

Massively Multiplayer Online Game Virtual Environments: A Potential Locale for
Intercultural Training

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ABSTRACT

With the increased number of people interacting cross-culturally and the lack of international training amongst those individuals, the need for intercultural training is critical. Currently, there are no cost-effective intercultural training programs accessible to a large number of people. The purpose of this study is to address the educational problem of current intercultural training methods being location based, expensive, and relatively inaccessible. To address the problem, this study aims to explore the possibility of utilizing massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) to deliver intercultural training. MMOGs are a promising technology that may be able to simulate intercultural training programs at a low cost and on a large scale.

This study involved collecting data through observations inside an MMOG, *World of Warcraft*, conducting an analysis of documents, and interviews leaders of select *World of Warcraft* guilds. The qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method and are presented in descriptive format.

The study revealed a very robust culture inside *World of Warcraft* and players spending time learning the culture and interacting within that culture. Players learned social formations, behaviors, norms and expectations, language, gestures, roles, rules, and rituals. Players learned through activity, interaction, experiential learning, and communities of practice. These same learning methods are currently used in face-to-face intercultural training.

Since culture and learning occur inside *World of Warcraft*, this study concluded that it would be possible to conduct intercultural training in an appropriately designed MMOG. This study ends with a recommended model for intercultural training in a

virtual environment. The model includes the process for engaging in intercultural training, as well as, necessary training components. The components include being grounded in intercultural training theory, interaction, reflection, group work, respect and trust, role-playing, a safe learning environment, a focus on developing skill, and external documents for continued learning outside of formal training.

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