

Equity and Inclusivity in the Assessment of High Impact Practices

Heather Haeger, California State University, Monterey Bay
Allison BrckaLorenz, Indiana University—Bloomington
Presented at the Assessment Institute, 2020

1

Housekeeping

Please **send questions** using the **Q&A** function

Use the chat to chat with each other or share resources

Norms

- Openness to new ideas and feedback
- Looking within our own practice
- When we know better we do better

2

Reflection

Value added model:

- Why do you do what you do?
 - What gets you riled up, and what do you want to change?
 - What would you like to create?

3

Learning Outcomes

Practice using a set of critical, reflective questions to use when creating an assessment plan in order to conduct more inclusive assessment.

Be able to design more inclusive survey questions especially in asking about student demographics and backgrounds.

Be exposed to different quantitative methods which can make more inclusive analyses and interpretations instead of always comparing minority to majority students.

Utilize Democratically Engaged Assessment strategies in thinking about assessment on your campus.

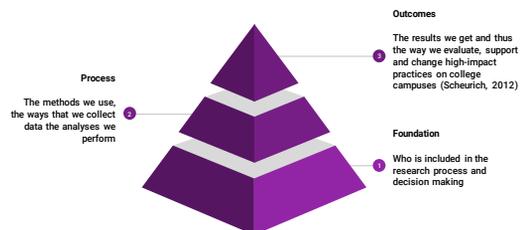
4

Agenda

1. Reflection on equity in assessment on your campus
2. Strategies for more inclusive survey design
3. Equity in Quantitative Methods
4. Democratically Engaged Assessment
5. Discussion

5

The choices we make matter



6

History of research and assessment that

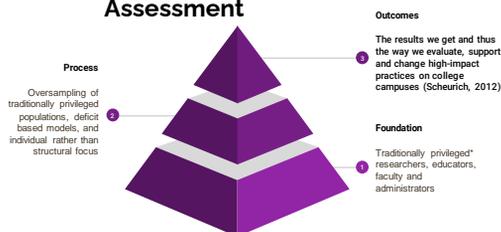
- "Naturalizes" differences by constructs (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class...) (Gunaratnam, 2003)
 - Define issues as individual or group "deficiencies" instead of structural problems
- Ignores intersectionality of experiences and identities
 - Flattens the intricate diversity of personal, social, and cultural experiences in education

7

- How we define and control the production of knowledge in assessment and research can (unintentionally) perpetuate a legacy built on exclusion
 - Perpetuating racist, sexist, classist, heteronormative, colonial structures in education and in assessment
- Example of "achievement gap" research (Quin, 2020)
 - Intention: expose academic inequality
 - Research illustrates inequalities
 - BUT does so in a way that frames issue as individual and/or group deficiencies
 - Unintended consequence:
 - Activating stereotype threat in students
 - Increasing racial bias in educators and general public

8

Cracks in the foundation of HIPs Assessment



9

More Inclusive Survey Design

Focus on terminology

- Using terminology that your respondents understand is the most important part of inclusive survey design
- Will students know that they're part of a "learning community" or would it be better to ask questions about being part of Spectrum or Residence Scholars (example communities at IU)
- Think ahead of time about the groups you want to study so strategic efforts can be made to recruit them
- Include members of these groups in collecting and analyzing data, planning, and action steps to future build goodwill
- Non-inclusive demographics are a quick way to alienate already marginalized student groups (and we definitely do not want that)

10

More Inclusive Survey Design

Inclusive identity language

- Be very careful with language, especially when it comes to identity and cultural differences important to your institution's communities
- Figure out what exactly you're trying to study
 - Sex versus gender, gender identity versus gender expression, etc.
 - Sexual identity versus sexual attraction versus sexual behavior, etc.
- What language is common among the people you're studying?
 - Gender variant, gender minorities, trans*, trans-spectrum, gender non-conforming, gender queer, nonbinary, noncisgender

11

More Inclusive Survey Design

Inclusive identity language complications

- Gender and sex (and sometimes sexual orientation!) are often used interchangeably or are conflated
- "Straight" has become far more common than "heterosexual" but, for example, "straight" doesn't translate easily in Spanish so "not gay" may be better. Straight might also imply something "crooked" about non-straight identities.
- Gender variant respondents may have difficulty choosing a sexual orientation, for example "straight" might apply but not feel right
- Comprehension and terminology use differs by age, race/ethnicity, level of education.... "Queer" might make sense to students but be offensive to faculty
- Some terms are very culturally specific such as "two-spirit" for American Indian tribes, "la alafine" from Samoan culture, "same-gender loving" or "DL" or Down Low" are used by Black or Latino men

12

More Inclusive Survey Design

Be wary of "best practice"

- Be critical of what, even trusted, groups say about what is "best practice" for asking questions. Generalized suggestions may not be what's best for your campus and needs
 - "Best practice" language from even a few years ago may be badly outdated as identity language evolves quickly
 - Consider multiple options from various sources, think of them as being on a spectrum of inclusivity. Less inclusive items (majority options and an "other" category) may contain fewer options but will be easier to analyze. More inclusive items (many options, write-ins, check-all-that-apply) may be very difficult to use and analyze
 - Be prepared to compromise, there is **no single right way** to ask identity questions
-

13

More Inclusive Survey Design

Questions to ask yourself

- What is it that you *really* need to know?
 - How can the creation and use of these items and data build trust?
 - What is your balance between useful survey data and inclusivity?
 - Who will you be reporting the information to?
 - How do you plan to analyze the data you collect?
 - How will you use, recode, or combine categories?
 - How will you use the information to disaggregate other information?
 - What will be the consequences for choosing a select-all-that-apply question versus select-one?
-

14

Equity in Quantitative Methods

Tip #1: Frameworks

- Start with a methodological framework that meets your needs
 - Critical questions for quantitative data, QuantCrit (Stage, 2007; Garcia, López, Vélez, 2017)
 - Focus on practitioner knowledge or action (Bensimon, 2007)
 - Person-centered approaches (Malcom-Piqueux, 2015)
 - Intersectional approaches (Jones & McEwen, 2000)
 - More inclusive frameworks can help guide your work and to **set expectations** for your audience (this can be especially important when speaking about small populations)
-

15

Equity in Quantitative Methods

Tip #2: Plan for small populations

- Be strategic about collecting data from minoritized groups to increase response rate
 - Make connections with cultural centers and other affinity groups
 - Consider combining responses from multiple cohorts and triangulating results with other data but remember that small numbers might actually capture all or most of your population!
 - Center data collection methods on minoritized experiences (inclusive item writing, culturally sensitive questions, etc.)
 - Make efforts to show these groups how their data is being used to create change
-

16

Equity in Quantitative Methods

Tip #3: Disaggregate

- The "average" student likely reflects your majority and most privileged populations
 - Disaggregate creatively: identity, student characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, intersections
 - Groupings like Students of Color or LGBT+ are a great start but still silence the variation within
 - Talking about the experiences of these smaller groups can help build trust, sense of belonging, and feelings of support
-

17

Equity in Quantitative Methods

Tip #4: Responsibly aggregate

- Yes, I remember Tip #3 too.
 - Be careful to not "out" people with results with findings that can be attributed to a specific person
 - Consider reporting on the experiences of an "unidentified" group
 - Typologies can mask identities
 - Sophisticated statistical methods may require that you drop small groups of students but resist the urge to silence them completely, include what information you can to tell some of their story
 - Avoid aggregate "other" groups, but when collapsing is necessary, aggregate based on the experience versus lumping together small minoritized groups
 - Example, Asian + Pacific Islander should not be automatic
-

18

Equity in Quantitative Methods

Tip #5: Rethink Comparisons and Reference Groups

A traditional analysis would say students with disabilities have lower sense of belonging than students without.

A disaggregated variable-centered approach would use identity as the disaggregating variable: Students with mental health disorders have lowest sense of belonging, followed by students with sensory impairments, then...

A person-centered approach first divides people by the outcome: low/medium/high sense of belonging, then looks at who is in each group. Students with mental health disorders will be disproportionately represented in the low sense of belonging, but appear in all three groups. You can then explore reasons for why they land in the different groupings.

- Statistical comparisons are often necessary as people wonder if a given experience is "normal," high, low, etc. But this implicitly positions groups as normative (i.e., straight, white, etc. is "normal")
 - Pre-creating benchmarks can help with this
- Try comparing within subgroups instead of to the majority
- Compare to averages, medians, or benchmarks; more sophisticated analyses can use effect coding (Mayhew & Simonoff, 2015)
- Person-centered approaches (Malcom-Piqueux, 2015) allow all students' experiences to be compared and to look for variation within subgroups

19

Equity in Quantitative Methods

The validity hurdle

- Often minoritized groups are small populations who may be difficult to gather data from (for many reasons!)
- The power of quantitative methods lies in the ability to make generalizations, but large sample sizes are needed
 - Consequently people question the validity of data from small populations
- Faculty, in particular, are a tough crowd
 - Frameworks can set expectations
 - Assessment is different from research
 - Triangulation can help
 - Use a qualitative mindset
 - Remind them about helping students during office hours...

20

Reflection

Who is included in your research and assessment decision making?

How are different voices and opinions experienced?

Whose voice is not included?

How could your research and assessment process be more inclusive, or what are areas you can identify for improvement?

21

Democratically Engage Assessment

Inquiry and practice that is collaborative, inclusive, and empowering of all stakeholders (pg 18)

- Co-creation: interrogate the line between knowledge producer and knowledge consumer
- The ends are *consistent with* the means
 - Results advancing equity & inclusive methods

Bandy, J., Price, M. F., Clayton, P. H., Metzker, J., Ngro, G., Stanlick, S., Etheridge Woodson, S., Bartel, A., & Gale, S. (2018). *Democratically engaged assessment: Reimagining the purposes and practices of assessment in community engagement.* <https://scholarworks.spu.edu/handle/1806/17729>

22

Democratically Engage Assessment

- Rigor
- Full participation
 - > Ends align with the means
 - > Institutionalize the participation of those who affect and are affected by the research
- Co-creation
- Generativity
 - > Not just who but how
 - > Invites growth and transformation for individuals, organizations, and communities
- Resilience
 - > Being able to adjust and overcome changes/challenges
- Practicability
 - > Grounded in the realities of the world

Bandy, J., Price, M. F., Clayton, P. H., Metzker, J., Ngro, G., Stanlick, S., Etheridge Woodson, S., Bartel, A., & Gale, S. (2018). *Democratically engaged assessment: Reimagining the purposes and practices of assessment in community engagement.* <https://scholarworks.spu.edu/handle/1806/17729>

23

Democratically Engage Assessment

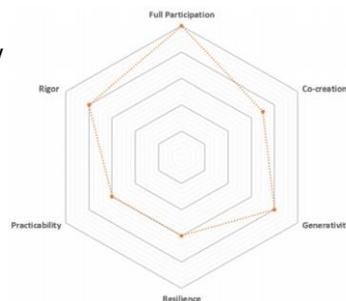
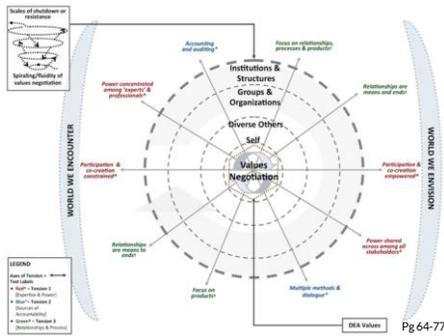


Figure 1: Values in Democratically Engaged Assessment

24



25

Holding Tension Creatively

- Expert-centered knowledge and power
- Work is judged by measures and processes of market and bureaucratic accountability
- Research products or outcomes are the primary focus
- Democratically co-created knowledge and shared power
- Accountability is created through deliberative, democratic practices and critical reflection
- Research processes and relationships as well as its products and outcomes are the primary foci

26

Reflection

What tensions are you navigating in conducting assessment in the world you encounter vs. the world you envision?

What steps can you take to make your research and assessment more equitable and inclusive?

27

Discussion

Please send questions using the Q&A function

28

You can also reach us at:

Heather Haeger:
hhaeger@csumb.edu

Allison BrckaLorenz:
abrckalo@indiana.edu