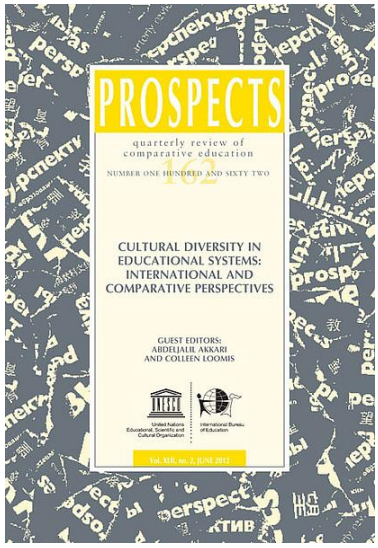

Hopes and Hazards of Transculturalism

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Article 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.

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Introduction

This study addresses the research question: What sorts of themes and images might resonate across cultures, which could be used to ease the way for students and educators in international classrooms? To that end, the research measures international university students' reactions to various themes and images projected through video presentations within global business courses. The study concludes with a consideration of how transcultural tools might be applied to course design, as well as hazards that may occur through misapplications.

Educators of international students are frequently challenged to cope with a clashing diversity of cultures in a classroom setting (Van Hook, 2011). Likewise, international students entering a new culture may face alien circumstances "tantamount to knowing the words without knowing the music, or knowing the music without knowing the dance" (Adler, 2001, p. 99). A foreign environment that provides a familiar ambience through transcultural themes and images may not only reduce the pangs of isolation, but also help improve bonding between students as they are able to better relate to each other through common ground on an individual basis, and as they also enhance their integration within the entire class by finding common group reference points (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000).

Global postsecondary education enrollments are forecasted to reach 160 million by 2025 (Irvine, 2003). Given the increasing numbers of international students within traditional and customized programs as institutions seek to expand their enrollments beyond national borders, curricula and pedagogies need to be adapted to accommodate a wider array of cultural and linguistic differences (OECD, 2003). The transforming capabilities of technology are empowering the rise of global universities, which are able to transcend national borders and draw together a wide range of student diversity in a virtual classroom setting (Levine,

2003). The most successful of the educational institutions "will be those that can respond the quickest and offer a high-quality education to an international student body" (p. 19).

A counter-juxtaposition of circumstance is that the demand for international education is so high while at the same time teachers skilled with global competence are so few (ACE, 2002). Universities and colleges lack sufficient foreign language and international studies faculty—especially in less common languages and nations—and faculty in professional disciplines such as "business, public health, law, and the environment, need greater international expertise. Lack of priority, rising costs, and dwindling funds from all sources have eroded higher education's capacity to produce the numbers and variety of experts needed" (p. 12).

The framework governing the current study was based on a set of fundamental concepts and theories. These include, (a) significant cultural variations exist and can be quantified, thus cultural commonalities may also be measured (Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998); (b) certain themes and images may transcend cultural variations, such as demonstrated through universal symbols, metaphors, archetypes, and mythologies (Campbell, 1988; Jung, 1968; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980); (c) these themes and images may be effective in enhancing classroom resonance and effectiveness (Freire, 1993; Meskill & Swan, 1996; Meyer, 2002); and (d) these transcultural themes and images may be better defined and assessed through qualitative and quantitative measures, as was undertaken in the current study.

While it is essential to discern between culture and nationality, practical circumstances typically meld the two. The measures of culture are vast including a rich spectrum of belief systems and social practices, while nationality is of a singular dimension. Of course, nations

are comprised of many cultural groups, and those cultural groups are in turn comprised of numerous subcultures. However, rather than cultural identities, peoples are frequently categorized according to nationality in international realms of business, politics, education, and so forth, rather than according to their cultural heritage. So for the narrower scope of practical application, a predominant culture—or the cultural mean—of a nation is the base of reference for the current study, as is also the case in numerous referenced cultural studies.

Cultural variations can range from different "ways of knowing" (Berrell, Gloet, & Wright, 2002; Masemann, 1990), to clashes in managerial styles between Western and Asian joint-venture executives (Elashmawi, 1998), to diametric and seemingly irreconcilable opposition in fundamental ethical values (Singhapadki, Rawwas, Marta, & Ahmed, 1999). These cultural conflicts may impede globalization, international business partnerships, transfer of economic and social ideologies, and other critical areas of interrelations, even when all parties have a common aim of effective development in cross-cultural relations. The cultural differences may also disrupt cohesion in an international classroom. Though each of these studies mentioned here and ahead may provide reliable and valid examinations of cultural variations and consequent problems in international settings, they do not effectively consider methods for addressing cultural clashes in ways that—while allowing for the differences—might serve to transcend them.

Some students of international relations may find assessing and assigning cultural dimensions as a demeaning, stereotypical reduction of the rich complexities in human diversity. However, such a negative dynamic should not necessarily be the case. Adler (2001) observed that while it may be unethical to label people from certain ethnic groups as *bad*,

"grouping individuals into categories is neither good nor bad—it simply reduces complexity to manageable proportions" (p. 83).

Students of international relations may also have a problem separating their own belief system when interacting with people from entirely different foundations (Adler, 2001; Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, & Blake, 1999). This may especially be the case between national cultures with extreme differences in regards to human relations and individual rights. Quite often it is not until travelers leave their own national culture behind that they begin to appreciate how profound and deeply rooted a cultural heritage might be (Adler, 2001). "In interacting with foreigners, we learn to recognize and value our fundamental humanity—our cultural similarities and dissimilarities" (p. 35). The cultural upbringing and identity we each carry bore deep into our attitudes and thought processes. Along with searching out ways to bridge cultural differences through common experience, educators may also seek ways to transcend those differences, where shared commonalities between students may help render cultural differences as a secondary concern.

Research Methodology

This mixed qualitative grounded theory and quantitative method study examined student responses to a series of marketing message clips that may or may not have contained transculturally resonant themes and images. Since 2001, more than 500 international students have taken my courses taught at an international program provided through a California university. These students have come from some 35 countries including Austria, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Denmark, Ecuador, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden,

Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela. The majority of students have come from Japan (25%), South Korea (22%), Germany (11%), Turkey (8%), Italy (7%), Brazil (6%), and Sweden (5%). The students have been 55% female and 45% male; mostly in their early 20s through mid-30s. They are often college graduates or current students in their home country.

The courses I have taught in international advertising, global marketing, and marketing communications were especially appropriate for laying the early foundations of this study. Over a single course, the participating international students may view 100 or more television commercials and advertisements from around the world. Television commercials and most other forms of advertisement are efficient quantum packets of communication; demographically resonant and necessarily concise. They are commonly-accepted expressions of relevant life situations and themes.

During classroom sessions, international students may tend to sit in small groups of nationality (from one to five students per seating group, depending upon the size of the class and the national mix): Turks with the Turks, Japanese with Japanese, Brazilians with other Brazilians, and so forth. It is common for the students to interact within their groups during the playing of video clips, communicating among their own cultural group when a clip in particular interests them along linguistic or cultural lines. A transcultural response to a displayed video clip or image may be evidenced when discussions among students go beyond their group seating. A positive transcultural resonance to a presented image and/or theme may be demonstrated when the cross-group discussion is energetic, upbeat, laughing; a cross-culture dissonance may be evidenced when the discussions turn confrontational and

argumentative between seating groups. Other indicators of student response to themes and images that transcend cultural differences may include behaviors as observed by the researcher over repeated course sections: (a) entire class focus on the screen projection in an intense and unified manner, (b) unified and attentive silence, (c) unified laughter, (d) unified chatter, and (e) cross-cultural comments and questions within and outside of class to particular themes and images.

The participants completed a simple quantitative assessment form as they responded to various international marketing messages and video clips containing a wide array of themes and images. A classification formula was used to identify which themes and images may help to evoke a positive resonance within international and culturally diverse classrooms. The classification of clips was a combination of two factors: one, rating a clip's positive, neutral or negative impression on the group; the other factor, assessing the level of resonance or dissonance the clip evoked within the group. To ensure a clear division between negative, neutral, and positive reactions, a 1-point range on either side of the 7- point scale's mid-point of 4 quantified a neutral response. Group responses with a mean ($\bar{x}$) greater than or equal to (≥) 5 were classified as positive; those less than or equal to (≤) 3 were classified as negative. Thus:

Positive: $\bar{x} \geq 5$
Neutral: $3 < \bar{x} < 5$
Negative: $\bar{x} \leq 3$

To ensure a conservative division between classifications of resonance or dissonance, the study employed a variance (VAR or s^2) of greater than or equal to 3, to indicate a dissonance. A reaction with a variance less than 3 indicated a resonance, whether that

resonance related to a generally positive, neutral, or negative reaction to the clip. This scale enabled a definitive distinction, allowing for clear delineation of dissonance, but provided yet an accommodating margin of disagreement within a resonant category. Thus:

Dissonance: VAR ≥ 3
Resonance: VAR < 3

The aim of this study was to identify themes and images within clips that may evoke a positive resonance in the classroom. The possible combinations of the two factors described above gave a number of possible combinations (the sought-after positive resonance, as well as positive dissonance, neutral resonance, neutral dissonance, negative resonance, and negative dissonance). Thus:

$\bar{x} \geq 5$ with VAR < 3 indicated a Positive Resonance
$\bar{x} \geq 5$ with VAR ≥ 3 indicated a Positive Dissonance

$\bar{x} > 3$ but < 5 with VAR < 3 indicated a Neutral Resonance
$\bar{x} > 3$ but < 5 with VAR ≥ 3 indicated a Neutral Dissonance

$\bar{x} \leq 3$ with VAR < 3 indicated a Negative Resonance
$\bar{x} \leq 3$ with VAR ≥ 3 indicated a Negative Dissonance

The descriptive analyses of the survey data also included a sum of the seven-point scale responses ($\sum x$), providing a raw rating of the clip. A maximum clip rating was the number of responses (n) multiplied by 7, the score at the high end of the scale. A relatively high rating with a high variance indicated positive dissonance; a low rating with a high variance indicated a negative dissonance. A high rating with a low variance indicated a positive resonance. Finally, the analysis of the data also included brief comments gleaned from informal participant interviews to expand upon the quantitative data.

The group of participants for the quantitative study included university students enrolled in my global business courses with the university international program during the

years 2004-2005, for a total unduplicated participant sample of 47 students representing 11 countries (18 from South Korea, 8 from Japan, 7 from Turkey, 5 from Brazil, 2 from Germany, 2 from Sweden, and 1 each from Austria, Norway, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Ukraine). The participants were 55% female (26) and 45% male (21). Though the average class size may have been small (ranging from 10 to 20 students per class), the diversity of the students was wide, typically representing vast cultural differences.

Dissonant / Negative / Neutral Themes and Images

There were no surprises in the findings regarding what themes and images might create a neutral, negative, or dissonant reaction among international students, including the reactions to video clips with *humor, sex, religion,* and *nationalism* as central themes. These themes have long been anecdotal as taboo topics leading toward discord at dinner parties, and findings in this study indicate significant cultural variations in participant response as well, especially in thematic areas of *nationalism* (VAR = 3.3) and humor (VAR = 3.3).

The following group categories were identified as dissonant, or resonantly negative or neutral, according to the analysis algorithm as defined above. While themes and images that might evoke culturally dissonant or negative reactions may not necessarily be precluded from use in international classrooms—especially as they may be valuable in stimulating discussion and debate—they might nonetheless be approached cautiously, with an understanding the related topics may especially generate animosities and dissonance between cultures.

Humor

The survey data in Table 1 demonstrate a neutral participant reaction to the collection of *humor* clips ($\bar{x}$ = 4.5), compounded however by a relative high level of dissonance (VAR = 3.3). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *humor* category with neutral dissonance.

Table 1
Humor Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance
n = 235
$\bar{x}$ = 4.5
Median = 5.0
VAR = 3.3
$\sum x$ = 1060
p < .001

An instructor of international students may find vast differences in what various nationalities and cultures find funny (e.g., Asian humor may be based on life anecdotes; Russian humor may be grounded in historical and political affairs; American humor may be a little raunchy). So while humor may serve well when directed toward a specific demographic group with appropriate cultural context, humor misapplied across cultures may create a dissonance in the classroom. One student from Taiwan commented that she "understood the words, but not the thinking" behind American humor. Another student observed a danger in

using humor since "sometimes people might think you are laughing at them" if one laughs at a joke or a funny situation from someone else's culture.

Nationalism

The survey data in Table 2 demonstrate a neutral participant reaction to the collection of *nationalism* clips ($\bar{x}$ = 4.7), with an overall level of dissonance (VAR = 3.3). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *nationalism* category as neutral dissonance.

Table 2
Nationalism Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 4.7
Median = 5.0
VAR = 3.4
$\sum x$ = 667
p < .001

The participants expressed special sensitivity to nationalistic positions, as capably summed up by one student: "You can get in a lot of trouble by celebrating your own nationality to others, when people are so different in their own celebrations." Other students expressed a general aversion to "bad stereotypes" as can be perpetuated by nationalistic posturing.

Sex

The survey data in Table 3 demonstrate a neutral participant reaction to the collection of *sex* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 4.5), with a resonant agreement toward the neutrality (VAR = 2.3). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *sex* category as neutral resonance. This classification compares with the *religion* group below—though not necessarily evoking a negative or dissonant reaction such as the *humor* and *nationalism* groups above—as a theme that may not successfully engage a positive and resonant international exchange in the classroom.

Table 3
Sex Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 4.5
Median = 5.0
VAR = 2.3
$\sum x$ = 632
$p < .001$

Sex within advertisements is a consistent theme, yet the continuum of sexual tone within the presented clips ranged from muted to blatant, affecting the student reactions. International students often exhibit profound cultural differences in what is considered appropriate for sexually themed clips and images. Some students expressed discomfort with the sexual themes: “It’s very different from what we see in Korea”; and “We wouldn’t see

such ads in Turkey." Other students expressed interest in the sexual themes and even requested repeat showings. However, the most vocal participant reactions included comments such as "Some sexy commercials make the woman look like an object. I don't like that" (Brazilian woman); "It's offensive to men as well as women" (German male); and some countries make sex look "too easy—like they don't respect it very much" (Taiwanese woman).

Religion

The survey data in Table 4 demonstrate a neutral participant reaction to the collection of *religion* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 4.1), with a resonant agreement toward the neutrality (VAR = 2.3). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *religion* category as neutral resonance.

Table 4
Religion Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 4.1
Median = 4.0
VAR = 2.3
$\sum x$ = 580
p < .001

The international students participating in this study came from a diversity of religious backgrounds. The South Korean students come from a nation that is about evenly divided

between Christian and Buddhist faiths. Some students come from Islamic nations, while the students from South American come from predominantly Catholic nations, and many European students come from largely protestant countries. Often the students express little knowledge about their own nation's religions, let alone about the religions of other lands. Many of the students said they are only nominal believers in their respective faiths, if at all. While there may be a curiosity about religions, the study participants expressed a sensitivity and apprehension towards ignorant assessments and ridicule of others' religious beliefs. One student commented that it may be best to avoid religious themes and images, because "it is such a personal issue and people react to it differently. For some people their religion is top priority. They value it higher than their own life." Another student observed that older people in particular may be especially sensitive to portrayals of their faith, though "younger people may be more open." Most students expressed an oral agreement that it was best to avoid ridiculing or giving an impression of picking on someone else's faith.

Water

The survey data in Table 5 demonstrate a neutral participant reaction to the collection of *water* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 4.4), with a resonant agreement toward the neutrality (VAR = 1.8). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *water* category as neutral resonance.

Table 5

Water Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Neutral Resonance
$n = 165$
$\bar{x} = 4.4$
Median = 5.0
VAR = 1.8
$\sum x = 734$
$p < .001$

Water is another contextual category, in that is more specifically an image than a theme. Students reacted positively to the water imagery, but may have been diverted by contextual factors within the category clips, for example, seniors swimming in a pool, or the classical music scoring an assortment of water images.

Positively Resonant Themes and Images

The following group categories were identified as positively resonant, according to the analysis algorithm as defined above. The purpose of this study was to seek out these positively resonant themes and images, and quantify the magnitude of the response so the findings might be applied to the problem of instructors' difficulty in achieving classroom cohesion between diverse nationalities and cultures.

Babies

The survey data in Table 6 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of *babies* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 5.7), with a resonant rating (VAR = 1.7). This thematic group received the highest ranking with the strongest resonance of any category in the study. According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *babies* category as positive resonance.

Table 6
Babies Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Positive Resonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 5.7
Median = 6.0
VAR = 1.7
$\sum x$ = 808
p < .001

Both male and female students—especially the later—responded affectionately to the clips with babies: "It's a baby!" and "Babies are so cute and innocent" were common types of comments. The affectionate response wasn't unanimous, however. One male German student

said, “Most people think babies are so cute, but I just think about diapers. It doesn’t appeal to me at all.”

Animals

The survey data in Table 7 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of *animals* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 5.7), with a resonant rating (VAR = 2.0). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *animals* category as positive resonance.

Table 7
Animals Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Positive Resonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 5.7
Median = 6.0
VAR = 2.0
$\sum x$ = 798
p < .001

There is an advertising adage that the most successful commercials invoke the three *B*s to attract consumer attention: Beasts, babies, and beauties. In relative magnitude, the presented clips in the *animals* group tied with the babies group in the survey’s highest scores, though slightly less in overall resonance.

Relationships

The survey data in Table 8 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of *relationships* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 5.3), with a resonant rating (VAR = 2.1). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *relationships* category as positive resonance.

Table 8
Relationships Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Positive Resonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 5.3
Median = 6.0
VAR = 2.1
$\sum x$ = 754
p < .001

As most of my international students are in their early to mid-20s and, with rare exception, unmarried, they are especially responsive to clips with a theme of relationships. Though the dynamics of a relationship may vary from culture to culture—in particular the respective roles and positions of the sexes—the students are especially attracted to clips that show a common tension between partners in a relationship, tensions of a type that go beyond cultural differences. For example, one student commented regarding a clip featuring a bickering husband and wife that "Everywhere people get married. It's universal."

Sports

The survey data in Table 9 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of *sports* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 5.5), with a resonant rating (VAR = 1.8). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *sports* category as positive resonance.

Table 9
Sports Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Positive Resonance
n = 141
$\bar{x}$ = 5.5
Median = 6.0
VAR = 1.8
$\sum x$ = 776
p < .001

International discussions of sports are frequently marked with rivalries between nations, yet there appears to be a transcultural commonality in their love of the game. One young Brazilian woman participating in the study described her reaction to the theme of sports as a shared camaraderie between competitors: “It’s just a game, unless we’re playing Argentina. We have fights with them, but just them. (Usually) it’s a good feeling between the people when we’re playing.”

Self Image

The survey data in Table 10 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of *self image* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 5.0), with a resonant rating (VAR = 2.4). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *self image* category as positive resonance.

Table 10
Self Image Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Positive Resonance
n = 188
$\bar{x}$ = 5.0
Median = 5.0
VAR = 2.4
$\sum x$ = 945
$p < .001$

This grouping is a reference to how we see other people, rather than how we see our own selves. While we all may have a self image, we might also appreciate that others have their own self image, and even though we may not understand or relate to that image, we may have a transcultural interest in the self image of others. The follow-up interviews included participant comments on this theme such as "It's nice to see lots of different kinds of people"; "I like ads that show the masses"; and "Different cultures, different customs are interesting to me." One South Korean participant, however, commented after a session that some people may find the flags and national anthems of their historic enemies' offensive, and some students expressed bewilderment over cultural contexts perhaps antithetical to their own.

Life Cycles

The survey data in Table 11 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of *life cycles* group clips ($\bar{x}$ = 5.1), with a resonant rating (VAR = 2.3). According to the data analysis algorithm, these results classify the *life cycles* category as positive resonance.

Table 11
Life Cycles Group Descriptive Analysis

Group Classification: Positive Resonance
$n = 141$
$\bar{x} = 5.1$
Median = 5.0
VAR = 2.3
$\sum x = 723$
$p < .001$

Regardless of our diverse national systems and cultures, one fundamental trait all peoples have in common is that they are born, they live, and they die. Participant comments on clips within this thematic group included "Birth and death—everybody has the same physical process," and "My career, my life, babies—I think a lot about those things."

The images and themes referenced in this study necessarily derive from the creative mindsets and incentives of international marketing and advertising. The industry produces audience appeals covering in large part the panorama of human desires, needs, and emotions. Yet the presented images and themes are hardly representative of the great diversity of human experience in the potential realms of transcultural communications, especially in the loftier dimensions of psychology and intellect, heart and spirit.

Transcultural Hazards

Instructors in international programs may well benefit from transcultural tools in the classroom. Research has indicated that transcultural themes and images such as *children, animals, life cycles, relationships and sports* can transcend cultural differences through a shared sense of reference in international classrooms, and this *transcultural resonance* may be used in

traditional and online university classrooms to create common ground among diverse cultures (Van Hook, 2011). However, before considering how transcultural themes and methods might be applied in appropriate circumstances, it would be prudent to consider how tactics of transculturalism might be misapplied, either through unintentional malfunction or nefarious design.

The successful application of transcultural tactics may well be derailed by a perilous misapplication of method and intent. These hazards include a dismissive regard for cultural diversity; a homogenization of the educational process; a pedagogical advantage to cultural imperialists; ever greater schisms between developing and developed nations; destabilizing threats to existing systems; as well as personal threats to successful proponents of education reform; as considered below.

Conscientious educators should be clear on intentions toward achieving a transcultural environment, as opposed to imposing a particular worldview on international classmates. Freire (1993) warned against a form of cultural invasion, where misguided educators may "penetrate the cultural context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities; they impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression" (p. 152). Established institutions offering education to other nations may frequently be insensitive to the characteristics of a local culture and the students' particular needs (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2004). A primary use of English as the language of international instruction raises further questions "about cultural imperialism and homogenization. Developing countries would surely be ill-served if universities from the outside replaced local universities rather than supplemented them" (p. 28).

A dominant cultural penetration may be inadvertent or an intentional imposition of particular political or economic agendas through propaganda empowered by transcultural tactics. To protect against the imposition of alien agendas, numerous countries have closed themselves from the influences of outside perspectives. According to the human rights organization Freedom

House, at least 20 countries—such as Myanmar, Cuba, North Korea, and China—have restricted their citizens' access to alien influences, particularly through the Internet. Foreign educational efforts—whether online or onground—may be especially suspect. Education in particular has been jealously guarded in many nations and is carefully protected as a matter of nationalism and a solidifier of cultural differences (Irvine, 2003). Educators should be heedful in using transcultural learning methods to advance an instructor's own particular political or social agenda, not only for the ethical issues that may be raised, but for the damage it may do to the tenuous participation of nations already wary of outside motives.

Providing culturally isolated peoples access to a global collective of cultures is not necessarily a clear-cut end in itself, as witnessed by some of the pitfalls found when introducing connective technology to village life. Cotopoxi men remote in Ecuador used their aid-provided computer equipment to access online pornography rather than crop information, much to the dismay of Cotopoxi women. And when impoverished women of the Wapishana and Macushi tribes in Guyana began making "big" money by marketing their hand-woven hammocks over the Web, the threatened male hierarchy drove them from their homes (Romero, 2000).

Some educators who effectively employ teaching tools such as transcultural learning may find themselves victims of their own results. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire proved especially successful in adapting teaching method and molding it into themes and images that resonated with his target students—the impoverished and illiterate workers of Brazil's villages and cities. In fact, so successful were Freire's techniques, that within just 45 days, 300 workers in the city of Angicos had learned to read and write (Elias & Merriam, 1995, p. 146). Confronted by opposition in Brazilian conservative circles, Freire was accused of "using his literacy method to spread subversive and revolutionary ideas," ultimately landing Freire in jail along with other leftist leaders following a military coup (p. 146).

Transcultural Applications

The question now addressed is how might transculturalism be best applied across cultural diversities in international classrooms? The following examples consider possible methods to promote learning in an international classroom for a course in global economics, and the means to apply the transculturally resonant themes and images identified in this study as supported through multimedia presentations. The thematic groupings of the considered examples include positively resonant themes *of babies/children, animals, relationships, sports, self image,* and *life cycles.* A brief video that samples clips referenced in the study and offers possible educational applications is available at http://wwmr.us/support/transculture/transculture.htm

Babies and Young Children

Components of a course in global economics might address the social and economic costs of war, slave labor, trafficking in women and children, and so on. Issues regarding human rights and social justice may make a deeper and more resonant impression on the students if presented within the context of the impact on babies and young children.

Animals

The evolution of complex economic systems may be illustrated by employing the transculturally resonant application of animals, for example the economic dynamics of technological development might be affectively illustrated with the resonant assistance of cows: Prior to refrigeration, the only way to keep milk fresh at home was inside the cow. Once refrigeration was invented, milk could be purchased from ever-larger dairy farms, where

each cow in the herd represented one family that no longer had to have a cow, freeing up human and natural resources for other avenues of personal and societal development.

Relationships

The economic cycle might be considered through a *sigmoid curve* graphic, and comparing how economic cycles rise and fall much in the same way as personal relationships often do—starting low, peaking, then declining, before moving on to something new. Furthermore, employing the relationship theme to help demonstrate John Nash's theory of equilibrium, international students may benefit by a video clip from the popular movie *A Beautiful Mind*, calling into question a fundamental principle of Adam Smith that the driver of individual self-interest serves the common good. The clip portrays young men in a bar competing for the attention of a young beautiful woman, ultimately tripping over each other as well as alienating the other young women in the room. The clip illustrates a proposed mix of strategies, where the best interests of the individual are served when also considering the good of the group.

Sports

The theme of sports may evoke a spirit of camaraderie in the classroom—a common bond even in the competitive atmosphere of sports. The principle of mixed cooperative and competitive economic drivers might be resonantly demonstrated through example of the racecar interaction in the Daytona 500, where a driver must attract a *drafting* partner in ever-shifting patterns of cooperation and competition among rivals.

Self Image

This study indicated a transcultural interest in the lifestyles and ways of other nations and cultures, and cultural subgroups as well. This resonant theme may be effectively employed as the global economics course considers related issues of business ethics, various perspectives on wealth and value, as well as differing takes on the context of human socioeconomic interaction. This might be illustrated for example by considering the Masai concept of value and beauty in others, where the word for *physical appearance* roughly translates as a person's *goodness.*

Life Cycles

Both face-to-face and online discussions may be useful to address greater economic and social issues impacting the students' daily life, stimulated with discussion topics such as common concerns of unemployment, military spending, education funding, health care support, family planning, and so on. These discussions might be facilitated with topical life-cycle questions, such as: What does someone do in your country when they lose a job? What is happening with the birthrate in your country? What are you own plans for marriage and family?

Further Applications

Transcultural teaching methods may apply in the face-to-face classroom experience, or in the increasingly rich online environment uniting students around the world in a common virtual classroom. With the rapid hardware and software breakthroughs, newer information technology could soon provide human interaction in a high-definition and three-dimensional

telepresence, allowing for distance education comparable to a face-to-face experience (Duderstadt, 2000). Already the current experience with the asynchronous distance learning process can be just as effective as the classroom experience in terms of learning and costs, and in some technical ways may already be superior to regular courses (Bok, 2003).

Educators dedicating themselves to global access to education may well benefit from tools that better empower international learning through transcultural tactics, which help improve common ground and positive interactions among students of diverse nationalities and cultures. Practical experience may demonstrate that many administrators in higher education are less concerned with addressing issues of such social good, but are rather more concerned with mundane issues of enrollment numbers and student retention. A transcultural approach to international education may help address those concerns, as well as issues of greater social significance. As institutions improve the learning experience for international students, they may enhance their competitiveness in the global education marketplace (ACE, 2002). This is particularly true of American colleges and universities, which "cannot claim to have the best system of higher education in the world unless graduates can free themselves of ethnocentrism bred of ignorance and can navigate the difficult terrain of cultural complexity" (Engberg & Green, 2002, p. 7), such as may be assisted through the application of transcultural tools.

Beyond the academic and programmatic benefits that might be gained from enhanced transcultural learning, strained global relations call for more effective communications within other international settings as well. Many international students studying abroad might eventually assume top leadership positions in their home countries. The international students participating in effectively designed transcultural learning programs may ultimately contribute improved cross-cultural leadership toward a less conflicted world.

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