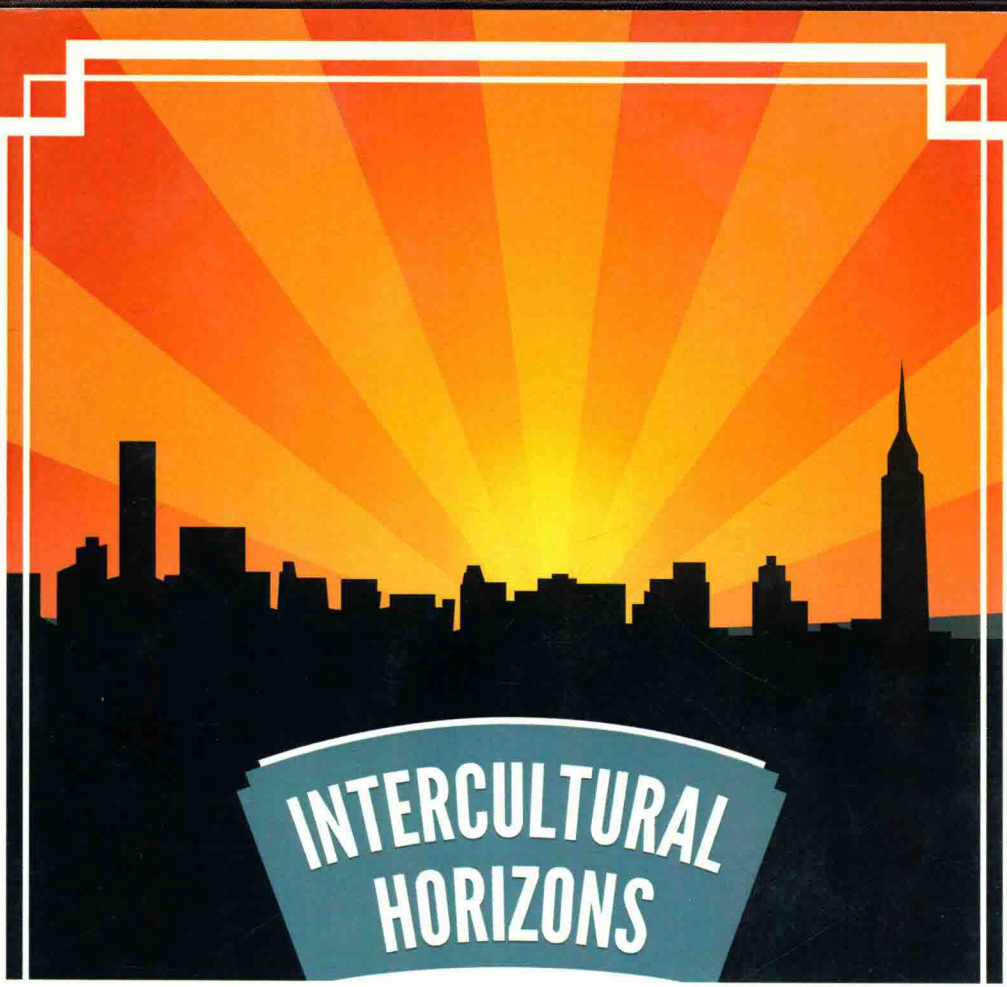

INTERCULTURAL HORIZONS

INTERCULTURAL STRATEGIES IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Edited by
Eliza J. Nash, Nevin C. Brown and Lavinia Bracci

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CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-5162-0, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5162-6

Intercultural Horizons

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FOREWORD

The papers featured in this volume have been taken from those presented at the second annual Intercultural Horizons conference held in New York, New York in October 2012. The conference was organized by the State University of New York at Geneseo and the International Center for Intercultural Exchange (Siena, Italy). The conference was designed to attract presentations primarily from North American scholars; in the end, nearly 120 participants came from the U.S., Canada, Ecuador and Italy. The 2012 conference was the second in what is becoming an annual series of meetings, and the present volume therefore is a companion to one issued last year by Cambridge Scholars Publishing (*Intercultural Horizons: Best Practices in Intercultural Competence Development, 2012).* Subsequent conferences will take place in the U.S. in even-numbered years (most likely New York City in fall 2014) and in Italy in odd-numbered years (most likely Siena, Italy in fall 2015), and so forth.

The papers included in this volume reflect a diversity of approaches both to intercultural education in the North American setting and to its application in service-learning and related contexts in diverse cultural settings in other nations. Our authors provide faculty and student perspectives, primarily from the level of postsecondary education but including a look as well at intercultural education at the primary level. Many of the papers focus in one way or another on issues of curriculum, teaching and learning in relation to developing intercultural competence in students in North American colleges and universities, particularly though not exclusively through the use of service-learning. Given the growing ethnic and gender diversity of students in North American colleges and universities, several papers focus on strategies for engaging these students (often first-generation and place-bound) in international and intercultural experiences--in some cases through virtual mechanisms, in others through offering opportunities for such students to engage in service-learning programs with organizations and populations of similar ethnic and economic backgrounds.

Other issues explored in various ways by the papers in this volume include: how to assess student intercultural learning and competence; the role of new digital technologies as possible tools for providing intercultural learning experiences for students; developing international service-learning and intercultural learning opportunities for first-year

students and those in two-year colleges; and the connections between intercultural education and what we are learning about the neurology of student learning. Several of the authors also challenge the reader to examine our overall assumptions about "service" and the organizations and people being served, and how to find the right balance between goals for student learning and having a positive impact on the social and other needs of the communities in which international service-learning and intercultural education programs are being placed.

All of the papers touch in one way or another on an important development now affecting almost all institutions of higher education in North America and, increasingly, in other nations worldwide—that of the university's engagement with the community. During the past thirty years, such engagement has moved from the periphery to the core of many North American colleges and universities. Similar efforts are now emerging among many Asian universities and in Europe as well. The paper in this volume on the Polisocial initiative at the Politecnico di Milano in Italy is a good example of how the theme of university-community engagement is taking hold in a city and nation facing similar intercultural and economic challenges to those in North America—and serves as a preview of themes the International Center for Intercultural Exchange hopes to explore in its future conferences.

There are many people and institutions to thank in the preparation of this volume, including: the staff and administration of the State University of New York (SUNY) at Geneseo, particularly Rebecca Lewis, Wes Kennison and Carol Long, for their co-sponsorship of the 2012 conference and their tireless efforts in its behalf; the SUNY Global Center and its staff and director Mitch Leventhal for offering an excellent venue for the conference in New York City.

As the conference moves into its subsequent years, we look forward to stimulating further dialogue on intercultural issues for scholars and professionals alike in the extensive fields of intercultural training and education.

Eliza Nash
Nevin Brown
Lavinia Bracci
Co-editors
July 2013

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CHAPTER ONE

EMPATHY, ACTION, AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: A NEUROLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR SIMULATION'S EFFECTIVENESS IN DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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Abstract

The literature has largely praised, but has not investigated the source of, simulation's effectiveness. In this paper, I combine a review of recent neuroimaging-based research with my simulation experience in two freshmen English composition service-learning courses to support my claim that simulation's effectiveness comes from the human brain's tendency to reconcile two sets of seemingly incompatible operations: It accepts emotion as cognition, and imagined activity as real; working together, these behaviors foster empathy. This claim justifies the use of simulation in service-learning courses as a way of developing education majors' intercultural competencies, and it helps guide our design of simulations.

Introduction

An Irish international student described her American friend's reaction when she, the Irish student, endearingly called her friend a word that U.S.

citizens consider to be a crude misogynist insult. The student, whose narrative dramatized one aspect of intercultural communications, was part of an audience of forty students, faculty, and staff at SUNY Cortland's October 2012 *Cross-Cultural (mis)Communication* Panel Discussion. Panelists shared narratives dealing with such cultural concerns as greeting customs, versions of history, and conceptions of time. I integrate some of their experiences and those of audience members into simulations designed for education majors in SUNY Cortland's two first-year service-learning[1] English Composition courses, *Writing Studies in the Community I* and *II*.[2]

Professionals in business, the military, human services, and education use simulation to develop a variety of competencies. The faith that many trainers and teachers have in simulation does not, however, explain its effectiveness. To that end, this paper argues that simulation's effectiveness comes from the human brain's tendency to reconcile two sets of seemingly incompatible operations: It accepts emotion as cognition, and imagined activity as real; working together, these behaviors foster empathy.

Background: Simulation

Simulation is widely-used. Academicians use it in courses such as "Families Theory" in counselor education (Harrawood, Parmanand, and Wilde 2011) and "Ethics and Ageing" in gerontology (Doron 2007), and in fields such as oncology (Baer et al. 2008), and pre-service teacher preparation (Dotger, Dotger, and Maher 2009). Simulation lessons can focus on anger management (Graves, Frabutt, and Vigliano 2007), being flexible when dealing with ambiguity (Boggs, Mickel, and Holtom 2011), confidence-building (Baer et al. 2008), dealing with stressful professional situations (Dotger, Dotger, and Maher 2009), and other social skills (Aubry et al. 2008; Baer et al. 2008; Boggs, Mickel, and Holtom 2007). Directly or indirectly, these lessons involve the development of empathy.[3]

The ability to understand another person's frame of mind is known as the Theory of Mind (ToM). Berger reinforces the importance of this empathy-related ability, claiming that it "is crucial to the understanding of one's own and others' behavior" (997), and is crucial for the development of social communication (Senju 2012). People with autism have low ToM.

Cruz and Patterson allude to empathy when they describe an increasingly important need that simulation can help address: teachers must "become sensitive to how …diversity can impact relational and cognitive styles," including "learning styles, parenting styles, and communication styles" (2005, 41).

To help my students develop greater empathy for, and to be able to interact with, people from socio-economic backgrounds that are different from their own, I use two versions of case study-based simulation: In one, I create simulations from students' service-learning experiences, from their research, and from events such as the *Cross-Cultural (mis)Communication Panel Discussion*. The other is *The State of Poverty Simulation*.[4]

The roughly 85 *State of Poverty* participants are in a large room that has, along its walls, tables representing "community resources," such as a grocery store, Department of Social Services, landlord's office, pawn shop, employment office, and work place. Staff of the organization that conducts the event, the Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO) serve in the appropriate roles (teacher at the school, for example) at each station.

Each participant receives a "bio" that represents an actual individual or a composite of individuals living in poverty; each participant spends four fifteen-minute "weeks" going to stations at which he tends to responsibilities such as working, buying food, and paying rent. During the simulated month, participants experience frustration, anger, and humiliation as they wrestle with laws and regulations, and with the attitudes of some community resource people. Students' spoken comments and anonymous written reflections match results from Nickols and Nielsen (2011), which show strengthened student empathy for people living in poverty.

Research into simulation's effectiveness typically involves quantitative analysis of students' written or spoken reactions as a way of identifying (for example) levels of engagement in, and satisfaction with, lessons (Alfes 2011; Beidatsch and Broomhall 2010), self-efficacy, (Kameg 2010), communication skills (Chan 2012), confidence (Alfees 2011; Cruz and Patterson 2005), increased ability to identify one's own assumptions (Chan 2012), and improved empathy (Levintova et al. 2011; Mounsey et al. 2006; and Wilson et al. 2008). Each of the studies listed showed improvements in the areas named.

Simulation practitioners such as Cruz and Patterson (2005) consider simulation to be a form of experiential learning. This next section justifies that perspective.

Simulation as Experiential Learning

John Dewey (1940) contrasts experiential learning with traditional teaching methods that treat students as "docile" learners who simply

memorize material. Dewey notes that such passive approaches treat knowledge as "a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future" (1938, 5). As an alternative, Dewey promotes a holistic, visceral model of learning (the scientific method) that relies to a large degree on multi-sensory, holistic, "first-hand experience" (1940, 70).

Cruz and Patterson define "simulation" in terms that parallel Dewey, writing that it is "an instructional technique that attempts to recreate certain aspects of reality for the purpose of gaining information, clarifying values, understanding other cultures, or developing a skill. ...[P]articipants learn by doing, feeling, analyzing, and reflecting" (2005, 43).

Simulation can immerse its participants so deeply in re-created experience that many of its proponents consider it to be a form of experiential learning. Dracup (2008) and Joyner and Young (2006) consider it to be an active learning strategy, as do Boggs, Mickel, and Holtom, who relate it to Boud and Pascoe's three characteristics of experiential learning, the first of which is that "each student is [actively] involved" (2007, 834).

Boud and Pascoe's second characteristic of experiential learning, the learning relates to the real world (Boggs, Mickel, and Holtom 2007, 834), matches Doron's observation that students who engage in simulation get "experience with practical dilemmas" (2007, 755). Simulation also has experiential learning's third characteristic, "the learner has control over her or his learning experience" (Boggs, Mickel, and Holtom 2007, 834), because of the impromptu or extemporaneous nature of simulations, and the reflecting sessions that follow.

As Dewey cautioned in 1938, the need for a new approach to education (experiential education) does not mean that we have solved problems associated with the established pedagogy; he points out, rather, that experience does not necessarily equal education, so "we need to understand what experience is" (13). A key element of experience is emotion.

Emotion

Emotion is a process through which the mind helps the individual recognize and defend against danger by rating the importance of an object, event, or situation to the individual's survival (Dolan 2002; LeDoux 2002; Phelps 2004). Emotion is important to our discussion of simulation's effectiveness in learning, including the development of cross-cultural competencies, because it is integral to participants' cognitive processes.

Researchers examining emotion's role in cognition focus on its links to five connected sub-processes: attention, perception, motivation, memory, and learning (Dolan 2002).

Simulations can create emotional reactions by surfacing conflict between a student's preconceptions and his experiences ("cognitive dissonance"); those reactions can lead to an understanding of reasons for other people's opinions and behaviors, including a deeper understanding of other people's cultures, as in *The State of Poverty* simulation.[5]

Many students, for example, share the feelings of one student who commented that, "coming in [to the simulation], I believed that poor people don't try hard enough to make ends meet," but "this experience changed my views of people in poverty. I did not realize how much work it was to live in poverty." Other evidence shows that the emotionally-jarring nature of such experiences helps students remember the events. In end-of-semester *Course/Teacher Evaluations,* for instance, my students refer to lessons learned during our simulations as being their most memorable. According to Dolan (2002), of the links between emotion and other facets of cognition, we understand most fully emotion's links to memory.

Phelps notes that "there is abundant evidence that memories for emotional events have a persistence and vividness that other memories seem to lack" (2004, 198). Hu, Real, and Takamiya (2007) identify emotional stress as one stimulus for the formation of molecules that help facilitate both memory and learning. As those molecules form, they help determine the strength of specific memories. At moderate levels, for example, emotions can strengthen memory (LeDoux 2004).

The "processing of and regulating of emotion" (McGarry and Russo 20011, 179) is centered in the limbic system, a region in the brain that includes structures such as the amygdala, which is active in identifying threats to the individual and, if need be, activating emotions such as fear. It is also involved with memory (Fernandez-Egea et al. 2009; LeBar and Cabeza 2006).

Some students, in their written and spoken reflections, link our simulations to the dire situations of people they know in their home towns. LeDoux might state that those students' comments reflect one aspect of the way in which memories work: they "are more easily retrieved when the emotional state at the time of memory formation matches the state at the time of retrieval" (2002, 222). The emotions that students feel from impersonating the poor resonate with emotions tied to their own loved ones' situations; emotion connects students' thinking of simulated current events with actual past events.

We now realize that emotion is more than just important to thinking: it is *integral* to it (Dolan 2002; Felten, Gilchrist, and Darby 2006). Helmuth points to "several studies [that] have shown, in neuroimagery Technicolor, that emotion enhances cortical processing [thinking] in healthy people" (2003, 568). Caine and Caine go so far as to state that "emotion and cognition cannot be separated" (1990, 67).

Research shows that incoming sensory information undergoes virtually simultaneous cognitive and emotional processing (Phelps 2004), and that brain structures and regions share their processed information with each other. (Tellingly, perhaps, more neurons send information from our limbic system to other areas than the reverse [Sylwester 1994].) The prefrontal cortex is a non-limbic system structure that participates in both the formation of memory (LaBar and Cabeza 2006) and in the decision-making process (Dolan 2002); it also facilitates the processing of emotion (Ibid.). It communicates with another non-limbic system structure, the cerebellum, which interacts with the limbic system (Baumann and Mattingley 2012), helps process emotion (Thirioux et al. 2009; Baumann and Mattingley 2012), and is involved in sensorimotor control, the subsystem of neurological connections between the senses and muscle movement that integrates sensory information, emotion, and memory (Dolan 2002).

Considering such functionality, these two structures represent an intersection of this paper's two parts: The human brain accepts emotion as cognition, and imagined activity as real.

Imagined Experience as Real

The brain processes imagined experience as real because for the brain (to quote Marshall McLuhan's observation from 1964), the medium is the message—or at least a part of it. The medium itself carries information; it helps us understand experience. Advances in neuroimaging technologies help support that claim by providing access to dynamics of brain physiology. Those technologies include positron emission tomography (PET), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS).

Through the use of such tools, researchers have discovered that we do not have only one "comprehension center" for processing experience, as previously believed; rather, as Norman Doidge explains, we have different comprehension centers (2007, 308). One, for example, processes *the reading* of the description of a homeless person's cardboard shelter, another interprets *the hearing* of one's own voice in the shelter, yet

another makes sense of our *crawling* into a damp cardboard box on a snowy night.

The neurological medium through which we receive information affects the way we understand that information. Norman Doidge states that "each medium creates a different sensory and semantic experience" (2007, 308); each sense helps the individual develop a different interpretation of an experience. Our kinesthetic sense (our sensorimotor control) is key to our understanding of the ways in which our brains accept imagined experience as real. One critical component of motor control is the *mirror neuron system.* Neurons in this system "respond during both the observation and execution of an action" (Kimberly and Haxby 2008, 1866), though the person's muscles might not move (Jacob and Jeannerod 2005). The mirror neuron system performs the automatic and unconscious mimicking of another person's observed "actions, emotions or sensations" (Buk 2009). This is called *mirroring* (Ibid.).

Interactions between sensory information, memory, and emotion can cause a progression of increasingly physical and cognitive/emotional reactions. These interactions can begin with an observer seeing or hearing an action, seeing or hearing a symbol (such as a word), or remembering an event. Any one of these "sparks" can lead to physical activity that ranges from the "firing" of muscles' neurons (but without any movement by those muscles [mirroring]) to the changing of physiological processes (such an increase in breathing rate) to the subconscious imitating or mimicking of another person's movements. The next section dissects a hypothetical case study to show that, in addition to physical activity, those sparks can cause emotional responses that parallel the emotions of the observed individual, that resurrect the observer's own emotions, and/or that generate empathy.

A State of Poverty Simulation participant, Jan, portrays "Mrs. Perez," the working mother of Maria. Jan is from a middle-class suburban family, so she arrives to the simulation from a lifestyle that contrasts starkly with the rural poor one that she is about to adopt. Italicized sentences describe an event unfolding at a particular point in three of the simulation's four fifteen-minute "weeks." (Most participants tend to many responsibilities during each week; in this description, we focus on only a few.) The non-italicized text provides a physiological explanation of the participant's reaction. We begin with Week 2, which is when the more troubling events usually begin to occur.

> *Week 2...Maria asks Mrs. Perez for $2 so that she can join her classroom's Halloween party, but Mrs. Perez does not have the money. Maria frowns, hunches forward, and says that—if she does not get the $2 —she will push her glass of milk away at dinner and not drink it.*

Jan's motor system, after hearing "Maria's" words, fires the neurons connected to the act of pushing a glass away from one's self. We know this from research showing that, when a person sees or hears an action word, motor neurons "activate" nerves connected to the physical areas represented by those words. For example, Buk refers to Rizzolatti and Craighero, whose work reveals collaboration between spoken language, sensory systems, and motor control: These researchers "have documented that simply listening to sentences that describe actions activates the visual-motor mirror neurons that represent those actions in the brain of the listener" (Buk 2009, 64).

Dove reports on a 2004 functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) study by Hauk et al. in which participants were asked to read words relating to movement of the extremities. The researchers discovered that even the "reading [of] each type of action word produced increased activation in the particular areas within the motor cortex associated with performing the relevant movements" (2009, 414).

At the same time, Jan notices Maria's frown; as a result, she herself feels some of her "daughter's" sadness and disappointment because of the brain's tendency to mirror not only actions, but feelings as well: Buk writes that when a person recognizes someone else's emotions, whether through body language or facial expressions, his mirror neuron system communicates with his brain's limbic system so that he, to some extent, feels that other person's emotions. If Jan were to imitate her daughter's facial expression, that sadness would intensify. Buk states that mirrored feelings intensify when the viewer "overtly *imitates* [the other person's] facial expression" (2009, 64, with Buk's emphasis).

Jan might also imitate her daughter's slouching posture. Iacoboni (2009) and Thirioux et al. (2009) report that we sometimes do overtly mirror another person's physical movements. Thirioux et al. conducted an experiment in which ten right-handed people mimicked the movements of a life-sized, computer-generated image (CGI) of a tightrope walker: Subjects tended to lean left when the CGI leaned to its left, and lean right when the CGI did so (even though the instructions did not ask participants to do so).

In imitating that posture, Jan's feeling of sadness might become even stronger, according to McGarry and Russo, who refer to Levenson et al.'s and Zajonc et al.'s research that suggests "that overt movements enhance emotional experience, which could contribute to greater emotional understanding" (2011, 180). Iacoboni claims that imitation is probably "pervasive and automatic," and that it is involved "in memory and general knowledge tasks" (2009, 658). Especially relevant to simulation's