

Transcending Cultural Differences in Global Settings

Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education

March 20, 2015 / 8:00 AM SLT



PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

Title: "Transcending Cultural Differences in Global Settings"

Facilitator: Steven R. Van Hook, PhD / Kip Roffo (Second Life)

When: Friday, March 20, 2015

Time: 8 AM PDT

Location: Idahonia Sim

Presentation Abstract:

Educators of international students are frequently challenged with a clashing diversity of cultures in a global classroom. This study examined what sorts of themes and images might resonate across nationalities and cultures, which could then be used to ease the way for students and educators in international classes. The study findings indicate applied themes and images including babies/children, animals, relationships, sports, life cycles, and self-image may help evoke a positive transcultural resonance for a common base of shared experience. The findings were used to consider instructional applications for more effective learning in international classroom settings, as well as identify hazards posed from misapplication of transcultural tools.

Presenter Biography:

Steven R. Van Hook has worked in international education, news media, economic development, and social services for more than twenty years, with positions in Oregon, California, Washington D.C., Moscow, and Kiev. He has served with social and economic development programs including VISTA, Head Start, and the United States Agency for International Development. He has a doctorate specializing in transcultural learning, and has developed courses and seminars in cross-cultural communications and global relations for universities in the United States and Eastern Europe. He has been a television news anchor, newspaper columnist, radio talk-show host, and managed a television bureau in Russia during the final months of the USSR. He teaches cross-cultural communication courses at UCLA and elsewhere. His research was recently published by UNESCO: <http://wwmr.us/support/transculturalism.pdf>

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Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education

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Slide 1

Transcending Cultural Differences in Global Settings

Kip Roffo in Second Life
Steven R. Van Hook, PhD / UCLA
VWBPE 2015

Text:

This is a presentation on Transcending Cultural Differences in Global Settings, delivered by Steven R. Van Hook for the Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education on March 20, 2015.

Slide 2

Background in Eastern Europe



Moscow TV Bureau Chief



■ Russians and Americans
are cultural polar opposites

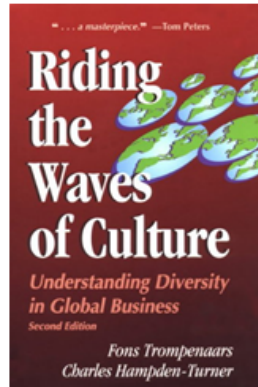
Text:

I became interested in cross-cultural management and communication when I was working in Russia as a TV bureau chief. The differences between Russian and American cultures helped contrast the stark diversity between us. This led to my master's and doctoral research in culture studies.

Slide 3

Cultural Theorists

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

**Text:**

Here are some key theorists in cultural research. But rather than how different we are, the more interesting question to me is: how do we get beyond those differences?

Slide 4

Who Should Care?

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

**Text:**

Effective cross-cultural relations are especially important to international educators and students; global business managers; mass and social media publishers; residents of culturally diverse nations, states, and cities.

Slide 5

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

Text:

The book *Global Work: Bridging Distance, Culture & Time* says 21st century leaders in the worldwide marketplace need to develop cross-cultural skills and supporting technologies to manage and communicate effectively with diverse and dispersed cultural backgrounds.

Slide 6

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)

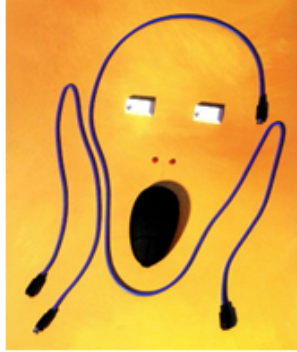
Text:

Teachers are often befuddled on how to teach a room full of international and culturally diverse students, clustered according to their nationality, and not interacting as a unified group of classmates.

Slide 7

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

Text:

The question is: how do we gather a group of culturally diverse people in an international setting, and try to get beyond our differences, reaching together towards a common purpose?

Slide 8

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.

**Text:**

It is a challenge to conduct a study of this type requiring a suitable group of culturally diverse participants, comfortable with the research process, exposed to a wide range of themes and images, with consistent and replicable observations.

Slide 9

Study Sample



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

Text:

A course in global advertising for an international program at the University of California provided the study participants and content. Over the initial study, hundreds of different students representing diverse countries and cultures were exposed to tens-of-thousands of total impressions of commercials with many varied themes and images.

Slide 10

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.

**Text:**

Commercials provided an effective medium since they are brief packets of information, demographically resonant, with a wide variety of themes and images, in a medium universally familiar to the study participants.

Slide 11

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.

**Text:**

Some important terms to consider are 'cross-cultural' relations *between* cultures; and 'transculturalism' which goes above and beyond cultural differences. 'Resonance' can be achieved with a sympathetic vibration; and 'dissonance' creates disagreement and discord.

Slide 12

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

Survey Instrument

Text:

The study sought to identify transcultural positive resonance through clips that received high mean score and low variance from the international participants. A larger variance in responses would indicate a dissonant reaction.

Slide 13

Articles on Transcultural Learning

UNESCO Journal "Prospects"

Van Hook, S.R. (2012, June).
Hopes and hazards of transculturalism.

Article available at <http://wwmr.us>



Journal of Research in International Education

Van Hook, S.R. (2011, April).
Modes and models for
transcending cultural differences
in international classrooms.

Article available at <http://wwmr.us>

Text:

Articles on this research have been published in scholarly journals including UNESCO's *Prospects*, and Sage's *Journal of Research in International Education*. These and other related articles are published on my research website at <http://wwmr.us>

Slide 14

International Student Count

- Countries: 39
- Total Students: 642
- Male: 323 (50%)
- Female: 319 (50%)
- Age range: Mostly early-20s through mid-30s
- Education: Current college students in home countries and college graduates
- Income: Typically upper income bracket families in home countries

Text:

The study included a wide range of countries and cultural diversity, and an even split between participating males and females.

Slide 15**Top Countries (83% of students)**

- Japan: 120 (19%)
- Germany: 110 (17%)
- South Korea: 102 (16%)
- Italy: 50 (8%)
- Vietnam: 49 (8%)
- Turkey: 34 (5%)
- Brazil: 32 (5%)
- Sweden: 32 (5%)

Text:

Diverse cultures of Asia, Europe, the Americas were well represented in the study.

Slide 16

Country Origin of Researcher's International Students
 UCSB / UCLA / CLU International Programs / 2001 - 2010

<u>Austria</u> Female: 3 Male: 0 Total: 3	<u>Bulgaria</u> Male: 0 Female: 2 Total: 2	<u>Denmark</u> Female: 2 Male: 0 Total: 2	<u>Hungary</u> Female: 1 Male: 0 Total: 1	<u>Italy</u> Male: 26 Female: 24 Total: 50
<u>Benin</u> Female: 1 Male: 0 Total: 1	<u>Canada</u> Male: 0 Female: 1 Total: 1	<u>Ecuador</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1	<u>India</u> Female: 2 Male: 0 Total: 2	<u>Japan</u> Female: 76 Male: 44 Total: 120
<u>Bolivia</u> Female: 1 Male: 0 Total: 1	<u>Chile</u> Male: 4 Female: 1 Total: 5	<u>Germany</u> Male: 66 Female: 44 Total: 110	<u>Indonesia</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1	<u>Kuwait</u> Female: 2 Male: 0 Total: 2
<u>Brazil</u> Male: 23 Female: 9 Total: 32	<u>China</u> Female: 7 Male: 6 Total: 13	<u>HongKong</u> Male: 3 Female: 1 Total: 4	<u>Iran</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1	<u>Lebanon</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1

Text:

Wide cultural diversity was strongly represented by participants Italy, Japan, Germany, Brazil ...

Slide 17

Country Origin of Researcher's International Students
 UCSB / UCLA / CLU International Programs / 2001 - 2010

<u>Mexico</u> Male: 3 Female: 0 Total: 3	<u>Nigeria</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1	<u>Slovak Rep.</u> Female: 1 Male: 0 Total: 1	<u>Switzerland</u> Female: 8 Male: 8 Total: 16	<u>Ukraine</u> Male: 2 Female: 1 Total: 3
<u>Mongolia</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1	<u>Philippines</u> Female: 1 Male: 0 Total: 1	<u>South Korea</u> Female: 62 Male: 40 Total: 102	<u>Taiwan</u> Female: 10 Male: 4 Total: 14	<u>Venezuela</u> Male: 1 Female: 0 Total: 1
<u>Netherlands</u> Female: 1 Male: 2 Total: 3	<u>Russia</u> Female: 2 Male: 2 Total: 4	<u>Spain</u> Male: 3 Female: 1 Total: 4	<u>Thailand</u> Female: 4 Male: 0 Total: 4	<u>Vietnam</u> Male: 37 Female: 12 Total: 49
<u>Norway</u> Female: 3 Male: 7 Total: 10	<u>Saudi Arabia</u> Male: 5 Female: 0 Total: 5	<u>Sweden</u> Female: 18 Male: 14 Total: 32	<u>Turkey</u> Female: 17 Male: 17 Total: 34	<u>Uzbekistan</u> Female: 1 Male: 0 Total: 1

Text:

... South Korea, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey.

Slide 18

Transcultural Messages:

What Doesn't Work Well

- Humor
- Sex
- Religion
- Politics

**Text:**

Topics that might create dissonance in a multicultural room include humor, sex, religion, and politics (or nationalism).

Slide 19

Humor Group

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance

$$n = 235$$

$$\bar{x} = 4.5$$

$$\text{Median} = 5.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 3.3$$

$$\Sigma x = 1060$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Humor and jokes are often deeply rooted in a cultural context, so the message may well be lost on others from a different country – even if they understand all the words used.

Slide 20

Sex Group

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 4.5$$

$$\text{Median} = 5.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 2.3$$

$$\Sigma x = 632$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

There are considerable cultural differences in the expressions of sexuality.

Slide 21

Religions Group

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 4.1$$

$$\text{Median} = 4.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 2.3$$

$$\Sigma x = 580$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Wars are sometimes waged over differences in religious beliefs.

Slide 22

Nationalism Group

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance

$$n = 141$$

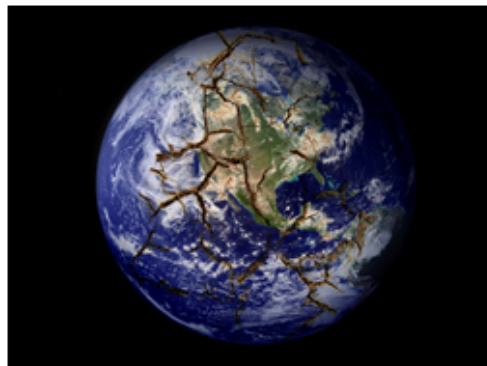
$$\bar{x} = 4.7$$

$$\text{Median} = 5.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 3.4$$

$$\Sigma x = 667$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Messages with a nationalist angle can create a high level of dissonance in a room, especially if nations and cultures are pitted against one another.

Slide 23

Transcultural Themes & Images

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

**Text:**

Transcultural themes and images may be easy to predict by those who work with international students or groups. This study provides the data to quantify and qualify the tactics.

Slide 24 & Video:

Video: Transcultural Clips (6:25)

- YouTube Video
- In-World Player Video

**Text:**

Video: Summary and examples of culturally resonant clips (6:25) <http://youtu.be/6yKNwBbm-Uk>

Video: Longer overview of transcultural study (16:55) <http://howtoteach.us/vanhook5.htm>

Slide 25

Babies Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 5.7$$

$$\text{Median} = 6.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 1.7$$

$$\Sigma x = 808$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Babies and children were the top ranked transculturally resonant theme in the study. If you are ever at a United Nations meeting where the old diplomats are battling, bring out the baby pictures of grandchildren and see if it changes the mood.

Slide 26

Animals Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 5.7$$

$$\text{Median} = 6.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 2.0$$

$$\Sigma x = 798$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Next to babies, the participants ranked the animal clips highly. International students often say they miss their pets back home more than their families. Some of them may be indifferent to animals, but that is more of a personal than cultural reaction.

Slide 27

Relationships Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 5.3$$

$$\text{Median} = 6.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 2.1$$

$$\Sigma x = 754$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

International students found the relationship clips engaging, but were often more interested in the examples that showed conflicts in the relations rather than sweetness.

Slide 28

Sports Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 5.5$$

$$\text{Median} = 6.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 1.8$$

$$\Sigma x = 776$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

The high ranking of sports clips was surprising. I was expecting a dissonant nationalist reaction to sports, but instead found the students typically appreciated excellence and team spirit ... even beyond national, cultural and demographic boundaries.

Slide 29

Self Image Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

$$n = 188$$

$$\bar{x} = 5.0$$

$$\text{Median} = 5.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 2.4$$

$$\Sigma x = 945$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Self-image was a tricky theme to categorize ... but there was a transcultural interest in how other peoples see themselves, and a curiosity to see another culture as outsiders looking in.

Slide 30

Life Cycle Group

Group Classification: Positive Resonance

$$n = 141$$

$$\bar{x} = 5.1$$

$$\text{Median} = 5.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 2.3$$

$$\Sigma x = 723$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

Life cycles: We're born, we live, we die ... for now, something everyone shares in common.

Slide 31

Water Group

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance

$$n = 165$$

$$\bar{x} = 4.4$$

$$\text{Median} = 5.0$$

$$\text{VAR} = 1.8$$

$$\Sigma x = 734$$

$$p < .001$$

**Text:**

The selected water clips didn't pass the cutoff for transcultural resonance, mostly due to confounding variables within a clip. But during qualitative interviews, the water images clearly appealed to the students beyond cultural differences.

Slide 32

Food



Presentation

Text:


Discussions of food and eating habits seem to transcend cultural differences.

Slide 33**Text:**


There also appears to be a transcultural interest in musical rhythms between cultures.


Slide 34

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)

Text:

There seems to be a transcultural interest in possible life forms on other worlds, based on my college presentation series on the topic.

Slide 35

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.

**Text:**

Transcultural tactics in global classrooms can contribute to international student comfort, bonding, integration, content relevancy, and holding their attention.

Slide 36

UC SANTA BARBARA
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



Transculturalism applied to International Student Course in Global Economics

Text:

Here are some examples of transcultural tactics applied to a university course in Global Economics:

Slide 37**Babies/Children: Socioeconomic costs of war**

A Palestinian boy waits to be treated after Israeli missiles struck Gaza city on May 16, 2004.



Sarah Haider, a wounded eight-year-old Iraqi girl, sits in a hospital bed after her house was destroyed in an overnight US air strike, which killed both her parents, in Najaf, May 12, 2004.

"They have to be carefully taught" 📢

Text:

The socioeconomic costs of war can be effectively transculturally illustrated by showing the suffering of children.

Slide 38**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](#)

**Text:**

Transculturally appealing animals can be used to explain how changes in farming practices transformed economic development.

Slide 39**Self-Image: The Masai Aesthetic***Clamor – July/August 2002*

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

Robert Biswas-Diener

"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."



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

**Text:**

The self-image transcultural tool can illustrate differing moral perspectives with a case study on the Masai aesthetic, where they describe someone's physical appearance in terms of their 'goodness'

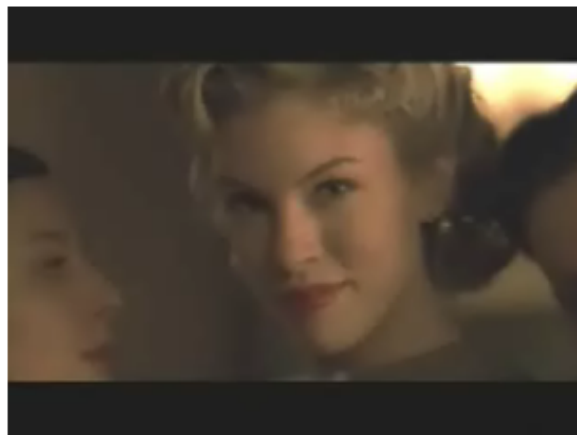
Slide 40**Relationships:**

"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

Text:

A movie video clip from *A Beautiful Mind* demonstrates the principle of group and individual interests in social gain, by using an illustration of men and women interacting at a nightclub.

Slide 41

Sports: Daytona 500 demonstrates complexity theory and social networking.

- 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.

**Text:**

The dynamics of social networking and complexity theory can be demonstrated by the principle of racecar drafting.

Slide 42

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?

Text:

Discussion board topics for international online courses can feature transculturally resonant life-cycle themes such as employment, education, health care, family planning.

Slide 43

Teaching Ideals

**Kerckoff Hall**

UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles)



Korean Students from
Hanyang University

Text:

On-ground and face-to-face learning may long remain the ideal learning environment, especially as it brings together and shares cultural diversity.

Slide 44

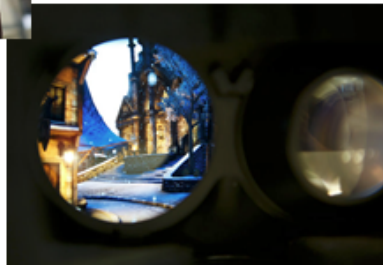
Immersive Technologies



Immersive headset company **Oculus VR** bought for \$2-billion by **Facebook** in 2014.

"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."

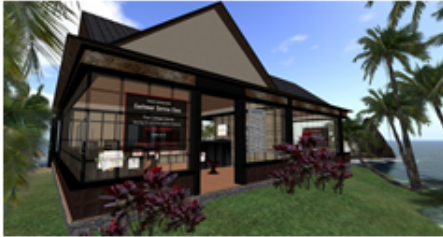
~ Mark Zuckerberg

**Text:**

However new virtual technologies will bring ever larger and more diverse groups of the world's people together.

Slide 45

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.

**Text:**

The Educare Learning Centers in Second Life provide transculturally resonant learning resources.

Slide 46

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



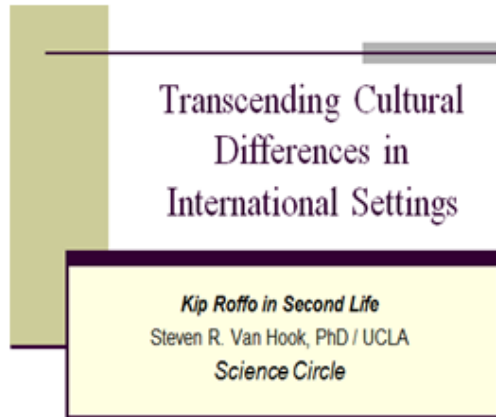
<http://educares.net>

Text:

Educare Research inc (ERi) provides free learning resources supporting international educators and students: <http://educares.net>

Slide 47

Slideshow PDF



Presentation Slides and Notes in PDF File

Text:

You can get a PDF file of this presentation at <http://wwmr.us/support/transculture-VWBPE.pdf>

Slide 48

Dissertation

The logo for Walden University, featuring the text 'WALDEN UNIVERSITY' in a serif font, with the tagline 'A higher degree. A higher purpose.' in a smaller, italicized serif font below it.

- Van Hook, S.R. (2005). Themes and images that transcend cultural differences in international classrooms. *U.S. Education Resources Information Center*. ([ERIC Document No. ED490740](#)). ([Proquest Publication Number 3200710](#)).
- Also available online at <http://wwmr.us/>

Text:

My dissertation on themes and images that transcend cultural differences is posted at <http://wwmr.us>

Slide 49

Questions? Comments?

Steven R. Van Hook / Kip Roffo

- **University of California**
*Language, Culture
& Business Programs*
- **Educare Research inc**
*Nonprofit International
Educational Resources*
- **Second Life: Educare**
Learning Centers
- <http://educares.net>
- <http://wwmr.us>
- steven@wwmr.us



Text:

Feel free to email me with comments and questions: steven@wwmr.us