Identifying Disciplinary Peers: A Process for Classifying Fields of Study based on Faculty Preference

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Today’s Agenda

• Purpose & Goals of the Study
• Methods
• Results & Lessons Learned
• Future Research
• Q&A
Purpose

• Identify disciplines that share similar
  ➢ research practices
  ➢ teaching practices
  ➢ perceptions of student engagement in academic activities

• Develop a method for grouping disciplines
Our Goal

• Create field/disciplinary comparisons for students and faculty that…
  ➢ appeal to faculty at a single institution
  ➢ appeal to disciplinary-based groups interested in teaching and learning
  ➢ provide IR professionals with an approach to presenting campus assessment data to faculty groups
Literature Review

• **Discipline**
  - a means of membership and identification within the academic profession
    (Clark, 1987)
  - “…usually reflects the values and norms held by its constituent individuals or dominant groups”
    (Nelson Laird, Shoup, Kuh, & Schwarz, 2008, p. 472)

• **Research, teaching, and learning may vary by discipline**
  (Borden & Young, 2007)
Disciplinary Classification Systems

- **High & Low Paradigmatic Development**
  (Braxton, Olsen, & Simmons, 1987)

- **Approaches to different academic tasks**
  (Biglan, 1973a, b)

- **High & Low Consensus**
  (Braxton & Hargens, 1996)
Information Source: FSSE

- **Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)**
  Survey designed to complement NSSE and to measure faculty expectations for student engagement in educational practices that are known to be empirically linked with high levels of learning and development

- **Two Survey Options (Course-Based & Typical Student)**

- **2010 administration**
  - more than 19,000 faculty from 154 institutions
  - extra set of items on “Peer Comparison Fields”
    - 38 institutions
    - 4,652 faculty respondents
“Peer Comparison Field” Items

- Please list and rank the 3 fields against which your field should be compares based on [write-in]:
  - Research and other scholarly activities
  - Faculty teaching practices
  - Student engagement in academic activities
Method

- In each of the three categories, separated the top two fields selected by each discipline

- Identified pairings (agreement between 2 disciplines) for each category
  - Tight Pairing: ≥40% agreement by at least one discipline
  - Loose Pairing: 26-40% agreement by at least one discipline
  - Tentative Pairing: ≤25% agreement by both disciplines

- Identified clusters (agreement between 3 or more disciplines) for each category
Results

- **Peer Fields of Study**
  - 14 disciplinary pairs across all three categories
  - 4 disciplinary clusters within individual categories
    - Peer relationships are similar across ‘research & scholarly activities’ and ‘student academic engagement’

- **Consistency with Biglan’s (1973) categories:**
  - hard—soft
  - pure—applied
  - Life—non-life
Peer Field Pairings

Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Applied-NonLife

1. research and scholarly activities
2. student academic engagement
3. teaching practices

Tight pairing ($\geq 40\%$)

Loose Pairing ($< 40\%$)

Tentative Pairing ($\leq 25\%$)
Peer Field Pairings

Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Pure-NonLife

1. research and scholarly activities
2. student academic engagement
3. teaching practices

Music    ---    Theatre/ Drama

Philosophy    ---    Theology/ Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tight pairing (≥ 40%)</th>
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<td>Loose Pairing (&lt; 40%)</td>
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Peer Field Pairings

Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Pure

1. research and scholarly activities
2. student academic engagement
3. teaching practices

Tight pairing (≥ 40%)

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Tentative Pairing (≤ 25%)
Peer Field Clusters

Category: research and other scholarly practices

Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Pure

- Tight pairing (≥ 40%)
- Loose Pairing (< 40%)
- Tentative Pairing (≤ 25%)

* n < 5
Peer Field Clusters

Category: student engagement in academic activities

Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Pure

Tight pairing (≥ 40%)

Loose Pairing (< 40%)

Tentative Pairing (≤ 25%)

*n < 5
Peer Field Clusters

Category: faculty teaching practices

Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Applied-NonLife

Tight pairing (≥ 40%)

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Peer Field Clusters

Category: faculty teaching practices
Biglan Dimensions: Soft-Pure-NonLife

Art
Music
Theatre/Drama

26%
42%
32%
33%
47%

Tight pairing (≥ 40%)
Loose Pairing (< 40%)
Tentative Pairing (≤ 25%)
Lessons Learned

• Perceived similarities between fields match on two of Biglan’s dimensions

• Perceived similarities permeate Biglan’s third dimension: life-nonlife

• When choosing comparison groups, faculty choose others that are like them
Future Research

• Further test peer field pairings and clusters by exploring FSSE responses by discipline
  ➢ to core survey items regarding participation in scholarly activities and perceived importance of student engagement in various activities
  ➢ to FSSE scales regarding the use of particular teaching techniques

• Analysis on other items in the extra set (re: cross-disciplinary research and teaching)

• Comparisons between peer field groupings derived at each stage of this research
  ➢ literature searches
  ➢ preliminary FSSE analysis
  ➢ extra item set analysis
Questions?

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