

Assessing Learning Outcomes of International Education: Lessons Learned from the GLOSSARI Project

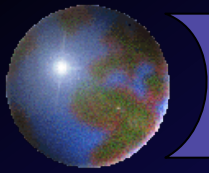
Richard C. Sutton

Global Designs Consulting Services, Atlanta, GA

NRC Conference: Demonstrating the Impact of NRCs

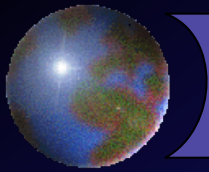
Columbus, OH

27 February 2013



A Child of Title VI (anecdotal evidence of impact):

- ✿ FLAS fellowship in Russian at Indiana University launched 30-year career in international education/area studies/foreign languages
- ✿ Fulbright fellowship for research in Germany
- ✿ Outreach coordinator/assistant director of NRC for Russia/East Europe
- ✿ Undergraduate Title VI grant at Univ of Wisconsin-La Crosse
- ✿ Turned down for Title VI grant to support on-line LCTLs (subsequently funded by NSEP)
- ✿ IRS grant for major research project on study abroad learning outcomes



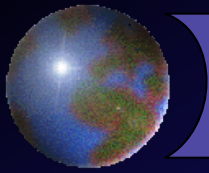
Assessment to document activity vs. Assessment to document learning gains/academic improvement

ACCOUNTABILITY/IMPACT

- ❖ Trumpeting numbers of enrollments, participants, publications, etc.
- ❖ Soviet Planned Economy Model: Inputs and Outputs
- ❖ Justifying resource allocation

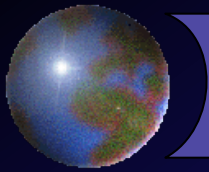
ACADEMICS/OUTCOMES

- ❖ Competencies & skills of program graduates
- ❖ Quality measures of research & analysis
- ❖ Effectiveness of instructional materials & processes



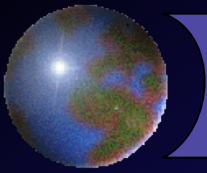
Assessment in U.S. Education Abroad

- ✦ Relatively new phenomenon in the field
- ✦ Limited attention to topic outside the U.S.
- ✦ Assessment inquiries initiated by EA professionals, not assessment specialists
- ✦ Creating a research base from individualized projects, building theoretical and methodological constructs as we go



Limited assessment fundamentals:

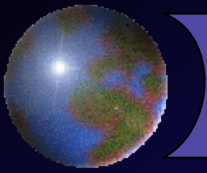
- ❖ articulation of clear goals and learning objectives
- ❖ assessment methods/instruments aligned to those goals/objectives
- ❖ ability to distinguish outcomes attributable to intentional program design, purposeful achievement
- ❖ comparative context of IE assessment results with other assessment findings (both within IE & HE)



Limitations of Existing Studies

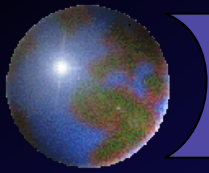
Improvement on prior student/customer satisfaction surveys, but challenges of:

- research design
- data access
- comparability
- sample size
- self-selection
- control groups
- replicability



Other compounding factors:

- ❖ Latent bias to "legitimize" study abroad through assessment may skew process and results
- ❖ Proprietary, profit-center interests of both study abroad and assessment instrumentation may influence research design

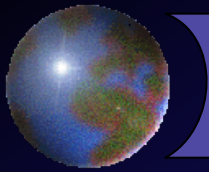


GLOSSARI

- ✚ GEORGIA
- ✚ LEARNING
- ✚ OUTCOMES OF
- ✚ STUDENTS
- ✚ STUDYING
- ✚ ABROAD
- ✚ RESEARCH
- ✚ INITIATIVE

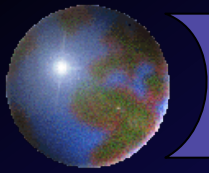


The GLOSSARI project gratefully acknowledges the support of a U.S. Department of Education International Research and Studies Program Grant..



Primary Objectives of GLOSSARI

- ✓ Identify cognitive learning outcomes attributable to
 - diverse study abroad experiences
 - for students at a wide variety of public institutions
- ✓ Identify impact on academic performance indicators
- ✓ Identify impact of study abroad on core liberal arts aspirations (critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, etc.)
- ✓ Identify program characteristics that optimize learning outcomes to guide future program development
- ✓ Identify student characteristics that predict
 - likely participants
 - successful participants
- ✓ Refine, replicate, and disseminate methods for assessing the impact of study abroad on student learning outcomes.



The Six Phases of GLOSSARI

Phase I: Learning Outcomes of SA Participants & Non-Participants

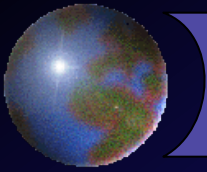
Phase II: Pre- and Post-participation Learning Outcomes with multiple measures

Phase III: Teaching the same course content abroad & at home

Phase IV: Academic performance measures among SA participants and non-participants

Phase V: Program design features that make a difference

Phase VI: Impact 2- to 5-year post-graduation



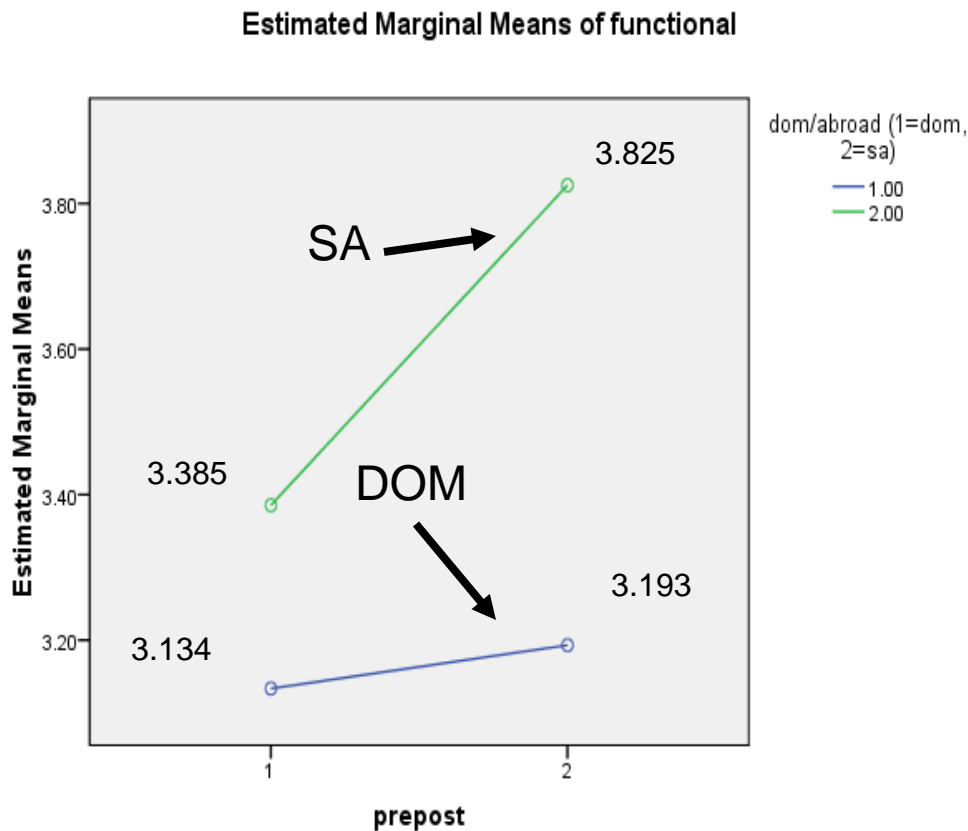
Phase I: Learning Outcomes of SA Participants & Non-Participants

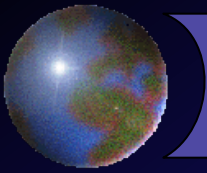
Challenge: How to assess generic learning outcomes across multiple study abroad programs?

- Available survey/test instruments did not measure knowledge acquisition, more focus on attitudinal/behavioral change
- Created new self-report survey (Intercultural Learning Outcomes—ILO) based on model by A. F. Fantini (SIT)
- 29 questions predominantly “I know how to..”



Finding: There is a significant increment in functional knowledge among study abroad students but not among the control group.





Phase IV: Academic performance measures (graduation and persistence rates, GPA)

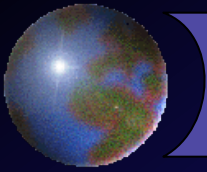
*Takes advantage of USG's unique ability to merge OIE
study abroad databases with System-wide student
records databases*

OIE Databases Provides:

- 31,000 individual study abroad records (location, duration, class level & major at time of SA, etc.) from 35 USG institutions
- Program catalog database

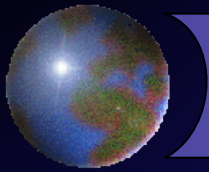
USG Databases provide:

- Age, gender, race, etc.
- Matriculation/graduation
- High school GPA, SAT
- USG semester GPA
- Transfers w/in USG



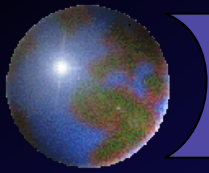
The Importance of Constructing a Statistically Comparable Control Group

- ❖ 19,109 usable unique student records in study abroad database (from 31,133 total)
- ❖ For each subgroup of institution, semester, and class standing, the comparison group drew a sample from the subgroup of twice the # of study abroad students.
- ❖ Clustered control group more closely matches SA group in institution, semester, and class standing than a random sample of students
- ❖ Same survivor status as SA group = comparable # of seniors, juniors, sophomores, freshmen
- ❖ Control group comprised of 17,903 students



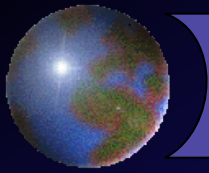
SA v. DOM Graduation Rates among eligible students in each population (w/USG baseline)

	Four-Year Grad Rate	Five-Year Grad Rate	Six-Year Grad Rate
Study Abroad Students (SA)	49.6% (n=8,109)	82.6% (n=6,572)	88.7% (n=4,890)
Control Group Students (DOM)	42.1% (n=6,241)	74.7% (n=5,712)	83.4% (n=4,523)
USG Totals (2008)	24.0% (n=24,482)	45.2% (n= 24,447)	49.3% (n=22,830)



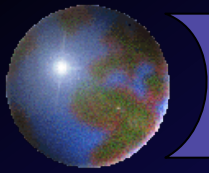
A Matter of Degree (Attainment):

- ❖ Four-Year graduation rates of SA are 17.8% *higher* than DOM rates
- ❖ Five-year graduation rates of SA are 10.6% *higher* than DOM rates
- ❖ Six-year graduation rates of SA are 6.4% *higher* than DOM rates



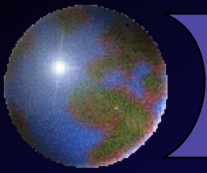
Effects hold consistently across subgroups of gender, race, and SAT

- Grad rates for males are 6-12% higher
- Grad rates for females are 6-19% higher
- Grad rates for African-Americans are 13-31% higher
- Grad rates for other non-white students are 7-18% higher
- Grad rates for students with SAT >1000 are 4-11% higher
- Grad rates for students with SAT <1000 are 2-7% higher (but not statistically significant in Chi-square tests)



A Critical Disconnect for GLOSSARI and Similar Initiatives:

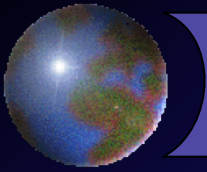
- ❖ These efforts largely originate within the international field, not linked to other institutional assessment processes.
- ❖ Lack of communication, interaction, and shared understanding between IE & IR



2010 NAFSA Assessment Report's opening paragraph stated:

"Assessment of U.S. international education needs to be fully integrated into the broader assessment of U.S. higher education. It is important to recognize that international education assessment is indeed part of higher education assessment. Thus, international assessment cannot be segmented from that broader process."

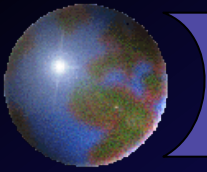
"At an institutional level, international assessment needs to be part of an institution's overall assessment plan. "



Setting the Same Standards

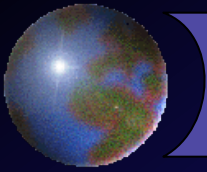
Need to assess study abroad in the same way we assess other forms of learning:

- for full programs of study abroad (exchanges, JYA, etc.), need to align with assessment of other broad learning processes (e.g., first-year experience, general education)
- for discrete study abroad courses (faculty-led, short-term) need to align with other institutional course assessments augmented by environmental and experiential factors



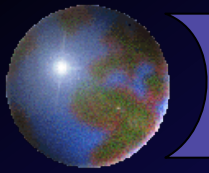
Outcomes from courses abroad:

- ✦ Content acquisition (more/less vs. different/deeper)
- ✦ Effective use of learning resources
- ✦ Student engagement in the learning process (class participation)



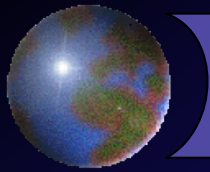
Outcomes from programs abroad:

- ✿ Persistence/retention
- ✿ Integrated learning
- ✿ Impact of shared experience
- ✿ Contribution to discipline/major
- ✿ Increased interdisciplinary understanding
- ✿ Effect on skill development (social, navigational, critical thinking, etc.)



The Challenge Remains...

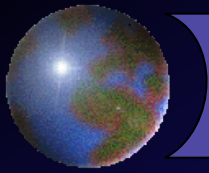
We need to continue to press forward with (at least) three basic questions of education abroad and other domains of international assessment.



Question #1: What learning outcomes do we expect students to acquire or achieve?

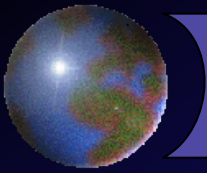


- Need to articulate specific learning outcomes expected from any course or program.

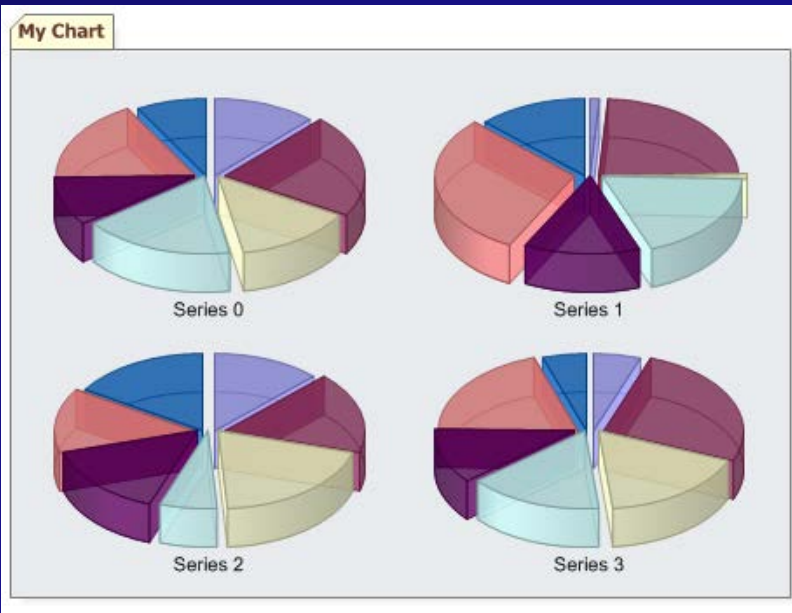


Question #2: To what extent are learning outcomes attributable to intentional program/course design?

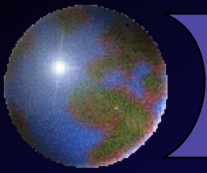
- ❖ Learning outcomes can often be identified, but is their value produced by intentional strategies, or simply good results from random practices?



Question #3: To what extent are these learning outcomes measurable?



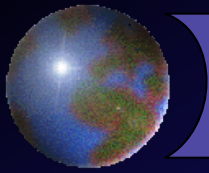
- Need to have defined mechanisms to measure outcomes
- Need to have comparable control groups to determine effects



We need to become:

- ✚ Our own best & worst critics
- ✚ More comparative about the relative merits of our enterprise vs. others in higher education
- ✚ More realistic (and even cynical) about our beliefs in the value of what we do, unafraid to ask taboo questions.

This will help drive strong assessments.



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