



“Using Classroom Simulations to Enhance Global Empathy”

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Abstract

Research on the use of simulations to enhance global-specific student outcomes has been linked to an overall goal of enhancing global citizenship in higher education. Phrases like globalizing and internationalizing have been increasingly included in strategic plans of higher education institutions. Simultaneously, there has been a growing emphasis on fostering skill-based student outcomes such as global learning, education, or citizenship. A set of survey tools adapted from research on the effect of online simulations on global empathy and learning in secondary education (Bachen, Hernández-Ramos, and Raphael 2012) are used to assess changes in *global empathy* and *political/civic engagement*. The adapted methodological tool can be used in future studies to assess change in student attitudes as a result of their global learning experience in the classroom.

Research Design

Global empathy has been identified as a critical component of global education and global awareness. We adopt the following definition of global empathy, expanding on an ethnocultural definition of empathy (Wang et al 2003), for this study:

“...mature individuals come to see themselves not only as citizens of their local community, nation-state, or ethnocultural group but also as global citizens willing and able to empathize with other peoples and their situations elsewhere in the world.” (Bachen et al 2012, 3)

Research Design:

This is a multi-campus study of the effect of the “Haiti IDP” simulation on global empathy. Data is currently being gathered for the following courses on these three campuses, using a pre/post-test design:

- a) Stockton College:
POLS 3662 International Political Economy (23 students)
- b) Salve Regina University in Rhode Island:
Undergraduate- Introduction to International Relations (17)
Graduate- Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (7)
- c) Knox College in Tennessee:
Undergraduate- Development

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM SIMULATIONS: University of Maryland ICONS International System Statecraft International Relations

Introduction: These two simulations mimic the international system, designed to introduce students to concepts of anarchy, cooperation, asymmetry in power and information, the role of non-state actors, competing interests, global networks, etc. Students take on the role of elites representing a real or hypothetical country and are given a set of issues to resolve or required to react to threats to global stability and often, their own country’s position.

ICONS is a 6-8 week long simulation that was incorporated into POLS 2170-Introduction to International Relations in the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013. It is an interactive web-based simulation of a global forum that typically involves 8-15 universities and colleges from around the world. Student groups are assigned countries and a set of issues to resolve through formal treaties or other agreements. Students take turns hosting international conferences with live chats, they negotiate resolutions, and hold a final voting session to determine the final outcome of their meeting. Assignments include country preparation research, resolution drafting, and a debriefing paper.

Statecraft is an 8-week long web-based simulation of a hypothetical international system in which student groups design their own countries and seek to achieve goals within the parameters they choose, operating within a single international system. In other words, there is no interaction with students outside the classroom.

CASE-BASED SIMULATION: Haiti Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

“Haiti IDP” Simulation Introduction: This is an originally developed simulation in which students are tasked with drafting policy to address the challenge of internally displaced persons (IDP) in post-earthquake Haiti from a variety of stakeholder perspectives (Beers 2013). The simulation is designed to illustrate the complexities facing politicians and aid workers who must balance the interests of competing groups in an environment of imperfect and incomplete information. By immersing students in a real-world humanitarian crisis, the simulation also is intended to improve learning outcomes related to global empathy, and civic engagement—outcomes that have become increasingly important to higher education institutions in the United States as benchmarks for curricular internationalization and global learning.

Parameters of the Simulation: Following the earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010, approximately 1.5 million Haitians became Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who congregated in makeshift camps located on flat areas of privately-owned and public land. Currently about 350,000 Haitians still reside in IDP camps. These camps lack running water, electricity, permanent dwellings, and health care and education infrastructure. The camps and the IDPs within them are to a large degree dependent upon supplies from international aid organizations. There is increasing pressure from some groups to close the remaining IDP camps, while others claim that there is simply no place for such a large number of IDPs to safely go.

- A panel of experts has been convened to determine what should be done with the IDP camps and their residents. The panel has decided to solicit written statements and testimony from representatives of key stakeholders in order to help inform its decision.
- Representatives of the following interest groups will be submitting proposals to the panel: (1) Haitian IDP camp residents, (2) employees of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) providing humanitarian relief to Haitians, (3) Haitian government officials, (4) Haitian business owners, (5) Haitian landowners (whose property is occupied by IDP camps), and (6) members of human rights, environmental, and social justice organizations.
- After evaluating the evidence contained in the proposals put forth by these groups, the panel will issue a binding and final decision on what will be done with the IDP camps.

ASE SUPPORT

- Participation in the “Simulations: International Relations” Track at the 10th Annual American Political Science Association (APSA) Teaching and Learning Conference in 2013
- Use of iPad for the Fall 2014 and later semesters to facilitate hybrid sessions of student groups physically located in a computer lab/hallway space while simultaneously engaging with groups in the online software.

RESULTS

Results from the Fall 2013 pilot semester suggest the following conclusions:

- Simulation design matters A LOT for its efficacy in achieving both content-based or attitudinal learning outcomes
- Global empathy requires students to take on roles with interests other than their own
 - Students must also engage in a bargaining (i.e. political) process in which they are required to express and pursue those interests in shaping the outcome of the simulation
- Quantitative measures of learning outcomes such as a pre/post-test should be enhanced with ‘thicker’ qualitative measures including:
 - Focus groups as part of the debriefing process
 - Open-ended survey questions
 - Soliciting student feedback from three phases- preparation, simulation, and debriefing

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