

Teaching and Learning Empathy: An Interactive, Online Diplomatic Simulation of Middle East Conflict

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What pass for the study of international relations is often more an examination of foreign affairs, transnational interaction from ethnocentric perspectives. Many analysts accept the assumptions and values of their own political culture, then superimpose them on other nations. If another state does not act in accordance with those values, its leaders are labeled irrational.

Such ethnocentric analysis excludes empathy, the ability to experience the values, feelings, and perceptions of another, a basic element needed to understand international relations. Empirical and analytical skills are important; but without empathy, students will never fully appreciate the subtle complexities of global affairs.

This paper explores the link between empathy and simulation role-playing, suggesting some practical steps to help students better adopt simulation roles; it illustrates these steps by describing a Middle East diplomatic simulation using Internet based, strategic interaction; and it evaluates students' responses.

Keywords internet, intersubjectivity, conflict resolution, world wide web, computer learning

The study of international relations at many colleges and universities is really more a study of foreign relations, the examination of global affairs from an ethnocentric perspective. Accepting the values of their own political culture, analysts often superimpose them on other countries. If another state does not act in accordance with those values, its leaders are labeled irrational.

This ethnocentric analysis excludes a basic element needed to understand international relations—empathy. We may use empirical skills, knowledge about diplomatic history, international law, political science, economics, and communication, but if we lack empathy, we will never fully appreciate the subtle complexities of international affairs. Teachers, scholars, and policy makers must be able to put themselves in the position of leaders from other countries, view the world from the perspective of these decision makers, and develop an understanding for the problems and opportunities they face.

Two recent processes have enabled instructors to use the concept of empathy more effectively in teaching and learning. Changes in the international system of world politics and the means of global communication have provided opportunities for exploring a multitude of different values, interests, and perceptions held by global actors. First, the end of the Cold War signaled the final demise of a bipolar world in which international relations were tightly controlled by two omnipotent nation

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states. This dynamic process of change had been under way for many years with the development of "third" world countries and "nonaligned" interstate organizations; but the new order was ushered in near the end of the last century with the fall of the Berlin wall. Soon, the term "globalization" would signify a different kind of international interaction heralded by increased exchanges of goods, services, capital, culture, information, and people across more porous national borders.

This change in the structure of the international system led to a greater number of active participants in world politics. The once exclusive club of nation states and international organizations expanded to include nongovernmental organizations and subnational groups based on ethnic, linguistic, religious, professional, humanitarian, and environmental interests. Indeed, today the role of the individual citizen in international relations is flourishing.

Citizen to citizen international relations includes activities as diverse as Doctors without Borders and Habitat for Humanity, Oxfam and International Adoption. It involves churches, associations of professionals, and ordinary tourists seeking information and influence in world affairs. Citizen to citizen international relations may be defined as "interactions . . . established between citizens of different states for the explicit purpose of discussing (or) changing . . . international political, social or economic affairs" (Howard-Hassmann 2000, 10).

This expansive, transnational exchange was permitted by the end of the Cold War and the accelerating process of globalization. It is now propelled by a second emerging trend in global affairs, changes in the nature of international communication (Stover 1984). Until recently, it was difficult if not impossible for individuals from distant countries to contact, understand, and influence one another. One hundred years ago, it took a traveler as long to journey from one end of France to the other as it now takes a tourist to go anywhere in the world. As a result, individuals travel widely, visiting people in cultures very different from their own.

Study abroad programs long attempted to bring together people of different nations and cultures, aimed at increased global understanding. Area studies and foreign language training sought similar ends. Foreign summer travel for students, teachers, and professionals provided them new perspectives on the world.

Beyond such travel opportunities, often limited to individuals with discretionary financial resources, information technology makes "virtual visits" possible from one's home or office. E-mail as well as Internet based voice and video communication encourages ongoing contact. Given the nature of today's electronic media, every human being with access to a computer can be "a potential actor in world politics" (Nossal 1998, 121). Thus, the opportunities for virtual visits to other countries through information technology provide individuals with connections to other cultures, their values, and citizens. This can lead to an increased awareness about international affairs and a greater sense of empathy with people far beyond the borders of a nation state.

This paper presents an example of virtual "citizen-to-citizen" international relations in the form of an online simulation. Participants from the United States "visit" the Middle East to learn about security policy, communicate with counterparts in the region, and interact with one another to resolve conflict. The project aims at fostering a sense of empathy in the participants, helping them understand more fully the nature of community values, national interest, and international politics. This project's focus is the Middle East, but its methods for encouraging role-playing as well as its use of information technology and the Internet to conduct research and communicate may help others involved in teaching and learning through simulations.

The paper begins with a discussion of empathy and simulation role-playing, suggesting some practical steps to help students better adopt simulation roles; it illustrates these steps by describing the Middle East diplomatic simulation; and it evaluates the participants' responses.

Empathy and Simulation Role-Playing

Political theorists have debated the fact-value dichotomy for years, with the pendulum swinging back and forth between the normative concern for values and the empirical desire for facts. What's been largely missing in this debate is the need to consider perceptions, a phenomenological approach to understanding political science, particularly international relations. If an Israeli decision maker really believes that Yasser Arafat controls Palestinian violence, that's the information the analyst must evaluate, the situation to which the policy maker must respond. If a member of Islamic Jihad believes his "human sacrifice" or suicide bombing furthers the cause of justice and provides him a secure place in paradise, these perceptions must be assessed. If a group of American policy makers believe an invasion of Iraq will bring democracy to the region, that's what teachers and students must consider. Whether or not it is truth in fact or justice in value doesn't matter if it's in the mind of the actor. It's the perception that the analyst must understand. Without this kind of intersubjective insight, students will never fully comprehend the existing condition and evolving dynamic of international relations.

Despite the importance of this concept in analyzing politics, there is little in the literature of political science about empathy. To understand the concept, we must explore the writing of psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapy. Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the term empathy (*empathie*) at the end of the nineteenth century, using it to explain the division between nature and humanity. While the scientific method was useful in explaining the natural world, empathy was a means to understand and experience the human spirit. Karl Jaspers further refined the concept in 1913, arguing that some conditions may be explained using the methods of science while others are understood by having the observer put himself in the place of the observed (Etchefoyen 1996, 270–273). Freud wrote in 1921 that empathy "plays the largest part in our understanding of what is inherently foreign . . . in other people" (Freud 1923, 108). For Greenson, it involves "the emotional knowledge of the feelings of another, preconscious phenomena that helps us to understand the (other) in so far as it enables us to share his feelings (Greenson 1960, 418–424)." This involves a delicate balance—the possibility of entering into the other's feelings without being overwhelmed emotionally, playing the part of a participant observer. Thus, empathic comprehension is a dynamic process. It invokes "one person's capacity to feel and understand what another feels" (Etchefoyen 1996, 271).

Empathy may be defined as the ability of one individual to experience the values, feelings, and perceptions of another. It is a concept directly related to simulations, an innovative and increasingly important method of teaching and learning, "the laboratories for political science" (Woodward and Gump 1994).

Simulations are widely recognized as making students "active participants rather than passive observers" (McKeachie 1994, 163); providing a positive effect on student motivation (Dekkers and Donatti 1981); and creating the opportunity for

experiential learning (Parente 1995). Political scientists have used simulations in areas as diverse as comparative politics (Kaarbo and Lantis 1997; Shellman 2001; Switky 2004), electoral campaigning (Koch 1991; Kathlene and Choate 1999), local, state, and national American politics (McQuaid 1992), legislative behavior (Ciliotta-Rubery and Levy 2000), domestic and international law (Pacelle 1989; Jefferson 1999; Baker 1994), budget making (Higgins 1988), international relations (Newmann and Twig 2000; Dougherty 2003; Ambrosio 2004), public policy making (Grummel 2003), and national security (Kanner 2004).

Some simulations are elegantly simple such as "The Isle of Ted" (Thomas 2002) and "Urban Revitalization" (Godek 1990). These can be used effectively in one or two class sessions with minimal preparation. Others are elaborately complex in their concept and execution. Examples are "The International Communication and Negotiation Simulations" (ICON) where students represent a nation's diplomatic delegation and negotiate with other groups from countries all over the world (Vavrina 1995); and "The Iron Triangle Simulation" where three separate classes experience the same simulation on policy making at the same time (Endersby and Webber 1995).

Whether simple or complex, all of these simulations share a common characteristic—the need for students to play a role, either as a specific character from a known institution or a general actor from an undisclosed or fictional one (Stoil and Lester 1979). Role-playing links simulations with empathy, part of a continuum in which increasing levels of role attainment correspond to greater experience of the values, feelings, and perceptions of another.

On one end of the continuum, a condition of *role absence*, students may be completely unaware of a role and have no empathetic feelings toward the character they will be asked to play. Presented with the need to join the simulation, however, they move to a state of *role awareness*. They accept the challenge to act in the learning process (Poplin and Weeves 1992; Smith and Boyer 1996), beginning to consider new and alternative ways to view a political situation or problem. The next point on the continuum, *role acquisition* requires students to acquaint themselves with the role they will play, learning more about the character or institution they will represent. Finally, *role adoption* occurs when students assume the characters they are simulating, experiencing their values, feelings, and perceptions. Simulation directors must guide students along this continuum, helping them achieve their highest possible level of role adoption for the simulation to be successful. As each participant more accurately reflects a role and acts in character, all students in the simulation benefit, and the simulation better portrays reality.

The literature of political science simulations suggests several practical steps to accomplish this move toward role adoption and a greater sense of empathy. First, focusing the simulation on a topic considered important by the broader community and students themselves is a way to generate interest and excitement in the simulation, motivating students to participate more actively. For example, Newmann and Twigg (2000) use the Indian and Pakistani dispute over Kashmir where terrorism and the threat of nuclear weapons have been depicted in the media as a looming crisis. Similarly, Dougherty (2003) uses the continuing conflict in the Middle East, always on or near the front page of the local newspaper. Grummel (2003, 787) uses a local parking problem, "familiar and dear to most students" to simulate policy making. In each example, students confront a situation that they see as globally or locally important.

Second, research is vital to any successful simulation. However, intersubjective research may help students make greater advances along the continuum toward role adoption and empathy. This means acquiring information and presenting it from the perspective of the character being simulated. For example, in his simulation of domestic politics' effect on national security, Kanner (2004, 107) asks students to include work by officials in the agencies being simulated as well as congressional hearings in which they testify. They present their research in the form of a policy recommendation "as if they were an action officer in one of the bureaucracies." Pacelle (1989, 9, 11) follows a similar procedure in his simulation of Supreme Court decision making. Students use material that is "directly related to their individual role" including "the strategies and motivations of specific litigants" as well as biographies of the Supreme Court members. Presentation of the research takes the form of litigant briefs and oral arguments before the court. This type of research may be facilitated by the wide diversity of sources available on the Internet, as reported by Josefson and Casey (2000) and Switky (2004); but it may be accomplished by traditional means as well (Dougherty 2003; Gilboa 1979; Feste 1977).

Third, students may move closer to role adoption and empathy when they must act on behalf of the individual, group, or institution they are simulating, while maintaining continuous communications with team members. This heightened sense of responsibility can be amplified and reinforced throughout the simulation by continuous inter-team communication that encourages members to adopt the interests and values of their group. For example, Linser, Naidu, and Ip (1999) report that students' use of web-based simulations enhances role playing by providing a stake in the outcome as well as a means for the group to communicate and exchange information. Indeed, the use of immediate and pervasive communication through web conferencing and e-mail may encourage students to internalize the groups' goals, experiencing more intense role adoption for longer periods of time during the simulation.

Finally, the role adoption process may be enhanced by including in the simulation individuals outside the class with practical experience in positions the students are simulating. The Internet provides the means for information exchange among group members and outside advisors (Sadow 1989), and there are motives for many outsiders to become involved. Retired civil servants or journalists looking for intellectual activity and mentoring; campaign staff, local officials, or legislative representatives interested in better university-government relations; members of ethnic, racial, religious minorities, or foreign nationals seeking an opportunity to share their concerns may be available to join a simulation. This can help students better adopt their roles, understanding more clearly the values, interests, and perceptions important to the person or group being simulated. When used in transnational simulations, the inclusion of foreign nationals represents citizen to citizen diplomacy.

Middle East Diplomatic Simulation

These concepts were applied as part of a simulation in a course introducing international relations to undergraduates at Santa Clara University. Ninety students participated in the Middle East simulation over three quarters during the academic year 2001 with 30 students in each class. Our subjects were lower-division students with little if any knowledge of the Middle East, other than the casual reading or viewing they might have done through American media sources. Their interest in

the simulation's topic was high, part of the national reaction to the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Participants chose countries to represent based on a list provided and their personal preference. If they had a bias toward a country, they were encouraged to consider choosing it, for the simulation might give them a different perspective. Most students got their first or second choice, and when a country team needed an additional member, students volunteered to take the assignment. As part of their own group process, students then selected decision-making roles within their countries: heads of state or government, foreign ministers or ambassadors, and national security advisors.

Students made their choices of countries and roles early in the ten-week quarter so they could become acquainted with the members of their "country team" and fill out a simple survey assessing their views on Arabs or Israelis, depending on the country they chose to represent. As part of the introductory course, they read several articles about the Middle East, attended three lectures and saw three video documentaries dealing with Palestinian-Israeli conflict, militant Islamic fundamentalism, and the history of United States relations with Iraq.

Their preparation for the simulation involved research for a 10 to 15 page term paper oriented around their simulated country. Heads of state wrote about the goals of their country in the Middle East, foreign ministers wrote about the history of relations between their country and others in the simulation, and national security advisors wrote about their country's security position.

The research required three types of sources: recent academic journals, current news media, and Internet sites from the countries they represented. The latter included hundreds of sources selected and posted on the simulation web site. This meant students had to look beyond the American-oriented media and academic community, "visiting" sites from the Middle East made available online.

The papers were subjective rather than objective efforts, probably unlike any research the participants had previously conducted. Thus, the project required careful explanation: the paper should not be a neutral, balanced report. Rather, participants presented research from their simulated country's perspective. For example, someone taking the role of an Israeli would use speeches by Israeli political leaders, articles written by Israeli journalists and scholars, and statements issued by the Israeli government. The paper also had to be presented in a subjective format, attempting to capture the values and perceptions of the simulated state and decision maker. For example, notes for a state of the world address by a prime minister, a private briefing by a foreign minister, e-mail messages from an ambassador abroad, a secret report on armed forces preparedness by a national security advisor, or the confidential journal of a king helped participants feel what it might be like to experience political responsibility in their simulated state.

This paper represented 25% of the student's grade for the course, evaluated using the following criteria: first, the response to three questions about their country's policies presented in the online instructions; second, the use of three types of sources (academic journals, news media, and documents from their simulated country made available online); finally, their creative efforts at achieving role adoption and demonstrating empathy in writing style and presentation. In addition to receiving an evaluation for the paper, students earned 5% of their overall grade (the equivalent of one quiz) for their activity in the simulation. This score was based

on their participation, knowledge of the rules, and ability to empathize with their country and role.

Country teams were assigned outside participants: "executive advisors" from the Middle East, nationals of the countries in the region recruited through previous visits or online contact. These individuals participated in a citizen to citizen exchange, helping participants with additional information and realistic decision making during the simulation. They included diplomats from Israel, Jordan, and Palestine as well as students from universities in Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt. The advisors were instructed to tell the American students what their simulated country would actually do in a given situation, not what the advisor might like their country to do. Thus, their advice reflected likely policies rather than personal proposals.

After completing their papers and becoming familiar with the rules of the simulation, students received a scenario that extended Middle East conflict several months into the future. It involved American military movement toward an attack on Iraq, an explosion in Jerusalem for which responsibility was unclear, rocket attacks against Israel from Syrian controlled territory in Lebanon, and a renewed effort at peace negotiations by Jordan, Egypt, Israel, and Morocco. Participants consulted their own country team members either by e-mail or in a secure "private conference" on the web site to which only the country team had access.

Having agreed upon their country's strategy, participants representing the country teams responded to the scenario on the Internet, making five moves over ten days that could be viewed worldwide. They took unilateral action by using "intent" moves, bilateral or multilateral action with "diplomatic" moves. Country teams could use force or take other national security measures with "military" moves. The moves were posted on the web site, and released by the simulation director at prearranged times. Any moves that were "routine" were released automatically. "Serious" or "extreme" moves were subjected to a probability calculus. Only "unrealistic" moves would be denied, but this did not occur during the simulation. After the first set of moves were posted, students met again online to plan their response and continued the simulation during four additional move periods. To further encourage realistic activity, several representatives in the Middle East served as "international journalists." They commented on the moves and the overall progress of the simulation by posting short, four to five paragraph editorials on the web site, using the perspectives and styles of influential Arab and Israeli media. At the completion of the simulation, students again completed the survey, responded in an open-ended essay, and joined in an enthusiastic in-class debriefing of their experience.

Preliminary Findings and Suggestions

The survey used a scale of opposites constructed to indicate trends in changed affect toward the ethnonational groups that students simulated as indicated by Table 1.¹ Student responses were tabulated and examined to see if they reflected any trend.

The resulting descriptive data is merely suggestive of trends in a very limited way. Only 90 students were involved. Of this number only 12 represented Israel and 60 the Arab states.² Their responses represent an aggregate group of 72 students surveyed over three quarters, further clouding the survey. To reach any meaningful quantitative conclusions about changing participant affect and increased empathy, the study would require a more complex and extensive research design with a greater

Table 1. Student attitude survey

As you think about the country you will simulate check the response that most closely corresponds to your view about its behavior in Middle East affairs:

	5	4	3	2	1	
Hostile	—	—	—	—	—	Friendly
Aggressive	—	—	—	—	—	Defensive
Warlike	—	—	—	—	—	Peace loving
Expansionist	—	—	—	—	—	Satisfied

number of participants and a control group that did not experience the simulation; a more detailed survey instrument; and statistical analysis showing the changes to be significant.

Despite these difficulties in research design and data collection, however, the results suggest that there was a trend in which the participants changed their views toward the countries or ethnonational groups they represented, as Table 2 indicates:

The averaged responses of these students representing Arab countries seem to show that the participants viewed the Arabs as less aggressive, hostile, and warlike after the simulation.

Much fewer in numbers, the participants representing Israel also show a trend in attitude change toward Israel's behavior in the Middle East as Table 3 indicates. After the simulation, students saw Israelis as less hostile and expansionist, more peace loving and defensive.

Two qualitative measures helped overcome the shortcomings of quantitative analysis, and both show similar trends toward greater affect and empathy. First, participants discussed their experience and reactions to the simulation during an in-class debriefing session. These were lively, inclusive discussions in each of the three classes where students reported increased empathy for their simulated countries as well as better understanding of all states in the region. The only negative feedback was a few students' complaints about the excessive amount of time they spent on the simulation, although there was no time requirement.

Second, as part of their final examination in each class, students wrote an open-ended essay discussing their stereotypes and attitudes about the Middle East as well as the country they represented. They assessed whether their views had changed during the ten-week course, and, if so, how and why. Virtually all of the essays reflected

Table 2. Attitudes toward Arabs

	Before simulation	After simulation
Hostile-friendly	3.7	3.5
Aggressive-defensive	3.55	3.0
Warlike-peace loving	3.8	3.4
Expansionist-satisfied	3.7	3.9

(n = 60).

Table 3. Attitudes toward Israelis

	Before simulation	After simulation
Hostile-friendly	3.9	3.5
Aggressive-defensive	4.0	3.8
Warlike-peace loving	4.1	3.8
Expansionist-satisfied	3.9	3.0

(n = 12).

increased empathy toward the simulated countries. Of the 72 students associated with this study, 35 (nearly half) attributed the change primarily to participation in the simulation itself, 25 (35%) to the research project, and 12 (17%) to contact with international advisors.

Both the class discussion and these open-ended responses support the trends suggested in Tables 2 and 3. They provide more meaningful insight and some level of confidence that participation in the simulation changed the subjects' attitudes, developing a sense of empathy with people from Middle Eastern nations. The following is a narrative summary of several responses in the students' own words.³

One member of the group representing Israel wrote "before the course, I saw the Middle East as violent, with the Israelis intransigent, egocentric, arrogant, rarely conceding to Palestinian demands because of military superiority. By participating in the simulation," he explained, "I found out how uncooperative and demanding the enemy countries are. I still believe Israel is uncompromising, but I've stopped perceiving the country as being arrogant. I now believe Israel's intransigence and military action are justified because other countries are uncooperative toward peacemaking." Another representative of Israel wrote: "before participating in the simulation, I thought Israel was a belligerent, antagonistic, stubborn, and violent nation. I had a kind of aversion to Israel, perceiving the conflict in black and white terms. I thought Israel was terrorizing Palestinians and denying them reasonable peace. Israel still seems antagonistic to me, but it also seems defensive and reasonable. I attribute the change to the intensive research paper. The interaction facilitated by the conflict simulation itself also helped this change in perception." Another student attributed her change in attitude to the research done in preparation for the simulation that "helped me learn a lot of facts; but during the actual simulation I was able to incorporate those facts with real life. I could apply it to what was happening." She concluded, "I'm not the type of person who stays home on a Saturday night to study; but I was so excited about this project I stayed home and read for two days straight. I couldn't get enough, and I still can't. I want to continue to follow up on the news of the Middle East."

Representatives from Arab countries reported similar experiences in their open-ended responses. A member of the Egyptian country team reported minimal knowledge about that country when he started the project: "mummies, pharaohs, pyramids, a distant foreign country we could not identify with in any way." After the simulation, another participant wrote: "I saw how much of an important role Egypt plays in the Middle East by representing someone from Egypt. I doubt I would have learned this by simply reading from a textbook. My understanding

and compassion came from actually being part of the Egyptian government and living in an ambassador's shoes. I not only read about it, but also was part of it." Another Egyptian team member wrote: "Although I still view the Middle East as hostile and warlike, I have a deeper understanding of why it is this way. I experienced the intense frustration of feeling like Egypt was talking about peace and not being heard. Everyone wants peace, but no one wants to sacrifice. My change in attitude comes from the empathy I gained by putting myself into the simulation, trying to achieve peace but coming up empty-handed."

One Jordanian representative initially saw her country as "powerless and weak; but through this simulation I have come to understand that Jordan has taken a strong stand on numerous issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the U.S.-Iraq problem. King Abdullah has a voice that is heard in the Middle East. I attribute the change in my perceptions to research for the simulation paper as well as my contact with ambassadors of the other countries who wanted and needed our support in reaching their goals."

A participant representing Palestine thought her national group was "close-minded, irrational, and uncompromising" at the beginning of the course. "My stereotypes have changed," she wrote. "It's quite amazing how empowering knowledge is and how it fosters an aversion to ethnocentric thinking. Families torn apart, innocent lives stolen, hopelessness—these make it impossible for an outsider to judge the struggle as irrational and ridiculous. I attribute the change in my perceptions to a chain-reaction. First, I opened my mind and started research about the Middle East conflict in a manner that included sources from every angle. Second, this knowledge enabled me to assume the role of a country's decision maker and to become involved in the situation. Ultimately this led to empathy."

Finally, a participant representing Lebanon expressed a very personal reaction to the simulation. At the start, she wrote, "I felt very nationalistic about United States relations with the Middle East. The event of September 11 further strengthened my prejudices against Middle East countries, especially since my good friend died on one of the planes. I felt Middle Eastern countries were belligerent, unstable, and terrorist. I saw Lebanon as one of those unimportant, tiny countries in the middle of nowhere. I now feel Lebanon is an ignored and underestimated country caught in the middle. It suffers horrible casualties yet no one seems to notice. I have a newfound sympathy for Middle Eastern countries caught in perpetual struggle and misunderstanding. I feel some of the change was brought about by research, using the Lebanese government web site and articles written by Lebanese journalists. Most of what changed my view however was relations within the simulation—frustration, helplessness, the lack of solidarity among Arab nations, and understanding their viewpoints in response to our war on terrorism."

Conclusion

Participants' experience in the Middle East diplomatic simulation seemed to have a positive affect on their development of empathy with ethnonational groups in the region. Their movement toward role adoption and empathy was most likely due to several factors, some indicative of all simulations, others amplified by the use of the Internet and online interaction.

First, the intersubjective research requirement made participants look at international relations differently as they sought to see the world through the perspective

of another country. Use of the Internet to obtain sources from these other nations may have been their first experience in viewing the world differently, and it helped participants adopt these views for the simulation. The requirement that they write the paper from their country's perspective also added to their internalization of the information and role adoption. While most simulations demand some level of research, this project's requirement for intersubjectivity and the availability of sources from the simulated countries were particularly useful in encouraging empathy.

Second, the need to assume responsibility as a decision maker in the simulation on behalf of their country team seemed to help students internalize their country's perspective and foster a sense of empathy. This role-playing responsibility is common to all simulations, but several aspects of this online experience seemed to strengthen the process. Use of the computer to obtain and transmit information is now one of the most common means of communication for students. Its speed and familiarity encourage them to maintain ongoing interaction through out the simulation, day and night, deepening their role-playing efforts. The facility and immediacy of online communication combined with the level of crisis associated with Middle East insecurity heightened students' participation. As a result, they seemed to focus their attention, reinforce their level of responsibility to their country teams, and more intensely adopt their roles.

Third, participants anticipated the simulation as an interesting, lively experience. Many took the course because their friends told them about the project, and they came to class ready to participate. They were motivated to learn about the subject matter and become actively involved. Their "country team" became a bonding group, and peer pressure seemed to make them want to impress team members and other "diplomats" with their knowledge and ability to participate realistically in their country roles.

Finally, citizen to citizen diplomacy with Middle East nationals in the simulation also seemed to foster a sense of empathy toward their countries. Reviewing student role-playing on the internet and offering advice, the foreign nationals motivated students to act more realistically and gain a better sense of their country's goals and values. Such participation in other simulations may seem prohibitive due to a lack of personal contact or funding.⁴ However, this project originally introduced outside, international participation without any funding and few personal contacts. At the start, consulate officials from Israel, Jordan, and Egypt as well as foreign graduate students from nearby, larger universities provided advice to students. The consular officers gave their country's official viewpoint, and the graduate students followed instructions that their advice should reflect policies their country would actually pursue, not what they might prefer. This external involvement most likely reinforced students' efforts at role-playing and their development of empathy.

Given the pervasiveness of e-mail, the Internet, and information technology, this type of external participation may be possible for a wide range of political science simulations in areas as diverse as election campaigns, criminal justice, local, state or national government, public policy, ethnic and women's politics. Working or retired, members of political parties, interest groups, minorities, the civil service as well as elected and appointed officials may be willing to participate with a college or university in a spirit of cooperative education.

Whether simple or complex, computer based or traditional, simulations can benefit from one or more of these steps that encourage role adoption and increase

empathy. Choice of a subject that captivates students; research that incorporates selected sources from the group or institution being simulated and an intersubjective presentation; efforts to maintain group cohesion through continuous communication and responsibility for the team; and outside participation can infuse higher levels of excitement, motivation, and empathy to the unique learning experience fostered by simulations.

Notes

1. Countries represented in the simulation routinely claim that their security policy is "defensive," their foreign relations "friendly" and "peace loving," certainly not "expansionist". These terms are a useful, although primitive measure of empathic values measuring affect toward ethnonational groups.

2. The rest of the students simulated decision makers in the United States or Iran or international terrorists.

3. Student responses were edited for clarity and grammatical corrections, but not for content or style.

4. International participation in this project was supported by several grants from Santa Clara University's College of Arts and Science, the Bannan Institute for Jesuit Education, and the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Three universities in the Middle East, the American University (Beirut), Saint Joseph's University in Lebanon, and Al Akhawayn University in Morocco have joined the Middle East diplomatic simulation, participating on a yearly basis; and the latter two are currently seeking support to launch their own online simulations. Such an endeavor requires designing a web site as well as purchasing threaded discussion software like WebBoard.

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