New Insights in Multicultural Teaching and Learning

Three ways we may LEARN

by reflection, which is noblest
by imitation, which is easiest
by experience, which is the bitterest

Confucius
Editorial

New Insights in Learning

Most people associate learning with schooling. We study for a calculus test and, afterward, think we’ve learned something. Yet, when we look into the process, most learning does not engage numbers or words. Walking through a new city, for example, teaches us to move, think and act in three-dimensional space. Adapting to an unknown environment is often more important than acquiring intellectual knowledge.

Essentially, the body is a giant system for regenerating information. Neural scientists now say learning occurs on top of old knowledge. The “making and breaking” theory posits that we physically transform memories by combining them with new experiences. The body is endlessly learning and constantly updating its memory bank, a physical-chemical process called synergy.

Our interviewee, Steven Crawford, has incorporated these insights into his teaching at JAMK University in Finland. Moving away from the how-to approach, his students produce their own intercultural experiences with multimedia tools to apply theory to real-life situations. They develop an informed understanding of what’s really happening and try to make sense out of it, a continuous dialectic between one’s memory and physical reality. Read more, starting on page 3.

In the last few months, some American football players have been protesting police brutality toward people of color by kneeling when the national anthem is played. President Trump and his supporters have attacked them for lacking “patriotism”. Our correspondent, Dan MacLeod, lived through similar times as a high school student. What constitutes national identity? See “Flags” on page 14.

Closely related is the molding of Chinese women, who traditionally get married by age 25 and produce a child. Those who don’t are cast as “leftover women” and, according to Denis Niedringhaus, this has implications when coaching Chinese females. Begins on page 12.

Going to one’s 50th high school reunion can be a powerful reminder of how our core cultural identities change very little throughout life. I went to mine recently and, to my amazement, it provoked childhood memories I thought had long left me. See page 9.

Enjoy the read.

Patrick Schmidt, Editor-in-chief
Facilitating intercultural knowledge and sensitivity among students in a multicultural environment can be both exhilarating and frustrating. To hear that you have changed their outlook at the end of the course is probably the most satisfying compliment one can receive. But different expectations, values and learning styles, and competing new media, can make the profession trying at times. So then, what does it take to make students enthusiastic about multiple cultural outlooks?

A quick check on what constitutes a good teacher tells us that not much has changed over the years. The overriding trait is probably a “calling” to the profession. Effective facilitators are driven by and passionate about what they do. They possess knowledge and can articulate clearly what they are teaching. They remain up-to-date about media to better transmit their expertise. And they believe in their students, offering guidance and support and going the extra mile to ensure success.

Steve Crawford fits those traits. He gave up his former job and took a new path later in life, receiving a Fulbright fellowship to study abroad at the age of 44. He and his family left the U.S. for Finland in 2001, where he later completed a master’s degree in intercultural communication. Letting his intuitions guide him, he began teaching and found his vocation. Now he’s a senior lecturer at JAMK University of Applied Sciences (JAMK), leading an academic track in cross-cultural management in the School of Business.

What makes him unique is that he trains his students to understand their own everyday lives in a multicultural academic institution through the creation and use of project-based multimedia. His students researched and produced a student’s guide to ethics and responsibility at JAMK, and are responding to the global refugee crisis through interactive game development. I was most eager to interview such an engaging and passionate person.

Tell us about the early life experiences that influenced your becoming an interculturalist.

It all started in the early 1960s when my family was stationed at Elmendorf Air Force base in Alaska, where my father was a pilot with the Tactical Air Command. He was on alert duty often, and, when an alert occurred, he’d fly up and face the Russian Tu-4 bomber that often tested our [US] defense perimeters. Meeting them in the air generated some interesting exchanges between pilots and crews. It was the Cold War era which, as a child, I did not know much about, but, as I got older, I wanted to know who the Soviets were and why we had this conflict.

In 1969, my father was sent to South Vietnam as a forward air control pilot. I was 15 then, and it was a difficult time for my mother and me, as well as for my father. I began to wonder again, who are these Vietnamese people? Why are we having this conflict? Thankfully, my father returned home safely, and it wasn’t long before some South Vietnamese military officers visited our home in Maryland.
These two historical events, among others, provoked me to be curious about other cultures. This fed into an interest in world affairs and I became an avid reader of the Washington Post. In all, you could say that my curiosity about culture was planted in the ’60s and blossomed in the 2000s when, for example, I was able to directly encounter Russian people in the classroom and in Russia.

In the 1990s I worked in the operations department for a Scripps-Howard newspaper. I was also coaching soccer at Saint Meinard College and School of Theology, a Benedictine men’s higher education institution in Indiana, and enjoyed working with the young men who were studying to become priests. I had tremendous respect for the Benedictine monks who are highly educated and continue studying throughout their lives. I connected with the potential of lifelong learning and decided to complete a Bachelor’s degree in liberal studies at the University of Evansville through a continuing education program.

In my last semester, I saw an announcement for the Fulbright program and decided to apply. When it came through, a result that was quite unexpected, I felt I was at a crossroads: continue doing what I was doing (my wife and I both had successful careers and comfortable lives) or re-invent myself. My wife and I discussed the opportunity and, with enthusiasm, I accepted the fellowship to attend the University of Jyväskylä. My wife and 2-year-old son joined me in the move to Finland; I arrived as a new master’s degree student just six weeks before 9/11.

You do many things to get young students involved in intercultural issues. Could you tell us how you go about that?

When I began teaching in Finland in 2004 very few materials were available to me locally that I could use to activate book-and-lecture learning. And because Finland’s higher education system was publicly funded, I could not afford most of the products available in the marketplace. All teachers continually seek out good resources, and so I decided to create my own. And I had a lot to work with in that we had so many students from different parts of the world. Later, when I participated in Thiagi’s workshops, I learned that we should combine content and activity in workshops. I extend the idea across courses and projects to produce our version of Jerome Bruner’s spiral curriculum.

Over time, I noticed that students increasingly are preoccupied with media, particularly social media, through smart phones, tablets, and laptops. So I decided that I needed to activate my audience through the same tools. It helps if the teacher is adept at technology, and, I admit, this has been a challenge for me.

My approach reduced the need to prepare so many lectures, read, and grade exams, and create a never-ending series of PowerPoint slides. A seminar with Jeremy Solomons helped me to move away from slide shows and toward “naked facilitation.” My colleagues, Ronan Browne and Diane Ruppert, and I began building a pedagogical approach to the point that we can now draw from a large repository of self-created “off-the-shelf”
Steven Crawford

resources, most of which are also available to other teachers. For example, our Tales from a Multicultural Classroom videos are used by teachers around the world, and some of these now have hundreds of views on our Youtube channel.

What I want to do is walk into a classroom and get people going, producing knowledge together. I suppose it's a more social way of teaching that suits well our socially-minded students. What's even more interesting is that my students bring to our school the pedagogical traditions they experienced back home. For students from China, Russia, India, or wherever, the potential exists to get them into something new by challenging the traditional ideas they have about teaching and learning.

A project-oriented approach allows me to deliver academic credits through courses, project-study, and/or thesis credits. There's also the possibility of internships. I've sent many students to intern with George Simons in southern France.

I've looked at a few of the videos your students produced, such as Russians and Chinese interacting. You see how they're applying theory in a real-life situation and, at the same time, integrating modern media tools.

Yes, many of my students work in project groups and use modern media, such as Facebook, to organize themselves and communicate. The Tales videos can be shot with smart phones and edited online with freely available tools. We're also a bit old-fashioned in the sense that we also work in traditional media. We now create printed card-based teaching products in our New Horizons game in partnership with George Simons' diversophy® team. It's nice to see people put the phones away and play a card-based game for an hour or so!

The real key for me — something I decided on early in the process — is that my students aim at a tangible outcome. A research report is tangible but there also are options such as a game, a video, a guide, something people can use and benefit from. Our Tales videos emerge from our intercultural communication course, where we focus initially on theory and then activate that theory through video production. So, about one third of the way through the course, we begin to teach students how to create a character, how to write a script and create a storyboard, and how to shoot and edit. They are able to respond to the content that was delivered at the beginning of the course through a story that they create as a team.

In short, I like the idea that students produce something, not just report something. In a traditional assessment, the students report what they learned from lectures, books, and discussions in class. I'm interested in going way beyond that; I believe that active project work and reflective assessment go together very well to help students make sense of what is happening around them in inter- and multicultural contexts. Additionally, since I teach in an international business degree programme, we need to de-
velop the social skills and intercultural competences they need in a global business career. When students come to JAMK, they step into a very mixed environment. About 60% of our degree students are non-Finns. We also have about 300 exchange students every year in the School of Business. So, every student, including our Finns, has an international experience.

What's the long-term effect on students in such a setting?
Sadly, I presently do not have the empirical data needed to describe how our alumni benefit from our approaches. When I do have the chance to talk to alumni, they look back rather fondly on their studies and report that they enjoyed my courses and activities. We typically receive highly positive student feedback at the end of the course. Perhaps we should pursue this further but like many teachers I find myself with little extra time these days. Maybe I could get a master’s student to look into it.

Actually, this is an appropriate question because I also sense that education is changing rapidly, and, frankly, I’m not happy with many of the changes. There is a growing movement in higher education toward increased reliance on technological mediation, pushed perhaps by financial constraints — that is, how to be more effective, how to disseminate information more efficiently, how to reduce the number of contact hours. It’s often promoted as innovation but, in reality, it’s devolution. When I was a student, the most influential resource was the teacher. I don’t necessarily remember much about the books I read, the exams I took, or the reports I wrote. I remember well being affected by excellent teachers and the other students. I hope we don’t move completely away from that. Interestingly, now I see small schools differentiating themselves by promoting that they have actual teachers! It seems societies are coming to a point where more people are unhappy about the expense of education versus the value obtained. We’ll see where it all goes. Ironically, I also rely to some extent on some of the same technologies that I often complain about. But I do not produce online courses and hope somehow to avoid it in the future.

How do you design intercultural awareness courses?
First off, I don’t provide “how to” instruction. And I don’t emphasize the forest-level views, the usual topologies, the dimensional perspective of culture, although I feel obligated to make sure that students are indeed exposed to the traditional and important academic informants and theories. Really, though, all the action in my courses is at the tree level. Through active learning, I try to provide a continuous dialectical process, an ongoing negotiation of communication and understanding, a process that is guided by the processes of creating informed, tangible outcomes.

I also encourage risk taking that sometimes, at least initially, produces failure. That may sound odd, but it’s better to first experience challenges in school than during one’s first assignment overseas. I want students to feel the uncertainty, the challenge of intercultural interaction first-hand. My colleagues and I want
to help them make sense of that by providing them with tools for building basic competencies. I’m not a trainer, teaching students how to do something; I’m more a facilitator, or animator, in this experiential reflective learning process.

I’ve enjoyed many conversations about what teachers should be doing and what our goals should be. I think, at least in the West, we have this systematic idea that there should be some kind of “correct” destination or outcome based on proven facts or the “truth”, and that we should identify a clear path based on these informants. But it doesn’t have to be that way from a pedagogical perspective. An example would be advising students about their Tales video. We tell them, “Don’t think you have to have a Hollywood ending! Try to create and present a critical incident with an open-ended outcome.” In this way, the teacher can use the video to open up discussion with the students.

One video is “Dmitri’s Drama”, about a Russian boy who comes to study at our school and encounters many cultural challenges and becomes very upset. At the end, he takes a taxi to the train station with a ticket home in hand. That’s where the video stops. The viewer doesn’t know what happened. Did he go home? Did he come back to school? That’s where I like to take students — to this kind of heightened sense of exasperation and uncertainty — and then let them talk about it: What caused the situation to develop? How did the characters behave? What sorts of options were available that might have worked better? And so on.

I compare my approach to the “how to” instructional approach in which the goal is to teach people how to behave and survive in certain new settings. That can be useful but that’s not at all we facilitators aim at with first-year bachelor’s students. It often turns out that students often can identify more than one optional outcome for each scenario — and often many solutions are suggested, including some that might not have helped. And, of course, the character and script development processes of the video significantly benefit from the fact that the producers work in multicultural groups.

My students will sometimes tell me that their intercultural coping strategies are positive, but they sometimes seem negative. For example, a new student once told me she was walking down the hall and saw three Russian students walking toward her. For some reason, at this early point in her studies, she was uncomfortable engaging with Russian students. Her coping strategy was to dive into a classroom to avoid them. I asked her, “Did that work for you?” and she said “Yeah, it worked great.” I didn’t think it was such a great strategy myself, but it makes for good discussion from many different angles.

Let’s face it, sometimes students make uninformed or otherwise unsuccessful decisions. The learning can be extended and eventually they will learn, they will improve. I’m not set on teaching people how to succeed immediately, I want them to develop an informed understanding about what’s really hap-
Steve Crawford — continued

If we look around the world, people are often separated along group identities.

pening and how to make sense out of it, and come up with constructive approaches to develop skills for the future.

Do you have students who don’t want to participate in this heightened sense of exasperation and uncertainty?

Some of my students would rather sit in the back of the classroom and listen to a lecture. Some may express frustration that they’re directed to be actively engaged with other students. It makes me wonder, “Why would you choose international business as a major and/or career if you prefer to be by yourself?” But, eventually, they do come around because they have to in order to survive and earn the credits.

How do you see SIETAR and what should it be striving for?

I’m not an old-timer with SIETAR. My first conference was in Denver in 2010. What I find most important is that we all benefit from each other; there’s so much diversity. And there is room for everyone in SIETAR, which I feel is a fundamental point. I enjoy SIETAR events because of the interaction among academics and practitioners. For me, the way practitioners operate is well suited to the classroom because of their active teaching and learning approach. Through SIETAR I learn about how to combine academic and practitioner approaches.

As far as what SIETAR should strive for, there are many good things we can do at the grass-roots level. It’s important to address important social and educational issues, and it’s a place where relationships and empathy are created.

I suggest that SIETARians engage more intensively and directly with ideas and people in our world that challenge our organisational ideals and values. People now around the world are not engaging interpersonally, but rather from an increasing physical or ideological distance. We’re separated along various lines of race, economics, age, politics, ethnicity, education, etc. There are so many places where you can find people just like you. But as globalisation increases, the push of cultural pluralism increases also.

Here in Finland, during the recent global migration crisis some people expressed resentment toward migrants and felt threatened by their presence. Their voices should be heard, and we need to understand and try to address their concerns. I wouldn’t be against having a controversial speaker come to the next SIETAR conference. Why not? I believe even seasoned interculturalists can benefit from discussions that take us a bit out of our comfort zone, just as we are asking of our students.

Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt

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Fifty years later...

Retrospections of my high school reunion

by Patrick Schmidt

I grew up in Northridge, a suburb in northern Los Angeles. It was a pleasant, middle-class area with nicely kept-up houses, like those you’d see in a traditional American TV series. And, as in those shows, there were no real problems of racism because there were no blacks and few Hispanics around. It was a world made up of whites, detached from any complicated past.

What made me slightly different from my friends was having a French mother. Although she never spoke French around us, France was always a source of conversation in our home.

When I was 10, my parents thought it would be a good for me to see life beyond suburbia so they sent me to spend the summer with my grandparents in a small village in Alsace. The vacation stretched into 15 months, I attended the local École des Garçons, French became my dominant language and I became far less American in my ideas.

By the time I got back to California, my perception of the world had radically changed. The experience of living in a new culture upended my sense of the world, set me dancing back and forth between French and American subjective worlds, not knowing where I belonged.

When I tried to tell friends back home about France, all I’d hear was, “Come on, America’s the best.” Looking back now, I understand that their reactions were perfectly normal; their subjective experiences were solely American and they couldn’t imagine anything else.

I learned to be more discreet with my tales of France. And, with time, the Americanness came roaring back; always-keep-smiling, “can do” individualism pushed my Latin side aside.

Entering high school at 15, I was like all of my classmates, a bundle of contradictory feelings. On the outside, I tried to project self-assurance, pragmatism and the will to realize the American dream. My generation incarnated the spirit of the times — we wanted to move up the social ladder, do better than our parents materially. Some saw themselves as pre-rich, naively believing they’d all be making their first million by age 30.

My interior world was a different story. I suffered from my massive delusions of grandeur, thanks to adolescent hormones, demanding parents, poor social skills and athletic ineptitude — I tried to make the tennis team for two years, then gave up.

Although I did make some good friends in high school, I was more of an outsider and somewhat bookish. This
I had the strangest experience at my high school reunion...

A lot of my classmates changed so much that they didn’t even recognize me!

50 years later...
— continued

generated a latent indifference to American social life. It was under these emotional conditions that I headed off to college to major in psychology, with the vague hope that studying the mind would explain why I didn’t fit in.

In third year, I returned to Alsace for a year at l’Université de Strasbourg. I spent the week among international students and the weekend with my grandparents. I was in my element, swinging back and forth between French and American worlds. When I graduated from California State University the following year, I returned to France.

But something happened that wasn’t planned. I decided to stop over in Stuttgart to see a German friend I knew from Strasbourg and what was supposed to last a weekend was extended to more than 20 years! The forces of destiny told me, “Stay in Germany, this is where you now belong.”

I began immersing myself in the German way of being, becoming German myself in many ways. I learned everything I could about the country, its culture, history and language. I adapted so well I “went native”, rejecting my American past.

A few years later, I developed a more realistic outlook toward myself, understanding that I was very much American but with French and German side-wings. I also began to realize — teaching English to Germans while I learned German myself — that understanding and generating appropriate behavior is an integral part of language training.

I went from teaching English to editing business magazines to establishing cross-cultural programs: corporate workshops and university courses in...interculturalism. My modus vivendi became my career and, without knowing it, I becoming an interculturalist.

The map of my life would come to include years in Malaysia, then French Canada, then Austria. I occasionally went back to visit my family in southern California but “home” was now with my French wife and two children.

My high school class had reunions but I was too busy with the hustle and bustle of life to find time to attend. And the insecurities and identity issues I formed in high school had never really left me. It was as if the old demons were blocking me from seeking out my old friends.

In a twist of fate, one of them contacted me to ask if I wanted to come to our upcoming 50th reunion. I live in Strasbourg now and my first reaction was to say no, it was too far away and, anyway, I’d left America behind.

But curiosity took hold. I found myself wondering what had
happened to all the super-smart achievers, the beautiful cheerleaders, the star athletes...and the outsiders. A sense of nostalgia overcame me.

No matter how interesting or intense our lives have been, in our later years we seem to want to go back and talk to those who helped shape us in the beginning.

So I changed my mind, flew to Los Angeles for the three-day gala event. I suppose I was apprehensive about reappearing, being looked at as an outsider again. To my astonishment, all these people who I hadn’t seen for 50 years were genuinely glad to see me. A few even played practical jokes on me and roared with laughter when I got back at them.

We had a fantastic time catching up on all that we’d done over the years. I began to think I might have been wrong about my classmates’ opinions of me.

I suddenly realized that life somehow has a way of restoring one’s humanity. We’d reached an age where there was no more need to be boastful; our weathered, savvy faces were the signs of unsung victories and overcome defeats. We’d all started our lives innocent and uninformed yet we’d survived the world.

And the reunion struck me in a more profound way, as well. Talking about our experiences from so long ago provoked memories I thought had long left me — an American reality returning in full force, becoming part of me again.

I felt completed and mellow. The mysterious sensation that our existences had attained a full circle of life.

The author at the time of his high school graduation in 1967.
Social pressure on Chinese women

Cultural considerations for coaches

by Denis Niedringhaus

Bringing up (yǎng) a child (ér) to protect against (fáng) old age (lǎo). The Chinese language has hundreds of chéngyǔ, 4-character proverbs which all Chinese people, regardless of their age or background, have learned by heart...and when I say by heart...well, this one in particular may cause a bit of emotional “resonance”. It rather succinctly reflects the kinds of social and parental expectations that may end up influencing the behavior and decisions of many young, successful professionals.

Recite this in front of any Chinese person under 40, single or married, and you will mostly likely get a verbal (How did you know about THAT?) or nonverbal (guilt, exasperation) reaction. Like many Chinese proverbs, this expression has its roots in Confucianism. From early on, a child grows up with the concept of xiào, the belief that he or she must remain devoted and make sacrifices to his or her parents. (This Chinese character appropriately depicts the child, 子, shouldering the weight of old age, 孝.)

Does this all sound quaint, antiquated and no longer relevant? An internet search of Yǎng ér fáng lǎo will turn up a number of blogs where Chinese young people themselves actively exchange their views on its pertinence. Their identities protected by a pseudo, they openly question just what a child really owes his or her parents. “Our purpose in life?” one young man complains...“to provide them with a pension! How can anyone think so selfishly?!” If being a good son or daughter entails lifelong sacrifice, it would appear that most young Chinese people have had it!

However healthy the debate, it doesn’t get much attention in the mainstream press. Most articles on Chinese society focus on the more visible aspects of the growing individualism and materialism of three generations of “Little Emperors”. Yet, how does one accurately measure a growing feeling of discontent? Statistics often provide clues. For example, the number of registered marriages has been dropping steadily for the past few years (down 9.1% in 2013, and 6.3% in 2014) while the number of divorces has risen to rates comparable to those in Western countries. All signs point to a loosening of the bonds of the traditional family.

This being said, it is still commonly considered the duty of Chinese women to get married by the age of 25 and produce a child. Those who cannot find husbands by this time often live with the feeling of having failed or having let their parents down. There is even a term in Chinese for these unmarried women which is used in the press and on the street. They are called shèngnǚ, literally “leftover women”.

Granted, all young people, regardless of their culture, face pressure from their parents to get married, but in China the extent and the effects of this pressure can be intense. Many
Social pressures on ...— continued

The Shanghai marriage market

Chinese parents are not at all shy about making their expectation known to their child as well as the entire community. In fact, most large cities have xiāng (mutual) qīn (parent/intimate relative) jiǎo (corners) — or “marriage markets” in public parks. As unromantic as it might seem to Westerners, parents will cheerfully put up posters with their child’s photo as well as a number of personal details — height, weight, profession, income, in the hope of finding an appropriate match.

The first time I visited one on a Saturday morning in Shanghai, I dismissed it as a cultural oddity and did not fully grasp the implications of it. It was not until I saw the important and uplifting video, “Marriage Market Takeover” link here that I understood the emotional havoc that Yǎng ér fāng lǎo can wreak. Towards the end of the video, unmarried Chinese women escort their parents back to the marriage corner and show them posters which they themselves have put up to replace their parents’. The new ones display statements such as “independent and happy” and “living a full life”.

What really stayed in my mind, however, were the early moments of the video which give a painfully accurate description of the anguish and guilt that many, far too many, Chinese women have to deal with. One woman sits silently on a sofa with her head bowed while her parents nonchalantly chat with a journalist. In another episode, a woman tearfully calls out to her parents, “Excuse me, please!!!!”

As confident, independent and outwardly successful as many Chinese women appear to be, I need to remind myself that some traditional values don’t disappear that easily or quickly....they just may go under the surface. Regardless of the extent to which we may consciously identify with our culture, we are still on some level influenced by it. Are there sharks or dolphins in those cultural waters? As coaches, helping people through their professional and personal life transitions, maybe we could all be a bit more sensitive to Yǎng ér fāng lǎo?

Denis Niedringhaus, a native of St. Louis, Missouri, is a trilingual intercultural trainer and certified expatriation coach. He will be giving a webinar on December 8th at 19:00 CET for SIETAR Europa, entitled “Using Chinese, Japanese and French TV adverts in intercultural trainings”. He can be reached at: mandarin18@orange.fr
Who are you?
... Stories about identity

Flags

by Dan MacLeod

There’s a great scene in the movie “Slap Shot” involving the national anthem. Everyone in the up-state New York arena is standing but minutes earlier, during warm-up, there was an on-ice brawl. Now the three Hanson brothers, battered and bloody, are the starting line, not a good sign.

The referee is frantic, skates over to them, launches into a dia-tribe about respecting the rules. Finally, one of brothers yells into his face, “I’m tryna listen to the fuckin’ song!”

The ref stops mid-word, realizes what he’s doing and that everyone in the arena is looking, slowly turns to face front.

The Hansons had just arrived from the “iron leagues” of Canada; I made the same trip in the opposite direction when I left Boston. So I’m 18 years old and 625 miles from home, about to play my first game of Canadian Junior. I’m bouncing up and down on the bench, chattering to my linemates as their anthem plays from a scratchy record over the rink’s loudspeakers.

I was about to learn that, unlike American refs, the ones up here notice when you take a guy’s skates out with yours. Also not to admire your passes for even a half-second because you’ll land upside down on the ice, concussion city.

Afterward, in addition to a severe headache, I got a talking to from the captain, who was 20 and proudly English-Canadian. He sounded hurt.

“If I were playing in your country, I’d be respectful…”

“I do that back home! I just want the game to start!”

Why can’t we just line up and start? Why bring politics into it?

No flag-waving in sport unless it’s international and even then, the athletes share more with each other than with the citizens of either country.

Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland had mixed teams during the Troubles, blacks and whites in America have played together for decades. Common cause in games, communion in teams. Politics exists but in the world outside.

But the captain was the only one bothered, everyone else said not to change. And half the team was French-Canadian. The Queen’s portrait hung at the end of the arena and they made fun of it. And their girlfriends, when they sent letters, put the stamp of the Queen’s face upside down. I found that so cute...

When I left Boston, we were in the middle of “forced bussing” and race riots.

...
Mr. Hedemark was one of those no-nonsense shop-teachers with a brush cut and military posture, also my homeroom teacher my last two years of high school in Belmont.

This was a new town for me and at 8:10 that first Friday, everybody noisily slouched upright for the national anthem. They didn't do that in my old school and I decided to remain seated. At the end, Mr. Hedemark asked me why and I said it was my right as an American to protest.

Protest what, the Vietnam War?

No, actually. The war was almost over. What bothered me was Watergate.

Mr. Hedemark said he'd served in the Marines in World War Two. I said I respected the hell out of that, told him my cousin had been a lieutenant in 'Nam. I also said protesting was patriotic, it was fighting for the country.

He nodded, said “Okay.”

Nobody else cared. Then again, my second week at the school, when Mr. Hedemark said we had to choose a class rep, everybody pointed at me.

He and I never really talked. He took attendance, the principal read announcements over the speaker and we went to classes.

I was a hockey player, that was in my favor. I also had long hair, was a state student rep and wrote about politics in the school paper. I was his opposite, not his adversary.

When a German exchange-student arrived for two months, even though there were a dozen girls in the room, he asked me to look after her. Same thing a year later, with a girl from France. And every Friday I stayed seated when the others stood, Mr. Hedemark with his hand over his heart.

Halfway through senior year he pulled me aside to ask what colleges was I looking at. I stood there with my mouth open. He was a shop teacher, had never been to college.

“You might take a look at West Point. Good hockey team. Excellent academics. Political science, foreign languages…”

You needed a letter from a senator, he said, but he could get me one.

“Something for you to think about…”

I've been in Canada 42 years, a Permanent Resident; I'm still an American.

I think about Mr. Hedemark every Fourth of July.

Makes me smile, kind of nod my head.

* United States Military Academy at West Point
Book Review

International Student Engagement in Higher Education: Transforming Practices, Pedagogies & Participation

By Margaret Kettle
Multilingual Matters, 224 pages
€ 119,95

Are you sometimes frustrated with international students not adhering to what you have explained and do you ask yourself how to bridge the gap between different world views?

Margaret Kettle examines the experience of six international students in a Master of Education program to analyse their Australian university experience. These, mostly first semester students, were using English as their second or third language. She also draws on their lecturer’s strategies to promote student success.

The book focuses on transformative practices and contains nine chapters including the preface In the first chapter, Kettle describes the context of international student higher education and what drives it today, highly useful for understanding the bigger picture. In chapter two, she analyses research on teaching international students and their learning in the Western academy, discussing power relations and including engagement as the new approach to enable inclusive pedagogy in higher education.

Chapter three is largely theoretical, with many references to Foucault’s social theory. It explains the social practice theory of engagement and analyses the relationship between power and knowledge. We learn about the student engagement study and its participants in the next chapter. Chapter five discusses the role of English in academia and the dominance of the Western knowledge system and intellectual tradition. Having experience of teaching international students in higher education, I found this chapter thorough and engaging, as it describes how language influences other aspects of academic life and describes the students’ English language experience. Chapter six outlines learning and participation theories, giving detailed examples of classroom discourse to show how transformative teaching succeeds in international higher education. We learn how good teaching looks from international student perspective.

The following chapter uses students’ perspectives and experiences to show how they react to and what they retain from their experiences with this kind of teaching. The last chapter concludes the international student engagement study. To find out more, I recommend you read the book.

The book is relevant in times of the hyper-marketing of international higher education around the world. It’s ideal for international education policy makers, provides solid theory for researchers interested in international student experience, as well as being practical for lecturers and others interested in transforming international student experience into a success.

The author closes citing her cultural source of inspiration for this study, the concept of “unknowing” drawn from the indigenous Walpiri people of Australia’s Northern Territory: “Unknowing is the joy of people from different cultural backgrounds, languages, and experiences committing to unknowing in order to learn from each other.”

Reviewed by Katrin Volt
They’re at it again! The authors of *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can’t Be Wrong: Why We Love France but Not the French* have returned to the Hexagon, this time with their school-age children, to apply their autoethnographic approach to the many facets of French speech and communication. They have matured their observations and deepened their exploration to provide a wider-ranging exposé of the dynamics of French interaction.

Now that I have spent over twenty years making my home in Provence, the book made me ask whether I would have benefited by reading it before I landed, or whether I was just coming to recognize dynamics that I have experienced, that I could not have foreseen or even understood had someone tried to spell it out for me back then. In sum, the book would contribute from either end, perhaps asking to be read twice.

Yet..Provence is not Paris; today is not then. Change is much afoot in diverse sectors of French society, though it may not appear so. I have long observed that maintaining appearances and respecting continuity here substantiate the *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose* cognitive frame. Even careful observations are both vulnerable to age and can generate stereotypes when indiscriminately applied to different groups and in different contexts. Old ingredients somehow find their way into fresh recipes without losing their flavor. I sadly settled for the fact that I am still an outsider in France and that the authors remained so as well. Cultural assumptions and experiences, my own and those found in these pages, must be continually tested. They are at best alerts, not dogma.

My reading of *The Bonjour Effect* was accompanied by a large amount of unconscious nodding at what I had experienced enough of to find matter-of-fact, such things as politeness, provocative speech, fear of faute, family impenetrability, as well as the hard-shelled bubble of conversational personal space. But this comfort was also punctuated by the occasional “Aha!”, as I recognized a dynamic operative in my experience that I had not previously been able to put my finger on, or had recognized but needed the context or clarification that I finally found here. As I am currently teaching diversity to French twentysomethings in a business school, where English is the required lingua franca, the book offered some handles to discuss classroom behavior—if I can get French students to address the topic at all.

Most interesting were the explorations into the emphasis on French identity and cohesion, resistance to the emergence of disparate communities, the politics surrounding race, gender and religion—and the taboos hampering their productive discussion.

The book is a linguistically easy read, though betimes repetitive and tedious. It could benefit from a mind-map relating conversational codes and tendencies to how they emerge in the variety of life and social areas under discussion. Perhaps I should have attempted that as I read.

Reviewed by George Simons
When it comes to popular culture, it’s all too easy to dismiss it as ephemeral, unserious, as “this too will pass”, to think of it as a squall at sea, a temporary hindrance to smooth sailing. This fails to realize that popular culture is an expression of the nature of the sea, that we cannot ignore it without ignoring the sea itself. Appropriately the book opens with a discussion of the place of popular culture in cultural studies, a presence that has been in the room from the beginning but rarely alluded to and its occasional sightings ignored.

The sea of culture does not change because go below deck and hole up with our books and natter about our models and theories. We try to ignore the rocking and listing of the ship in real time, while we hope for the calm to go on deck and meanwhile carry on with our values and dimensions talk, hoping they will promote culturally sensitive etiquette and communication. Enough said – the introduction and each of the studies in Making Sense of popular Culture provide a challenge to this complacency.

This wake-up work starts in earnest with a no holds-barred chapter about US American war fever, the fighting metanarrative that has driven US conquest and imperialism from before Manifest Destiny to the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia today. Penetrating everyday language, gaming and sports, business strategy and global politics, this exposition of tough talk and action makes it impossible for those engaged with cultural studies and professions to continue to look the other way.

In the following chapter, health and sex education are viewed from the perspective of prescriptions found in diverse media treatments; in Spain and India, for example, where popular advice columns sought to alleviate earlier layers of popular belief by inviting readers into a new context. Pop culture in service to well-being.

Next, our attention is called to the special contexts in which social and cultural behavior takes place. The focus is on how gender construction is reflected in the physical organization of spaces, to whom they belong and how they are used. Women’s search for space is used as case-in-point, as space determines and, in the case of women, belonging and activity. Few readers of Virginia Woolf’s plea, nine decades ago, for the freedom of A Room of one’s Own realize that it is as gender specific around space and contact as Trump’s gropes.

Much of the book’s subtext regards the artificial, often rigid class distinction between “real art” and “popular” creations and forms of creativity. Time may blur this distinction; however, a final note sums up a chapter on the bard [which means poet]. It makes it clear that “Shakespeare was the people,
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— continued 

and his theatre was the people’s theatre.” This, though an ensuing chapter, shows how class and politics appropriate Shakespeare’s work, as it recounts how Romeo and Juliet have been acted out as class propaganda for the upper class. Speaking of propaganda and cultural control, the book next presents a reflection on the 1953 Bucharest International Youth Festival, designed as a youth identity building exercise, spared no cost to popularize its ideals down to the minutest details.

A brief chapter on the humanities in Spain raises the issue of the place of children’s literature, seen as the “Cinderella” of literary studies in the rigorous academic context there. The reader suspects that this is just one example of how the entry of other realms of the popular may be blocked by interests not interested in them. Similarly, a chapter on young adult empathy in the Hunger Games trilogy forced me to relook how stories of identity choices are built among the young in succeeding generations.

More apparent to me was a study of the current “transgressive”, direction of popular fiction. We are flooded with a focus on violence, crime, excess, as well as unbridled language in literature and media. This suggests a wholesale questioning of the assumed reality and perhaps craziness of everyday life. The search for identity facing young people and the questioning of identity among other generations reflects a certain futility, a tendency to both degradation and radicalization.

Not surprisingly, both utopian and dystopian thinking creatively vie for our attention in popular culture, the two “-opiates” spurring each other on, so to speak. At the same time, a nostalgia for an idealized existence posited in certain “good old days” seemingly rejects both, but in fact supports them in in its desire for return to something lost, most recently sloganized as, “Make America great again. The last two chapters of the book describe this challenge of popular culture to envision with desire or dread what the future could look like, but also examine the fantasy of migrating back to the past.

A final observation on my part relates not particularly to this book but to the studies genre overall. It is what I am starting to call “publish and perish”. I refer to the tendency of academic research and commentary to limit itself to drab typeface in a time when technology makes all kinds of reproduction possible. Cultural topics in particular deserve illustration, imagery, and exemplary personal stories, not just technical neologisms and constipated syntax. In fact, we aren’t even given the delight of Gutenberg’s lovingly decorated uncials. I fear for the future of the book, and sense a growing libricide [destruction] in popular culture.

Reviewed by George Simons
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