MEASURING CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ) GROWTH IN SUMMER HOMESTAY, STUDY-ABROAD STUDENTS

Dr. David Towles & Dr. Andrew Milacci: Dept. of Modern Languages
Dr. Fred Milacci: Dept. of Community Care and Counseling

Key Takeaways

• Students motivated to engage culture, but perceived lack of knowledge (cultural and linguistic) inhibits interactions and, by extension, CQ. More confidence = more interactions = more growth.
• Host families eager to share. Many meet this need among themselves in WhatsApp chats or in casual conversation.
• Families become savvy about how to “design” the best homestay experience, and having students can constitute social capital.
• Homestays prove transformational for students and families alike, breaking down barriers and overcoming negative or naïve stereotyping.
• Brought in additional interviewer/researcher for 2019 interviews in Guatemala.

Method

• CQ Scale (CQS) and Semi-Structured Phenomenological Interviews of students:
  * Administered internationally-normed CQS measures student growth at beginning and end of trip (n=46). Results used to select interview participants.
  * Follow-up interviews (n=20) with students over the course of three years/cohorts so far.
  * Then, conducted interviews (n=25) on site, in Guatemala, with students’ home-stay families, in Spanish in 2018-2019.
  * Transcription in English and Spanish. Interview data in Spanish is translated as needed. Back-translations on quoted material per Schroeder and Milacci 2016 to ensure reliability. See graphic “Trustworthy Data?”.

Findings

• Nearly all students grow in CQ. CQ training pre-trip might have an effect, too.
• Motivation shift: extrinsic > intrinsic, despite high CQ Drive scores. Contradicts some research, for example, Livermore 2015.
• Increase in language proficiency made students want to engage culture more.
• Doubts about language proficiency can be a major inhibitor to engage culture.
• Move beyond stereotyping to humanizing language when describing Guatemalans.
• Confianza: students and families engage in unspoken trust-building processes that ultimately drive the experience, and thus, CQ growth.
  - Food
  - Family
  - Activities.

Future Research

• Location is visited by dozens of US-based religious groups per year. Results would likely differ if the locale had less contact with foreign cultures.
• Less religiously affiliated families and students.

Limitations

• Authority dynamic: Interviewers are students’ professors. Location or means of interviewing (by phone at times) might cause stress.
• Authority culture: Two male researchers, authority figures, interviewing mostly women in Guatemala.

UPDATE: Female, Latina faculty member traveled to Guatemala to conduct interviews in December 2019. Elicited similar, though more nuanced, data.