Modes and Models for Transcending Cultural Differences in International Classrooms

by

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ABSTRACT

Educators of international students are frequently challenged to cope with a clashing diversity of cultures in a classroom setting. This study examined what sorts of themes and images might resonate across nationalities and cultures, which could then be used as tools to aid an instructional framework for international education. The study employed mixed qualitative and quantitative methods to identify and analyze transculturally resonant images and themes. International students viewed and rated a series of video clips presented in the context of global business courses. 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. The findings were used to consider instructional applications for more effective learning in international classroom settings.
Introduction

Educators of international students are frequently challenged to cope with a clashing diversity of cultures in a classroom setting. 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). The research question at hand is: What sorts of themes and images might resonate across nationalities and cultures, which could be used to construct an instructional framework to ease the way for international students and educators? To that end, this study examined international university students’ reactions to various themes and images projected through video presentations, within international business courses. Data were collected through a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods including observation, interviews, and a measurement instrument, with sufficient safeguards to ensure study reliability and validity. Following the data collection, the study sought to identify and categorize any transcultural images and themes that may resonate across diverse national and cultural backgrounds, within a theoretical framework that may be applicable to enhanced learning in international classrooms.

One of the common shortcomings of international education is that instructors may often be unprepared for and unaccommodating of the diverse cultural variations and needs found among international students (e.g., Pinheiro, 2001). Though instructors cannot be expected to become experts on the diversity of world cultures, they can become better skilled at finding methods to adapt to the challenge in a way that—while acknowledging cultural variations—seeks to transcend them.
This study considers transcultural models to conduct more effective learning experiences in international higher educational settings. If such tactics are further developed, international students could benefit in a number of ways, including an increased comfort level in a strange environment; improved bonding between students as they relate to each other on individual common ground; enhanced integration within the class by finding common group ground; improved course relevancy by seeking transcultural context for the materials; and improved application of resonant themes and images to better engage students’ attention in the learning process. Finally, the study findings may be applied to instructional methods and curricula development administrators and educators might consider to improve learning opportunities for international students, and to be better prepared for the increasingly competitive globalized environment of higher education.

Nature of the Study

This study employed mixed qualitative grounded theory and quantitative methods to identify and analyze potential transculturally (culturally transcendent) resonant images and themes. The study findings were then used to consider transcultural models toward more effective learning in international classroom settings. The foundations of the study employed a qualitative grounded theory approach, seeking a theoretical context for researcher observations over 4 years teaching diverse groups of international students. For the quantitative element, a simple survey instrument was applied to provide a measure of participant reactions to the presented themes and images within courses comprised of international students. The themes and images examined in the study were
gleaned from international marketing video clips played in PowerPoint presentations
during global marketing and advertising courses for international students, with student
reactions measured through observation, informal interviews, and student assignments.

Study Questions

The primary research question in the study was what sorts of themes and images
might create a positive transcultural resonance within an international classroom
comprised of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds? A secondary question that
followed the research was how might such culturally transcendent themes and images be
applied to course design, both in traditional and online international settings?

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

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.
This study was grounded in a conceptual premise that international cultural variations are profound and readily measurable. Consequently, cultural commonalities may also be measured. Dutch anthropologist Geert Hofstede investigated various dimensions of culture in his original and definitive cultural study, demonstrating that cultural differences may be effectively measured by use of the survey process, producing a databank with answers to 117,000 survey questions. Subsequently, the research of Fernandez et al. (1997) expanded Hofstede’s work with a quantitative examination of cultural differences in nine countries not originally included in Hofstede’s study, collecting data from a sample of 7,201 respondents through surveys measuring cultural variation. Although Hofstede’s methodology incorporated key criteria of consistency of setting within a company culture, the aim of the study was to discover cultural variation between homogenous groups, rather than find transcultural commonalities between diverse groups—the opposite aim of the current study.

Other cultural observers have developed similar measurement tools for dissecting the mindset of a society. Hall (1989) defined various and often-cited cultural dimensions, including those of high and low context consideration of circumstances, monochronic versus polychronic perceptions of time, issues of personal space, and patterns of information flow. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) provided an eight-dimensional algorithm for measuring cultures, with a continuum between poles of cultural characteristics. These studies demonstrate the validity of efforts to describe, quantify, and qualify cultural variations. As with Hofstede’s research, these studies were limited to identifying variations between cultures, rather than seeking a means to transcend those differences. However, they do provide a valuable insight into quantitative
methods that may be applied to the current study, augmenting the qualitative observations
with an objective quantitative measurement tool as detailed below in the description
below of the study methodology.

Among the more interesting and applicable works on culture—especially relating
to issues in international education—are the writings of Paulo Freire. Freire’s (1993)
applied theory was actually quite simple: speak to the students using themes, images,
symbols, and words that resonate with them. Addressing the needs of Brazil’s underclass,
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,
1973, p. 159). Freire (1993) 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
observed the use of symbols in effective communications, where “in the relationship
between communication and dialogue the Subjects engaged in dialogue express
themselves through a system of linguistic signs” (Freire, 1973, p. 138). 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.

Freire proved especially successful in adapting his teaching method and molding
it into themes and images that resonated with his students—the impoverished and
illiterate workers of Brazil’s villages and cities (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Although an
excellent insight into the viability of effectively applied themes in the classroom, his
work was directed to a national sub-culture, rather than the international cultural diversity examined in the current study.

Other theorists have also specified themes and images that may resonate across differing cultures. For example, Jung (1968) identified certain archetypes that transcend cultural differences and may “reproduce themselves in any time or in any part of the world” (p. 58), such as the universal theme of a paradise or golden age. The universal resonance of certain themes and images may be found regardless of place and time, even when contributory factors such as transmission from ancestors or migratory cross fertilization may be ruled out (p. 58). The universal resonance to particular themes and symbols may reside in a collective consciousness—the “part of the psyche which retains and transmits the common psychological inheritance” of all humanity (p. 98). He detailed a number of ancient symbolic images and myths that have survived to the current day from antiquity (p. 97). These archetypal themes include the cosmogonic myth (or the creation of the world and humanity), the symbolism of rebirth such as demonstrated in common rites of solstice, the hero in battle to rescue the distressed, sexual images of fertility, themes of shadows challenging the ego, symbols of transcendence and release, and so forth. While these themes and images may be universal, they may prove challenging to reduce to practical applications for achieving transcultural resonance in the classroom.
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

This study’s framework included a presentation of themes and images, by way of advertisements and television commercials viewed by participating international students during the regular presentation of materials in international advertising and marketing courses. A similar study might be conducted among international students relying on other thematic media such as art, music, or literature, although those media may provide a more limited variety of themes and images from which to select and measure within the constraints of classroom time. Though certain forms of images presented in the classroom (such as static paintings and photographs) may fail to operate transculturally and without regard for social contexts (Loizos, 2002), a benefit of using commercials and other advertisements is that they provide a near-globally recognizable and familiar medium (Mueller, 1996).

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. Advertisements might be considered as practical applications maximizing market-driven efficiencies toward the understanding of human motives and behavior, as modified for specifically targeted demographics. It could well be as British writer Norman Douglas observed, that we “can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements.” However, though commercials may be a commonly recognized form of communication, it does not mean individual commercials’ themes and images are commonly interpreted across cultural
groups. Indeed, there are numerous examples where a message resonant or appropriate in
one cultural setting may prove disastrous if misapplied to another culture (Anholt, 2000).

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.
However, advertising is used in some way to promote almost every good or service
consumed by almost every type of person on earth, so most fundamental human needs
and aspirations are at some time likely to be addressed through the ubiquitous display of
advertisements. The commercials and other advertisements used within this study were
obtained through databases with vast collections of advertising messages gathered from
around the world.

Groups of international students participating in courses over the years 2002
through 2005 were in smaller classes than the prior years, following the 9/11 disaster
where student visas to study in the United States were more difficult to obtain, and some
students were more reluctant to study with US-based international programs.
Furthermore, students attending the study’s international program held at a California
university typically represent some of the higher-income and more privileged classes of
their home countries, for example, children of government officials, corporate officers,
and land owners. Yet Hofstede (1997) indicated that the examined core cultural
dimensions tend to be independent of localized social variation and stratification in such
sub-groupings as religion, generation, gender, and social class. The higher social
positions of the students also helps ensure they may well become key decision-makers in
their home countries, underscoring the necessity for an effective and culturally enriching
experience in their international studies.

There was also concern regarding research methodologies that involve more in-depth interview and survey processes, which may have resulted in culturally skewed results based on a student’s cultural proclivity to volunteer (or not) for such activity. To avoid this, the data collection process consisted of informal interviews during regular class sessions, with the researcher relying on less intrusive observations of classroom dynamics, comments, room ambiance, and so on, as well as a simple measurement tool.

Finally, the theoretically transcultural images and themes visited in the study’s global marketing and advertising courses were necessarily limited to those selected by message producers within the constraints and demands of the marketing industry, and the instructor’s selection of these clips to illustrate industry practices. Other potentially transcultural themes and images may exist well beyond those that were observed in the current study within business courses, particularly given the wide array of other subjects international students may study.

Research Method

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. The participants in the study included students from numerous countries enrolled in global business courses through a
California university’s extension international program. The clips in the study were selected according to an ongoing qualitative consideration of international student reactions to various themes and images displayed over several years of course presentations. 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.

It is no simple prospect to examine the effective application of themes and images for enhanced teaching across multiple nationalities. It required a diverse group of international participants gathered over an extended period of time and comfortable enough in a cross-cultural setting to express viewpoints perhaps opposed to others in class; as well as consistent exposure to numerous images and themes; and an attentive researcher/observer who might make some theoretical assumptions.

These combined challenges may explain why an extensive literature review turned up so few references on the topic. This current study had a happy intersection of all three requirements: the diverse nationalities of students attending a university international program; exposure to hundreds of themes and images through video clips presented in global marketing and advertising courses; and a researcher trained and experienced in international broadcast production and journalistic observation, and professional expertise in cross-cultural public education. With more than 200 international students viewing more than 100 video clips over each course prior to the study, it provided a rich pool of more than 20,000 impressions on which to base the research.
Setting and Sample

Since 2001, some 500 international students have taken my courses taught at an international extension program provided through a California university. These students have come from more than 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. They frequently stay for two or more quarters in the United States—not an inexpensive proposition in the California university’s city. They typically come from upper-income and well-placed families in their home countries.

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 quarter, the participating international students may view 100 or more television commercials and advertisements from around the world. Though certain forms of images presented in the classroom (such as paintings and photographs) may fail to operate transculturally and without regard for social contexts (Loizos, 2002), a benefit of using commercials and other advertisements is that they provide a near-globally recognizable and familiar medium (Mueller, 1996). Television commercials and most other forms of advertisement are efficient quantum packets of communication;
demographically resonant and necessarily concise. They are commonly accepted, practical expressions of relevant life situations and themes.

I have a professional background working with video images and themes in international settings. I was employed as a reporter, anchor, bureau chief, and producer in local and international television news from 1986 through 2000, responsible for selecting video clips to support diverse storylines. My international media experience also included 5 years as a journalist and television producer in Eastern Europe (Russia and Ukraine). I spent 4 years in management for a mass-media public education program in Ukraine, developing television, radio and print campaigns targeting a national Ukrainian audience as well as diverse subcultures within the Ukrainian population. While based in Ukraine, I also completed a master’s degree in business communications, with an emphasis on cross-cultural management. I have taught international university students since 2001, in courses including international advertising, global marketing, marketing communications, and global economics.

The participating international students were advanced English students enrolled in business courses that are to approximate as closely as possible the experience they will face once they take regular university courses, while still however accommodating their diverse language needs and cultural adjustments. 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, Koreans with their own, Japanese with their own, 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: (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.

Over repeated courses prior to the formal study, with more than 200 students viewing more than 100 video clips each, I had observed student reaction to more than 20,000 impressions, and gained further insights through student comments on why they may have reacted in certain ways to the presented themes and images. Throughout the observations, student comments, and review of their course assignments (such as student final projects analyzing international advertising message development), I began to theorize categorical groupings for the themes and images that elicited and encompassed the classroom responses described above. These central topic groups include humor, sex, religion, and nationalism—mostly evident because of the heated arguments and classroom dissonance those topics may evoke.

Central topic categories that appeared to generate more harmonious discussions involved themes and images such as animals, relationships, babies/children, sports, water, life cycles, and self image. These last three topics may need just a few more
words of expansion. A common experience among my international students at this coastal university is their attraction to the Pacific Ocean stretching along the campus shoreline. They show a similar response to advertising clips that include some sort of water imagery. The thematic grouping of life cycles reflects the fundamental and commonly shared human process. We all are born, live, and die—the rest is just details (a line that usually gets a laugh from the class). The grouping of self image has more to do with our curiosity over how others see themselves, rather than a focus on our own image. We may not understand another human or group, and we may not want to be like them, but we still are intrigued by their own self image. This dynamic, beyond some selected video clips, is also evident during one of the popular sessions with students in a presentation on flags and national anthems from around the world.

Based on repeated observations of students’ reactions to particular images and themes within these general groupings, I selected a collection of clips for the study. The goal was to attempt a measure of which themes and images may best create a positive resonance—or, in acoustical parlance, a sympathetic vibration in the room. Some themes and images may create a negative resonance, or a discordant dissonance disrupting the educational flow, or may simply incur an indifferent boredom; so it is useful to identify those as well.

Quantitative Research Design

The Sample

The group of participants for the quantitative study included university students from diverse countries enrolled in several of my global business courses with the university international program during the academic years 2004-2005, for a total
unduplicated participant sample of 47 students. This grouping of participants may be considered a convenience sample as they were readily accessible and enrolled in courses in which the images and themes were both presented as subject matter and examined as part of the current study. However, this selection of participants was also more than a simple convenience sample; this sample was not only representative but indeed was the bulk of the advanced population of the university’s international program. The students in these elective courses are not only representative and substantially inclusive of the diversity of international students in the advanced language program, but are also representative of the population of international students studying throughout the United States; a preponderance of the students from Asia, with strong representation from Europe, and developing southern nations (OECD, 2003).

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 from nations of Europe, Africa, South American, Eastern Europe, and Asia. Such cultural extremes allowed for a form of maximum variation sampling, a sampling strategy that may turn the weakness of a small sample into strength (Patton, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) observed that when researchers can maximize the differences within comparative groups, they may bring out the “widest possible coverage on ranges, continua, degrees, types, uniformities, variations, causes, conditions, consequences, probabilities of relationships, strategies, process, structural mechanisms, and so forth, all necessary for elaboration of the theory” (p. 57).
The student participants completed a simple assessment form as they observed a PowerPoint presentation, responding to various international marketing messages and video clips containing an array of themes and images. The presented clips are described in Appendix A. The students were instructed to refrain from talking or laughing or other such expression during the presentation and survey, to avoid a diffusion effect of opinions (Glesne, 1998). These clips were presented to the study participants as part of the regular context of materials within the course during normally scheduled class hours. While it may provide better researcher controls to hold a presentation session apart from the regular class, that would have required a considerably higher degree of voluntary student participation, and could serve better as a study of cultural proclivity to volunteer, rather than serving the study at hand. Furthermore, the study sought to address the applicability of themes and images within regular class sessions with all the related factors and influences, so assessing the effectiveness of the presentation within a regular class session may have been more appropriate.

Reliability and Validity

The measurement instrument employed a reliability-tested simple 7-point summated scale, on a multi-page form where participants rated their reactions to an assortment of video clips and images projected through a PowerPoint presentation. The instrument response choices ranged from strongly dislike to strongly like, with a no opinion option at the midpoint.
Among the controls, the research methodology included informal follow-up interviews during regular class sessions conducted once the written survey had been administered. Open-ended interview questions sought further description of the students’ reaction to the presented themes and images, probing for insights into the aspects of the themes and images that may contribute to transcultural resonance or dissonance. The interviews also questioned where sub-themes or other incidental factors (such as the music selection, cast of characters, or even a dog breed) may have influenced or subverted the participants’ reaction to a primary theme, as further considered below in the section on data analysis. Excerpted student comments were used to illustrate these influences as warranted.

To further ensure the study’s validity, the research methodology combined an assortment of clips within the central group headings to mitigate the influences of sub-themes and other skewing factors. The selection of clips throughout the study was slightly modified as follow-up interviews indicated sub-themes or other incidental factors were significantly imposing upon the impact and measurement of the clip’s central theme.

Data Analysis

The presented video clips within the study were rated according to their levels of negative, neutral, and positive reactions combined with the degree of resonance and dissonance in each instance. The data analyses included descriptive analyses assessing the magnitude of differences in participant reaction, a significance test of the study results, and qualitative detail elaborating on the collected quantitative data. All
descriptive statistics in the analyses as detailed below were rounded to the nearest tenth, unless by rounding up or down the central group ranking would be moved into a different category—a circumstance that did not occur.

Each clip presented in the survey, though categorized according to a primary theme, typically and unavoidably also contained one or more sub-themes. For example, a primary theme of relationships may contain a sub-theme of sexuality, which could skew the participant assessment of the primary theme. To mitigate skewed responses to a mix of sub-themes within any clip, the data analysis combined a minimum of three clips within a thematic grouping (e.g., the humor group, nationalism group, life cycles group, water group, and so on), so high and/or low outlying variations attributable to sub-themes might be mitigated between the clips. Thus, for the thematically grouped clips, the number of sample responses \((n)\) encompassed the total data for the subgroupings of clips combined.

The classification formulae described below relied on a data mean for determining negative and positive reactions to a clip. However, the data analysis also included a median analysis to identify possible skewing of the data by participant response outliers. Some of the participants in a pilot study admitted to ranking a particular response to a clip at an extreme, for reasons that had little to do with the theme or image itself. For example, one student did not like the particular breed of dog in the clip; another student simply did not like a clip’s music score. Instructors may need to acknowledge such outliers in the classroom because they are common fixtures, and just one extreme viewpoint might shift the character of the class.
Classification Formulae

The aim of the classification formulae was to help 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 \( \geq 5 \) were classified as positive; those less than or equal to \( \leq 3 \) 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: \( \text{VAR} \geq 3 \)
Resonance: \( \text{VAR} < 3 \)

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:

\[
\bar{x} \geq 5 \text{ with } \text{VAR} < 3 \text{ indicated a Positive Resonance}
\]
\[
\bar{x} \geq 5 \text{ with } \text{VAR} \geq 3 \text{ indicated a Positive Dissonance}
\]
\[
\bar{x} > 3 \text{ but } < 5 \text{ with } \text{VAR} < 3 \text{ indicated a Neutral Resonance}
\]
\[
\bar{x} > 3 \text{ but } < 5 \text{ with } \text{VAR} \geq 3 \text{ indicated a Neutral Dissonance}
\]
\[
\bar{x} \leq 3 \text{ with } \text{VAR} < 3 \text{ indicated a Negative Resonance}
\]
\[
\bar{x} \leq 3 \text{ with } \text{VAR} \geq 3 \text{ indicated a Negative Dissonance}
\]

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.

The subgrouped clips were randomized on the measurement instrument to
mitigate data skews possibly caused by initial responses with no comparative context,
sub-group overlap, and participant fatigue. The measurement analysis provided
descriptive data including median, mean, variance, and raw score, as well as the clip
classification the analyses indicated. The individual clip analyses were aggregated for the
respective thematic group score. The analyses of study findings also included a two-tailed
hypothesis test considering the significance of the study results, supporting the extent to
which the findings and conclusions might be generalized and applied to other contexts.
Research Findings

The primary research question addressed in this study was what sorts of themes and images might create a positive transcultural resonance within an international classroom comprised of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds? Based on the methodology described above and further detailed below, the research data from this study indicate that certain themes and images may indeed evoke a positive transcultural resonance. These include babies/children, animals, relationships, sports, self image, and life cycles. Themes and images that evoke a negative dissonance or a neutral reaction were examined as well, since international instructors may need to consider those factors in course design. Those themes and images include religion, sex, humor, and nationalism.

Dissonant / Negative / Neutral Themes and Images

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 235$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 1060$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure broader national representation in the analysis of applied humor, the humor group survey was comprised of a larger selection of component clips than the other group categories (five clips instead three), including clip titles of “Fish Love” (Singapore), “Whassup” (U.S.A.), “Love Kiss” (Russia), “The Haka” (Belgium), and “Proof” (U.K.). These clips are described in Appendix A. Humor may not correctly be considered a theme in itself, but rather the contextual application of a theme. For example, the sexually-themed humor in “Proof” did not rate well across cultures in the survey ($\bar{x} = 3.9$; VAR = 2.1), while the resonant relationship theme within the humorous “Fish Love” clip scored higher with the international participants ($\bar{x} = 5.6$; VAR = 1.7).
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Neutral Dissonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 141$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.7$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 667$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The nationalism group was comprised of clips providing adamant statements and displays of nationalistic patriotism. The component clips included titles “The Haka” (Belgium), “I Am American” (U.S.A.), and “I Am Canadian” (Canada). The clips are described in Appendix A. 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. One of the largest variances (VAR = 3.9) in the study—signifying a relatively high degree of dissonance—was toward the clip, “I Am an American” with various races of Americans repeating the title phrase throughout the clip. Some students expressed weariness with the nationalistic point: “It was annoying, the repeating of I’m American—American, American, American”; while others found the diversity of America an interesting counterpoint to their frequently homogenous cultures: “They’re all kind of different, but they’re still American.”

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Neutral Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 632$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. The presented clips within the sex group included “Headache” (Brazil), “Proof” (U.K.), and “Quick Soup” (U.K.), as individually described in Appendix A. International students often exhibit profound cultural differences in what is considered appropriate for sexually themed clips and images. The Asian students and the students from Islamic Turkey expressed the greatest 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Neutral Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 141$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 580$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. The Turkish students come from an Islamic nation, 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.
This was the case in the survey and oral response to the selection of images for the religion group, including clip titles of “Pope,” “Rabbi,” and “Priest and Nun” as described in Appendix A.

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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Neutral Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 165$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 4.4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 734$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Water is another contextual category, in that it is more specifically an image than a theme. Water as an image is a supporting character in the thematic presentation, so consequently the reactions to the water clips were complicated by overriding themes. For this category there were five clips within the category, to help further mitigate student reactions to various themes within the clips. The water group component clips as described in Appendix A included clip titles of “Water” (U.S.A.), “Swimming” (Thailand), “Seniors” (France), “Water Ballet” (France), and “Use Me Up” (U.S.A.). 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/Children

The survey data in Table 6 demonstrate a positive participant reaction to the collection of babies/children 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/children category as positive resonance.
### Table 6

*Babies/Children Group Descriptive Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Positive Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( n = 141 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \bar{x} = 5.7 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sum x = 808 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p &lt; .001 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One tense quarter in a global marketing course was impacted by ongoing classroom hostilities between Turkish and Brazilian students—instigated in part by the rivalries during a World Cup soccer competition, and further intensified by conflicts over the expressive sensuality of the Brazilians grating against the conservative Turks. The “Up & Go” clip was presented during a class session, showing a baby presumably standing for the first time to the triumphant strains of a classical tune. Two fathers in the class—one Turkish, one Brazilian—shared stories with one another about the first time their own babies stood up, and how much they missed them back at home. For a moment, the international rivalries diminished in a sharing of common ground.

The presented clips within the babies/children group included “Sign” (U.S.A.), “Up & Go” (Sweden), and “Cry Baby” (France), as individually described in Appendix A. Both male and female students—especially the later—responded affectionately to the clips with babies: “It’s a baby!” and “They 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th><em>Animals Group Descriptive Analysis</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Classification: Positive Resonance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n = 141$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 5.7$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 6.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Sigma x = 798$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an advertising adage that the most successful commercials invoke the three *Bs* 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. In the follow-up interviews as well as student response to other animal clips, dogs are viewed more favorably than cats or other animals such as cows, yet all the animal clips in this study (except for “Happy Cows”) ranked in the positive resonance range.
The clip “Sprinkler” was substituted for the clip “Happy Cows” in following survey sessions after some students expressed a problem with the overly sexist tone in the “Happy Cows” spot (when a bull said to a passing cow, “Hey baby, do you work out?”). Other than the language, both clips are both similar in the overall creative approach—talking cows and bulls in a field promoting the same product. The presented clips within the animals group included “Peanut Butter” (U.S.A.), “Confused Dog” (Singapore), “Happy Cows” (U.S.A.), and “Sprinkler” (U.S.A.), as individually described in Appendix A.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Positive Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 5.3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 754$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.”

The presented clips within the relationships group included “Marry Me?” (China), “Heads” (U.S.A.), “Moving Van” (U.S.A.), and “Snoring” (Mexico), as individually described in Appendix A. The clip “Heads” was substituted for the clip “Moving Van” in later survey sessions after some students expressed concern over the stereotypical portrayal of women as obsessively fixated on shoes: “It’s stupid to throw out stuff for the shoes. It’s insulting to the woman,” and it “made it look like the woman didn’t care about the man.”

*Sports*

The presented clips within the sports group included “Anthem” (Poland), “Soccer” (U.S.A.), and “Football” (Netherlands), as further described in Appendix A. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Positive Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 141$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 5.5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median = 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR = 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 776$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

International students appear to be more engaged with sports than their American counterparts, especially with the game of soccer (or football, as they call it).

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. The unifying theme of sports may be illustrated in the study’s positively resonant “Anthem” clip ($\bar{x} = 5.2$; VAR = 1.9):

Two raucous groups of opposing football (soccer) fans meet up at an alleyway intersection, and square off with one another in challenging stares. Suddenly a cell phone tone begins to play the Polish national anthem, and “in the spirit of the world cup” they soften and hug in the realization that a kindred commonality transcends rivalries.

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 ($\overline{x} = 5.0$), 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Image Group Descriptive Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Classification:</strong> Positive Resonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$n = 188$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\overline{x} = 5.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median = 5.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VAR = 2.4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 945$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. This concept is reflected in student interest in other students’ national anthems and flags as the symbols of their national identity, a popular component in some of my classes.

The presented clips within the self image group included “Popping” (U.S.A.), “Odyssey” (U.K.), and “Internet” (International), as individually described in Appendix A. These clips featured themes and images particular to certain cultures and cultural subgroups such as American or British youth cultures, or composites of multiple cultures.
such as the “Internet” clip. For example, the clip “Odyssey” is set to a musical background:

A young man in a bleak and sparse apartment house opens a room door and begins running strongly and free, bursting through interior building walls. About midway through the run, a young woman joins in, also breaking through a series of walls. They pause a moment, exchange glances, then continue on with their run, through the last wall of the building, up a towering tree, then leaping free into open air.

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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Classification: Positive Resonance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$n = 141$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{x} = 5.1$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median $= 5.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAR $= 2.3$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum x = 723$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p &lt; .001$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. The presented clips within the life cycles group included “Old Man” (Thailand), “Elevator Fantasy” (U.S.A.), and “Champagne” (U.K.), as described in Appendix A.

Participant comments on clips within this thematic group included “Birth and death—everybody has the same physical process,” and “My career, my life, children—I think a lot about those things.” One of the starkest presentations of the birth-life-death cycle theme was in the clip “Champagne”:

A woman in a hospital delivery room, in a final push, expels her newborn through the hospital window with such force that it arcs across the sky, aging in extended flight as it goes, shooting through boyhood, puberty, manhood, into decaying old age as he finally lands with a crash into a gravesite. The marketing message from an electronic game company: “Life is short—play more.”
Conclusions and Applications

The study findings indicate that certain themes and images may indeed evoke a positive transcultural resonance in an international classroom. These identified themes and images included babies/children, animals, relationships, sports, self image, and life cycles. The findings also indicate other themes and images may evoke a negative dissonance or a neutral reaction, including religion, sex, humor, and nationalism. While images of water may pose an effective appeal for international students, the confounding themes employing the water imagery may have lowered the level of students ranking their response to clips in the water grouping.

This study benefited from a fortunate conjunction of circumstances, including a diverse group of international participants over an extended period comfortable enough in a cross-cultural setting to express assorted and even adversarial viewpoints; repetitious and consistent exposure to numerous images and themes; and an attentive researcher/observer who might make some theoretical assumptions over successive groups of international participants. Given this efficacious set of conditions, the current study was able to fill some voids in existing literature considered above.

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 more positively resonant themes and images of babies/children, animals, relationships, sports, self image, and life cycles were marked by higher scores and lower variation in resonance, likely due to a greater universality of common attitudes toward those categories. There was a particularly strong and resonant reaction to the video clips with the relatively straightforward themes and images of young children ($\bar{x} = 5.7; \text{VAR} = 1.7$), animals ($\bar{x} = 5.7; \text{VAR} = 2.0$), and sports ($\bar{x} = 5.5; \text{VAR} = 1.8$). Among the most common of all human experiences—the birth and raising of children—clips with this theme scored the highest with the greatest resonance of all the categories in the study.

Other themes—though scoring a positive resonance according to the classification formulae—may have been diminished in participant reaction due to their more complex shadings and subthemes, as well as greater cultural differences in their interpretation. For example, the participants were responsive to clips with a theme of relationships ($\bar{x} = 5.3; \text{VAR} = 2.1$), though with lower overall scores and less resonance than the categories of babies, animals, and sports. This may be due to the different dynamics of relationships that might vary from culture to culture, in particular the respective roles and positions of the sexes, which may have complicated their reactions to the relationship category clips. The greater complexity of certain themes may have been evidenced as well in the participant reaction to the life cycles group of clips, though scored as positively resonant ($\bar{x} = 5.1; \text{VAR} = 2.3$), still ranked relatively weak in the data compared to other positively resonant themes. The life cycle theme typically evoked strong student interest and commentary, though may have scored lower because some students might have had a
problem following the necessarily complicated nature of the life cycle clips. One student comment she enjoyed a life cycle themed clip more on the second viewing, once she was able to follow the complicated story better.

The same phenomena may be applied to the self-image theme as well, which also scored in the positively resonant range ($\bar{x} = 5.0; \text{VAR} = 2.4$). As the meaning or context or a more complicated theme is drawn out in classroom discussions or a repeated viewing of a clip, the students may react more strongly than in a first impression where they might not gather the full meaning or impact of the imagery and theme. However at other times, the participants expressed a diminished interest in a clip as it became boring on a second viewing.

The grouping of water clips was a contextual category, in that water is more specifically an image than a theme. Water as an image is a supporting character in the thematic presentation, so consequently the reactions to the water clips were complicated by contextual themes. Students reacted positively to the water imagery, but may have been diverted by confounding factors within the video clips, for example, seniors swimming in a pool, or the classical music scoring an assortment of water images.

Implications of the Study

The transcultural themes and images identified in this study might be applied to diverse international groups, whether in business meetings, organizational gatherings, diplomatic summits, educational seminars, and so on. These transcultural tools may be deployed by speakers, in setting décor and design, multimedia presentations, and such that may incorporate transcultural themes and images to create a greater sense of mutuality and common ground. Such an ability to find common terms and reference points, even in an
attenuate form, is a “valuable asset in an increasingly global world. Corporate, nonprofit, and governmental leaders increasingly have no choice but to engage in multinational cooperative endeavors” (Keohane, 2001, p. 187).

Potential Misapplications

Before further considering how the results of this study might be applied in appropriate circumstances and methods, it may be prudent to consider how the findings might be misapplied, either through unintentional malfunction or nefarious design. The successful application of transcultural methods may well be derailed by a perilous misapplication of motives and intent. These perils 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).

**Educational Applications**

Global postsecondary education enrollments increased from 6.5 million in 1950 to 88.2 million in 1997, and are forecasted to reach 160 million by 2025 (Irvine, 2003). However, this demand for global higher education comes at a time when teachers skilled with global cultural competence are so few (ACE, 2002). In that vein, the study findings are considered below in how they might apply to the design of a transculturally effective international course in global economics.

The question now addressed is how might the themes and images considered in this study be best applied toward an improved positive resonance across cultural diversities in international classrooms? The following sections consider possible
applications of the positively resonant themes and images that may better empower international educators, to help improve common ground and positive interactions among students of diverse nationalities and cultures.

These applications could 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 may 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).

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 may need to be adapted to accommodate a wider array of cultural and linguistic differences (OECD, 2003). By applying the resonant themes and images identified in the study, international students might benefit in a number of ways, including an increased comfort level in a strange environment. An international environment that provides a familiar ambience through transcultural themes and images may not only reduce the pangs of isolation, but might 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).

Furthermore, students may find an expanded content relevancy through a transcultural context for the course materials. Such an application of resonant themes and images may serve to better engage students’ attention in the learning process, as evidenced by the impressive learning results achieved by illiterate Brazilian farmers through Freire’s (1993) use of contextually resonant graphics.

Classroom Examples

How might the findings of transculturally positive resonant themes and images be applied to an undergraduate level course—in this exampled case, a course in global economics—serving a classroom populated by international students? That question may be considered by demonstrating possible applications of themes and images as they might be employed to illustrate key economic concepts within classroom lectures and discussions, engaging multimedia tools such as offered through PowerPoint presentations.

Wilson (2001) observed there is simply not enough time in the highly diverse classroom “to bring forward examples that appeal to everyone’s interest and draw on everyone’s experiences” (p. 206). This limitation may be mitigated through the use of a technology-enhanced environment, offering interactive resources online, as well as multimedia presentations within the classroom, allowing for better incorporation of transculturally resonant themes and images. Meyer (2002) found that meaningful learning can be assisted through the use of images when students find a cognitive
engagement through a combination of verbal and pictorial processes. Verbal modes of instruction include words spoken through lecture and discussion, while pictorial modes employ the use of “static graphics (such as photographs, illustrations, figures, and charts) and dynamic graphics (such as animation and video),” (pp. 61-62).

Some media formats for the projection of themes and images may prove more effective than others. Among the flaws in solely relying on still photographs to convey cross-cultural thematic experiences is that people insulated from the global economy may be unused to photographs, while others may give a different meaning to the pictures according to their biographies (Loizos, 2002, p. 96). However, this shortcoming may be mitigated in the classroom by also employing richer video presentations (p. 103).

The transcultural themes and images presented within the international classroom through lecture, discussion, readings, and rich media might help enhance classroom resonance, and develop a learning context for international students—a contextual relevance they may share with other nationalities. The presentation of themes and images within the learning examples described below might serve to evoke the resonance of commonly shared reactions, as well as place the themes and images within greater social and human contexts.

The following examples consider possible methods to promote learning in an international classroom, 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.
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. The International Labor Organization (1997) reports that 250 million children around the world who should be in school are at work instead, many in conditions of slavery in mines, factories, and plantations. As demonstrated in Figure 1, 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, as in the illustrated case of the affects of warfare on children in Palestine and Iraq. Another application of this theme may be to consider the health services provided by nations in terms of infant mortality rates. Yet another economic concept may be illustrated through this applied theme: studies have found that the level of child spankings correlates to income levels, as higher income parents may be better placed to inflict financial rather than physical punishments.

**Figure 1.** Young children depicting social and economic costs of war.
Animals

Students are frequently reluctant participants in a course on economics. The economic concepts may be bewilderingly theoretical and difficult to apply to familiar circumstances. The explanation and comparison of economic systems such as capitalism, socialism, and communism may be assisted by employing the transculturally resonant application of animals, such as the family cow in the often-quoted cow’s guide to economic systems (Figure 2). The economic dynamics of technological development might also 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. This meant twice daily milking (early morning and late afternoon). This in turn impacted the daily social and economic life cycle of the family. Once we had refrigeration, we could just go out and buy a half gallon of milk 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.

Cows’ Guide to Economic Systems

- **SOCIALISM** - you have two cows. The government takes them and puts them in a barn with everyone else’s cows. The government gives you as much milk as you need.

- **COMMUNISM** - you have two cows. Your neighbors help you take care of them. You all share the milk.

- **CAPITALISM** - you have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull.

*Figure 2. Cows help to demonstrate economic systems.*
Relationships

The economic cycle might be considered through a relationship perspective on analysis of the cyclically graphic sigmoid curve. It illustrates the story of economic cycles or a corporation’s rise and fall. It may even chart the course of love and relationships. Relationships may start slowly, experimentally, and clumsily; reach romantic peaks, and then—without proper care and attention—the relationship cycle may terminally wane. 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* (Figure 3) 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 attentions 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 mixed of strategies, where the best interests of the individual are served when also considering the good of the group.

![John Nash (1928-)](image)

“Nash’s Equilibrium” 27-page dissertation
Nobel Prize in Economics, 1994

*A Beautiful Mind*
By Sylvia Nasar
Universal Pictures 2001

“Adam Smith Was Wrong”
3:00

Figure 3. Film clip demonstrates John Nash’s theory of equilibrium.
Sports

As illustrated in the study’s “Anthem” clip (Appendix A), 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 may be resonantly demonstrated through example of the Daytona 500 (Figure 4), where a racecar driver must attract a drafting partner in ever-shifting patterns of cooperation and competition among rivals. The resonant sports theme may also help illustrate the economic principle of Ricardo’s law of comparative advantage. The principle is based on Adam Smith’s concept of specialization of labor, such as may be found in the various specialized positions on teams in baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and so on. Ricardo observed that a socioeconomic system will benefit if all members do what they do best, and society will sacrifice less to the opportunity costs of people doing what they do not do as well.

Figure 4. Daytona 500 demonstrates complexity theory and social networking.
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 by considering the Masai concept of value and beauty in others (Figure 5); an inspiring perspective from one of the world’s poorest peoples, yet with a rich philosophy of life. My international students have responded well to presentations on the self-image of other nations, in particular a presentation on flags and patriotic anthems as the national symbols of different lands. Another seemingly well received presentation has considered college students’ cultural view on the concept of freedom, as surveyed among college students in a diverse selection of nations.

The Masai Aesthetic

Clamor – July/August 2002

“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.”

Figure 5. Masai perspective on beauty.
Life cycles

Both face-to-face and online classroom discussions may be useful to address greater economic and social issues impacting the students’ daily life. Discussion topics such as unemployment, military spending, education funding, health care support, family planning, and so on may be better facilitated by employing transculturally resonant life cycle themes, and how those topics impact the daily and lifelong course of the students’ lives. One student participating in the study observed, “My career, my life, children—I think a lot about those things.” As illustrated in Figure 6, these discussions might be facilitated with topical and thematic discussion questions. These topics may be made more relevant by citing developments and data during class sessions that project social and economic trends over the next 20 or so years, which are some of the most important years in the students’ professional and personal growth.

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**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?

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Figure 6. Sample life cycle topics in classroom discussions.
Suggestions for Further Study

The possibilities of transcultural learning may be further realized by additional research into assessing the effectiveness of applied resonant themes and images in the classroom, including measures of any increased levels of student engagement, interaction, and satisfaction in courses where transcultural themes have been applied. Further beneficial research may also be conducted into additional themes and images that might be transculturally resonant. This research might be conducted by applying similar methods as employed in this study to a broader range of international courses in the humanities such as literature, music, art, history, sociology, religions, and so on.

Supplementary studies may find other and even better educational contexts, forms of media, and pedagogical methods for incorporating transcultural themes and images into the international classroom. It may be that longer portrayal of transcultural themes and images may prove more or less effective in evoking resonance, than the short commercial clips employed in this current study.

Perhaps transculturally resonant learning might best be achieved through field trips, interpersonal exchanges, and informal rather than formal instructional settings—for example, student-led discussion groups rather than instructor lectures. The efficacy of transcultural techniques may also be further assessed through applied situations and assignments, such as interactive discussion questions where students are given a range of topics to pick from and reply to, so researchers might seek which potentially transcultural themes may be particularly appealing and stimulate higher levels of discussion compared to less resonant themes.
Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify tools that may better empower international educators through the application of resonant themes and images in the classroom, to 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 social change that may be offered by transcultural methods, 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 in the United States come from rather privileged backgrounds, and may 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.

The world is divided by as many as 6,000 different languages, with a small number of languages such as Arabic, Bengali, English, French, Hindi, Malay, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish serving to bridge our linguistic gulfs (Tucker, 1999). Likewise, transcultural themes may help to bridge our vast cultural differences.

Perhaps among the most valuable aspects of the potential in globally adaptive international higher education are the benefits to be gained in learning about world problems that transcend national boundaries, as students from differing nations and cultures better share their experiences and perspectives with one another. Ironically, it is through the effort to find transcultural common ground that we may connect and come to better appreciate our many varieties.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Subject Group Descriptions

Each subject group heading of clips is comprised of three sub-group clips categorized according to the overall group theme. Following are detail of the subject groups in alphabetical order of Animals, Babies/Children, Humor, Life Cycle, Nationalism, Relationships, Religion, Self Image, Sex, Sports, and Water, including summary descriptions of the group component clips.

**Animals Group Summaries**

Clip Name: Peanut Butter  
Country: U.S.A.  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: A young boy is sitting on a front porch eating peanut butter from a spoon and sipping milk through a curly straw, while a large dog hopefully watches. The boy extends the spoon to the dog who gratefully takes a bite, then begins to repeatedly lick its tongue to work the peanut butter off the roof of its mouth. The marketing message is sometimes milk comes in handy.

Clip Name: Confused Dog  
Country: Singapore  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: A dog happily runs home after a day of play, entering through a swinging doggie door, to be confused by the living room which has been freshly and attractively refurnished. The dog runs outside, checks the number by the door, and returns inside in continued confusion.

Clip Name: Happy Cows  
Country: U.S.A.  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: Two bulls with computer-generated mouth movements are grazing in bountiful and sun-drenched fields, commenting in English how nice the California life is, when an attractive cow saunters by. They bulls make some stereotypical male comments, such as “whoa—do you work out?” and other banter. The marketing message is great cheese comes from happy cows, and happy cows live in California.

Clip Name: Sprinkler  
Country: U.S.A.  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: Another in the series of “happy California cows,” a playfully voiced cow comments “it’s time for a spritz,” as a sprinkler begins to spray the lush pasture land and showers her wet. A romantic love song “lady” begins to play, and two nearby bulls make appreciative sounds and comments.
Babies/Children Group Summaries

Clip Name: Sign
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: A child is swinging in a mechanical swing, laughing on the upswing and beginning to cry on the downswing. After several repetitions of this, the perspective turns to show that as the swing goes high, the child is able to see McDonald’s golden arches through a window, which on the downswing the child is not able to see. A similar spot has run in other countries, replacing the American baby with a regional nationality.

Clip Name: Up & Go
Country: Sweden
Running Time: 45 seconds
Description: A diapered child is comfortably seated on a living room rug, as dramatic strains of Strauss’ Thus Spake Zarathustra begin to play. As the music continues, the child turns to crawl, and then, with a breakthrough effort as sunlight beams through picture windows, stands for the (apparently) first time, with a marketing message that it is time for a new style of diaper.

Clip Name: Cry Baby
Country: France
Running Time: 40 seconds
Description: A baby is crying fitfully on a public bus loaded with other passengers. A man offers to take the baby from the distraught mother, and begins to perform a tune-up, so the baby now cries in a well-running pitch, rather in than burps and squawks. The man exits the bus with a satisfied smile, as the slogan proclaims the mechanic’s work is never done.

Humor Group Summaries

Clip Name: Fish Love
Country: Singapore
Running Time: 35 seconds
Description: The scene is an apartment with a young man sitting on a couch, while a young woman prepares to leave for the day. There is a large fish in an aquarium. When the young woman leaves, the young man takes the fish and dances with it, romances it on the couch, shares a milkshake with it. When the young woman suddenly returns, the man takes a cleaning spray to remove the apartment of fish smells, so the woman would not know what had been happening.
Clip Name: Whassup
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 60 seconds
Description: A dog exits a rural house during an evening party, runs to a vacant field, and is transported aboard a spaceship on a light beam. The ship flies home through space, and at a gathering of aliens, the dog removes its costume to reveal an alien inside, who had been spying on Earth. An official at the gathering asks the spy what it learned, and after a pause, the alien says in an exaggerated street voice, “Whassup?” The other aliens begin to mimic the word, which is heard by an earthbound military listener, who declares, “We are not alone.” The spot ends with a logo for a beer brand.

Clip Name: Love Kiss
Country: Russia
Running Time: 20 seconds
Description: The song *Love me Tender* plays in the background while various Russian leaders (e.g., Brezhnev, Khrushchev, and other prominent dignitaries) exchange formal kisses taken from news clips, on the mouth as is common in Russian culture. After a dozen seconds of this, the tagline comes on for a breath mint, which is the “secret of the long kiss.”

Clip Name: The Haka
Country: Belgium
Running Time: 45 seconds
Description: Two opposing football (soccer) teams face each other on a field. The New Zealand team performs a Maori battle chant, challenging the Scottish players. After the Maori chant is done, the Scots stand for a moment, then lift up their kilts toward the New Zealanders in a show of nationalism, promoting a brand of Scotch Whiskey.

Clip Name: Proof
Country: U.K.
Running Time: 95 seconds
Description: An attractive woman saunters on to a stage, and says she is about to demonstrate how the lingerie she is wearing is the world’s most erotic. As proof, she hops on and rides a mechanical bull, undulating in sensual and provocative motions. A matronly woman watches the display. Afterwards, the women invite the men in the audience to stand; suggesting the men—too embarrassed to stand—are proof of the lingerie’s effect.

*Life Cycle Group Summaries*

Clip Name: Old Man
Country: Thailand
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: A younger man sits in a sparse yet warm apartment reading a newspaper when the light burns out. A close-up shows his youngish face as he replaces the light bulb then returns to his seat and newspaper. Moments later, the bulb burns out once more. As the light returns after he again replaces it, the close-up shows the same man though considerably aged by decades, thanks to a long-lasting light bulb.
Clip Name: Elevator Fantasy  
Country: U.S.A.  
Running Time: 60 seconds  
Description: A young man and women get on an elevator, both in attractive blue jeans, exchanging sideways glances as they check each other out. Suddenly their eyes lock and they slip into a fantasy vision of running through a field hand-in-hand to romantic music, then to a chapel where they are getting married, then on to a honeymoon suite, and finally to a hospital delivery room, where the vision ends in a shriek of sweaty panic as they resume their elevator ride. The two hastily leave the elevator, heading in opposite directions.

Clip Name: Champagne  
Country: U.K.  
Running Time: 50 seconds  
Description: This commercial was pulled from the air by the BBC after a number of viewers complained over its intensely graphic nature. A woman in a hospital delivery room, in a final push, expels her newborn through the hospital window with such force that it arcs across the sky, aging in extended flight as it goes, shooting through boyhood, puberty, manhood, into decaying old age as he finally lands with a crash into a gravesite. The marketing message from an electronic game company: “Life is short—play more.”

Nationalism Group Summaries

Clip Name: American  
Country: U.S.A.  
Running Time: 60 seconds  
Description: A wide assortment of Americans representing various races and demographics repeat over and over in brief individual segments the words, “I am an American.” The spot was produced following the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, to bolster American unity and pride.

Clip Name: The Haka  
Country: Belgium  
Running Time: 45 seconds  
Description: Two opposing football (soccer) teams face each other on a field. The New Zealand team performs a Maori battle chant, challenging the Scottish players. After the Maori chant is done, the Scots stand for a moment, then lift up their kilts toward the New Zealanders in a show of nationalism, promoting a brand of Scotch Whiskey.
Clip Name: The Rant
Country: Canada
Running Time: 60 seconds
Description: A young Canadian man walks on to a stage in a large auditorium with a Canadian flag and other images projected on a background screen. He begins to address various clichés about the Canadian people, and explains the ways Canadians are different from Americans. As he builds in intensity, he ends the spot promoting Canadian beer with, “My name is Joe—and I am Canadian!”

Relationships Group Summaries

Clip Name: Marry Me?
Country: China
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: The ad is in Chinese with English subtitles. A young couple sit in a McDonald’s restaurant, the male nervously commenting on the food (how fresh the french fries are, how cold the coke, etc.). He then hands the young woman a box of chicken wings, which she opens to find, instead of wings, a diamond engagement ring. A pause in the flow, then, “Where are the wings?” she asks.

Clip Name: Heads
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: A young computer-animated couple is dining at a table in the woman’s apartment, while the man rambles on about his work day. As the woman gets increasingly bored with the prattle, she rises, pulls the head off her dinner partner, and goes to her closet full of other animated men’s heads. After selecting a more romantic model, she places the new head on her dinner date. Her improved evening continues, with a marketing message that sometimes a change in furnishings helps.

Clip Name: Moving Van
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: A young woman is shown opening the back door of a moving van as it speeds down a busy four-lane highway. She begins to toss out boxes, furniture, golf clubs, and rolls a motorcycle out into the road, as following traffic swerves to avoid and hits the items. When the back of the van is empty, she climbs to the front of the van, where she looks innocently at the driving young man, and says, “What?” The marketing message was she needed to create room for new shoes now on sale.
Clip Name: Snoring
Country: Mexico
Running Time: 20 seconds
Description: An older man turns on the bedside lamp late at night, as his wife keeps him awake with her loud snoring. He reaches into a bed stand drawer and takes a chewable aspirin. He then splashes a glass of water into his wife’s snoring mouth, which quiets her. The marketing hook: use chewable aspirin and save your water for other purposes.

Religion Group Summaries

Clip Name: Pope
Country: Multi-country magazine ad
Running Time: Still photo
Description: A look-alike for the pope is purchasing condoms from a hallway vending machine. The marketing message is that the condoms are such high quality, that even the pope chooses them.

Clip Name: Rabbi
Country: Multi-country magazine ad
Running Time: Still photo
Description: A rabbi look-alike is sitting at a kitchen table, smearing a ham spread on a slice of bread. The marketing message is the ham spread is so delicious, even rabbis will eat it.

Clip Name: Priest & Nun
Country: Multi-country campaign
Running Time: Still photo
Description: As part of a series of shock-ads promoting brand awareness, this magazine photograph displays a Roman Catholic priest kissing a nun.

Self Image Group Summaries

Clip Name: Popping
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: A friendly group of teenagers is driving around the city at night, in a moody ambience set by music and contemporary dancing moves. The marketing tactic seeks to have potential buyers associate that car model with the appealing atmosphere created by the commercial.
Clip Name: Odyssey  
Country: U.K.  
Running Time: 60 seconds  
Description: A young man in a bleak and sparse apartment house opens a room door and begins running strongly and free, bursting through interior building walls. About midway through the run, a young woman joins in, also breaking through a series of walls. They pause a moment, exchange glances, then continue on with their run, through the last wall of the building, up a towering tree, then leaping free into open air. The marketing message is the runners’ blue jeans give them freedom to move.

Clip Name: The Internet  
Country: Global play on CNN  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: A montage of images, situations, nationalities, and demographics flit across the screen, with a high-tech music track, as spokespeople espouse on the multifaceted character of the Internet, as contributed to by an international service provider.

Sex Group Summaries

Clip Name: Headache  
Country: Brazil  
Running Time: 40 seconds  
Description: The spot is Brazilian Portuguese, with English subtitles. A couple is reading in bed, when the man turns romantically to the woman. “Not tonight, I have a headache,” she says. The man then reaches over and offers the woman a diamond ring. “What do you mean by that? That I’m a prostitute?” the woman responds. Then, after a pause, “Or a nurse? Or a high school cheerleader in a skirt this short? Or a stewardess?”

Clip Name: Quick Soup  
Country: U.K.  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: A man and woman in bed just finish having sex, the man grins and rolls over for a nap, and the woman gets up to go to the kitchen, just as the timer on the microwave oven preparing her soup hits the two-minute mark and shuts off. As she eats her two-minute soup, she shakes her head with a wry smile.

Clip Name: Proof  
Country: U.K.  
Running Time: 95 seconds  
Description: An attractive woman saunters on to a stage, and says she is about to demonstrate how the lingerie she is wearing is the world’s most erotic. As proof, she hops on and rides a mechanical bull, undulating in sensual and provocative motions. A matronly woman watches the display. Afterwards, the women invite the men in the audience to stand; suggesting the men—too embarrassed to stand—are proof of the lingerie’s effect.
Sports Group Summaries

Clip Name: Anthem
Country: Poland
Running Time: 45 seconds
Description: Two raucous groups of opposing football (soccer) fans meet up at an alleyway intersection, and square off with one another in challenging stares. Suddenly a cell phone tone begins to play the Polish national anthem, and “in the spirit of the world cup” they soften and hug in the realization that a kindred commonality transcends rivalries.

Clip Name: Soccer
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 30
Description: A young man is facing a string of challengers on the soccer field, as he maneuvers to kick an impressive goal. The dreamy image fades into a man standing in a sporting goods store holding a soccer ball, and a pregnant women asks him, “And honey—if it’s a girl?” The dream image returns, this time with a girl kicking the winning goal.

Clip Name: Football
Country: Netherlands
Running Time: 60 seconds
Description: A group of young male athletes perform numerous feats and tricks with a soccer ball, with no narrative and music, other than the rhythmic pounding of the ball and feet. This continues for almost the full commercial with no marketing message at all, save for a sports logo in the last few seconds of the clip.

Water Group Summaries

Clip Name: Water
Country: U.S.A.
Running Time: 30 seconds
Description: A hospital promotes itself as a healing environment with a series of dissolves though consistently water-themes images such as a saline drip, washing hands in a splashing sink, a whirlpool bath, an indoor tropical fountain enclosure, a fish aquarium, and dewdrops falling from a healthy leaf. Soothing music and a calming voice underscore the imagery.

Clip Name: Swimming
Country: Thailand
Running Time: 35 seconds
Description: In a televised swim competition with the crowd cheering, a swimmer passes past the video screen holding a fast-food sandwich aloft, taking a bite after alternating strokes, in a testimony to just how tasty the sandwich must be.
Clip Name: Seniors  
Country: France  
Running Time: 45 seconds  
Description: As the narrator extols in French about the benefits of the advertised bottled water for good health, this commercial provides a glorified romp of water acrobatics performed by senior citizens enjoying an expansive and brilliantly adorned swimming pool, to an engaging music soundtrack of the Beach Boys’ *Wouldn’t it be Nice.*

Clip Name: Water Ballet  
Country: France  
Running Time: 45 seconds  
Description: Another spot designed as above extolling the benefits of bottled water, this commercial features choreographed water acrobatics performed by digitally synchronized babies in a luxurious and brightly lit swimming pool, to a jazzy music soundtrack of “Bye Bye Baby.”

Clip Name: Use Me Up  
Country: USA  
Running Time: 30 seconds  
Description: To a bouncing musical background of the R&B classic “Use Me Up,” young men and women frolic in and beside a large swimming pool, floating, splashing, dancing, batting a beach ball, while enjoying and ‘using up’ potato chips from a tubular can.