Transcultural Themes
Steven R. Van Hook, PhD
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Bridging Cultural Gulfs in Global Classrooms
Background in Eastern Europe

Russians and Americans are cultural polar opposites
Cultural Theorists

- Geert Hofstede
- Marieke De Mooij
- Fons Trompenaars
- Edward T. Hall
- Barbara Mueller
- Simon Anholt
- Samuel P. Huntington
- Lawrence E. Harrison
- Erin Meyer
Who Should Care?

- International educators and students
- Global business managers
- Mass media
- Residents of culturally diverse nations, states, cities
21st Century Skills

Global Work: Bridging Distance, Culture & Time

- Understand and communicate across multiple cultures
- Communication technologies and how they apply to teamwork in cross-cultural, decentralized settings
- Unique leadership skills in managing business teams in a global setting

O'Hara-Deveraux & Johansen
The Problem

Teachers in international courses are frequently unable to accommodate the wide range of cultural variations among a growing diversity of international students.

(Adam, 2003; Pinheiro, 2001; Engberg & Green, 2002)
The Research Question

- What sorts of themes and images might create a positive transcultural resonance within an international classroom comprised of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds?
- How might any resonate themes and images be applied in the classroom and other settings?

The Scream
Edvard Munch
1893, Norway
The Challenge

- To examine resonant themes and images for enhanced teaching across multiple nationalities:
- Diverse groups of international participants gathered over an extended periods of time and comfortable enough in a cross-cultural setting to express viewpoints perhaps opposed to others in class;
- Consistent and replicable exposure to numerous images and themes;
- Attentive researcher/observer who might make some theoretical assumptions and measures.
Study Sample

- University of California courses in global advertising
- 200+ Students
- 24+ Countries
- 20,000+ advertising impressions in class
Why Commercials?

- Could use art, literature, history, music – any media and subject that rely on diverse themes and images.
- Commercials are universal recognized quantum packets of information; demographically resonant and necessarily concise.
Coming to Terms

- **Cross-Cultural:** A connection between cultures.

- **Transcultural:** A connection above and beyond cultural differences.

- **Resonance:** *Acoustics.* Intensification and prolongation of sound, especially of a musical tone, produced by sympathetic vibration.

- **Dissonance:** A harsh, disagreeable combination of sounds; discord.
Resonance is:

- **Acoustics.** Intensification and prolongation of sound, especially of a musical tone, produced by sympathetic vibration.

- Richness or significance, especially in evoking an association or strong emotion.

- **Physics.** The increase in amplitude of oscillation of an electric or mechanical system exposed to a periodic force whose frequency is equal or very close to the natural undamped frequency of the system.

- **Dissonance:** A harsh, disagreeable combination of sounds; discord.
Resonance & Bridges

- The most famous example of resonance was the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in Washington State (also called Galloping Gertie).

- In 1940, just months after its completion, winds in the Tacoma Narrows matched the bridge's resonant frequency and caused the suspension bridge to sway uncontrollably. Within hours, the bridge collapsed.

http://science.howstuffworks.com/question603.htm
Analysis Algorithm

Survey Instrument with 7-point Lickert-type Scale

- $\bar{x} \geq 5$ with VAR < 3 indicated a Positive Resonance
- $\bar{x} \geq 5$ with VAR $\geq 3$ indicated a Positive Dissonance
- $\bar{x} > 3$ but $< 5$ with VAR < 3 indicated a Neutral Resonance
- $\bar{x} > 3$ but $< 5$ with VAR $\geq 3$ indicated a Neutral Dissonance
- $\bar{x} \leq 3$ with VAR < 3 indicated a Negative Resonance
- $\bar{x} \leq 3$ with VAR $\geq 3$ indicated a Negative Dissonance
Articles on Transcultural Learning

UNESCO Journal “Prospects”
Hopes and hazards of transculturalism.
Article available at http://wwmr.us

Journal of Research in International Education
Modes and models for transcending cultural differences in international classrooms.
Article available at http://wwmr.us
Study Sample

- 40+ Countries
- 900+ Students
- Typically higher-income families
International Student Count

- Countries: 40+
- Total Students: 950
- Female: 494 (51%)
- Male: 467 (49%)
- Age range: Mostly early-20s through mid-30s
- Education: Current college students in home countries, college graduates, professionals
- Income: Typically upper income bracket families in home countries
Top Countries (91% of students)

- South Korea: 223 (24%)
- Germany: 185 (19%)
- Japan: 127 (14%)
- Brazil: 68 (7%)
- Norway: 62 (6%)
- Italy: 51 (5%)
- Vietnam: 49 (5%)
- China: 43 (4%)
- Turkey: 34 (3%)
- Sweden: 32 (3%)
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<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
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Transcultural Messages:

What Doesn’t Work Well

- Humor
- Sex
- Religion
- Politics
Humor Group

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance

\( n = 235 \)

\( \bar{x} = 4.5 \)

Median = 5.0

VAR = 3.3

\( \sum x = 1060 \)

\( p < .001 \)
Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance

\[ n = 235 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 4.5 \]
Median = 5.0
VAR = 3.3
\[ \sum x = 1060 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
Sex Group

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

\( n = 141 \)
\( \bar{x} = 4.5 \)
Median = 5.0
VAR = 2.3
\( \sum x = 632 \)
\( p < .001 \)
Natan Jewelry – “Headache” – Brazil

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

\( n = 141 \)
\( \bar{x} = 4.5 \)
Median = 5.0
VAR = 2.3
\( \sum x = 632 \)
\( p < .001 \)

“Headache”
\( n = 47 \)
\( \bar{x} = 4.3 \)
VAR = 1.9
BMW – “Man”
Italy

LEAF Lisbon Erotic Advertising Festival (Bronze FigLeaf) 2002
Religions Group

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 4.1 \]
Median = 4.0
VAR = 2.3
\[ \sum x = 580 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
Manix – “Pope” – UK

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

$n = 141$

$\bar{x} = 4.1$

Median = 4.0

VAR = 2.3

$\sum x = 580$

$p < .001$

“Pope”

$n = 47$

$\bar{x} = 4.1$

VAR = 2.2
Politics / Nationalism Group

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 4.7 \]
\[ \text{Median} = 5.0 \]
\[ \text{VAR} = 3.4 \]
\[ \sum x = 667 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
PSA – “I Am American” – USA

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 4.7 \]
Median = 5.0
VAR = 3.4
\[ \sum x = 667 \]
\[ p < .001 \]

“American”
\[ n = 47 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 4.8 \]
VAR = 3.9
Molson Canadian – “The Rant”
Canada

Cannes Lions Bronze Award 2000
London International Advertising Award 2000
Transcultural Themes & Images

- Babies & Children
- Pets & Animals
- Sports
- Love, Marriage, Relationship Conflicts
- Self-image
- The Birth-Life-Death Cycle
- Water
Babies Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 5.7 \]
Median = 6.0
VAR = 1.7
\[ \sum x = 808 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
Libero Diapers – “Up & Go”
Sweden

EURO EFFIE Gold Award 2000
McDonald’s – USA – “Sign Baby”

The Chicago Show (Gold, Best of Show) 1997
Advertising Age Award (Top Winner) 1997
International Andy Awards (Distinctive Merit Certificate) 1997
CLIO Awards (Gold) 1996
Cannes Lions (Gold Lion, Grand Prix) 1996
Creativity (Gold Medal) 1996
International Andy Awards (Excellent Award) 1997
Midas – “Cry Baby” – France

Eurobest (Winner) 2001
One Show Awards (Bronze) 2002
Sealy – “Boy” – Mexico

Cannes Lions - International Advertising Festival, 2001 (Silver Lion)
CLIO Awards, 2002 (Silver)
D&AD Awards, 2002 (Silver)
Animals Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 5.7 \]
Median = 6.0
VAR = 2.0
\[ \Sigma x = 798 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
Ikea – “Confused Dog” – Sweden

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 5.7 \]
Median = 6.0
VAR = 2.0
\[ \sum x = 798 \]
\[ p < .001 \]

“Confused Dog”
\[ n = 47 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 6.3 \]
VAR = 1.1
Got Milk? – “Peanut Butter Dog” – USA
Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 5.3 \]

Median = 6.0
VAR = 2.1
\[ \sum x = 754 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
Aspirina – “Snoring” – Mexico

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\( n = 141 \)
\( \bar{x} = 5.3 \)
Median = 6.0
VAR = 2.1
\( \sum x = 754 \)
\( p < .001 \)

“Snoring”
\( n = 37 \)
\( \bar{x} = 6.1 \)
VAR = 1.1
McDonald’s – “Marry Me?” – China
Ikea – “Heads” – USA
Nordstrom – “Moving Van” – USA

The Good, the Bad & the Ugly Awards (Winner - Good TV) 2000
Sports Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\( n = 141 \)
\[ \overline{x} = 5.5 \]
Median = 6.0
VAR = 1.8
\[ \sum x = 776 \]
\( p < .001 \)
IDEA – “Anthem” – Poland
Bright Dairy – “Football” – China

CLIO Awards, 2002 (Bronze)
German Soccer/Football Team
Brazilian Soccer/Football Team
Self Image Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\[ n = 188 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 5.0 \]
Median = 5.0
\[ \text{VAR} = 2.4 \]
\[ \sum x = 945 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
“Istanbul” – Turkey
National Anthems & Flags
Life Cycle Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\( n = 141 \)

\( \bar{x} = 5.1 \)

Median = 5.0

VAR = 2.3

\( \sum x = 723 \)

\( p < .001 \)
Sylvania – “Old Man” – Thailand

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

\[ n = 141 \]
\[ \overline{x} = 5.1 \]
Median = 5.0
VAR = 2.3
\[ \sum x = 723 \]
\[ p < .001 \]

“Old Man”

\[ n = 47 \]
\[ \overline{x} = 5.0 \]
VAR = 1.4
MS Xbox – “Champagne” – UK
Banned by the BBC after 136 complaints

Cannes Lions - International Advertising Festival, 2002 (Gold Lion)
:50
McDonald’s – “Life” – Australia
Water Group

**Group Classification: Neutral Resonance**

\[ n = 165 \]
\[ \bar{x} = 4.4 \]
Median = 5.0
VAR = 1.8
\[ \sum x = 734 \]
\[ p < .001 \]
McDonald’s – Thailand – “Swimming”

Cannes Lions - International Advertising Festival, 2000 (Bronze Lion)
CLIO Awards, 2000 (Bronze)
Evian – “Water Ballet” – France

Cannes Lions, 1999 (Bronze Lion)
Epica, 1999 (Winner)
Evian – “Seniors” – France
Food

Presentation
What’s this got to do with teaching?

Application & benefits of transcultural images and themes for international students could include:

- **Comfort** - give students something familiar in an alien setting.
- **Bonding** - students relate better to each other through common ground.
- **Integration** - students interact better with group through common ground.
- **Content relevancy** - e.g., present management concepts illustrated with family metaphors and similes.
- **Attraction** - tools to attract attention front and center.
Transculturalism applied to International Student Course in Global Economics
Babies/Children: Socioeconomic costs of war

Boy wounded from missile fire.

“They have to be carefully taught”

Girl wounded and parents killed in air attack.
Animals: The Globalization of the Family Cow

- The need for the family cow squeezed by refrigeration.
- Holsteins – the “SUV” of dairy milkers – are now the globalized cow breed.

Article
“In the Masai language, the word for physical appearance (which roughly translates as a person's "goodness") can also be used to describe their morality.”

“The Masai typically think about attractiveness in terms of both physical attributes and character traits alike.”

Robert Biswis-Diener

“When I asked the Masai about what constitutes a perfectly good-looking person, their answers frequently included friendly, well respected, disciplined, and brave.”
Relationships:

“Nash’s Equilibrium” (27-page dissertation)

John Nash (1928-)
Nobel Prize in Economics, 1994

A Beautiful Mind
By Sylvia Nasar
Universal Pictures 2001

“Adam Smith Needs Revision”
:45
In aerodynamically intense stock-car races like the Daytona 500, the drivers form into multi-car draft lines to gain extra speed. A driver who does not enter a draft line (slipstream) will lose. Once in a line, a driver must attract a drafting partner in order to break out and try to get further ahead. Thus the effort to win leads to ever-shifting patterns of cooperation and competition among rivals. This provides a curious laboratory for several social science theories.
Life-Cycles: Discussion Topics

- **Unemployment rate**: Is it high or low in your country? Does the government provide unemployment insurance? What does someone in your country do when they lose a job?

- **Military**: Is service mandatory in your country? Do they offer benefits and incentives for service? Is military spending a big part of your economy?

- **Education**: Who pays the largest part for education in your country, private or public funds? Who should pay? Is there financial aid? How important is education to economic development?

- **Health care**: How much does a visit to the doctor cost? A stay in the hospital? Who pays: private or government funds? Who should pay? Do you have private insurance companies? Is health care regulated? Should it be?

- **Family planning**: What is happening with the birth rate in your country? Are people getting married later? Do you think the current state of the economy in your country is helping or hurting families? How? Has this impacted your own plans for marriage and a family?
“Technology is so advanced, we don’t need that many people to do things ... What should human beings do ... and still live a good life?”

Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown
Shanghai: Most ‘go-go’ place on Earth
Season 4, Episode 1 (2015) 2:10
Ricardo’s Law of Comparative Advantage

(1772-1823)

You & I spend equal time writing papers and baking pies:

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<tr>
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<th>Papers</th>
<th>Pumpkin Pies</th>
<th>PPP Production</th>
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<td>You</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 Total PPPs</td>
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You spend your time writing papers / I spend my time baking pies:

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Papers</th>
<th>Pumpkin Pies</th>
<th>PPP Production</th>
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<td>24 Total PPPs</td>
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‘Pan-Cultural’ Facial Expressions

- Joy, Anger, Disgust, Sadness, Fear, Surprise

Ekman et al. (1969)
Watson (2004)
Researchers have identified a single, universal facial expression that is interpreted across many cultures as the embodiment of negative emotion. The look proved identical for native speakers of English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese and American Sign Language. It consists of a furrowed brow, pressed lips and raised chin, and because we make it when we convey negative sentiments, such as 'I do not agree,' researchers are calling it the 'not face.'
ELF: English as a Lingua Franca

- Only 400-million native English speakers (~6% of world’s population)
- 1.5-billion conversant in English (~25% of world’s population)
- 80% of all English interactions between non-native speakers

Kankaanranta, 2009
Teaching Ideals

Kerckoff Hall
UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles)

Korean Students from Hanyang University
Immersive Technologies

“Imagine ... studying in a classroom of students and teachers all over the world or consulting with a doctor face-to-face, just by putting on goggles in your home.”
~ Mark Zuckerberg

Immersive headset company **Oculus VR** bought for $2-billion by **Facebook** in 2014.
English language and content courses designed for a global audience.
Educare Virtual Learning Centers

Sakura Learning Center by Educare Research on Imzadi Island

Non-profit 501(c)(3)

Free college courses, English read-along books, videos, career development, transfer credit possible through Saylor Academy.
Educare Research inc

- Non-profit educational think tank in USA
- Resources for international educators
- Instructor materials
- LMS learning platform access & links
- Educator and student support and references

http://educares.net

Also available online at [http://wwmr.us/](http://wwmr.us/)
Questions? Comments?

Steven R. Van Hook, PhD

Educare Research inc
Nonprofit International
Educational Resources

http://educares.net
http://wwmr.us
steven@wwmr.us
Saturday, December 7, 2002, is the 30th anniversary of this image, known as the ‘Blue Marble,’ taken by the Apollo 17 mission which launched 30 years ago on Dec. 7. The mission’s astronauts had the first chance to get the perfect shot of Earth, when hours after lift-off, the spacecraft aligned with the Earth and Sun, allowing the crew to photograph Earth in full light for the first time. It was also the first time in an Apollo photo that the Antarctic continent was visible. Earth photography was an important mission for the Apollo 17 crew, with their images revealing weather and terrain analysis and even higher atmosphere studies. Their shot of the full-disc Earth saw an important role in society as the centerpiece of the Earth Flag, symbol of Earth Day; stamps and posters, according to NASA (news web sites). NASA says that even today it is the single most requested image in their archives. (AP Photo/NASA files)
Instructor

Steven R. Van Hook, PhD

Global business/MBA/communication courses for UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, California Lutheran University, National University, Antioch University …

- http://wwmr.us
- http://clu.wwmr.us
- steven@wwmr.us
Steve Van Hook
:: Media Samples ::

TV Anchor
Circa 1987

Radio Reporter
Circa 1985

Russia TV Bureau Chief
Circa 1990

Newspaper Writer
1980s –
Nonprofit / Government Work

- VISTA
- USAID
- UNESCO
- Head Start
- IREX
- Educare Research
- Crisis Counselor
- Saylor Foundation
- Corrections Intake
What Steve Does for Fun ...
Explanation of linguistic grammaticalization of word endings (e.g., Latin term *amabo* derived from *amare habeo*) using the Angler Fish mating as a resonant example.
A number of conservative Indo-European languages save ‘things’ as they age, as an adult may have saved stuff from childhood.
Languages can hide complexities in ways we don’t see, much like personal relationships may have secret meanings at the edges.

Prof. John McWhorter / The Story of Human Language
The Teaching Company / 1:50
Languages evolve in size and complexity through interim stages, much like the evolution of the horse.
Standard dialects are selected based on what a people find appealing, much as we might pick a puppy based on our own preferences.
Food: Linguistics Lecture

Bits and pieces of the world’s languages mix in various dialects, as ingredients mix with one another in a beef stew.

Prof. John McWhorter / The Story of Human Language
The Teaching Company / 1:10
Grammar moseys its way through a language, filling it up with frills, as a cat crawls through a room, filling an empty suitcase.
Language is not hard-wired in our brains for diversity ... but changes because our mouths do different things as language moves from one place to another.
Resonant Life Cycles: “Our Town” Plays in Compton

- Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* (1938): universal themes of daily living, marriage, death, and the afterlife from a perspective of small town America in 1902.

- *OT* contrasts rural life in Grover’s Corners, New Hampshire vs. the harsh life for high schoolers in Compton – ‘home of gangsta rap & gansters.’
Resonant Relationships: 
*Spanglish* Merges Myriad Relations

- Wives & Husbands
- Lovers on the Side
- Parents & Children
- Bosses & Servants
- Immigrants & Elite
- Rich & Poor
- Cross-Cultural Bonds

*Spanglish* / James L. Brooks 
2004 / 4:30
Resonant Self-Image:
The Life of the Lakota (Sioux)

Dances with Wolves / Kevin Costner
Best Picture 1990 (7 Oscars) / 2:30
Animals / Life Cycles / Relationships: Ways of the Emperor Penguin

- French production
- US box office success
- 4\textsuperscript{th} highest earning documentary of all time
- Resonant themes of relationships, animals, babies, life cycles, self image, (sports)

March of the Penguin / Bonne Pioche
2005 / 4:30
Sesame Streets Worldwide

Multicultural and Transcultural Children’s Television Programs
Trans-Galactic Relations

Exobiologists and exosociologists consider physical forms and social structures of alien species.

• Astronomers Predict Alien Contact Within 25 Years (Reuters)
• Scientists Reach Out to Distant Worlds (New York Times)
• Astronomers Identify Cradle of Alien Life (Agence France-Presse)
• Search Focuses on 166 'Promising' Signals (National Geographic)

Presentation
Among the more interesting and applicable works on culture – especially relating to issues in international education – are the writings of Paulo Freire. Freire’s applied theory was actually quite simple: speak to the students using themes, images, symbols, and words that resonate with them.

Freire proposed developing an educational curriculum that includes a group of themes that unites the educator and the educatee in a knowing process. The educator, through structured research, would need to learn the “peasants’ manner of seeing the world,” seeking out the themes and problems so ingrained in the peasants’ way of living. Freire attempted to identify the resonant themes by a qualitative process of examining the students’ lives, first considering some of the universal themes of life, then finding locally resonant themes through interview and observation. He found that for there to be a successful transference of meaning or learning, there should be a common frame of reference meaningful to both and all communicators.

So successful were Freire’s techniques, that within just 45 days, 300 workers in the city of Angicos had learned to read and write. Freire was accused of using his method to spread subversive and revolutionary ideas, ultimately landing Freire in jail. (Van Hook, 2005)