of or in denial about Exploration/Search with American culture.

- Study Abroad students found Exploration/Search exciting, they were ready for it.

- Home students found Exploration/Search threatening, they were unprepared to consider it.

- Study Abroad rise in Commitment/Affirmation mechanisms:
  - Exposure to stereotypical host culture reactions
    - Intergroup contact anxiety, Symbolic anxiety
  - Pre-reentry anticipation
Pre-departure AIM and ABC’s

- Pre-Commitment/Affirmation (C) correlated significantly with Post behavioral adaptation difficulties (B).

- Pre-Commitment/Affirmation (C) is related to lower Flexibility, higher appraisal of cultural experiences as Threats, stronger Negative Affect and higher Anxiety (A).

- Pre-Exploration/Search (C) also correlated significantly with Post behavioral adaptation difficulties (B).

- Pre-Exploration/Search (C) correlated significantly with the appraisal of acculturative stress as a Threat, Critical Thinking, Negative Affect, and Depression (A).
Discussion

- Higher Pre-Commitment/Affirmation may indicate a more fixed, potentially rigid identity; thus less amenable to intercultural adaptation.

- Higher Pre-Exploration/Search may open the Study Abroad student to more identity questions and anxiety, thus more negative affect if unresolved.
Affect while Abroad

- Two groups defined by positive and negative affect

- The Lower Affect group stayed approximately at the same level of Commitment and Affirmation throughout their sojourn, while the Higher Mood group increased their Commitment and Affirmation to a marginally significant degree.

- The groups were not different on the Exploration-Search factor.
Discussion

- AIM as a aspect of Cognition is impacted by Affect—potentially reciprocal

- Exploration/Search still not responsive even for Higher Affect group
Conclusions

- AIM taps a key feature of social identification: national identity.

- American identity is an important aspect of the acculturation process for study abroad students.

- American identity, as a cognitive construct, is related to student adjustment and adaptation.

- The Exploration/Search factor may be connected to anxiety concerning questioning cultural assumptions and values embedded in identity, thus avoided.

- The Commitment/Affirmation factor seems to be increased by comparisons with other cultures, and is related to psychological well-being.
Assessment for Longitudinal Study Abroad Design

Longitudinal (pre, post)

- Multi-method
  - Student Variables
  - Program Variables
  - Outcome Variables
Types of Assessment Variables

1) Student Variables

- Pre-AIM
- Student Goal Checklist

Given to the students prior to departure. Contains 14 possible goals, for which factor analysis yields two factors:

- personal development goals (e.g., greater autonomy, opportunity to travel, growth in interpersonal skills)

- intercultural development goals (e.g., understand different cultures, learn a different perspective on American culture, greater understanding of American culture)
(2) Program Variables

➢ Measure of Intercultural Engagement

Self report on the level of intercultural engagement she personally pursued. There are two categories:

• **multicultural interaction** (e.g., visiting local families, engagement in campus events, volunteering, etc.) and

• **multicultural reflection** (e.g., journaling, photography, conversations with locals, etc.)

➢ Adaptation of Engle & Engle (2003) five study abroad levels of immersion (from less → more)

• **Entry target language**: (elementary → advanced)

• **Language used in course work**: only English → only target language

• **Academic Work context**: Home institution faculty → institute for foreign students → in house student group → direct enrollment

• **Housing**: Collective → individual homestay

• **Experiential learning**: none → limited → optional → required & regular
Types of Assessment Variables

(3) Outcome

- Change in AIM scores
- IDI (Intercultural Developmental Inventory)
- GPI (Global Perspectives Inventory)

We are going to focus in this talk on the AIM.
Using Assessment Data

• Pedagogical/curricular program design and improvement (e.g., increasing experiential learning and classroom integration, both of which are significantly positively correlated with growth)
• Advising (e.g. length matters, as do student goals, year, and even ethnicity)
• Pre-departure preparation (data on importance of own goals and choices around intercultural engagement)
• Advocating generally for study abroad effectiveness within the institution
• Accreditation and external accountability
Participant Action Step Generation

- Reflect on application to your own institution’s assessment processes
- Share with your neighbor
- Q&A
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Thank you!

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PowerPoint and handout will be posted at cwil.saintmarys.edu/global-education by next week