The Comparative Intercultural Sensitivity of American Faculty Teaching Abroad and Domestically: A Mixed-Methods Investigation Employing Participant-Generated Visuals

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Abstract

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Domestically: A Comparative Mixed-Methods Investigation Employing
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This thesis aimed to identify and compare the intercultural sensitivity, or IS, of
tertiary American instructors teaching mono-national, non-American student
populations abroad in the UAE and that of American tertiary instructors in multi-
national, non-American student populations domestically in the US. The study
investigated the use of reflexive photography and photo-elicitation interviews
methods as both data collection approaches and possible cultivators of IS, as
well as any variation in findings between the two participant groups. The study
employed a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and semi-structured
photo-elicitation interviews following a four-week reflexive photography project.
Qualitative data were analyzed through the lens of a developmental framework
and inductively through thematic analysis to capture fuller images of
participants' environments. Both groups of participants self-report fairly high IS,
with the US-based group's sensitivity averaging higher than the UAE-based
group. Both groups, on average, showed slightly increased IS quantitatively
following the reflexive photography project and photo-elicitation interviews, with
the UAE-based group experiencing a slightly greater increase. This research
involves a small number of participants; findings should be considered for
indicative purposes only. Participants' IS, when observed through the
theoretical lens, indicate more progressive sensitivity among US-based
participants. Thematic analysis of interview data reflects distinct teaching
contexts faced by each participant group, with five and six themes emerging
from the UAE- and US-based groups, respectively. This research is the first to
the best of the author's knowledge to investigate the IS of tertiary American
faculty teaching internationally diverse student populations domestically and is
also the first to compare differences in IS between this group and American

instructors teaching mono-national, non-American students abroad.
Furthermore, it addresses gaps in the literature of participant generated visual
methods, or PGVMs, among American higher education professionals as both
a data collection method and as an approach to developing IS in American
faculty.

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Pukach sides overcame obstacles and oceans to ensure I wouldn't just be a first-generation American but a first-generation college student; I want you to know I appreciate that and I did my best to make sure those sacrifices weren't in vain. Anne-Marie, after all these years, whenever even a shred of fear creeps up on me, I envision your bright, beautiful smile in the face of the most inconceivable of fates. Your courage is one for the record books. I strive to live for us both. Mom, you instilled sound judgment in me. Albeit via unconventional avenues, you taught me criticality. You gave me practice in forgiveness. Through your missteps, I found my own footing, ultimately with more self-assurance than most. Poppy—mi poppy chulo, el poppy más chulo del mundo—it overwhelms me to reflect on all you've done for me. How you could teach someone to set such high standards while still supporting them when they fall so devastatingly short at times without judgment or frustration is something to admire. You gave me the confidence to truly believe there was nothing in the world I couldn't do. I attribute so much of who I am to you—all the good parts especially. Thank you for being an example in respecting diversity and struggle, in empathy, in seeing the good in people while remaining unwavering in your principles; thank you for teaching me those principles and for loving me anyway as I amended them toward my own beliefs. More than anything, thank you for showing me what an unrelenting pursuit of knowledge and full truths looks like. No one loved learning as much as you did. I hope I can inspire this in others even a fraction as much as you've done for me. It is unquestionably at the heart of my pursuance of a PhD. My last name is just one of the countless gifts you've given me that I will hold onto throughout my entire life and finally being able to put the "Dr." title before it is as much a result of your work as it is of mine. You gave me everything you could, and it's so much of what I have today; **I'll always be grateful that you were my father**.

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Author's declaration: I declare that the thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere. No sections of the thesis have been published or submitted for a higher degree elsewhere. The thesis is not the result of joint research and is my own work alone.

Signature _Joni McLaughlan_

Publications derived from work on Doctoral Programmes

Smart Learning Environments (2023) International Undergraduates' Perceptions of Social Engagement in Online and Face-to-Face Learning Environments: A Photo-Elicitation Approach to Thematic Analysis

Educational Technology & Society (2022) Chai Chats: An Online Teacher-Training Program of Observation and Social Connectedness Evaluated via Contribution Analysis

Arts and Humanities in Higher Education (2021) Book Review: Giovanna Fassetta, Nazmi Al-Masri and Alison Phipps (eds), Multilingual online academic collaborations as resistance: Crossing impassable borders

International Journal of Information and Learning Technology (2021) Facilitating factors in cultivating diverse online communities of practice: a case of international teaching assistants during the COVID-19 crisis

Chapter 1: Background and Introduction

As of 2018, it was projected that almost eight million students were "globally mobile" (Altbach, 2020, p. 76), with the US receiving, in terms of absolute numbers, the highest intake of international students at approximately one million (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). The OECD (2020) states that, throughout the last decade, the number of students studying internationally has doubled, and increases in such trends are expected (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). Institutional and governmental motivations for this are often viewed as being primarily economical (Wimpenny et al., 2020; Fabricius et al., 2016), with tuition fees for international students reaching nearly three times the price tags for in-state students (Cooper, 2020). Nonetheless, the push to recruit incoming students from abroad is often touted as beneficial for the receiving institution in the multicultural perspectives it may bring and the resulting potential for world-readiness among its graduates (Baldassar & McKenzie, 2016). The competitive edge of a degree from an American university is considered a draw for many students from all over the world (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). As international mobility incurs high costs for students (Baldassar & McKenzie, 2016), a number of reforms have been enacted to make international education more accessible to more of the global population (de Wit, 2019; de Wit & Altbach, 2020). Such initiatives have taken the shape of lessening costs of distance learning (Deming et al., 2015); Internationalization at Home (IaH), defined as on-campus, domestic academic activity that integrates global interactions, collaborations, coursework, etc. (Soria & Troisi, 2014); and Internationalization at a Distance (IaD), which Mittelmeier et al. (2020, p. 269) define as "all forms of education across borders where students, their respective

staff, and institutional provisions are separated by geographical distance and supported by technology." Such accommodations, along with the progressively positive perceptions of online learning among international undergraduates (Fidalgo et al., 2020), are only driving the increasingly high demands of globalization in HE, and the drives to meet such demands have substantiated the idea that internationalization in the field is not just here to stay but is in fact growing. Therefore, it is becoming more essential that faculty are comfortable, confident, and competent in meeting the needs of these students. One gauge of these factors is Intercultural Sensitivity (IS), an individual's desire and drive to understand, value, and embrace cultural distinctions, as defined by Chen and Starosta (2000).

Associated with intercultural competence (Matveev & Merz, 2014), and therefore engagement and communication with culturally distinct others (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992), IS emphasizes emotion, affect, and attitude toward diversity as opposed to behavior (Chen & Starosta, 1997); this focus on emotion and affect is particularly relevant to the Emirati context given the affective and emotional components Emirati students value in HE contexts (Abdulla et al., 2022; Khassawneh et al., 2022; McLaughlin & Durrant, 2015; Rapanta, 2014). Its importance in a progressively internationalized education system is well-established in the literature. Yet, despite the purported non-financial returns of a multicultural, international student population, studies suggest that many university services and programs do not fit the demands of their international populations (Agostinelli, 2021; Appe, 2020; Perry et al., 2017; Wimpenny et al., 2020). It is not rare to discover faculty that report feeling positively toward the

benefits of international students at their campuses while simultaneously feeling underprepared or untrained in working with these populations (Agostinelli, 2021; Jin & Schneider, 2021). This poses significant issues for the effectiveness of internationalization policies and especially for international students, who report sensing this uncertainty among their professors (Agostinelli, 2021). Thus, there is a growing need to support HE instructors in matters related to the teaching and learning of these students.

Literature suggests intercultural competence among faculty as integral to relationships with and therefore effective instruction involving tertiary international students (Aldridge & Rowntree, 2022). Several studies point to heightened engagement with and focus on cultural differences in developing such competence (Bennett, 1986; 1993; 2004; 2013; Hammer et al., 2003). Thus, a multi-week, reflexive photography project that emphasizes cultural differences and culminates in photo-elicitation interviews may be a worthwhile method of enhancing the IS of university faculty. Harper (2002) proposes that including a photo-elicitation component to interviews adds validity and reliability to word-based methods and often leads to deeper, more intimate responses from participants. He further suggests that including images in interviews evokes the inclusion of different information than strictly verbal interviews due to differences in visual versus verbal brain processing, stating that the "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness" (p. 13). Thus, integrating a photo-elicitation portion to this study is intended to bring a heightened awareness of interculturality to the forefront of one's experience. Previous studies have shown that, in general, the more someone has interacted with intercultural environments, the more likely

they are to increase their intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993; Hayden & Wong, 1997; Waterson & Hayden, 1999). While much work has been done on intercultural sensitivity—or cross-cultural adaptability, intercultural competence, intercultural maturity, among its many inconsistent labels of similar meaning (Vijver & Leung, 2009)—findings on predictive factors and impacts are widely inconsistent. Furthermore, most studies on the matter are centered around IS development in students with significantly less literature focusing on faculty; this narrows further yet within the scope of HE, and largely diminishes when integrating photo-elicitation approaches or participant-generated visual methods (PGVMs) in general (Kortegast et al., 2019).

1.1 Statement of the problem

Internationalization of HE has grown and is expected to continue to expand in both program design (de Wit, 2019; de Wit & Altbach, 2020; Deming et al., 2015; Mittelmeier et al., 2020; Soria & Troisi, 2014) and student numbers (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). HE faculty and professionals often cite feeling underconfident or underprepared in working with these populations (Agostinelli, 2021; Jin & Schneider, 2021). As Intercultural Sensitivity, or IS, is a well-supported gauge of one's emotion, affect, and attitude toward diversity in populations (Bennett, 1986; Chen & Starosta, 2000), it is postulated that heightened IS may have benefits for faculty. One such approach to fostering IS is through increased exposure to or awareness of culture in one's environment (Bennett, 1993; Hayden & Wong, 1997; Waterson & Hayden, 1999), with photo-elicitation as a possible manner of achieving an amplified awareness of interculturalness.

However, there are a series of gaps in the literature as it relates to the factors discussed above. Notably, no studies on IS, to the best of the researcher's knowledge at the time of the research project, investigate HE American instructors in the UAE using PGVMs nor American HE instructors who teach purely international student populations within the US; these sorts of programs are often called "intensive English programs," or IEPs. (Though IEP instructors, for example, do not live abroad, they do spend a significant amount of their day in multicultural settings, with IS being arguably at the heart of their profession.) Beyond this, the publications on IS in HE that are available yield inconsistent findings. To highlight inconsistencies among just a few of many more factors to be addressed later in the thesis, studying abroad was found to have both positive effects (Covert, 2011; Maharaja, 2009) and no effects (Ersin & Atay, 2020; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015) on IS; teaching abroad has been found to have both positive effects (Moore, 2015; Sinclair; 2019) and no effects (Sinclair, 2019; Alaei & Nosrati, 2018 citing Jantawej, 2011) on IS; closeness with internationals in non-academic capacities was found to have both positive effects (Killick, 2012) and no effects (Munawar, 2015) on IS; and nationality was found to have both positive effects (Sinclair, 2019) and no effects (Sinclair, 2019; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015) on IS. Several studies discovered that initiatives intending to heighten American participants' IS, in particular, resulted in no effects (Sinclair, 2019; Strekalova-Hughes, 2017).

Furthermore, very limited research has been done on photo-elicitation and its potential influence on IS in general but especially with HE and North American instructors according to an extensive literature on the prevalence of PGVMs

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(Kortegast et al., 2019). Thus, the current thesis aims to shed light on whether photo-elicitation programs may be beneficial in cultivating IS in American instructors, both in the UAE and in the US, and to explore reasons why such inconsistency in findings exists.

1.2 Context

The UAE has a uniquely diverse population, with approximately 88% of its estimated 9,915,803 residents being expatriate workers and their families from a wide variety of countries (CIA, 2022). Nonetheless, student enrollment at public education institutions is limited to generational Emirati natives: at the time of writing, no path to citizenship was available to expatriate workers, including to children of expatriates born and raised in the UAE. Instructors in the study's UAE-based participant group are instructors at a government tertiary institution; they teach only students with Emirati nationality from at least one parent dating back generations. The institution primarily serves undergraduate students, with an enrollment just over 21,500 students in 2021, although it does offer a small number of graduate-level degrees as well, conferring seven Master's degrees that year. 83.5% of 2020's incoming class also attended government high schools, which serve only Emirati nationals, signifying that most students may not have had much opportunity to socially interact with same-aged peers of other cultures. While the student population of government education institutions in the UAE is monoethnic, the faculty are quite diverse. According to UNESCO, 80% - 95% of academics at non-public HEIs in the GCC are expatriates (Badry, 2019). This number may differ slightly from the target institution, as it is a public institution. Essentially, participants in this group work with a multi-ethnic set of

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colleagues but must navigate the unique needs of a classroom filled with undergraduate students who share many of the same ethnic and cultural expectations as each other but that differ considerably from their own.

As students at the UAE-based institution are all natives of the UAE, pandemic-related travel issues involving international student populations was not the consideration that it was at many of the world's universities. Thus, a return to in-person classes was swift at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. By the start of the research project in early January 2022, with a brief exception of one week at the end of January, nearly all classes were fully on campus, including all courses taught by the research participants of this study.

The teaching and learning context of the UAE-based group therefore contrasts with that of the US-based group: students of the US-based instructors are graduate-level students, not undergraduates, and attended their classes online via Zoom. Students would have been required to attain visas and travel to the US in time for June of 2022. At this point in the pandemic, many US visa-granting offices continued to experience processing delays for COVID-related reasons, with some agencies reporting wait times up to five times longer than pre-pandemic norms (Barros, 2022); several countries also continued to enforce stringent travel restrictions, including China (Leung, 2022)— a country that typically represents a significant portion of the US international student population (U.S. Mission China, 2021). Though this is not optimal for consistency in participants' experiences across groups, the decision to run the program virtually was made last-minute and the disparity in learning environments in the study could not be practically avoided. Nonetheless, participants are all

employed full-time in ESL or EFL environments that were generally in-person, typically with undergraduate students, throughout the majority of the academic year.

All US-based participants worked at a mid-sized state research institution of approximately 24,000 students in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States for the summer of this study. The university has an affiliate institution that works solely with English language learning college-aged and adult students, many of whom later matriculate into the main university. This English language department hosts a variety of specialized programs, serving students learning English for academic, professional, or other communicative purposes. Various courses and programs are offered to meet these needs, including the International Teaching Assistant (ITA) program from which the study's sample was taken. Of the 181 students comprising the student population of the 2022 ITA program, 38 nationalities were represented. All 13 ITA instructors hold a Master's degree, are US citizens, and completed the majority of their schooling in the US. This signifies that, though surrounded by a fairly monoethnic faculty in their home country, instructors must be highly sensitive to the variety of cultural backgrounds, expectations, and needs of a very diverse classroom.

1.3 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this exploratory research is to investigate the Intercultural Sensitivity (IS) of two groups of American instructors in different multicultural settings, both of which are under-investigated in the literature to date. A brief reflexive photography program ahead of phenomenological photo-elicitation interviews is expected to shed light on any potential influences of heightening

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cultural awareness in efforts of fostering IS among A) UAE-based American HE instructors who work with a monoethnic student population in a foreign country, and B) US-based American HE instructors who work domestically but with a fully-international, diverse student population. Potential relationships between the implementation of a PGVM program and IS are explored, and potential changes in each group's IS are compared in an effort to identify implications for further cultivating IS in American instructors. Findings are valuable in light of increasing trends of internationalization in HE. At the time of investigation, no publications to the best of the author's knowledge explore the relationship between PGVMs and the IS of American HE instructors teaching in the UAE or teaching fully-international classrooms domestically. The research will also explore contextual nuances thematically with the intentions of providing a more comprehensive image of why any differences in IS may occur.

1.3.1 Research questions

The research questions are proposed as such:

1. What is the intercultural sensitivity level of American expatriate tertiary instructors in mono-national, non-American student populations when working in the UAE?

    a. How do PGVMs of reflexive photography and follow-up photo-elicitation interviews affect this?

2. What is the intercultural sensitivity level of American tertiary instructors in multi-national, non-American student populations when working domestically?

a. How do PGVMs of reflexive photography and follow-up photo-elicitation interviews affect this?

3. How does the IS of expatriate American instructors and US domestically-based instructors compare following the reflexive photography project and photo-elicitation interviews?

a. How does an inductive thematic analysis of the data shed light on the cultural differences faced by each group?

4. How can a photo-elicitation project serve as a methodology that leads to more representative results when investigating intercultural sensitivity?

1.4 Significance of the study

This study contributes to the knowledge in that it provides additional findings on PGVMs. It also adds to literature on IS, especially with Americans working in HE in general but particularly in the UAE and in the US with fully-international student populations-–areas that are largely under-investigated and inconsistent in the research that does exist. While review of the literature suggests that American instructors demonstrate less change in IS compared to instructors of other nationalities in various intercultural and international environments, findings overall remain largely inconsistent. Nonetheless, these studies do agree on the importance of and need for heightened IS in increasingly internationalized HE environments (Moore, 2015; Shammas, 2017). Challenges with "cultural others" can lead to employee turnover (du Toit & Jackson, 2014), and given the documented positive impacts of intercultural sensitivity on communication with diverse populations (Bennett, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 2007), a lack thereof may logically correlate with negative effects on students' learning and educational

experiences. Therefore, situating research aimed at enhancing IS with Americans in distinct instructional contexts with respect to the possible impacts of PGVMs can have beneficial implications for both teaching and learning in international HE settings overall.

Chapter 2: Internationalization

The internationalization of HE is a well-documented phenomenon that has changed shape to continually reflect the new and shifting demands of the global educational landscape for decades. Though its definition is broad and ever-changing alongside the trends of the field, the term is generally accepted to refer to "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society" (de Wit et al., 2015, p. 29). While the COVID-19 pandemic marked the beginning of years of global shutdowns and travel restrictions, it did not produce a major pause in internationalization trends in HE (NAFSA, 2020). Some, in fact, predict the opposite will occur, as students around the world may become more receptive to internationalized education from a distance resulting from recent engagement in online learning: in responding to the *IAU Global Survey on the Impact of COVID 19 on HE around the World,* 98% of 424 universities across 109 countries experienced changes to teaching and learning due to COVID-19 (Marinoni et al., 2020). Approximately 66% of these institutions reported replacing in-person instruction with distance approaches, resulting in emerging skills in navigating virtual education spaces among both instructors and students alike. This sudden and seemingly unavoidable catapult into distance education, according to the report, has led to an evolution in distance learning techniques and tools and expectedly prompting a shift in perceptions toward distance education opportunities (Marinoni et al., 2020). As more favorable attitudes have already

been found among international undergraduates throughout the pandemic's early stages (Fidalgo et al., 2020), widespread exposure to virtual learning (Jensen et al., 2022) resulting from the pandemic may result in further heightened perceptions toward online education for years to come. Thus, many modifications to HE rooted in responses to COVID-19 are anticipated to be adopted not as temporary accommodations but as "new normals" (Hussein et al., 2020; Marinoni et al., 2020), potentially facilitating internationalization through increased global accessibility.

The approximately eight million "globally mobile" tertiary education students in 2020 (Altbach, 2020, p. 76) signifies that numbers of students studying internationally have doubled throughout the last ten years, according to the OECD (2020); such trends are expected to continue to rise (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). Most competitively-ranked HEIs worldwide maintain active agendas to support their own internationalization initiatives (Altbach, 2020): in fact, in responding to IAU's 5th Global Survey, *Internationalization of HE: An Evolving Landscape, Locally and Globally,* 90% of universities included "internationalization" as a component of their strategic plans or missions (Marinoni, 2019). While regional hubs of institutions receiving international students are beginning to emerge in non-Western countries to meet global massification demands of tertiary education, particularly in Russia, South Africa, and China to name a few, Western nations continue to have the highest intake of globally mobile students (de Wit, 2019). This is driven largely by both students, motivated by degree mobility, and institutions, who often endorse neo-liberal strategies that primarily prioritize financial goals (Altbach, 2020). This trend has

historically involved movement of students from lower-income countries pursuing education in countries with higher incomes (de Wit & Altbach, 2020). As of 2020, international students represented about 20% of the total number of British and Australian university student populations and 4% of students at American institutions. Whereas institutions in Canada and the UK have witnessed heightened interest and enrollment among international tertiary students, the US' global market share of this population has decreased in recent years (Dennis, 2022; Open Doors, 2022; Student and Exchange Visitor Program [SEVP], 2022), purportedly due to nationalistic attitudes, geopolitical tensions, and obstructions to visa processes (Dennis, 2022).

2.1 Internationalization in the US

In absolute numbers, the US brings in the largest population of international students—an expected 1,236,748—as of 2021 (SEVP, 2022). Even during pandemic-related shutdowns, mid-2020 figures projected that international students contributed approximately $38.7 billion to the US economy during the 2019-2020 academic year (NAFSA, 2020). Cooper (2020) lists yearly average undergraduate in-state tuition costs as $8,182 in 2016, compared to $22,048 for international students, highlighting significant disparities in tuition costs between these groups. It may also signal several likely motivations that drive international recruitment campaigns among many of the United States' largest and most competitive state research universities, which at times reach international student populations exceeding 20% of their total student enrollment. Ultimately, the objectives at the heart of internationalization trends are often viewed critically. Many policies appear power-driven, with an individual institution's or system's

influence central to their internationalization plans (Tight, 2021); or economically-driven (Wimpenny et al., 2019; Fabricius et al., 2016), given that education is the country's 6th largest service export as of 2021, according to the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of State & U.S. Department of Education, 2021). However, the engagement with multicultural perspectives and better-preparedness for cooperation in a global workforce for graduates that are trumpeted as central to internationalization efforts (Baldassar & McKenzie, 2016) remains somewhat underwhelming and will be addressed on behalf of faculty and students in the immediately following section.

Currently, traveling abroad for tertiary education is restricted predominantly to those who have had access to effective English language programming in the education systems of their home countries and who can afford life in typically costlier host nations with matriculation fees that exceed domestic students' (Baldassar & McKenzie, 2016). However, a shift away from financially-driven motives in favor of more focus toward intercultural learning, engagement, and cooperation may be within reach: recent research suggests that increasing calls to reform internationalization policies and programs are energizing institutions to pay particular attention to the equity and inclusion necessary to foster the multicultural respect and resulting societal benefits that are touted in many institutional plans and missions (de Wit, 2019; de Wit & Altbach, 2020) as well as the US State Department's own statements of principles on internationalization (U.S. Department of State & U.S. Department of Education, 2021). While elitism continues to play a major role in the state of international education at present, change is happening, as many HEIs move to adjust tuition costs for international

students to align with in-state rates (Durrani, 2019) or amend distance learning fees to provide more affordable options (Deming et al., 2015). Such initiatives point toward a changing educational landscape and a likely jump in internationalized classrooms, whether in-person or virtual. Along with this, then, is an accompanying need for culturally competent faculty and HE professionals.

2.1.1 Shortcomings of internationalization goals

Whereas one of the greatest potential educational benefits of internationalization efforts are the diverse perspectives they bring to the classroom, much of the literature states that such outcomes do not typically come to fruition. Urban and Palmer (2014) found that students at US universities are not utilized as the "cultural resources," or active contributors to the university's internationalization goals, that they could be, even though the international students themselves express an interest in opportunities to share information about their cultures and countries. The authors further posited that the university in the study did not systematically involve international students in increasing cultural awareness or other internationalization efforts. In their survey on international student inclusion on cultural engagement in classroom and campus activity, they found that international students indicated that only "peer inquiry about native culture" occurred regularly in their university experience. It seems that the sheer presence of international students with little intentional institutional pro-action is often expected to lead to intercultural learning (Mwangi, 2016).

Beyond this, research has found that international students often perceive their needs at US tertiary institutions to be largely unmet (Tang et al., 2018; Perry et

al., 2017; Appe, 2020). This population faces an abundance of unique challenges compared to domestic students, including being away from family, friends, and familiar systems in their home countries, feeling like "outsiders" both on and off campus, struggling to make friends with domestic students (Perry et al., 2017; Yan & Pei, 2018), an inability to work off-campus, visa-related pressures (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2019), adjusting to new educational and cultural norms such as extra-curricular involvement (Karuppan & Barari, 2011), informal classroom environments and student-faculty relationships, student-centered and interactive classrooms, differences in ideas of academic integrity, and critical thinking over memorization of course material (Smith, 2020). Perhaps the most impactful obstacles they face are language-related, as students' perceived English abilities correlate most closely with international students' success (Caplan & Stevens, 2017; Heng, 2019; Hsu & Huang, 2017; Karuppan & Barari, 2011), including participation, positive learning outcomes, and satisfaction of the academic experience at their host university (Karuppan & Barari, 2011).

2.1.2 International student experiences at US HEIs

According to Urban and Palmer (2014), and when studying Gulf Muslim students in particular in the U.S. (Dimandja, 2017), although international students did perceive university staff and faculty as supportive academically, they did not feel that their needs as international students, as outlined above, were understood. In a series of focus groups involving 24 international students at two community colleges in the US, Slantcheva-Durst and Knaggs (2019) found that students felt that campus staff, even in the international office, were not confident on visa- and work-related issues for students. They also expressed that they did not feel that

faculty facilitated their participation in class discussion. Beyond their own outreach to the international office on campus and their interactions with faculty outside of class, they felt little was done to serve their community. This apathy, or even "rejection" or "intolerance" (Thompson, 2013), toward cultural and linguistic differences among international students at US institutions is common in the literature, as students report minimal if any attempts to integrate their unique global perspectives in class (Gartman, 2016; King & Bailey, 2021; Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2019; Urban & Palmer, 2014). In fact, quite the opposite is often true, as discussion of struggles relating to "American-centric" lessons that take for granted that all students in a class share the same knowledge of US-specific culture, history, and religious and socio-political ideologies is a challenge highlighted by international students recurrently throughout the literature (Gartman, 2016; Heng, 2019; McLaughlan, 2023; Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2019; Urban & Palmer, 2014; Valdez, 2015). Further, this indifference or even intolerance towards international students can be accompanied with perceptions and experiences of stereotyping, unequal treatment, and discrimination (Heng, 2018; Lee, 2010; Valdez, 2015; Yan & Pei, 2018), especially among non-White and East Asian students (Heng, 2018; Lee, 2010; Valdez, 2015), leaving students feeling that they must simply "accept" the mistreatment in order to avoid negative repercussions to their academic records or visa status (Yan & Pei, 2018) and to overall have unfavorable perceptions of their institution (Lee, 2010). Even in a study of the experiences of international students of color at a (mono-racial) Historically Black College in the US, sentiments of being perceived as an outsider and a lack of institutional support were commonly cited among participants (Mwangi, 2016).

2.1.3 US faculty experiences with internationalization

Research shows that faculty typically express favorable opinions toward having international students on campus and in the classroom, noting their global perspectives, linguistic diversity, and strong academic capabilities (Jin & Schneider, 2019). They also recognize that international students face sociocultural issues to which they are generally sympathetic (Abon, 2021; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Wimpenny et al., 2019). Nonetheless, university faculty and staff consistently express feeling underprepared to meet the needs of international students, citing limited knowledge regarding relevant campus resources (Unrah, 2015) and, more commonly, perceived differences in language and culture and how to integrate these as resources into their curricula and classroom discussions (Jin & Schneider, 2019; Wimpenny et al., 2019). Jin and Schneider (2019) found that White, monolingual, US-born faculty in particular are most likely to view language skills as a major obstacle for teaching international students; in turn, students sense their instructors' apprehensions in communicating with them, creating opportunities for class participation, and a lack of understanding regarding their cultures and backgrounds (Wireman, 2017). Furthermore, faculty members at times admit to not having differentiated methods for teaching international students (Unrah, 2015), who they often approach as a homogenous group (Hanassab, 2016; Heng, 2019; Thompson, 2013), posing problems in itself. Whereas some research supports the idea of self-accountability on the behalf of the instructor and a desire for more campus direction in matters of internationalization and inclusive instructional strategies (Abon, 2021), other studies have found that both instructors (Jin & Schneider,

2019) and international students (Yan & Pei, 2018) put the onus of academic and cultural assimilation onto the students themselves.

2.1.4 Recommendations from the literature

While the bulk of the literature does appear to highlight the issues that international students face navigating US university systems, culture, language, institutional approaches, and relationships with staff and faculty, several studies did outline positive student-faculty experiences, particularly with respect to academic interactions (Karuppan & Barari, 2011; Mullen, 2018; Urban & Palmer, 2014). Constructive student-faculty relationships are invariably powerful and correlate strongly with a number of positive student experiences, such as motivation (Jean-Francois, 2019; Wireman, 2017), perceptions of inclusivity on campus (Glass et al., 2015) and in the classroom (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018), confidence in English and class participation (Hsu & Huang, 2017), academics (Glass et al., 2015; Jean-Francois, 2019), social integration (Jean-Francois, 2019; Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011), and their overall sense of belonging at the institution (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2019; Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018; Zhou, Frey, & Bang, 2011). Essentially, ensuring that tertiary staff and faculty feel prepared and knowledgeable in working with these student populations is vital in best serving international and domestic students alike.

Research advocates for the adoption of active and collaborative learning strategies for encouraging meaningful and impactful classroom and academic interactions between international and domestic students (Karuppan & Barari, 2011). Further, inclusive approaches that foster intercultural learning through the

incorporation of students' backgrounds, cultures, and languages have also been shown to be useful in working with international students in HE (Smith, 2020; Urban & Palmer, 2014) and in creating a positive campus climate for international students (Glass et al., 2015). However, the literature suggests that few instructors have been trained in such methods (Smith, 2020). Heng (2018) goes on to state that this type of culturally responsive pedagogy not only heightens the classroom experience for students but for faculty as well, as instructors can draw on students' specific sets of strengths in academic activity. He argues for continued institution-wide training on diversity and intercultural awareness that takes into account the same nuance of heterogeneity within the international as the domestic student populations, noting varied needs relating to academic ability and integrity (Heng, 2018), financial situations (Glass et al., 2015), and culture-specific knowledge backgrounds (Heng, 2019; Jin & Schneider, 2019), for example; successful achievement of this, of course, requires strong skills in intercultural competence and sensitivity. Nevertheless, only when this is accomplished, according to Heng (2019), can coping strategies and needs be adequately addressed and inclusive environments be created, complete with comprehensive, specialized services for international students.

As with domestic students, responsive pedagogy requires an instructor's understanding of the student and their background. For example, sensitive responses to student contributions (Gartman, 2016) and scaffolding material to be more accessible to learners (Caplan & Stevens, 2017) are beneficial for international students as well, though only when adapted to be relevant to the specific needs of non-native English-speaking populations and their

differentiated needs. These sorts of tailored engagement approaches, as opposed to "simply expecting foreign students to 'adapt,'" assist in student learning but also in substantiating the value of the "international exchange and diplomacy" elements of internationalization trends in HE (Lee, 2010). Approaching groups of individuals from unfamiliar cultures with the same degree of nuanced variability and understanding as one's own culture is challenging and requires considerable intercultural competence and sensitivity (Hall, 1977; Hofstede et al., 2010). In investigating differences in faculty attitudes toward international students among American HE instructors, Jin and Schneider (2019) found that faculty who had studied abroad have better chances of understanding and empathizing with international students, supporting the possibility that such intercultural competence and sensitivity might be learnable or acquirable. Similarly, in a dissertation on Emirati tertiary students' and Western-trained expatriate instructors' perceptions of each other, Moore (2015) found that the amount of time that one is immersed in diverse environments may also enhance their coping abilities in such contexts.

2.2 Internationalization in the UAE

In an extensive review of the current literature on internationalization with a particular focus on trends beyond Western education systems, Tight (2022) notes that research in the Gulf region is an emerging area of study. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), the UAE sent 14,689 students abroad to pursue HE in 2022, including 2,388 to the United States. According to UN projections, the UAE currently has an approximate population of just above 10 million people as of 2022, an estimated 88% of which are expatriate residents

(CIA, 2022; UAE Government Portal, 2022a). This makes the UAE, along with several neighboring Gulf region nations, unique in its demographics and, in turn, its education systems; the Gulf has the highest immigration rates in the world (UNESCO, 2021). As of 2022, around 295,000 students were reported to have been enrolled in HEIs in the UAE (Gulf News, 2021), 215,975 of which were categorized as "international students" (UNESCO, 2022). However, this figure is problematic, as "international students" are defined here as "someone enrolled in a degree program in the UAE who does not have Emirati citizenship" (Cruz et al., 2022, p. 153), which is inherited through the father. This means that a considerable number of tertiary students who were born and/or raised in the UAE are often classified as "international", including those born to expatriate parents, to mixed lineage homes of Emirati mothers and foreign fathers, or possibly to "bidoons"— stateless individuals who, for several plausible reasons, were not granted or rejected citizenship at the time that independence was established (Alqadi, 2015). These individuals are often granted passports from the Comoros, as in 2008, the UAE government covertly agreed with the government of the Comoros to "an arrangement that transformed" for undocumented Emirati citizens applying for citizenship into "foreign residents" (Alqadi, 2015, p. 73); as their eligibility for enrollment at the government universities is situationally nuanced, their representation and classification in such institutions remains unclear. Thus, given that 88% of the country's population are classified as non-Emirati, adopting a binary approach to international/domestic student numbers paints a misleading picture, though no studies, reports, or statistics to date provide a more specific breakdown of the HE student population in the UAE. In fact, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics' annual *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level*

Students report, which typically gives specifics on international students' countries of origin, provides no data for the UAE's international student population's nationalities.

The UAE serves its international student population, consisting largely of residents who have lived in the UAE for years or even since birth, with chiefly for-profit private institutions or international branch campuses, often referred to as IBCs (UNESCO, 2021). IBCs are generally defined as the campuses of tertiary institutions set up abroad to serve local or regional populations. In the UAE, with the world's second-highest number of IBCs, these campuses are typically branches of institutions from Western nations, with 50% belonging to the US and UK alone (Wilkins, 2020). In recent years, several branch campuses in the UAE have reportedly reached a level of saturation so high that campuses are now finding it challenging to attract and retain sufficient student numbers. Nonetheless, with a disproportionately high number of non-Emirati residents being born and/or raised in the UAE with little to no access to its public universities, many residents depend on these private institutions for university education and seek opportunities with institutions that are affiliated to their nations of citizenship (Wilkins, 2020). Other motivations for selecting the UAE for tertiary education include the safety of Abu Dhabi and Dubai and the cities' high employment of non-nationals; or, otherwise stated, a seemingly high chance of employability upon graduation. Cost was the second most common motivation for choosing a branch campus in the UAE, as many of these campuses carry the name recognition of Western universities with lower tuition fees (Ahmad & Hussain, 2017). Although IBCs are often more expensive than public institutions

in students' country of citizenship, "international students" in the UAE may never have lived in their country of citizenship and may feel more comfortable remaining in the Emirates, especially if their families are also residents there. Furthermore, IBCs are often viewed as more affordable options compared to other private institutions in the area or to the country's public universities (Ahmad & Hussain, 2015), which rarely provide funding or even admission to non-Emirati nationals (Cruz et al., 2022; Higher Colleges of Technology [HCT], 2022a; Zayed University, 2022).

2.2.1 Internationalization in the UAE's federal HEIs

While the UAE has several initiatives in place for sending students abroad for their HE experiences (UAE Government Portal, 2022a), its public universities have not established themselves as hubs for receiving international students (Cruz et al., 2022). The UAE's three public universities are almost exclusively accessible to Emirati nationals with the exception of one (HCT, 2022a; UAEU, 2021; Zayed University, 2022), whose international student population remains a minority of the total student body (UAEU, 2021) even though Emiratis comprise only 12% of the nation's population (CIA, 2022). The UAE has three fully public tertiary institutions, and tuition is provided in full by the government for Emirati students attending them (Winchip, 2020). Enrollment at the public universities accounts for about one-half of all Emirati university students and less than 10% of the country's international tertiary student population: combined, roughly 7,000 international students were enrolled in total across all 19 campuses of the three federal institutions in 2019 (Cruz et al., 2022). The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), the federal institution with the country's highest student enrollment, does

not serve international students (HCT, 2022a) although internationalization is listed as a priority for its "HCT Vision 2030" strategic plan (HCT, 2022b); the smallest of its government HEIs, Zayed University, just recently began admitting non-nationals, reporting an international student population just above 1%, though expressing a desire to develop international recruitment (Cruz et al., 2022; Zayed University, 2022). United Arab Emirates University, or UAEU—the country's most highly-ranked federal institution, according to QS World University Rankings (2023)—reports that its international student population comprises 30% of its total student enrollment (UAEU, 2021), though again, many of these students have likely resided in the UAE for a considerable amount of time preceding their university enrolment. In their research on international students at one UAE public university, Cruz et al. (2022) found that 40% of their international sample population reported living in the UAE for at least the four years preceding their university matriculation, or, in other words, the full duration of their high school education.

Though discussion of internationalization in this paper has been predominantly focused thus far on student mobility, the movement of academic staff is also a significant component of the phenomenon (Tight, 2022). As with students, many faculty members are drawn to employment opportunities at universities in the West. However, as detailed above, several Gulf nations including the UAE present a unique academic situation, as local populations are proportionally small in comparison to the total number of the nations' residents. This signifies that they comprise a relatively small portion of the workforce; combined with high salaries on a global comparative scale (Dimitropoulou, 2022) and a shortage of

qualified local candidates (Austin et al., 2014), institutions in the region attract faculty from all over the world (Badry, 2019); even at public institutions, internationalization takes the shape of diverse instructional staff and faculty members (Silvera & Stocker, 2018). Despite major "Emiratization" initiatives and laws enacted by the government to integrate more Emiratis into the workforce (Badry, 2019), Emiratis do not typically view education as an attractive professional field (Austin et al., 2014). As of 2020, 11.7% Zayed University's faculty members were Emirati with the remaining portion immigrating from 59 different countries (Zayed University, 2022); according to a transcription of a 2021 talk from UAEU's Chancellor, nationals comprise about one-third of the University's instructional staff with the other two-thirds of faculty members representing 77 countries (Nusseibeh, 2021); demographic breakdowns for the third public institution, HCT, are not available. Essentially, discussing internationalization as it pertains to HE in the UAE can be rather complicated; the diversity in its HE faculty and resident population, however, is well-established. Needless to say, intercultural sensitivity and competence are essential for successful teaching and learning in such a diverse educational environment, even at institutions in which the student population is almost fully mono-national. Research on the perceptions of Western and Western-trained faculty and of Emirati tertiary students are outlined later in this chapter. However, to give context to their perceptions and experiences, descriptions of the general higher education and workplace environments in the UAE are first presented here.

2.3 HE in the UAE

In its "National Strategy for Higher Education 2030," the UAE has stated its desire to become a globally competitive player in today's knowledge economy (Ashour, 2020; Shomotova & Karabchuk, 2022; UAE Government Portal, 2022b). Introduced in 2017, the plan consists of 33 initiatives centered largely around improving graduates' readiness for the workforce, integration of the private sector into educational planning and workforce training, and boosting the country's research outputs among both faculty and student bodies. The development of numerous government bodies geared toward benchmarking and ensuring institutional quality through centralized data collection and availability for public, comparative purposes is also a major component of the strategy (UAE Government Portal, 2022b).

In reviewing the literature on federal HEIs in the UAE and the spaces where educational ideologies and practices occur where the East and West meet, it is evident that the UAE is both a relatively young and ambitious nation that is in a seemingly constant state of drastic and rapid change, often negotiating its own identity and role in a globalized society. Established in 1971, the UAE is a fairly young country with an even younger HE system dating back only to 1976 (UAEU, 2022). The country continues to evolve quickly: though the country has nearly 10 million residents to date (CIA, 2022), this number was only slightly above 3.5 million just 20 years ago (World Bank, 2023). Thus, there have only been a few decades' worth of time to research and publish on these institutions; throughout most of those years, research and data collection processes were inconsistent and de-centralized, attempted by various entities from state, federal, and other organizational levels (Shroff & Kratochvil, 2018). Though CHEDS, the Central

Higher Education Data Store, was established for such endeavors and for the purpose of making comprehensive, data-driven institutional comparisons available to the public (Shroff & Kratochvil, 2018), their findings remain unavailable with the exception of a report from 2012. Their downloadable data website, last updated in 2018, included only empty spreadsheets at the time of this draft. The National 2030 Strategy lists continued work on such endeavors as a main tenet of the plan, though no tangible outcomes have yet to be published or at least publicly accessible to the best of the author's knowledge.

Furthermore, the research on the country's federal HEIs that has been published within the past 20, 10, or even 5 years would have been under considerably different policies with different demographics (Singh et al., 2021), especially given the constant change in ministry and institutional policies as well as high employee and leadership turnover in the HE sector (Austin et al., 2014). Nevertheless, a few key findings from earlier studies are included when relevant.

2.3.1 Societal transformation and education

Historically, the educational model in the UAE was rooted in practices emphasizing rote, passive learning. In the country's earliest years and even preceding its establishment roughly 50 years ago, education focused on religion and tribal-level oral storytelling (Freimuth, 2014; Rapanta, 2014; Russell, 2004; Singh et al., 2021). While there are remnants of this type of traditional learning still in place, particularly in the primary and secondary schools, systems are said to be on their way to transitioning into focus areas of innovation, business, and critical analysis of material, and student mindsets are showing signs of becoming

receptive to pedagogical models that foster active learning and analytical thinking (Singh et al., 2021). Students must, by law or with few exceptions depending on the type and emirate location of the school, pass their primary and secondary school courses; teachers are not permitted to or are sternly discouraged through pressure from leadership from designating students a failing grade (Abu Dhabi Education Council, 2015; Badam, 2018; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, 2015). As a result, many Western expatriate instructors are surprised with students' academic performance of Emirati students in HE classrooms (Austin et al., 2014; James & Shammas, 2018; Matherly et al., 2017). Ashour (2020) addresses the government's preference in allotting financial resources to Emirati salaries instead of the funding that extra time in education would require. It is imperative to keep in mind as well that, with the country having been established only about 50 years ago, many Emiratis led transient, Bedouin lifestyles until the government overhauled such customs in favor of mass urbanization and resettlement (Al Amaireh, 2011); thus, many students' parents and most of their grandparents have not attended formal schooling at all, let alone university (Singh et al., 2021), creating its own set of academic challenges and disadvantages.

In part as an attempt to overcome such disadvantages, the UAE has allocated a considerable amount of funding to study abroad scholarships and infrastructure updates to its federal institutions, achieving several high quality indicators on World Economic Forum reports. However, although the HEI sector's growth over recent years, particularly among IBCs, is uncontested, such investments are typically not viewed beyond borders as meeting the demands of today's

knowledge economy: the quality of education and graduates remain in question (Ashour, 2020; Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Badry, 2019). The country is falling short of labor demands as well (UNDP, 2016), which is likely a primary factor in the government's recent drive to both incorporate industry professionals into the HE long-term strategic 2030 plan and to integrate Emirati nationals into the private sector through "Emiratization" (The National, 2022a).

2.3.1.1 Emiratization

"Emiratization" refers to legal policies requiring both public and private sector organizations to hire more Emirati nationals. UAE nationals must comprise 2% of a private company's staff by the end of 2022; this number is to increase incrementally to reach 10% by 2026 (The National, 2022a). In 2022, the government dedicated 24 billion AED (just under $6.5 billion USD) to getting Emirati nationals into private sector jobs. This includes subsidizing salaries (The National, 2022a), as locals' financial expectations are often well beyond company and industry norms. Acknowledging this, the government substantially contributes to Emiratis' private sector salaries if under 30,000 AED ($8,169 USD) monthly. Emirati nationals receive an additional 5,000 AED ($1,361 USD) monthly if they have only a high school degree; this subsidy jumps to 7,000 AED ($1,906 USD) for citizens with a Bachelor's degree (Web Desk, 2022). Conversely, companies are fined for not hiring enough Emiratis, who often expect high salaries—roughly 20,000 AED or $5,445 USD—for entry-level positions (Abbas, 2022) or to be offered managerial positions with little if any prior employment experience. Nationals may even take offense to being offered entry-level positions despite a lack of employment experience, and offering such

positions has become illegal (The National, 2022b). This private-sector push is a transition from previous guarantees of comparatively high-paying government jobs—with shorter working hours and more holidays—immediately upon attaining a Bachelor's degree (Ashour, 2020; Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Davidson, 2008; Engin & McKeown, 2017; James & Shammas, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2007; Singh et al., 2021), which many locals have now grown to expect as a workplace norm. This makes Emiratization quotas even more difficult for companies to fill but also plays a role in perpetuating a cycle of financial and employment entitlement that many academics believe hinders actual learning and skill development among Emirati university students (James & Shammas, 2018). HE, which is not only free (James & Shammas, 2018) but generally comes with a monthly financial student stipend (Fatima College of Health Sciences, 2022; Oxford Business Group, 2019), is often viewed by students as a "rite of passage" instead of a place of learning, applicable skill attainment, or critical thought (Badry & Willoughby, 2015). Though a more thorough discussion of perceptions of Western and Western-trained expatriate faculty and Emirati students in federal HEIs and vice versa will follow, this relatively minimized financial pressure and job competition for Emirati nationals (Maxwell, 2022) seems to feed a mismatch of expectations between the two groups throughout this study.

2.3.1.2 "Othering"

The approximate 1:10 ratio of Emiratis to non-Emirati residents and the foreign-dominant workforce is instantly visible in UAE society. James and Shammas (2018) illustrate that UAE nationals virtually never work in service positions, which may be contributing to what the authors call an "unequal society" in which

foreigners are largely present in the country to serve them; this extends into education sectors. The authors "observed that students felt that teachers were there to serve them and to accede to their demands" (James & Shammas, 2018, p. 504). This expectation may be attributed to the transactional nature that is the basis for most of Emirati students' interactions with non-locals and, as James and Shammas (2018) point out, are unequal in social and economic relations, which may likely be the root of the attitudinal transfer into academic spaces. In a thesis on Emirati students' and Western-trained expatriates instructors' perceptions of each other in the UAE's HEIs, Moore (2015) illustrated perceived overt racism toward on the part of Emiratis toward non-Emiratis in treatment and vocalizations, even toward other non-Emirati Arab instructors and classmates who are the children of mixed Emirati/non-Emirati marriages. The author proposes that this may initially be viewed as shaming others, which is actually illegal in the UAE, but may be perceived among the local population as honoring their own status as Emiratis. This visible societal distinction is referred to by Diallo (2014) in research on Emirati students' identity construction in expatriate-predominant teaching environments as "Othering," a phrase also employed by James and Shammas (2018) in their investigation of UAE national tertiary students and expatriate faculty. Diallo (2014) also contends that Emirati HE students may view Western instructors as "covert cultural agents" and that avoiding compliance with teachers' requests may be an act of validation of their own identities. He explains that teacher-student conflict may be the result of clashes of what he refers to as students' own identities, which may in turn lead to "critical incidents" in the classroom. This notion that Western instructors impart more than linguistic knowledge has also been found among Emirati educators,

who express that Western teachers' customs, clothing, and presence visibly symbolize their culture in the classroom (Hopkyns, 2017). Emiratis' concern over expatriates' presence as detrimental to local languages and cultures is well-documented in the literature (Badry, 2019; Diallo, 2014; Hopkyns, 2017; Moore, 2015; Solloway, 2016; Yahya, 2022).

2.3.2 Western and Western-trained expatriate faculty experiences of teaching in federal HEIs in the UAE

Likely due at least in part to the relatively small number of Americans working in government universities in the UAE, there is not much published specifically on Americans in Emirati HEIs. Therefore, this review focuses on research of Western or, as is more prevalent in the literature, Western-trained, expatriate faculty. This section aims to outline expatriates' overall perceptions of teaching in Emirati federal HEIs, whereas discussion of expatriates' perceptions of working with Emirati students specifically, and vice versa, follows. Summarized, the cultural differences discussed above align with many experiences described in the literature on Western and Western-trained faculty in the Emirati education system and may be at the heart of the reportedly high faculty turnover in Emirati HEIs (Austin et al., 2014; O'Sullivan, 2007; Schoepp, 2010). In general, the literature creates an image of perceived instability, uncertainty, inequality, and limited if any room for professional development for expatriate faculty.

Many academics view research as an essential component of their career in HE; publications are vital in growing professionally, staying up-to-date with job-related innovations, and advancing one's field and career. However, the literature shows

that conducting research at the federal HEIs is barely emphasized if at all and that minimal if any time or funding is allotted to faculty for such projects (Austin et al., 2014; Ashour, 2020; Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Badry, 2019). Furthermore, faculty seeking to take on research nonetheless may encounter difficulties in acquiring the necessary approvals given the lack of transparency and complicated approval processes involved in institutional systems (Ashour, 2020). Emiratization further hampers professional growth, as Emirati nationals may reject entry-level positions (The National, 2022b); many high-ranking positions are typically reserved for nationals, and there are few if any tenure opportunities for non-Emiratis at government HEIs (Al-Ali, 2014). This perceived inequality is compounded by differences in salary, leave (Austin et al., 2014), and sabbatical (Tawfik, 2022) between national and expatriate government employees. Arguably of utmost importance, whereas UAE nationals are generally on unlimited-term contracts and can only lose their positions under extreme circumstances, non-local faculty feel uncertain about their job security because of the government's reliance on short-term contracts for expatriates (Austin et al., 2014; O'Sullivan, 2007) and because they can be terminated at any point without transparency; further, such decisions are not often communicated in a timely manner (Austin et al., 2014). This lack of transparency is doubly frustrating in that faculty are typically excluded from institutional decision-making or even voicing their experiences or opinions; their input is seemingly absent toward the top of the hierarchy (Al-Ali, 2014; Austin et al., 2014; Ashour, 2020), leading to an absence of any sense of community or ownness in one's workplace (Austin et al., 2014). This is listed by Schoepp (2010) as one of the primary reasons for faculty resignations in the UAE's HEIs. This lack of representation is further

exacerbated in that policy change in the education sector and even institutionally-speaking is perceived as a constant (Al-Ali, 2014; Badry, 2019; Schoepp, 2010): such continuous policy change with minimal ability to contribute combines to become a source of frustration.

However, limitations on idea-sharing are perceived to extend beyond hierarchically-top decision-making and serve as another cause for concern among expatriate faculty. Austin et al. (2014) found that expatriate faculty felt hesitant to speak freely, even regarding academic topics or suggestions for institutional improvement. These conditions affected their daily attitudes toward their jobs, impacting, for example, their confidence in sharing new ideas or proposing projects in fear that such brainstorming may present a difference in opinion with administration that could quickly result in termination. This leads to a feeling of hopelessness in impacting positive change, even with regard to instilling ambition in students in the classroom, especially when topics of politics such as labor rights were involved, including at so-called "Western" universities in the UAE that carry the Western institutions' names (Noori, 2016). That faculty report feeling hesitant to discuss certain themes in class (Al-Ali, 2014; Austin et al., 2014; Noori, 2016) is understandable given the imprisonment of activists and academics in the country (Human Rights Watch, 2022) but logically leads to a distance between critical education and many of the issues of Emirati society (Noori, 2016). It may not be surprising then that expatriate faculty often perceive their workplace environments as punitive (Austin et al., 2014), exacerbated by the common practice of Emirati students to go directly to top administrators with complaints about faculty (Austin et al., 2014; Diallo, 2014).

Nevertheless, a relatively high number of expatriates remain in their faculty positions in UAE's federal HEIs. Austin et al. (2014) found that high salaries were the primary motivation for instructors' decision to accept work in the UAE and, according to Schoepp (2010), to continue. Both studies also found that expatriate faculty do cite the opportunity to work with a diverse set of colleagues as an extrinsic reward of teaching in the UAE. They viewed other expatriates as sources of guidance, friendship, and support, though closeness of such relationships was difficult to achieve for many, given differences not only in national background but also age and the temporary nature of employees on limited-term contracts (Austin et al., 2014).

2.3.3 Western and Western-trained expatriate faculty experiences of teaching Emirati students

Though not broken down by nationality, research by Austin et al. (2014) investigated the experiences of 33 expatriate instructors employed in Emirati HEIs. While participants consistently discussed feeling highly dedicated as instructors, they generally viewed Emirati university students as less hardworking than they would have expected in a HE setting, referring to them as "challenging" to teach behaviorally (Diallo, 2014; James & Shammas, 2018). In the public institutions in particular, faculty perceived that female students approach university as less of a space for learning and more as a stepping-stone in their marriage trajectory as, culturally, holding a Bachelor's degree can impact spousal options (Austin et al., 2014; Bridi & Al Hosani, 2022; Findlow, 2013; James & Shammas, 2018; Matherly et al., 2017); similarly, being married can impact a woman's likelihood of, or lack thereof, getting a job (Bridi & Al Hosani, 2022;

James & Shammas, 2018; Young, 2017). Thus, they may view their HE experience as an opportunity for socialization rather than an academic pursuit. Faculty also felt that wealthier students—a considerable portion of the Emirati population—may not approach academic excellence as essential for personal success (James & Shammas, 2018). Students often believe that they are entitled to and promised cushy government jobs upon graduation (Ashour, 2020; Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Davidson, 2008; Engin & McKeown, 2017; James & Shammas, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2007; Singh et al., 2021) and question why the government and its universities require perceptively challenging courses and implement attendance policies on the path to graduation (Badry & Willoughby, 2015; James & Shammas, 2018). Though details of Emirati students' self-described HE motivations are outlined in the following section, it is worth noting here that faculty perceptions of students' marriage-related rationale and seemingly effortless government job assignment (Davidson, 2008; James & Shammas, 2018) are corroborated by research with Emirati tertiary student participants as well (Bridi & Al Hosani, 2022).

Faculty also perceived Emirati tertiary students in government institutions as largely underprepared for university studies (Austin et al., 2014; Diallo, 2014; James & Shammas, 2018; Singh et al., 2021) and unable to handle university-related challenges (James & Shammas, 2018). Instructors may be accustomed to education systems in which students have already achieved a degree of autonomy in their own study habits (Singh et al., 2021) and where critical thinking skills are encouraged at earlier ages, whereas in the UAE, many primary and secondary schools are said to rely heavily on rote memorization, teacher-

centered instruction, and passive learning methods with considerably fewer opportunities to engage in analytical questioning (Ashour, 2020; Freimuth, 2014; Rapanta, 2014; Russell, 2004; Singh et al., 2021). Further posing challenge to investigative-style university instruction, Rapanta (2014) suggests a skepticism among students in the scientific method and the near-universally accepted approaches to conducting research, relying instead on their own intuitions and anecdotal experiences with an emphasis on "bigger pictures" versus the pieces that constitute these grand ideas. Essentially, Emirati students' habits of echoing readings and lesson materials in lieu of synthesizing, conceptualizing, and analyzing information is well-documented as a perceived challenge or even frustration among Western and Western-trained expatriate faculty teaching in the UAE HEIs, who according to Diallo (2014) often expect Emirati students to study and learn in ways that are similar to students in their domestic contexts. As a result, faculty recounted having to provide extensive degrees of structure and support within their lessons in attempts to bolster learning (McLaughlin & Durrant, 2015; Rapanta, 2014; Singh et al., 2021). They expressed frustration with the amount of time this can take, given the extent of adjustments to textbooks and linguistic bolstering needed to convey meaning, as well as pressure to cover curricula in class due to a lack of independent reading or study among students outside of class (Singh et al., 2021). Compounding faculty frustrations is the outward student awareness of their privilege as, according to James and Shammas (2018), they at times admit openly that they are accustomed to everything being made easy for them and may even expect revised, easier versions of assignments under the guise of "help" upon initially failing (James & Shammas, 2018). Students require near-identical prototypes and examples in

order to complete assignments, and content must be presented as concretely as possible with minimal inclusion of the abstract (Rapanta, 2014).

Of course, expatriate faculty's perceptions of Emirati students are not all negative. Several described experiences with classes full of kind, motivated, and hard-working students (Austin et al., 2014). While work by Singh et al. (2021) highlighted culturally-related disconnections between faculty and students and their conceptions of teaching and learning, the authors do state that instructors are nonetheless highly respected in the UAE. In fact, much of the literature attributes concerns and frustrations among both expatriate faculty and Emirati students as stemming from frequent culturally-based misalignments in expectations (Austin et al., 2014; Diallo, 2014; James & Shammas, 2018; Moore, 2015; Rapanta, 2014; Singh et al., 2021).

2.3.4 Relational motivation in Emirati university students

HE is free in the UAE to Emirati nationals. As discussed above, Emirati students are perceived as approaching HE as a rite of passage as opposed to a place of learning (Badry & Willoughby, 2015). Whereas students in other parts of the world may at times manifest a similar attitude, Emirati students are relatively unique in that they expect to be appointed to highly-compensated government jobs with little if any competition or review of their skills, knowledge, or competencies immediately following graduation (Ashour, 2020; Ashour & Fatima, 2016; Davidson, 2008; Engin & McKeown, 2017; James & Shammas, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2007; Singh et al., 2021), leading them to at times question the point of university at all (James & Shammas, 2018). In this sense, attending college is

viewed as fulfilling a requirement for the inevitable and guaranteed next step versus an interest in pursuing an academic passion or interest. It is perhaps related to this that, according to much of the literature, Emirati students cite significantly more extrinsic than intrinsic motivations (James & Shammas, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2007; Semmar, 2005; Singh et al., 2021). In addition to the high-salaried jobs they expect, extrinsic motivations for university study tend to include representing their family in a positive light and making them proud by fulfilling their dreams or expectations (Engin & McKeown, 2017; James & Shammas, 2018), becoming a better mother (Bridi & Al Hosani, 2022; James & Shammas, 2018), helping to develop the nation (Engin & McKeown, 2017; James & Shamma, 2018; Matherly et al., 2017), and a need to improve their English in order to achieve the aforementioned, as they view English as a global communication necessity despite mixed views on its role in and effects on local culture and language (Hopkyns, 2017; Solloway, 2016).

Crucially, alongside family-related inspirations, Emirati university students consider their instructors to be among their top sources of motivation and encouragement (Halawah, 2011; James & Shammas, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2007; Semmar, 2005). In fact, they rated their instructors almost as highly as family members in discussing sources of encouragement and prefer instructors who behave as another parent to them (James & Shammas, 2018). Emirati students ranked caring relationships with instructors as more important to their university study than an instructor's content knowledge or even teaching methods. They find instructors who demonstrate sympathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness and who get to know them individually—knowing their names and about their families,

listening to them and their opinions, and praising their contributions—as especially motivating (James & Shammas, 2018), along with personalities that are friendly, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable about their individual interests (Halawah, 2011). Work with 338 high school Emirati students found similar results, adding that these motivating student-teacher relationships can in fact correlate with achievement of learning goals and mastery of concepts, more so than participation in classroom activities or even peer relationships (Aldridge & Rowntree, 2022). Thus, though the list of preferred traits may differ compared to other parts of the world, research supports the idea that student-faculty relationships in UAE HEIs are powerful in fostering student motivation. As such, their perceptions of their instructors are particularly impactful on their learning.

2.3.5 Emirati students' experiences with Western and Western-trained expatriate faculty

Perhaps because research is not emphasized or expected at the government institutions (Austin et al., 2014; Badry, 2019), and perhaps also due to fears of retaliation for discussing sensitive or critical topics (Austin et al., 2014; Diallo, 2014) and an outright dictation of what can or must be taught (Moore, 2015), fairly little work has been published on uniquely Emirati HE students in government settings; fewer studies yet, if any, focus solely on perceptions of American faculty. Thus, a review of the literature as it pertains to Western and Western-trained expatriates is presented here.

English is the language of instruction at all three government universities in the UAE. This brings with it a sense of frustration or concern in itself toward HE

among many Emiratis, who understandably would prefer to learn in their native language (Moore, 2015; Hopkyns, 2017; Solloway, 2016) or remain dedicated to preserving the Arabic language and cultural attributes that accompany it (Badry, 2019). Despite this resentment, Emirati students often view English as a necessity for work even within their own country, given the diversity of the resident population (CIA, 2022). It may be for this reason that Hopkyns (2017) found that students in fact prefer native English-speaking instructors, which typically aligns with Western- and Western-trained faculty. In addition to desiring exposure to native accents and the elimination of temptations to communication with instructors in Arabic, students also disclosed an interest in learning about Western culture from these faculty members (Hopkyns, 2017). According to Rapanta (2014), tertiary Emirati students respond particularly well to Western faculty who demonstrate a knowledge and acceptance of the local culture and who encourage and positively reinforce such topics through student discussion.

However, as discussed above, Emirati students maintained perceptions of HE that were distinct from those of Western and Western-trained expatriate faculty, particularly with regard to concepts of teaching and learning, motivation, student needs, and culture (Moore, 2015; Singh et al., 2021). Students hold predominantly extrinsic motivations for job acquisition for financial or familial reasons without necessarily recognizing the value in long-term material internalization or knowledge application in real-world jobs (Singh et al., 2021). Still, expatriate instructors often approach their courses in the UAE with an expectation that students are interested in their "chosen" fields of study and thus build lessons around sparking curiosity and intrinsic motivations, though this is

instead met with confusion among students (Singh et al., 2021). Ashour (2020) points out that reaching policy targets of employment placements seem to be the primary driver of encouraging Emiratis to pursue HE, which, when met with expatriate instructors who expect students to be intrinsically motivated, results in students questioning instructors and why hard work or attendance are required obstacles in their systematic path to the high-paying jobs they feel unquestionably entitled to (James & Shammas, 2018). Diallo (2014) outlines how this mismatch of expectations can lead to student perceptions of course material as inappropriate, mocking course materials and refusing to cooperate with faculty when either content or instructors themselves are perceived as clashing with students' own beliefs. Diallo (2014) goes on to explain that students at times view Western-trained expatriate instructors as "teachers who not only are shaped by liberal and secular views and trained according to Western epistemologies but have also inherited Judeo-Christian educational philosophies" (p. 57), which then leads to "critical incidents" in the classroom.

2.3.6 Recommendations from the literature

Just as in the case of American HE faculty teaching international students in domestic settings (Jean-Francois, 2019; Wireman, 2017), the literature illustrates that student-faculty relationships in the UAE's HEIs are impactful in shaping students' motivation and thus their learning (Halawah, 2011; James & Shammas, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2007; Semmar, 2005). Though challenges to fostering these constructive relationships have been outlined in previous sections, researchers do posit several recommendations for fostering them.

Again, just as with the case of American HE faculty teaching international students in domestic settings (Smith, 2020; Urban & Palmer, 2014), research suggests that Western and Western-trained faculty teaching fully Emirati tertiary students could benefit from teaching and learning about each other's backgrounds and cultures and integrating such knowledge into culturally responsive pedagogical approaches (Singh et al., 2021). While James and Shammas (2018) point out that Orientalist attitudes among faculty may encompass ethnocentric comparison and lead to mindsets that emphasize stereotyping and judgments of one culture's moral superiority over another's, considerable cultural differences and motivations on behalf of students may also impede in the adoption of these strategies (Singh et al., 2021). Nonetheless, Emirati students' desire to be recognized and heard in their own classrooms is clear (James & Shammas, 2018; Rapanta, 2014), which may then become a useful starting point in line with the benefits of the collaborative approaches found for HE international students in the US (Karuppan & Barari, 2011).

Given the high-context nature of Emirati culture, cultural responsiveness in the Emirati HE context may necessitate heightened degrees of reflection and empathy compared to many Western cultures (Abdulla et al., 2022; Hofstede et al., 2010). This makes emotional intelligence a key tenet in taking cultural expectations into consideration in HE settings (Rapanta, 2014), especially given the affective nature of education and heightened academic outcomes in the UAE (McLaughlin & Durrant, 2015). Khassawneh et al. (2022) explains that emotional intelligence in instructors in the UAE significantly impacts educator behavior, which in turn improves student success.

Chapter 3: Interculturality and HE

3.1 Theories of culture

Ultimately, the solutions posed by researchers in both American and Emirati HE contexts for ensuring more positive college experiences for students and faculty alike suggest the enhancement of intercultural knowledge and sensitivity. This is not surprising, given that many of the negative perceptions and research discussed above are rooted in cultural differences and misunderstandings through the lenses of Hall's 1977 conception of high-context cultures (Rapanta, 2014) and in collectivist or power distant societies (McLaughlin & Durrant, 2015; Rapanta, 2014; Singh et al., 2021) as described in Hofstede et al.'s 2010 iteration of six dimensions of culture.

3.1.1 Hall's High-Context Cultures

In applying Hall's (1977) dimensions of intercultural communication, numerous researchers have described the culture of the UAE, or of Arab cultures in general, as high-context compared to most Western cultures such as the United States or United Kingdom (Rapanta, 2014), whose HE systems serve as the models from which many of the UAE's education systems were formed (Goby & Nickerson, 2014; Hall, 1977; Kamali et al., 2015; Milla & Mataruna-Dos-Santos, 2019; Rapanta, 2014). According to Hall (1977), high context cultures value non-verbal, even ambiguous, communication in relying heavily on interpersonal relationships, which are often lifelong and depend on grounds of shared cultural experiences; this is in line with the historical accounts of their storytelling approaches to education discussed above. Low-context cultures common to the

West are more likely to communicate directly, using objective facts in place of intuition, and weigh writing and documentation over non-verbal or even spoken communication (Goby & Nickerson, 2014; Hall, 1977). Rapanta (2014) hypothesizes that it is partly this trust in relationships and shared culture as foundational to communication that results in students trying to understand lesson material through their classmates, with comments and questions in Arabic often relayed to peers instead of instructors, often in the middle of class; she predicts that such behavior may be seen as inappropriate by Western-trained faculty who may not be accustomed to such behavior in the tertiary classroom. Furthermore, the majority of Western expatriate instructors will not understand these frequent classroom comments, which may logically lead to its own set of misinterpretations and possible frustration in addition to violating English-only policies.

3.1.2 Hofstede's Collectivism and Power Distance

Hofstede et al. (2010) describes the Individualism versus Collectivism dimension as one in which societal members look primarily after themselves and immediate family under the former or integrate into larger groups—more commonly, extended families—in the latter. Emirati society, with its generational history of self-governing tribes (Al Amaireh, 2011; Alqadi, 2015), aligns closely with the characteristics of collectivist societies. According to Hofstede et al. (2010), such traits include the maintenance of harmony over conflict, a classification of people as part of their own "in-group" versus an "out-group," an unquestioned loyalty among in-group members from birth, and an approach to education as a space for acquisition of "how to do" skills where relationships are more valued than

tasks. In this regard, McLaughlin and Durrant (2015) write that tertiary education is not deeply rooted in the culture of the collectivist UAE, with the authors suggesting a potential clash in attempts to transfer a Western approach to academia that typically entails individualistic traits of competition, motivation, and according to Singh et al. (2021), the independent learning preferred by many of the country's expatriate faculty's cultures. The notion that relationships take precedence over task in collectivist communities may manifest itself in students' sense of "help" in tertiary education, including attempts to negotiate grades or expectations of opportunities to repeat exams or to request easier replacement assignments; in James and Shammas' (2018) research on Emirati students' and Western-trained expatriate instructors' perceptions of each other at a federal university in the UAE, these behaviors were presented as a contextual norm.

Given the role of family in the collectivist Emirati society, it is also important to again address that older generations did not attend university; many parents and grandparents likely did not attend any formal schooling at all (Singh et al., 2021), leading one to question generational perceptions of the value of education in the UAE. In setting out to investigate this, Matherly et al. (2017) discovered that one's education level had the greatest impact on perceptions of the benefits of education: the more education achieved, the more value perceived, with no significant distinction between generations. With many students' families being minimally educated, this may pose obstacles for Western expatriate instructors accustomed to the learning cultures of their home countries. In the UAE, Rapanta (2014) reported a general skepticism of research and its reliability- and validity-ensuring processes among Emirati students while Al-Ali (2014) highlighted a lack

of emphasis or value here in the autonomy or free thought that is at "the heart of the global American model" of HE (p. 243). This is crucially not to present either culture's approach to education as superior but to instead outline the mismatch in systems and cultures.

Hofstede (2011) also places the UAE highly on its Power Distance dimension, which the researcher aligns with the more teacher-centered approaches to education that many Western expatriates describe experiencing as being both common in the K-12 schools and as a preference among their Emirati students (Singh et al., 2021). It also signifies that members of a society are accustomed to accepting a hierarchical approach to governing with minimal justification expected from those in policy-making positions. This often serves as a source of frustration among Western expatriate faculty, who express a desire to have more of a voice in the decisions made at their institutions (Al-Ali, 2014; Austin et al., 2014; Ashour, 2020).

Essentially, the research shows conflicting expectations of HE between expatriate faculty and Emirati students. The majority of Emirati HE students in government HEIs come from government schools that commonly employ a distinct set of teaching approaches from those adopted in the West. This presents a set of surprises for expatriate faculty, who, especially upon initial arrival into their new roles in their new host countries, often expect their new students to pattern academically and behaviorally as HE students in their home countries. This disconnect, along with cultural norms tangential to the classroom such as motivations for pursuing education, at times lead to frustration or even conflict in

the classroom. Thus, the need for intercultural sensitivity among faculty here remains of utmost importance.

3.2 Intercultural sensitivity

One's ability to navigate intercultural interactions is well-documented as being of utmost importance in today's increasingly globalized society, of which education plays a significant role (Chen, 2010; de Wit & Altbach, 2020; McKay, 2017) and was detailed in the section on internationalization. Navigating these spaces and identifying unique needs first require a recognition of cultural differences and an emotive respect for such diversity—key tenants of the definition of IS adopted here (Chen, 2010). IS is "associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence" (Matveev & Merz, 2014, p. 123), which is then associated with successful engagement and communication with individuals of distinct backgrounds and cultures (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). However, research crucially shows that a sheer "familiarity" with a particular culture does not necessarily enhance one's level of IS when engaging with others from that culture (Bennett, 2014). In fact, in his thesis on sojourn educators teaching at a government university in Qatar, in which many of the participants had lived and worked in the host country for a number of years, McKay (2017) found that educators greatly overestimated their own levels of intercultural sensitivity. Challenges with cultural others can lead to employee turnover (du Toit & Jackson, 2014), and given the documented positive impacts of intercultural sensitivity on communication with diverse populations (Bennett, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 2007), a lack thereof may logically correlate with negative effects on students' learning and educational experiences.

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3.2.1 Ambiguity in definition

In the literature, definitions of intercultural sensitivity (IS) frequently differ, overlapping in some regards while unclear in others (Chen & Starosta, 1997; McMurray, 2007; Mezirow, 1997; Shammas, 2017). Complicating matters further, conceptualizations can be quite similar in meaning while the labels of such concepts are inconsistent (Vijver & Jeung, 2009; Shammas, 2017) and include terms such as intercultural competence, intercultural awareness, and intercultural maturity (Vijver & Leung, 2009). Nonetheless, many of the posited definitions of intercultural sensitivity emphasize one's ability to successfully navigate intercultural contexts, which requires positive attitudes toward intercultural engagement in areas such as learning, recognition, and respect of differences in culture and thus reflected an emotional, affective competency (Chen & Starosta, 1997); Mezirow (2007) corroborates this notion, suggesting that IS reflects attitudinal and mindset changes in its growth.

Nonetheless, definitional ambiguity logically leads to obstacles in measuring a construct, in turn hindering identification or implications of the predictive factors and impacts discussed in earlier IS research. In an attempt to address the issue, Chen and Starosta (2000) aimed to reinforce their 1997 definition of intercultural sensitivity as a measurable concept by developing the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS). Thus, the definition employed in this study is adopted from Chen and Starosta (1997; 2000), as it aligns with both the theoretical framework (Bennett, 1993) and the quantitative measurement scale used in this research; it is aimed at understanding the emotional component of intercultural communication as outlined in the following paragraph. This seems particularly

relevant to this study not only in its positioning in the UAE, where academic outcomes correlate with emotional and affective student-faculty relationships (Khassawneh et al., 2022), but also because the majority of students of the instructors in the US-based group come from high-context, collectivist cultures as well. Hall (1977) and Hofstede (2011) respectively, when relating these classifications to education, state that students from such societies are more likely to view relationships as more valuable than the achievement of tasks and to place the preservation of harmony above critical, individual opinion.

3.2.2 Chen and Starosta (2000)

Following a movement to distinguish the individual elements that together comprise the larger concept of intercultural communication competence, the umbrella term was divided into *awareness* as a cognitive aspect, *adroitness* as a behavioral component, and intercultural *sensitivity* (IS) as the emotional aspect (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Maintaining their initial conceptualization of the term from their 1997 publication, Chen and Starosta (2000) state that IS is "the affective dimension of intercultural communication competence" that involves a "mindset that helps individuals distinguish how their counterparts differ in behavior, perceptions, or feelings in the process of intercultural communication" (p. 4). Otherwise stated, it is one's skill in developing understanding and appreciative emotion toward differences in culture that in turn results in appropriate, effective behavior when communicating in intercultural situations (Chen, 2010). These traits, the researchers argue, are rooted in six elements of IS: *self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement,* and *non-judgment.*

Chen and Starosta (1997; 2000) outline that interculturally sensitive individuals are aware of culture and differences; they have respect for and see value in differing ideas and recognize individuality within a culture's people; they are motivated in demonstrating this respect behaviorally when engaging with cultural others. Thus, these accepting and positive feelings toward cultural diversity result in more effective behaviors in intercultural interactions (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Bennett (1986; 1993; 2004; 2013) takes this a step further, stating that IS is a developmental process. His definition shares the emphases on emotion and one's approach to cultural difference in that positive affect reflects non-innate, learned growth across a developmental continuum of ethnocentric and ethnorelative phases centered upon one's navigation of cultural differences. Called the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), this continuum serves as the framework adopted in the qualitative component of this study.

The developers of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) that is adopted in the present study, it was essential that Chen and Starosta (2000) not only defined IS but could also reasonably measure it. Though details of the development, validity, and reliability of the scale are presented in the Methodology section, it is important to note that Chen and Starosta initially posited six elements that constitute IS (self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment) that were measured using 77 items. They later adapted their conceptualization to entail only five factors that would be measured by 24 items, with the final five elements being interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment,

and interaction attentiveness (Chen & Starosta, 2000); this is the iteration of IS that will be adopted in the current study. According to the researchers, high scores in these categories manifested in individuals who are more attentive, empathic, and self-monitoring and who then engage in more effective and positive intercultural communication.

3.2.2.1 IS in faculty and staff in HE settings

As Chen and Starosta (2000) pose IS as positive emotion that one can crucially *develop*, and as Bennett (1986; 1993; 2004; 2013) proposed a continuum of one's IS progression, IS is positioned as a learnable, improvable construct. Logically, this leads researchers to question how, why, and under what circumstances this occurs. Compared to research on HE faculty and staff, considerably more studies have investigated different strategies aimed at enhancing IS with students, including study abroad experiences (Maharaja, 2009; McMurray, 2007), foreign exchange trips (D'Antoni, 2020), participant-generated visual methods (Covert, 2011; Karimi, Chalak, & Tabrizi, 2020), and experiential learning (Shammas, 2017; Stone, 2018). Conflating findings on students with studies on faculty and staff is not advisable: in comparing the two groups, Nieto (2008) found that university instructors in the US from various disciplines scored more highly on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale than international students studying at universities in the US. This is not surprising, given that faculty and staff logically have more exposure to navigating various intercultural settings throughout both their education and career experiences, which in fact correlates positively with IS (Ahmad & Khan, 2016; Bayles, 2009; Davis, 2009; Moore, 2015), along with other profession-related factors to be

detailed below. Nonetheless, few publications focus on IS in university faculty and staff, and even fewer still narrow in on Americans in particular. Beyond this, the few studies that do investigate faculty and staff in HE settings have resulted in inconsistent findings.

3.2.2.1.1 Positive effects

Corroborated by numerous studies, faculty and staff teaching ESL, teaching bilingual groups, and working only with international students for considerable lengths of time result in higher IS. Among the most positively correlated factors aligning with IS among faculty and staff is specifically teaching ESL (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018; Arcagok & Yilmaz, 2020; Jantawej & Inada, 2011; Nieto, 2008; Strekalova-Hughes, 2017). The participants in these studies taught in their nations of origin, including Turkey (Arcagok & Yilmaz, 2020), Thailand (Alaei & Nosrati, 2018; Jantawej & Inada, 2011), the United States albeit with mixed American and foreign faculty (Nieto, 2008), and American teachers of younger students as well (Strekalova-Hughes 2017). Interestingly, no effect was found for pre-service ESL teachers studying abroad, although those expressing interest in study abroad demonstrated higher IS compared to those not interested, regardless of whether they completed an abroad component (Ersin & Stay, 2020). Otherwise stated, the study abroad experience itself did not result in higher levels of IS among teachers compared to those who did not study abroad (Ersin & Atay, 2020).

Positive effects were also found for an individual's length of time working with groups of only international students (Ahmad & Khan, 2016; Bayles, 2009; Davis,

2009; Moore, 2015). In researching foreign student advisors at a US university, Davis (2009) discovered that IS was positively correlated with the length of time that American advisors served in their position. Furthermore, he also learned that organizing intercultural experiences for these students correlated more highly than actually engaging in the planned activities, which corroborates other studies suggesting that immersive experiences are not necessarily any more beneficial for faculty and staff than other rich intercultural input (Davis, 2009; Fahim, 2002). Similarly, teaching experience in multicultural settings with only international students also yielded higher IS in faculty. In investigating mixed nationality expatriate instructors at a government HEI in the UAE, research by Moore (2015) suggests that teaching experience correlates with greater intercultural competence. With a similar participant group at a university in Saudi Arabia, Ahmad and Khan (2016) found a significant difference in the IS of instructors who had more than 10 years of international teaching experience compared to those with less. With younger students, Bayles (2009) found that working with bilingual students also aligned with higher levels of IS among teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience.

3.2.2.1.2 No significant effects

A variety of demographic traits (Walker, 2019) and teaching classes with American students—even if mixed with international students (Bayles, 2009; Strekalova-Hughes, 2017) and even abroad (Sinclair, 2019)—did not yield significant results on IS. The latter is perhaps more interesting: no significant effects were found with American instructors who teach diverse, mixed groups of international and domestic students in non-ESL/bilingual classrooms. Though no

publications were found for HE faculty with such groups, a number of studies address this context with American teachers in K-12 environments. In studying American middle and high school teachers of ethnically diverse student groups, Walker (2019) learned that even when controlling for years of teaching experience, no significant effect was found for IS; teaching mixed diverse and international students among Americans in non-ESL classrooms yielded largely ethnocentric attitudes (Acquah et al., 2015). Even when abroad, North American instructors following American curricula at international schools with mixed groups of North American and international students maintained an ethnocentric outlook (Fretheim, 2007).

Several studies also indicate that a number of demographic factors do not correlate significantly with IS among faculty, including gender (Ahmad & Khan, 2016; Arcagok & Yilmaz, 2020; Walker, 2019; Yurtseven & Altun, 2015), domestic versus foreign nationality (Yurtseven & Altun, 2015), ethnicity (Walker, 2019), level of education (Ahmad & Khan, 2016), or religion (Ahmad & Khan, 2016).

It is also worth noting that no publications to the best of the researcher's knowledge indicate any significantly negative effects on IS. This is especially interesting in that it supports Bennett's hypothesis that backward movement along the continuum of IS is in fact a rare occurrence (1993, 2004).

3.2.2.1.3 Conflicting results

Teaching mixed refugee-domestic student groups, teaching abroad, and relationships with diverse others seem to have conflicting relationships to IS in

the literature, with Americans seeming more resistant to IS development. For instance, whereas Morales et al. (2017) discovered that teaching in such an environment heightened Chilean instructors' IS compared to primary school teachers with all-Chilean student populations, no significance was found among American teachers of mixed refugee groups (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017). Further confounding studies is work with a faculty-exchange program between Turkey and the US: Sinclair (2019) found that Turkish HE instructors increased the intercultural sensitivity, per their scores on the ISS, following their experience teaching in the US while the American faculty members reciprocally teaching in Turkey, on the other hand, did not increase their IS. What is interesting here is that both sets of participants were ESL instructors. While research shows that ESL HE instructors tend to have higher IS compared to instructors of other disciplines (Nieto, 2008), it seems here that teaching abroad does not necessarily heighten IS further. This may be related to the fact that Americans were teaching their own language abroad while the Turkish group was not and may have been perceiving the experience as more enriching for their own linguistic or professional skills.

In another sense, however, this bolsters findings discussed above from Fretheim (2007), who found that American instructors in southern Africa retained ethnocentric worldviews when teaching mixed American-international student populations, even though teaching international students abroad seems to correlate with higher IS (Ahmad & Khan, 2016; Moore, 2015). Working with uniquely international populations may, then, have more of an impact on IS than the sheer experience of living abroad for Americans, especially given that

Americans in the above studies are teaching in their native language—often viewed as the language of commerce and academics—and likely have less motivation to therefore interact with locals when abroad.

Nonetheless, one may hypothesize that one's relationship to diverse others may be playing a role in such findings, as it is well-documented that people seem to gravitate toward co-nationals when abroad (Fabricius et al., 2016; Tang et al., 2018) and may then be minimizing their interaction with local cultures and persons, whereas this is nearly impossible when working solely with internationally diverse others. Munawar (2015) found no significant impact in research on the IS of international HE students living with American roommates at their US universities. In the same vein, Turkish pre-service teachers working in Turkey did not demonstrate significantly higher IS as a result of having more friends from foreign countries (Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). However, an effect is indeed found when measuring for the closeness of these sorts of relationships, according to work done by Killick (2012) in reviewing American university students studying abroad, suggesting that establishing the level of comfort to inquire about more intimate or sensitive topics may instead lead to a greater recognition of intercultural difference and, in turn, sensitivity.

Essentially, though fairly intricate to traverse, findings as they relate specifically to Americans are as follows:

Significant positive effect
Teaching in ESL, both in HE (Nieto, 2008) and in schools (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017)

More than ten years of teaching experience in mixed bilingual classrooms domestically (Bayles, 2009) and all-international students abroad (Moore, 2015)
Length of time working as an advisor and event organizer for foreign students (Davis, 2009)
No significant effect
Working with mixed international-American student groups outside of ESL/bilingual classroom settings within the US (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017)
Teaching ESL abroad (Sinclair, 2019)
Teaching abroad in mixed international-US student classrooms with US curricula (Fretheim, 2007)

It is important to note that Chen and Starosta's scale measures one's IS at a given point in time. However, to triangulate data for illustrating a fuller, more representative image of participants' intercultural experience, this study aims to bolster its quantitative findings with qualitative data using the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; 1993; 2004; 2013) as the theoretical framework.

3.3 Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

For its evaluation of the ways in which individuals perceive, experience, and view differences across cultures (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), Bennett's six-phase model of progression, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was selected as the theoretical framework for this study. The DMIS has been widely researched since its initial introduction in Bennett (1986); since, countless references have cited its various conceptualizations albeit a bit inconsistently. Bennett himself references four iterations of the DMIS on his IDRInstitute website last updated in 2018; these include conceptualizations from

1986, 1993, 2004, and 2013 (Bennett, 2014). The conceptualization adopted for this study is Bennett (1993) for several reasons. First, the initial presentation of the DMIS did not include distinct perspectives specific to individuals from "dominant" cultures, which Bennett (1993) explicitly describes as relevant to Americans, though not exclusively. This is crucially relevant to this particular research, given that all participants are American instructors. While Bennett (2004) heightens this conversation of dominant culture perspectives and traits, it eliminates discussion of key concepts and strategies that in part comprise one's approach to intercultural engagement, such as isolation, denigration, superiority, pluralism, and contextual evaluation; these are defined and essential tenets of the Bennett (1993) conceptualization and will be used in the present study to assist in guiding participants' current situatedness on the DMIS continuum. While discussion of several of these terms may reappear in Bennett (2013), definitions remain consistent; this conceptualization of the framework serves primarily to extend its practical application in industry-specific environments, such as educational or business settings. Furthermore, a review of DMIS publications to date suggests that Bennett (1993) is the predominant conceptualization of the framework referenced, investigated, and applied in the literature. Thus, to align with previous work for consistency in comparison, in addition to the rationale above, Bennett (1993) was deemed most fitting for the current project.

The Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer et al., 2003), or IDI, was later introduced as a quantitative measurement tool intended to accompany the DMIS. Bennett has since licensed the IDI. Thus, given the financial costs associated with adopting the trademarked IDI, the ISS (Chen & Starosta, 2000) was selected

as the quantitative instrument for this thesis. However, it is important to explicitly note that the 1993 DMIS conceptualization was developed independent of the IDI as its own framework for qualitative application. In other words, its validity is not reliant upon nor restricted to the adoption of the IDI, and the ISS is therefore an equally acceptable quantitative tool for measuring IS.

3.3.1 Key aims and assumptions

Developing communicative competence in the linguistic form of one's native language, rooted in one's own native culture, is a naturally occurring phenomenon; however, this same skill in another culture is not, as navigating cultural "otherness" is an acquired skill. Bennett and Bennett (2004) explicitly state that the DMIS is not a model of growth or regression in attitude or behavior but of cognitive structure. The guiding principle of the model is that, in intercultural scenarios, people's perspectives toward cultural others and cultural differences vary across a range of perspectives, with the underlying assumption of the theory being that individuals' perceptions will shift over time as a result of a growing sophistication of their experience with cultural difference, which in turn increases their intercultural sensitivity (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The emphasis is explicitly on the meaning that communicators attribute to difference (Bennett, 1993); this difference is experienced individually and subjectively, thus rooting the theory in phenomenology. The first three stages of the continuum reflect ethnocentric perceptions of differences, from the stance of one's own culture, with little respect for or even awareness of other culturally-informed norms. The last three phases represent ethnorelative interpretations of cultural difference, where an appreciation of and value toward diversity and distinct world-view perspectives

are present (Bennett, 1993). Bennett (1986; 1993; 2004) argues that progression across the continuum is largely unidirectional—that backwards movement toward previous phases, which he refers to as "retreating," is unusual and is, in its rare occurrences, essentially limited to movement within the ethnocentric phases. In other words, once an individual has reached an ethnorelative view of culture, such retreat is atypical, as "people do not generally regress from more complex to less complex experiences of cultural difference" (Bennett, 2004, p. 74).

The framework was first created as a result of Bennett's own systematic observations of communicative behaviors of students in intercultural academic settings, such as classes, workshops, or exchange programs (Bennett, 1993; 2018). Throughout months or at times even years, he recognized progression in their intercultural competence and communication, noting that their strategies appeared to be forming predictable patterns. He thus utilized grounded theory, a phenomenological approach, to classify his observations into six categories—the six phases that continue to comprise the continuum—of heightened sensitivity to cultural difference. The model is Constructivist in that communicators are assumed to be creating their own experiences and interpretations of reality in their engagements (Bennett, 1986; 1993; 2018). When awareness and recognition of cultural difference is *experienced* and grows in sophistication, the potential for increased intercultural competence and relationships begins to take shape (Bennett, 1986; 1993; 2004; 2013; Hammer et al., 2003).

3.3.2 Employing the framework

To reiterate, the DMIS consists of six progressive phases that one is proposed to potentially move through in maturing perceptions of cultural differences. It is assumed that not all individuals grow to reach all six phases, or even beyond stage one or two. The stages and sub-stages, shown in Figure 3.1, indicate one's sequence of IS beginning with *denial, defense*, and *minimization* in the *ethnocentric* stances of the continuum that then progress into the *ethnorelative* phases of *acceptance, adaptation*, and *integration* that represent one's ability to better appreciate the complexities and nuance of interculturality and to in turn respond with more sensitive and appropriate behaviors. Intercultural learning opportunities and experiences are predicted to assist individuals in advancing across the model's phases (Bennett, 1993). Each stage of the framework consists of characteristics of one's view of cultural difference that Bennett (1993) argues mark one's development within that phase and progression out of it. He also posits phase-specific "developmental strategies" that may aid in advancing one's intercultural competence, lending practical applications to his initial goals of explaining why and in which order individuals progress along the continuum (Bennett, 2018), ultimately expanding this set of strategies extensively to be industry-specific in Bennett (2013).

The Ethnocentric Stages		
I. Denial	II. Defense	III. Minimization
A. Isolation B. Separation	A. Denigration B. Superiority C. Reversal	A. Physical Universalism B. Transcendent Universalism
The Ethnorelative Stages		
IV. Acceptance	V. Adaptation	VI. Integration
A. Respect for Behavioral Difference B. Respect for Value Difference	A. Empathy B. Pluralism	A. Contextual Evaluation B. Constructive Marginality

Figure 3.1 DMIS stages and substages, initially published in Bennett (1993) but reorganized in Maharaja (2009) to appear in its current form.

3.3.2.1 Ethnocentric stages

As discussed in brief above, the model is divided into six stages that comprise the two larger categories of *ethnocentricism* and *ethnorelativism.* Bennett (1993) defines ethnocentrism as a belief that one's own cultural worldview is at the center of all reality and is perceived as such by everyone. He argues that racism, negative stereotypes, and "othering" stem from this view of one's own culture as central. From most to least ethnocentric, this category consists of the stages of *denial, defense,* and *minimization*.

3.3.2.1.1 Denial

Keeping in mind that one's position on the continuum is based on one's perception of cultural *difference,* the *denial* stage is characterized by an outright lack of awareness of the existence of cultural differences, that differences occur only "elsewhere," or broad generalization of "others," such as "Asian," with nearly no recognition of nuance within such a grouping. Behaviorally, individuals in this

stage may laugh at differences that do not fit into their own worldview or approach them with a "laborious" or superficial politeness, for instance (Bennett, 1993). Bennett (1993) acknowledges that this may initially seem quite rare in an increasingly globalized world but maintains that an intentionally created social separation or certain geographical barriers may shape such a mindset. Examples of this *isolation*, to use the terminology of Bennett (1986; 1993), include Amazonian tribes or other physically remote areas of the world that simply do not confront external cultures, or small towns with homogeneous populations despite diverse metropolitan areas within the same country, which Bennett (1993) refers to as *parochialism*. The latter substage of *denial, separation* refers to an intentional creation of physical or social barriers. This can also include unintentional separations, where, for example, white Americans live in urban areas with black populations but rarely if ever interact with them. Whereas downplaying cultural differences impedes movement within this stage, Bennett (1993) suggests raising exposure to and directing attention toward cultural difference as strategies for encouraging movement within the phase.

3.3.2.1.2 Defense

This stage of sensitivity is marked by a perception of other cultures as a threat that must be countered (Bennett, 1993), which crucially entails a recognition of a cultural difference that thus situates individuals beyond the denial stage. Bennett (1993) includes the concepts of *denigration, superiority,* and *reversal* in describing the three forms of progression within the *defense* phase.

Denigration is argued to be the most common *defense* strategy. Bennett (1993) defines this as a repeated—not isolated—attachment of derogatory stereotypes or hostile statements toward every member of a group based on religion, race, gender, or any trait of potential "difference." He argues that an individual exhibiting defensive *denigration* of one group likely denigrates other groups as well, and that retreating from the *defense* stage back to the *denial* stage is possible. Of particular interest to this study, Bennett (1993) notes that this retreat is seen with relative frequency with expatriate groups who are pushed into intercultural interactions that often involve friction and view isolation as a peaceful solution in eliminating the potential for conflict even though it prevents the progression to more advanced stages of sensitivity that result in an ease of such tensions. He suggests that a sheer co-existence or contact with "others" is insufficient in progressing within this stage and that focusing here on a "common good" among all cultures and groups should instead be employed. He notes that this is counterintuitive to the emphasis on cultural difference but insists that this must precede emphasis on difference, perhaps to combat "de-humanizing" thought processes that partly comprise this stage.

Beyond denigration is s*uperiority,* defined by feelings of positivity toward one's own culture and may or may not involve denigration of other groups; cultural differences are viewed as threatening through a relegation of lower status toward "others" (Bennett, 1993). As with *denigration*, movement beyond the *superiority* phase entails a positive acknowledgement of one's own cultural identities but an affirmation of cultural "others" must immediately accompany such statements.

Bennett (1993) concludes his outline of the *defense* stage by introducing *reversal*, a phenomenon marked by the denigration of one's own culture and a newfound sense of superiority toward another. Though not occurring in all individuals, Bennett (1993) believes it to be most common among long-term sojourners, such as the participants in this study, with a typical pattern of thought consisting of an initial denigration of the host culture, followed by a desire to help this culture to evolve to be more like the sojourner's own "superior" culture (in this case, American), ending in a romanticization of the host culture's values as they are. Though this may at first seem interculturally sensitive, Bennett (1993) argues that one's acceptance of cultural difference has not changed; instead, the individual has only shifted the ethnocentric center of reality to a different culture as their worldview basis.

3.3.2.1.3 Minimization

The final ethnocentric stage is *minimization*. It is marked by an attempt to cover cultural differences under sweeping generalizations of commonalities (Bennett, 1993). In terms of the phases discussed thus far, cultural differences are acknowledged and thus surpass *denial*; they are not viewed negatively nor through one's own sense of *superiority*, demonstrating a worldview beyond *defense*; at this stage, they are now instead trivialized, with cultural similarities becoming more prominent than differences and crucial differences in turn being set aside. In providing an example, Bennett (1993) highlights the case of a female employee in a male-dominated workspace being referred to as "one of the guys." He argues that people from oppressed groups within a society tend to remain in this stage for briefer periods as their dominant counterparts who remain here

longer project their own ethnocentric perceived "universals" that minimize "others'" differences and often involve challenge or struggle; the result among the oppressed group then, naturally, is a recognition of difference. Bennett (1993) classifies *minimization* universals as either *physical* or *transcendent.*

Physical Universalism reduces cultural difference down to the physical necessities of sustaining human life. All humans are the same, as we all need air, water, and food to survive, for instance. However, in reality, Bennett (1993) argues, successful intercultural communication requires a recognition of cultural differences and a social context that extends well beyond the physical universals of human biology. *Transcendent Universalism*, on the other hand, generalizes all humans through a uniting existence that has resulted from some sort of common principle, such as the religious notion that we are all the work of God or the capitalist concept of individual achievement. They may recognize that others may not subscribe to their belief system, which they believe to be the one real "truth," but consider this difference to be one of misinformation. Thus, an individual in the *minimization* stage may approach cultural difference with interest or as "part of the plan" (p. 44) but also as an obstacle to effective communication. When this occurs—when the expectations they have based on these perceived universals are not met—retreat to previous stages may take place.

3.3.2.2 Ethnorelative stages

Movement into the e*thnorelative* stages of the DMIS represents a transition into a worldview that places differences into the context of their culture. Cultural difference is experienced without threat and results in the construction of new

understandings. With the elimination of an *ethnocentric* cultural standard of what is absolutely correct or incorrect, differences are now simply perceived as different, with some behaviors lending themselves as more "adaptive" to certain environments compared to others (Bennett, 1993). This is not to say that individuals within these stages have no preferences for certain worldviews or that they agree with the ethical positions or implications of all cultural differences; it does, however, indicate a respect for distinct values and careful selection of ethical positioning that has considered a variety of worldviews. *Ethnorelativism* begins with the *acceptance* stage, continues on to *adaptation*, and culminates in *integration*. It is worth noting that not all individuals are expected to progress across all stages of the DMIS; in fact, many do not reach *ethnorelative* stages at all (Bennett, 1993).

3.3.2.2.1 Acceptance

Here, difference is viewed as a reality and a tendency to judge it as positive or negative is no longer necessary. Cultural difference is acknowledged and attitudes toward it are respectful. This respect, according to Bennett (1993), tends to come in the form of behaviors or in values.

Respect for behavioral difference signifies an acceptance of verbal and nonverbal actions as worthy of respect. Language is an example of the former and is, according to Bennett (1993), the most obvious and perhaps accepted of differences, given the legitimacy it is granted across education. Still, he argues, languages are not sheer "codes" of communication but culturally contextual "shapers of realities" (p. 48). Beyond linguistic elements of language,

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communication styles are accepted as manifesting difference and, at this stage, inspire feelings of intrigue over hostility. Bennett (1993) argues that nonverbal behavior requires a heightened sense of awareness "at least for Americans" (p. 48), based on his observations, and may thus more easily be approached ethnocentrically, as a lack of awareness places one's own worldview as central to reality. He thus suggests presenting explicit differences in nonverbal behavior in order to make them recognizable as distinct; from there, more abstract communication concepts become more recognizable as well.

Bennett (1993) emphasizes that r*espect for value difference* is a process in which one perceives cultural values and assumptions as demonstrations of human ingenuity. In this process, one recognizes that the foundation of each worldview is a set of contextually dependent assumptions that influence behavior, viewed at this stage with acceptance and a self-awareness of the contextual tenets of one's own worldview. Humans organize the world and value phenomena from this organization as "good" or "right," acknowledging that other worldviews may differ significantly, at times in ways that some may not value as "right" but do, at this stage, respect. Impeding movement from this phase is perceiving another culture's assumptions or values as "personally offensive" (p. 50). Bennett (1993) suggests approaching such values as a part of a culture's organization of reality and does not require a denial of one's own opinion.

3.3.2.2.2 Adaptation

Exercising skilled communication with and in relation to people of diverse cultures without losing sight of one's own worldview is the foundation of the *adaptation*

stage (Bennett, 1993). Bennett (1993) is careful to distinguish adaptation from assimilation, which he argues is an example of *minimization* in its reversal of one's own worldview in favor of perception from a new center of reality. *Adaptation*, on the contrary, sees the addition—not replacement—of communication skills that facilitate interaction with different cultures. He argues that by defining communication as the achievement of a shared meaning between two communicators, cross-cultural interaction must involve varying worldviews to avoid either communicator falling into an *ethnocentric* stance in the engagement, which thus necessitates a "shifting of cultural frames of reference" (p. 52). When these shifts are brief, temporary, and intentional, an individual is in the *empathy* phase of *adaptation*. An experienced difference in reality when communicating defines *empathy* as it relates to Bennett's DMIS (1986; 1993; 2004; 2013). It requires communicators not just to imagine what another may do or feel in a certain circumstance but to instead imagine another's perspective from an entirely different frame of reference, taking their contextual differences into consideration. The more progressive subphase of *pluralism*, conversely, is characterized by continuous shifting within one's multiple, permanent frames of references that lack the intentionality of the *empathy* substage.

3.3.2.2.3 Integration

This final phase of the DMIS is defined not just by a heightened sensitivity as it relates to a range of cultures but by one's sense of identity as one that is individually fashioned through a patchwork of distinct cultures and a long-term state of disintegration from any specific culture/s, referred to by Bennett (1993) as *cultural marginality:* one consistently exists peripherally among various

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cultures. *Integration* is a self-reflective process that entails evaluating context and reality construction iteratively, keeping one aware of and sensitive to multiple cultures simultaneously while eliminating one specific culture as a point of reference. *Integration* comes in the form of either *contextual evaluation* or *constructive marginality.*

In *contextual evaluation,* an individual approaches a situation from more than one cultural worldview resulting in a decision on what is best in a given context. In other words, one's judgment of what is "right" is informed by multiple cultural perspectives while being equally situational. Several evaluations involving numerous perspectives would likely be involved in decision-making, especially when the context is one of diverse cultures. Bennett (1993) states that movement to the second form of *integration* is not necessary for most people and will most likely only be found in those who work or live intensively in international or multicultural settings.

The second form of *integration* and thus the most interculturally sensitive placement throughout the whole of the DMIS framework is *constructive marginality.* Existing on the periphery of multiple cultures and thus outside of any culture-specific frames of reference, according to Bennett (1993), places one in the margins of all culture, asserting that "there is no natural cultural identity for a marginal person" (p. 63). Any culturally-dependent absolute, stance, or assumption is now eliminated, and as uncomfortable as that can feel for marginalized persons, such a position can as well be constructive. He distinguishes this form of *integration* from the previous in that a weighing of

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contexts is now replaced by developments of complete frames of reference, with realities being self-constructed.

3.3.3 The DMIS with HE faculty

Use of the DMIS has been studied in a variety of contexts, though research specifically on faculty in HE settings remains quite limited. In the US, Matkin and Barbuto (2012) investigated leaders in US HE settings. They found that subordinates more positively rated their interactions with leaders who were situated in more advanced phases on the DMIS, further supporting the potential positive effects of IS. Furthermore, the "followers" also did not report feeling differential treatment from leaders based on demographic similarity or difference. These types of findings have valuable implications for increasingly internationalized HEIs, where Mellizo (2017) highlights that conversations on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion are prevalent but that actual progress in these areas in American university spaces remains slow. She contends that raising American HE students' intercultural sensitivity relies heavily on instructors' knowledge of the concept and recommends first advancing faculty exposure to and training on the DMIS as a result. Corroborating this notion, several studies emphasize that instructors' knowledge of the specific DMIS phases may support their understanding of cultural differences and individual student behaviors (Webb, 2012), thus promoting personalized strategies in the classroom (Norman, 2017) and stressing the need for DMIS-centered professional development among faculty (Westrick & Yuen, 2007). Furthermore, in order for such intercultural PD and training efforts to be maximally impactful among HE faculty at US universities, research shows that institutions should

consider rewarding employee efforts through, for example, its recognition in tenure and promotion processes (Pedersen, 2017).

With expatriate albeit not uniquely American faculty teaching abroad, McKay (2017) suggests increasing faculty engagement in reflective activities to enhance movement along the DMIS continuum. He found that most sojourn educators at a government university in Qatar were still in the *minimization* phase of the DMIS. Similarly, Etri (2023) found through observations and interviews with HEI faculty teaching in Saudi Arabia that the majority of instructors' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom reflected placement within the ethnocentric phases, specifically *defense* and *minimization*. When outside of the classroom and discussing their beliefs on pedagogy and English language teaching, however, he projects instructor self-perceptions that fall within the ethnorelative stages of acceptance and adaptation, potentially reflecting a disparity between educators' self-perceptions and exhibited classroom behaviors in practice. Hernandez and Kose (2011) uncovered similar results: American school leaders perceived themselves as being more interculturally sensitive than researchers believed the DMIS reflected, leading to the conclusion that organizations must pay careful attention to first identifying educators' actual developmental needs versus their perceived needs in order to effectively achieve intercultural goals. In fact, even when instructors self-report as valuing inclusive education and actively try to integrate inclusive teaching strategies, the level of their intercultural sensitivity can nonetheless support or hinder their efforts (Wang, 2021).

3.3.4 Criticisms of the DMIS

Though the DMIS has been used extensively and accepted in a variety of settings with a range of participant groups (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008; Mahon, 2006; McKay, 2017), it is not without its criticisms. It is first necessary to again highlight that the DMIS has its own accompanying quantitative tool, the IDI (Hammer & Bennett, 1998; Hammer et al., 2003), and that a number of publications instead identify reliability and validity issues with this quantitative instrument but not necessarily the DMIS itself. For example, several studies have claimed that the framework is not as cross-culturally generalizable as it presents (Greenholtz, 2005; Punti & Dingel, 2021) and that it is overly "Western"-centric (Bennett, 2017), though the researcher's issue is with the translation of the IDI into Japanese. Similarly, in pointing out the potential for structural inequalities in intercultural interaction, Punti and Dingel (2021) demonstrate a breakdown in validity of the IDI with participants from black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities.

Still, with regard to the framework itself, primary criticism involves its relatively simplistic linearity (Bourjolly et al., 2005; Moore, 2015; Nemtchinova, 2020; Perry & Southwell, 2011, Shaules, 2007), which Bennett (2017) himself admits while noting that several other models of intercultural competence apply more cyclical or iterative approaches. These researchers postulate that individuals may be capable of skipping entire phases of the continuum, or that they may demonstrate conflicting perceptions (Shaules, 2007) or perceptions that fall within different stages of the model within the same intercultural engagement (Moore, 2015; Perry & Southwell, 2011). Bennett (2017) counters by arguing that this class of criticism is one of developmental models in general, as developmental models

inherently view change or growth as augmentative. Similarly, assessing one's situatedness on the continuum entails quite a bit of subjectivity, another criticism of the DMIS noted by Bennett (2017) himself among others (Greenholtz, 2000). He defends such subjectivity, arguing that it is at the heart of qualitative methodology, which he views as vital in observing participants' perceptual adaptations as opposed to positivist approaches or models that attribute intercultural sensitivity to personality traits over learned behavior or skill.

Further, McKay (2017) highlights that the framework has been primarily adopted with American participant groups. While this may certainly pose issues of international generalizability, in the case of this research, it is not of concern, as all participants are indeed American. BIPOC issues, however, may be relevant to this research. As a result, special attention will be lent when analyzing qualitative data through the lens of the framework.

3.4 Alternative models for qualitative IS assessment

Several alternative frameworks were attractive but rejected for comparative reasons. The Intercultural Maturity Model (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005) seems initially attractive but was developed specifically with students in mind and has only been applied in a limited number of publications, all of which were also with students (Atencio, 2018; Alves, 2017; Neufeld, 2013; Opengart, 2018; Pryshliak et al., 2020). Consisting of three levels of maturity across three domains— cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal—the framework was also deemed as less appropriate for measuring intercultural sensitivity for the purposes of this study in the highest level of maturity is largely marked by one's willingness to

engage in diverse relationships and to work with culturally diverse others; given that all participants in this study have chosen a profession that requires them to work solely with diverse others, the findings would likely be invalid. Search results for the trademarked Intercultural Development Continuum, or IDC (Hammer, 2009) similarly yield a fraction of the number of studies published using the DMIS; issues related to its trademark itself are of concern. This model, often adopted alongside the proprietary Intercultural Development Inventory, was adapted largely from the DMIS. Its key difference is that it consists of only five phases with minimization conceptualized as a "transitional" phase that is neither *ethnocentric* nor *ethnorelative*.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Provided in this chapter is an overview of the research design and the conceptual underpinnings and frameworks adopted in the data collection and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative components of this study. Rationale for and commonly cited criticisms of the methodology are also addressed. All procedures involved throughout all stages of the study are outlined and ethical considerations are addressed.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines descriptive quantitative data from pre- and post-test administrations of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000) and the use of photo-elicitation interviews (Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002) viewed through the phenomenological lens of a six-stage progressive continuum intended to measure one's intercultural sensitivity called the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, or DMIS (Bennett, 1993), as well as inductive thematic analysis as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). The intended goal is to uncover the possible value in corroborating the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) with a four-week photo-elicitation project and follow-up interviews to both investigate the impact of a photo-elicitation project on intercultural sensitivity (IS), to identify any distinctions in IS between UAE- and US-based American HE faculty, and to expound upon why the variability in findings of previous studies as illuminated in Chapter 2 exists. Though heavier weighting is placed on the qualitative component of the study, a mixed-methods approach was adopted in an effort to triangulate the interpretive data by integrating a quantitative complementary measure for comparison and contrast of theories (Collins, 2017).

No publications to the best of the researcher's knowledge investigate the IS of American ESL instructors of all international students in HE contexts within their home country; whereas limited studies do explore the IS of international instructors in HE in the UAE (Moore, 2015; Shammas, 2017), few are corroborated with phenomenological interviews—none of which employ the use of participant-generated visual methods.

This chapter will first outline the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the researcher in light of the study's phenomenological roots. From there, the qualitative approaches are presented along with the rationale for selecting a participant-generated visual method to data collection and accompanying interviews. This is followed by a discussion of the quantitative scale employed in the study. Participants and their sampling methods are then contextualized, and details of the procedures of the study in full are outlined. In addressing data analysis approaches, the DMIS is revisited in brief and steps as applied in a thematic analysis of data are bulleted. To conclude the section are reflections on ethical considerations, limitations of the research design, and the role of the researcher.

4.1 Qualitative approaches

4.1.1 Phenomenology

The qualitative portion of this study investigates the IS of faculty of international students in HE through a comparison of faculty's progression on the DMIS between UAE- and US-based participants as interpreted through their perceptions of cultural differences and similarities. Thus, this exploratory

research adopts a phenomenological approach, as it aims to uncover and illuminate participants' lived experiences, interpretations of culture, and their attitudes toward it through reflexive photography and photo-elicitation interviews.

A phenomenological approach to research aims to capture and to elucidate the meanings of a group of participants' lived experiences (Creswell, 2007) and how they understand a specified phenomenon, uncovering deep experience that may otherwise remain hidden (Bennett, 1993). It places "belief in the importance, and even primacy, of subjective conscious" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 20) and the "social and cultural situatedness of actions and interactions, together with participants' interpretations of a situation" (p. 21). Otherwise stated, phenomenology describes individuals' meanings of their conscious views intentionally directed toward their lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In phenomenological processes, researchers first identify a phenomenon of interest, and then reflect upon what the nature of this lived experience entails (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Shammas, 2017). Here, the phenomenon of investigation involves teaching tertiary international students and participants' perceptions of cultural difference or similarity within each respective context, with the researcher's interpretations of these perceptions guiding participant situatedness on the DMIS (Bennett, 1993). This implies, arguably inextricably, a conscious negotiation on behalf of participants of the social and cultural contexts of the interpersonal engagement involved in teaching, as outlined by Cohen et al. (2011). A phenomenological approach provides an opportunity for meaning creation and complex understanding of these phenomena, here through the collection of images and elaboration upon them as subjectively being

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representative of culture—a process that is largely if not entirely based upon personal experience. The developer of the adopted framework for this study asserts that "the most basic theoretical concept in the DMIS is that experience (including cross-cultural experience) is constructed" (Bennett, 2004, p. 72).

In response to the emphasis on rigid objectivity in science and psychology in particular, phenomenology was conceptualized by Edmund Husserl and researchers that soon after expounded upon this school of thought (Spiegelberg, 1982), arguing in favor of an approach to investigating human life and issues by means of experience (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). As a student of Husserl, Martin Heidegger proposed *hermeneutical phenomenology*, a philosophy of phenomenology in which researcher subjectivity is viewed as inextricable to the research process. Perhaps most notably, according to Creswell (2007), hermeneutical phenomenology has been more recently conceptualized by van Manen (1990) for its emphasis on its interpretive foundations as an approach that differs from phenomenology's transcendental, or psychological, counterpart, outlined by Moustakas (1994) as focusing "less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants" (Creswell, 2007, p. 59). A hermeneutical phenomenology underpins this study given the interpretive role of the researcher and her mediation of meaning in describing participants' lived experiences, as well as her assumption that this likely adds an unavoidable element of bias to the study.

Logically, the potential for bias is undesirable and therefore a common criticism of phenomenology, the DMIS framework, and often of qualitative research in general for their often-subjective underpinnings (Bennett, 1993), and concerns

toward such subjective interpretation in phenomenology is echoed by a considerable number of researchers (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). In this study in particular, participants describe their perceptions of cultural others and intercultural engagement, which the researcher then interprets, also from her own culturally-influenced frames of reference and biases.

4.1.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

As discussed above, phenomenology sheds light on individual, subjective meaning-making, especially within contexts of interaction, observation, or interpretation (Eberle, 2013). To this end, in his establishment of phenomenology, Husserl (1939) pointed out that examining human issues and experiences requires an epistemological stance (Eberle, 2013). In this study, as with the approaches it adopts (Bennett, 1993; Braun & Clarke, 2006), the researcher takes a constructivist position to meaning-making. It is assumed that knowledge is acquired through experience, which is crucially interpreted through the eyes of the individual. Because knowledge and meaning-making are presumed here to be constructed interpretively, individuals are assumed to create their own unique viewpoints over time that are deeply rooted in context. Given that this study aims to uncover how participants respond to intercultural experiences and social interactions, with individual perspective as seminal to the lens through which data is approached, an interpretivist epistemology is central in considering the credibility of data (Collins, 2017). Ontologically, then, reality is relative, differing from one person to another in its subjective nature and constructed individually (Scotland, 2012). These assumptions guided the

researcher's decision to employ semi-structured interviews and photographic submissions as data collection methods in eliciting rich qualitative data for further intersubjective interpretation of the participants' perspective (Scotland, 2012).

4.1.3 Participant-generated visual methods

This study makes use of a participant-generated visual method (PGVM), specifically reflexive photography (RP), in eliciting data to guide photo-elicitation interviews—the most widely utilized complement to RP (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019). Photographic methods generally entail that either researchers select images to incorporate into a study or that participants produce (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019; Collier & Collier, 1986; Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Harrington & Schibik, 2003; Kortegast et al., 2019) or choose (Harper, 2002) photographs for a study. For this particular research project, participants were asked to produce their own photographs and were assured that any names, faces, or identifying images would be completely eliminated in the final versions of any submitted research documents. Images alone, of course, could be interpreted differently by different individuals; follow-up writings or interviews, then, serve as the most common platforms for participant reflection and explanation. To allow for further discussion of participants' photographs, this research made use of photo-elicitation interviews as the follow-up data collection technique.

Research approaches employing a photographic foundation have expanded in recent decades, in fields relating to anthropology and social science in particular (Harper, 1988; Schulze, 2007). Visual methods are alleged to stimulate richer

data that evokes layered meanings, ideas, and emotions from interviewees (Glaw et al., 2017; Kortegast et al., 2019; Pain, 2012) in comparison to verbal interviews, which seems an appropriate approach for this research given the emphasis on affect and emotion involved in intercultural sensitivity. Upon reviewing more than 100 studies of visual methods, Pain (2012) also found positive impacts on rapport between participants and researchers when PGVMs are adopted in data collection, especially when issues of power or privilege dynamics may be present. Similar to Pain (2012), in conducting their own comprehensive literature review, Kortegast et al. (2019) revealed similar patterns in rationale for making use of visual methods in research, highlighting that PGVMs challenge power dynamics by evading many of the normative research processes that reportedly lead to feelings of hesitation in experience-sharing among participants. PGVMs, alternatively, are said to empower participants by placing them in the position of "expert" (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019), allowing them to drive the course of the research and the depiction of data through their own image choices as well as the experiences they decide to share and reflect upon. This is of particular relevance to the context of this study, as both previous research (Al-Ali, 2014; Austin et al., 2014; Ashour, 2020; Diallo, 2014; Noori, 2016; O'Sullivan, 2007) and the participants alike reference reluctance and caution in free speech, a punitive workplace environment, and opaque and unpredictable decision-making processes from upper management: that participants themselves could determine what was shared and discussed was of utmost importance in creating a space of comfort and trust in order to seek and secure participants. The detailing of lived experiences at the heart of this study also had the potential to invoke a sense of discomfort among participants, as

sensitive conversation regarding racism, classism, prejudice, sexism, etc. had the potential to arise, again making PGVMs an appropriate approach due to their proposed elicitation of emotionally rich data combined with the autonomy they provide to interviewees in driving the direction—and, therefore, avoidance—of the topics discussed.

4.1.3.1 Reflexive Photography

In more detail, reflexive photography was developed with theoretical underpinnings in *symbolic interactionism* (Lewin, 1936; Harrington & Schibik, 2003; Schulze, 2007) and *individual-environmental interaction* (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) as a phenomenologically-oriented technique (Harper, 1988; Harrington & Schibik, 2003) involving visuals as central to participants' subjective meaning-making as they reflect upon their individual lived experiences (Harper, 1988; 2002; Schulze, 2007), in line with the epistemological underpinnings of the research. This data collection method is asserted to enhance participant creativity during the reflection process as they explore their own experiences and perceptions (Harrington & Schibik, 2003), generating heightened critical analysis as photographs pave new avenues of thought and serve as reminders of memories that may have potentially been forgotten otherwise (Schulze, 2007)— a real possibility for a four-week project such as this. According to Harrington and Schibik (2003), researchers encourage participants to detail the reasons and opinions underlying their perceptions as represented by the photographs they have chosen to submit. In this particular study, participants were asked to reflect on capturing specific images of events, individuals, and even interactions as representations of culture. It is this reflection on their photograph selections that

embodies the "reflexive" component of RP (Harper, 1988; 2002) that would later be expanded upon in their photo-elicitation interviews.

4.1.3.2 Photo-elicitication interviews

In defining photo-elicitation and its implications for future research, Harper (2002) attributed its first use to Collier (1957), outlining the use of photos as a foundation for further elaboration on a phenomenon, which often serve to stimulate potentially forgotten memories and to mediate comfort in detailing experiences and elaborating meaning of possibly sensitive topics or contexts. He describes how photo-elicitation gained traction in previous decades in anthropology and sociology research in particular, with literature slowly extending into other disciplines, including education and cross-cultural studies (Shaw, 2013). Photo-elicitation interviews are posited as a useful approach for discussing multicultural issues, given the potential vulnerability involved in such topics (Choo, 2023; Shaw, 2013). Similarly, such an approach to interviews is also posited as especially helpful in facilitating investigations into "aspects of the everyday," which may be less accessible using purely-verbal methods (Choo, 2023). In her dissertation on reviewing the usefulness of visual data in qualitative research, Byrne (2012) notes that participants' photographic submissions did prompt more detailed explanations of meaning, again supporting photo-elicitation interviews as a data collection method but also aligning it with the ontological assumptions of the study in its bridging of subjective, individual, socially-constructed interpretations of realities. Beyond this, Harper (2002) proposes that photo-elicitation interviews add validity and reliability to word-reliant surveys and frequently yield more depth and emotionality in participant data. Furthermore, he

suggests that integrating photographs into interviews activates different cognitive processes—visual versus verbal—in the brain, extracting distinct ideas in comparison to all-verbal interviews, as "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness" (p. 13). These interviews, then, are presumed to create a safe environment for participants to expound upon on the meaning and symbolism underlying their reflective photograph selections (Harrington & Schibik, 2003).

It is suggested that the more someone has interacted with intercultural environments, to an extent, the more likely they are to increase their intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993; 2003; Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Hayden & Wong, 1997; Karimi et al., 2020; Shammas, 2017; Stone, 2018; Waterson & Hayden, 1999). Beyond this, progression in IS as a result of such interaction is found to be bolstered by reflection on such intercultural engagement (McKay, 2013), especially when reflecting on experiences of cultural difference (Stone, 2018) as emphasized by this study in line with IS conceptualizations rooted in the DMIS (Bennett, 1993), further supporting reflexive photography and photo-elicitation interviews as data collection techniques for invoking a consciousness of photograph production and reflection in semi-structured interviews (Harper, 2002). Thus, such approaches to this study were expected to encourage intercultural engagement, heighten participants' awareness of culture, and to therefore yield positive outcomes for participants' intercultural sensitivity over the course of the four-week project.

Lastly, employing PGVMs for this study adds to the uniqueness of this study. While Eberle (2013, p. 190) points out the "vastly overlooked importance of visual data" in general, Kortegast et al. (2019) note that the use of PGVMs, despite

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being widely used in other fields, remains relatively underutilized in HE studies and are particularly scant in North American contexts. No publications to the best of the researcher's knowledge investigate the IS of American ESL instructors of all international students in HE contexts within their home country; whereas limited studies do explore the IS of international instructors in HE in the UAE (Moore, 2015; Shammas, 2017), few are corroborated with phenomenological interviews—none of which employ the use of PGVMs.

4.2 Quantitative instrument: The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

For its quantitative component, this study adopts the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) as developed and tested for validity and reliability in Chen and Starosta (2000), demonstrating what the researchers say reflects one's effectiveness in intercultural interactions and positive attitude toward intercultural communication. Continued testing of the scale's validity and reliability is also documented across diverse contexts (Davila et al., 2013; Fritz et al., 2002; Fritz et al., 2005; Loebel et al., 2021; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013; Wang & Zhou, 2016). According to Chen and Starosta (2000), the scale consists of 24 items that are categorized within five more specific factors of IS: *Interaction Engagement*, *Respect for Cultural Differences, Interaction Confidence, Interaction Enjoyment*, and *Interaction Attentiveness*, as briefly defined in Table 4.1 below:

IS Factor	What the items intend to measure
Interaction Engagement	Feelings toward participating in intercultural communications

Respect for Cultural Differences	Tolerance toward others' cultures and opinions
Interaction Confidence	Self-assuredness in intercultural environments
Interaction Enjoyment	Attitudes toward engagement with culturally distinct others
Interaction Attentiveness	Effort in navigating intercultural interactions

Table 4.1 Meanings of the five factors of IS (Chen & Starosta, 2000).

The ISS was developed to specifically assess the emotional dimension of intercultural competence (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 2000; Fritz et al., 2005)—a quality of relevance to this study given the importance of the relational element of faculty-student engagement in multicultural contexts, as outlined in Chapter 2. Purporting IS to comprise open-mindedness and non-judgmental attitudes, for example (Chen & Starosta, 1997), the scale's developers' aim to measure affect is again relevant to this study in that the DMIS (Bennett, 1993)—the analytical lens through which the qualitative interviews are evaluated—is a framework centered around perceptions and attitudes. In other words, both tools approach IS as affective and explicitly not behavioral (Bennett, 1993; Chen & Starosta, 1993).

Nonetheless, the ISS is not without its criticisms. Some of the items may present as somewhat offensive (Shammas, 2017), for instance (i.e., #2: *I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded*); others rely on participants' self-awareness in intercultural interactions and cultural knowledge of appropriate communication (i.e., #5: *I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures*). Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the testing of the scale on predominantly Western and white populations (Chen & Starosta,

2000; Steuernagel, 2014; Petrović et al., 2015): while the tool's reliability and validity have been demonstrated in many countries around the world, several studies demonstrate that the scale does in fact require modification in a number of contexts (Petrović et al., 2015). The ISS also does not project any baseline or "cutoff" scores of what is to be considered high or low IS (Aksoy & Akkoç, 2020; Meydanlioglu et al., 2015); simply stated, the higher the ISS score, the higher the participants' sensitivity in intercultural engagement (Chen & Starosta, 2000). In some contexts, this may be viewed as a problem with the scale.

The ISS in particular was selected for this study intentionally for its approach to IS as an affective quality of intercultural competence. Beyond this, whereas various intercultural sensitivity measurement tools have been developed, quite a few are financially impractical due to proprietary protections: e.g., the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, 1999; Hammer et al., 2003), the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley & Meyers, 1995), the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (Matsumoto et al., 2001), among others. The Cultural Intelligence Scale, or CQS (Van Dyne et al., 2008), and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire, or MPQ (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000; van der Zee et al., 2013), were also strong contenders. However, the CQS (Van Dyne et al., 2008), as Shammas (2017) notes, addresses knowledge of cultural objectivities and behaviors, such as marriage customs, crafting, and legal and economic systems, while the ISS centers more around the the emotional and communicative dimensions involved in intercultural competence. The MPQ (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2000) is a measure intended to assess an individual's stable personality traits across international settings, similarly de-

emphasizing development in one's intercultural competence. Other commonly used and available scales, such as the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory, or ICSI (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992), measure specific cultural groups in line with the categories theorized in Hall (1977) and Hofstede et al. (2010). While this may initially appear acceptable for the UAE-based participants of this study, such a tool may be less appropriate for the US-based group, given their internationally diverse student population. Thus, taken together, analysis of the freely accessible measures suggests the ISS (Chen & Starosta, 2000) as the most appropriate scale for the quantitative component of this study.

4.3 Participants and sampling

This study aimed to compare the IS of two groups of American participants: UAE-based with all-Emirati student populations and US-based with an internationally diverse group of students (but no Americans). In total, ten instructors ($n = 10$) participated in the study. All participants are American citizens raised in the United States in an effort to minimize significant influence on IS, though several lived brief periods of their childhood or adolescence abroad. More detailed descriptions of each participant are included in Chapter 5, as each participant had unique multicultural experiences that were discussed during the interview portion of the study.

Criteria for both sets of participants included 1) being a US citizen who completed the majority of their K-12 schooling in the United States, and 2) working as a full-time instructor throughout the academic year and at the time of research investigation with either a monoethnic Emirati student population in the UAE or

with a fully-international student population in the US. These criteria necessitated the use of purposive sampling methods. According to Wyse et al. (2017), purposive sampling can be particularly useful in identifying participants based on "specific dimensions of interest" (p. 283); here, it was selected in order to achieve homogeneity among participants regarding their contextual backgrounds and current workplace environments.

4.3.1 UAE-based participants

The target institution in the UAE consists of 16 campuses in eight cities (one campus per city for each sex) across the country. Six campuses in three cities were selected for participation for reasons of accessibility in that all are located within the researcher's province of residence or the neighboring province in the event that the direction of the study required in-person participation. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method (Wyse et al., 2017) that allowed the researcher to fulfill the specific foci of the study: that instructors were Americans who completed the majority of their K-12 schooling in the US. Because of their close communication and familiarity with the campuses' faculty body at their respective locations, coordinators at campuses' academic support centers within these cities were contacted for assisting in identifying Americans as potential participants for the study. Information about the study was shared by coordinators across four of the six selected campuses, reaching twelve Americans who were sent emails that included the participant information and ethical approval sheets along with a brief description of the steps involved throughout the full research project. Five participants expressed interest in participating; all five completed all components of the full research program.

Essentially, participants represented three cities across the UAE and four campuses. Demographically, the group consisted of two women of color and three Caucasian women.

Though this is an admittedly small number of participants, it is important to note the exploratory nature of this research. While a growing body of research has been and continues to be published on expatriate academics working in HE in the UAE, none to the best of the researcher's knowledge focuses uniquely on Americans. Swedberg (2020) defines exploratory research as the investigation of the unknown as opposed to replication of previous work. He goes on to discuss that while exploratory research can be risky in its potential lack of novel findings, it is nonetheless at the heart of research and the expansion of knowledge. This lack of focus on American participants is likely the result of a relatively low number of Americans working in HE in the region. According to an UNESCO report on HE in the GCC, 80% - 95% of academics at non-public institutions in the region are expatriates (Badry, 2019), though this number is not broken down by nationality and may differ slightly from the target institution, as it is a government HEI. However, according to the Human Resources department at the researcher's campus, an estimated 3% of faculty members are American, projecting a total of approximately 35 American instructors for the target institution system wide. Therefore, the eleven Americans contacted likely represent just over 30% of the total number of American instructors for the entire institution nationwide, while the five who completed the study constitute 50% of the total contacted and an approximate 14% of American instructors systemwide. It is also worth noting that several of the Americans in the Human Resources

records are naturalized or dual citizens who were not raised in the US, potentially making the study more representative of the study's target population than the projected 14%.

4.3.2 US-based participants

For reasons of accessibility resulting from the researcher's affiliation to the university, participants from the US-based portion of the study are employed at a mid-sized public research institution in the Mid-Atlantic US. The institution had, at one time, a fairly large and thriving English language program. However, because of pandemic-related issues, travel restrictions, and a changing political climate, the university's English language program has dwindled considerably, especially in summer sessions, when the research was conducted; summer sessions generally bring special programs tailored to student groups from specific countries or institutes. Therefore, purposive sampling was again adopted: the university's English language department leads an International Teaching Assistant (ITA) program each summer consisting of incoming graduate students from all over the world, providing the most diverse, fully-international classes at the time. The 2022 program consisted of 14 instructors, including the researcher. The remaining 13 instructors were contacted via email with the approved participation information and ethical approval forms, along with a full description of the study and each of its components. Seven instructors expressed interest in participating in the study. Of these seven, five completed the full research program; one withdrew before completing any element of the project; another was eliminated as a candidate as she is not a full-time instructor in any international context throughout the academic year. Because the UAE-based

participants work with their monoethnic student groups full-time throughout the academic year, the same criterion was sought for the US-based participant group. Essentially, five of 13 (38.5%) instructors of the target population completed the study. In terms of demographics, one female of color took part in the study, along with one Caucasian male and three Caucasian females.

4.4 Procedures

This study entails a pre- and post-survey administration of the ISS (Chen & Starosta, 2000) of both US- and UAE-based American instructors in HE teaching environments. As discussed above, a purposive sampling method was used in identifying and accessing potential participants. Emails were sent outlining all stages of the full research study with participant information sheets and ethical approval forms attached. The email also contained the link to the ISS in its pre-survey form, which differed from the post-survey only in its inclusion of demographic questions and a request for an email address for anyone interested in completing the next phase of the research study. After its first administration of the ISS using the researcher's personal and secure SurveyMonkey account, instructors were asked to take a series of photographs that represent culture, cultural differences, similarities, or intercultural interactions; the goal was simply to heighten the participants' focus on multiculturalism across four weeks, for reasons outlined in the previous section. Each week, a reminder email was sent requesting the week's participant-generated images; these images were stored in the researcher's personal institutional Google Drive account using participant pseudonyms. After the four-week program, participants were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews over Zoom. During the interviews, participants'

photo submissions were projected, and participants were asked to elaborate on their selection of each image as representative of culture. The interviews ranged in duration from 35 to 65 minutes and were recorded using Zoom software. All videos were immediately downloaded to the researcher's personal secure and password-protected laptop and Google Drive and transcribed first using Otter.io transcription software; transcriptions were later checked for accuracy personally by the researcher and also saved to the researcher's personal secure and password-protected laptop and institutional Google Drive. At the conclusion of the interview, each participant was sent the post-survey link to the second and final administration of the ISS, again using the researcher's personal and secure SurveyMonkey account. This data has since been downloaded and saved to the researcher's personal, secure laptop along with the qualitative data. All data are also stored safely and securely in the researcher's university Google Drive account using participants' pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. The participants' institutions of employment are never named at any point throughout the study.

4.5 Data analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed through the lens of the DMIS framework as conceptualized by Bennett (1993) using the steps of a *thematic analysis* as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), detailed below.

4.5.1 Conceptual framework

The DMIS as presented in Bennett (1993) has been detailed in Chapter 2 of this study. In brief, it is a six-phase model of the progression of an individual's perceptions and cognition toward experience with intercultural difference, from

ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The conceptualization adopted for this study is Bennett (1993) for its fitting references to "dominant" cultures and this study's concentration on American instructors. This iteration of the framework also highlights discussion of key concepts and developmental strategies that in part constitute approaches to intercultural engagement that were considered likely to manifest in the situatedness of the study, such as isolation, denigration, superiority, pluralism, and contextual evaluation, which were fundamental in guiding participants' progression on the DMIS continuum.

4.5.2 Thematic analysis

In approaching the qualitative data, this study adopted a six-phase *thematic analysis* that is both *theoretical* and *latent* as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This approach generates a detailed description of a specific aspect of the data through the lens of a given theory or framework—here, the DMIS (Bennett, 1993). A latent approach to thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), lends a level of interpretation appropriate to this study, as the researcher interprets significance in patterns in broad meanings in connection with the literature. To identify specific themes across participants' experiences beyond the DMIS lens, an inductive approach to the data was dually employed. First, the epistemological underpinnings of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to the study—respectively, the DMIS (Bennett, 1993) and ISS (Chen & Starosta, 2000)— are constructivist, in line with their respective theorists' conceptualizations of IS. Second, the sociocultural contexts that situate the participants' experiences are crucially considered in theorizing meaning. The

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section below serves to detail how the six phases of Braun and Clarke (2006) were applied across the qualitative data through the lens of the DMIS.

Phase 1 - Familiarization with the data:

Interviews were originally transcribed using the Otter.ai transcription application. All transcriptions were then carefully compared to the original audio/video and corrected for accuracy by the researcher. Once all interviews were fully and accurately transcribed, the researcher returned to each transcription, re-reading them individually to take note of key points, patterns in meaning, and ideas of relevance to the research questions.

Phase 2 - Generating initial codes:

From here, each individual interview was reviewed through the lens of the DMIS framework (Bennett, 1993). This means, the key points and meaning patterns of note in phase 1 were reviewed specifically for evidence of participants' perceptions of or attitudes toward cultural differences or cultural similarities.

Phase 3 - Searching for themes:

This phase involved reviewing participants' codified perceptions of or attitudes toward cultural differences or cultural similarities within the pre-determined stages of the DMIS. More specifically, analysis involved searching for evidence of changes in worldview perspective and cultural frames of references among the participants and acknowledgement, respect, or judgment (or lack thereof) of cultural differences. Identification of potential topical patterns across participant data was also conducted for providing a richer view of cultural experience and

context, which may become beneficial in comparing the IS of the UAE- and US-based groups.

Phase 4 - Reviewing themes:

All data were again reviewed to ensure the inclusion of all coded patterns from the first three steps of the process and their placement within the appropriate stages of the DMIS. Attempts were made to combine connected ideas and patterns within concrete, well-substantiated topical themes that were corroborated by at least four of the five UAE-group participants.

Phase 5 – Defining and naming themes:

At this stage, a review of each participant's data took place in an effort to most accurately reflect their IS situatedness on the DMIS continuum. Any evidence of participant perceptions and attitudes within the DMIS' sub-phase strategies was also identified at this point. The names and definitions of these stages and sub-phase strategies are pre-determined, given the analytical lens of this study.

Content themes were refined to their final groupings and defined, resulting in five or six themes (depending on participant group) centered around the participants' experience with and perceptions of cultural difference and similarity.

Phase 6 – Producing the report:

This step is manifested in the following sections, as interview excerpts and evidential examples have been carefully selected to support and thus validate participants' IS situatedness on the DMIS in line with the conceptualization of

Bennett (1993) and the various topical themes, particularly in relation to the research questions.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was granted by Lancaster University in January of 2022 (Appendix II). All ethical considerations required by the university were outlined and strictly followed throughout the course of the research. Participants were made aware of these considerations in their initial email of invitation to participate in the study. This email included the Participant Information Sheet, Consent Form, and the Ethical Approval Letter from the university. The Participant Information Sheet included the aims of, benefits, or disadvantages to the research; a description of the steps involved throughout the full study; why individuals were selected to receive the research invitation;, a statement of the purely voluntary nature of participation in the study; and details of the safe, secure, anonymous, and confidential encryption, storage, and reporting of all data as accessible only to researcher and necessary university supervisors. Contact information of appropriate parties involved in the research was also provided. Once participants expressed an interest in participating in the study, a link to the pre-survey ISS via SurveyMonkey was sent along with a request for a signed consent form. In addition to signed consent forms, all participants agreed electronically to participate in the study, as the first question of both the pre- and post-survey requested consent to proceed. Consent Forms required potential participants to acknowledge having read the Participant Information Sheet and listed the uses and storage of data in audio, visual, and written formats along with a promise of anonymity and confidentiality with respect to the names of

participants, their institutions, and the elimination of all identifying information before submission. Data saved in the researcher's institutional Google Drive account makes no mention of the participants' institutions of employment and all names have been saved as pseudonyms.

The potential for ethical concerns with photo-elicitation is well-documented (Copes et al., 2018; Harper, 2002; Reese, 2013; Torre & Murphy, 2015). With regard to this study, these concerns fall primarily within the realms of photographs of identifiable individuals who may not have consented to participate in the study and of the emotionality that may accompany potentially sensitive topics during interviews.

Identifiability in the photographic, audio, or written data was a potential concern in this study, especially considering legal issues of photographing individuals in the UAE and cultural stigmas common among Gulf Arabs toward the photographing of individuals—the latter of which is relevant to both the UAE- and US-based environments. Also of ethical concern is the documented punitive nature of the UAE-based federal HEIs and the consequent "culture of fear" invoked in faculty (Austin et al., 2014; Moore, 2015), as corroborated by the UAE-based participants in this study as well. These circumstances carried with them the potential to induce hesitance on behalf of participating instructors; therefore, in securing both participants and accurate, reflective responses from them, the anonymity and confidentiality across all forms of data—visual, audio, and written—for participants and the surrounding environments represented in the data, were of utmost importance. No data were collected or stored using any electronic platforms or accounts from the UAE-based target institution.

The emotionality that may accompany sensitive topics relating to culture that accompanied the photos and interviews of the study also required additional ethical consideration. These concerns were addressed in several ways. As discussed above, participants were made fully aware of all steps of the research, all data storage procedures, and were given instruction to avoid identifying information in their visuals to the best of their ability. Nonetheless, several participants either unknowingly did so or opted to include visuals that contained the name or identifying images of the target institutions. As images serve only to inspire thoughts and memories during the interview process, they have not been included in the report of this study. Though images were projected during the Zoom interviews, any cloud-based videos have been deleted from the Zoom account following the transcription process. Furthermore, when downloaded and saved to the researcher's personal and secure devices and accounts, identifying information in photos was anonymized and "hidden" using the "markup" feature of the researcher's Apple iPhone and Macbook Air devices.

In line with a study of nine photo-elicitation studies involving sensitive contexts (Bugos et al., 2014), the researcher debriefed participants on taking and selecting appropriate photographs to submit for the study. This debriefing took the shape of emailed instructions for all and Zoom meetings for the three participants who expressed an interest in receiving more guidance—for all three, the primary concern centered around a desire to provide the researcher with images that would be useful and align with the needs of the study. The literature also outlines several additional strategies for photographs that were adopted in this study,

such as removing such images from publication and anonymizing images (Bugos et al., 2014).

The potential issue of emotionality in the study was minimal in that instructors were directed to photograph instances of cultural difference, cultural similarity, intercultural interaction or exchange, or anything at all representative of "culture" to them. As outlined in the literature on photo-elicitation interviews involving PGVMs (Balomenou & Garrod, 2019; Harper, 1988; Kortegast et al., 2019; Pain, 2012; Schulze, 2007), this implies that participants had the autonomy to guide the direction of the research and to avoid any topics that may invoke feelings of discomfort. Nonetheless, in the event that participants did appear to exhibit an emotional reaction during an interview, as suggested by Copes et al. (2018) in their work using photo-elicitation with vulnerable populations, participants were reminded and assured of this directional control during the interview and were made aware at the start of the study that they could take a break from the interview or opt out of the study entirely at any point.

4.7 Role of the researcher

Along with the limitations outlined in Chapter 6, the role of the researcher must also be considered in this study. The researcher works for both the UAE- and US-based target institutions. As the UAE-based participants represent five different campuses across four different cities, the researcher was only personally known to two of the participants before the study. With respect to the US-based institution, the researcher has taught in the same ITA program each summer for many years and is known by all participants in a friendly capacity.

These relationships, along with the researcher's affiliation with the participants' institutions of employment, may have influenced participant responses. First, participants—especially at the UAE-based institution with its culture of fear, speech limitations (Katzman, 2013), and potential distrust of the researcher, with whom three of them were not familiar—may have been reluctant to give full, honest, or especially unfavorable answers that may implicate them in the future as being critical. Participants may also have wanted to please the researcher in their photo submissions and interview responses. However, issues of power differentials are likely not present in this study as the researcher holds no position of power at either institution.

As is the nature of studies involving interpretivism (Scotland, 2012), the researcher crucially interpreted participants' perceptions as representing a shift in cultural reference point or as being culturally respectful or judgmental, adding an element of potential conflict regarding the integrity of the application of the DMIS framework. In photo-elicitation research, the participant is to be the interpreter of the reality and representations present in the photos while the researcher's role is to analyze the interpretations to identify patterns in meanings in order to construct a full and reflective illustration of phenomena (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). The data for this study entailed qualitative analysis of culture-specific information that is quite difficult for the researcher to avoid approaching from her own culturally contextual frames of reference (Bennett, 1993). It is possible that the researcher's own misperceptions or unidentified biases may have played a role in applying the DMIS framework. This study demands a researcher who respects the norms and values of the cultures involved in the

study; while the researcher considers herself to be respectful and knowledgeable of such standards and values of Emirati culture, there are several cultures discussed in the more internationally diverse US-based data that the researcher is less familiar with. Nonetheless, as the DMIS argues that one's positive or negative opinion toward a cultural value is not to be considered in DMIS situatedness but rather one's respectfulness and attempts to take on another cultural worldview, the researcher's own judgments or misinterpretations of norms should not play a major role. To further address the researcher's role and recognizing her inexplicable involvement in knowledge construction in the study, the researcher aimed to exercise introspective reflexivity throughout data analysis and interviewing processes as posited by Patnaik (2013): the researcher is aware and conscious of his or her own experience, attitudes, and emotions and how they may relate to all aspects of the research project. This practice aids in side-lining researcher biases with the goal of minimizing their effect in proposed conclusions. In this study, introspective reflexivity took the form of note-taking: the researcher marked each instance of possible bias to the best of her ability and awareness throughout data analysis, revisited DMIS literature to refamiliarize herself with the tenets of each stage, and returned to the data and notes in an effort to eliminate elements of subjective bias in favor of an objective identification of respect, judgement, and perspective shifting as postulated by the DMIS. Bias during interview processes was less likely, as the researcher aimed to create a space of participant autonomy in choosing any topics of culture they desired and added little if any opinionated response in interview interactions, instead asking simply for elaboration or clarification when needed.

Chapter 5: Results

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach employing pre- and post-test administrations of the ISS (Chen & Starosta, 2000) as its quantitative component and semi-structured qualitative photo-elicitation interviews analyzed through the phenomenological lens of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993) and thematic analyses in line with Braun and Clarke (2006).

This section consists of a presentation of the findings of each participant's and group's qualitative and quantitative data. Beginning with the UAE-based group, each participant's placement on the DMIS is assessed and justified with evidence. Following the presentation of each participant's qualitative data, the group's qualitative data is evaluated as a whole, with emerging themes outlined and substantiated, followed by the group's descriptive statistics from the ISS and its more specific five factors of IS.

5.1 UAE-based qualitative results

When briefly outlining the participants' contexts, it is important to note that all UAE-based participants work at different campus locations of the same "target institution:" a government HEI in the UAE with a fully mono-national student population. Though they teach in various departments, they all have ESL/EFL pedagogical training. To maintain participant anonymity, the context provided is intentionally limited to remain non-identifying.

5.1.1 DMIS results

To begin and in line with previous research (Moore, 2015; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Shaules, 2007), all participants in this study exhibit perceptions situated in different stages of the continuum when discussing different topics. In other words, no participants' perceptions or attitudes aligned with only one phase of the DMIS.

Three participants from the UAE-based group demonstrate IS that remains within the *ethnocentric* half of the continuum while two show sensitivity in the *ethnorelative* stages as shown in Figure 5.1.
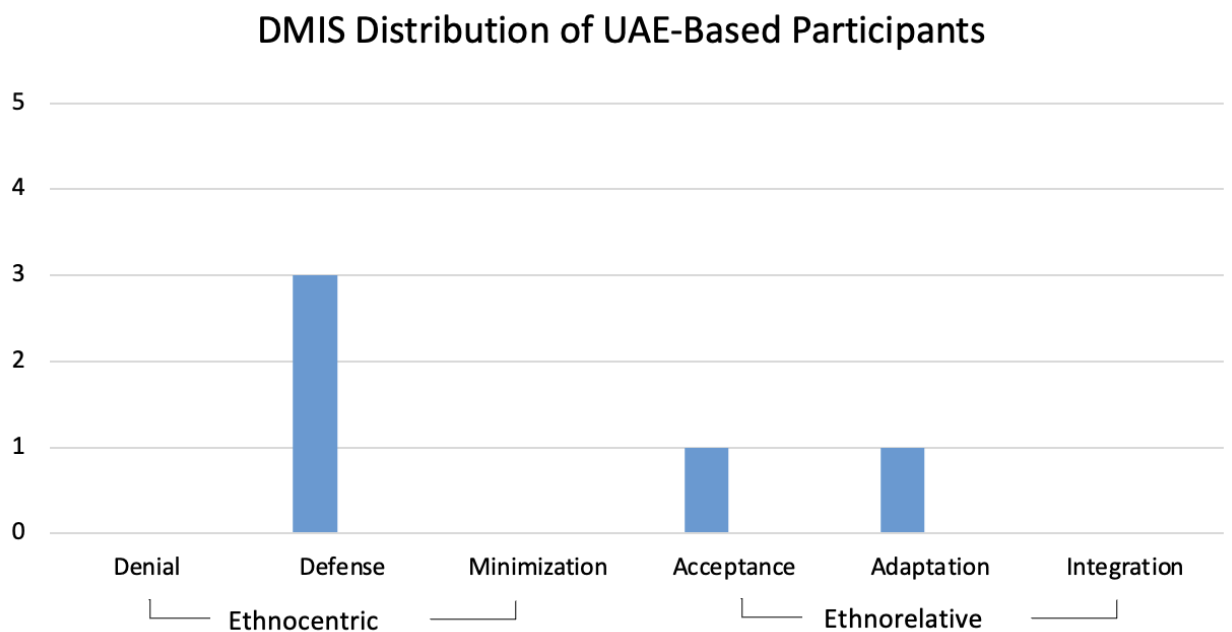
Figure 5.1 UAE-based participant situatedness on DMIS.

All three participants with *ethnocentric* sensitivity are interpreted as demonstrating perceptions in line with the *defense* stage of the DMIS; one *ethnorelative* participant's sensitivity aligned with attitudes that Bennett (1993) classifies as *acceptance* while the other aligned more closely with an *adaptation* stage of sensitivity. Table 5.1 below briefly introduces each UAE-based

participant alongside their DMIS progression stage. Individual analyses are presented in order of progression.

UAE-based participant	DMIS stage
Carmen	Defense
Sandra	Defense
Ariel	Defense
Katie	Acceptance
Madeleine	Adaptation

Table 5.1 DMIS stage of UAE-based participants.

5.1.1.1 Carmen

Carmen is a female of color who was born and raised in the US. Though she speaks English natively, she was raised in a non-English household by family who immigrated to the US. Carmen was surrounded by cultural diversity as a child, attending public schools in large American urban settings. At the time of this study, Carmen had lived in the UAE for ten years, having taught at government HEIs throughout: first at a men's military college and after at an urban women's campus. Her position at the target institution requires her to interact with all students, first- through fifth-year, across major programs of study and across student performance levels.

Carmen submitted images and videos that all represented cultural differences. In discussing these during the semi-structured interview, Carmen's perceptions of and attitudes toward the cultural differences she experienced align most frequently with the characteristics of the *defense* phase of the DMIS (Bennett,

1993). Data from her interview also reflect several instances of *acceptance,* as she at times demonstrates what Bennett (1993) calls *a respect for behavioral differences* in her lack of judgement toward and acknowledgement of socioeconomic differences between Emirati and American college students, as well as linguistic barriers and her adjustment to them. On multiple occasions, Carmen demonstrates that a US-based worldview is her predominant frame of reference, never switching points of reference or attempting to adopt another culture's perspective at any point during the interview. She often describes the students at her all-female campus as "coddled" and expresses frustration with their lack of problem-solving skills. She gives examples of students who can't "figure out how to write their passwords" for their laptops or web-based university accounts; she comments that it would be "egregious" or "out of this world" for her to suggest to a student to "get on a bus or take a taxi to come to college" when the student's driver is unable to take her to class. She goes on to note that she believes the Emirati culture views women as needing "coddling" and that "someone needs to do things **for** them," which she believes is in stark contrast to her experience and life in the US:

> *"It's frustrating to me because like, I've had to figure out things in my life. And the fact that they don't have that very basic skill of like, troubleshooting and problem-solving, is frustrating to me."*

In the above quote, her frustration is interpreted here as an example of *superiority* as defined by Bennett (1993)—a characteristic of the *defense* phase—in that she seems to believe that her worldview is superior to the custom of what many in the Emirati culture would likely view as a value of not "coddling" but "protecting"

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women. She discusses that she aims to highlight what she believes to be strong Emirati women in her classrooms, such as female fighter pilots, as opposed to women she believes her students are more likely to recognize, such as "makeup influencers and singers." This is interpreted as an example of what Bennett (1993) refers to as "countering" another culture from one's own worldview, which is a key tenet of *defense*. In both cases, nonetheless, according to Bennett (1993), it is not Carmen's misunderstanding or perhaps even a dislike of the values that reflects an ethnocentric worldview, but her lack of an attempt at taking another culture's perspective; she does not attempt to understand why such occurrences are the norm for her students and is understood as perceiving these approaches as inferior. Bennett (1993) asserts that an *ethnorelative* viewpoint necessitates "respect" toward another culture's values and systems and that the need to judge norms as positive or negative is no longer present.

Instead, like several of the UAE-based participants, Carmen appears to conflate the conventions of the US as also being superior and a shared standard for most other cultures, again demonstrating the centrality of an American worldview in navigating her experiences in Emirati society, precluding her progression into *ethnorelativism*.

5.1.1.2 Sandra

Sandra is a woman of color who was born and raised in a large American urban area. She notes that her K-12 schools had diverse student populations and that Spanish was widely spoken among her peers, though she herself is not a Spanish-speaker. At the time of interview, Sandra had lived and taught in the

UAE for eleven years. She works in the Education department of an urban women's campus, which allows her to work with students who range from freshmen to seniors. As part of her position, she shadows students through their teaching practicum placements and has in-depth knowledge of the government's schools and education systems.

Although Sandra's photos and discussion of them align with several phases of the DMIS, analysis firmly situates her responses in an *ethnocentric* worldview. More specifically, her interview reflects placement predominantly within the *defense* stage with several instances of *minimization*.

She begins the photo-elicitation project in week 1 with photos that inspire interview focus on *universals*, such as an image of a family reunion following military service abroad. She says this represents that "we're all healing" and that "families are the same no matter where you are." According to Bennett (1993), this emphasis on commonalities signifies a reduction in cultural nuance, which is situated in the *minimization* phase of the DMIS. One may initially argue that family may indeed be a universal—that most people independent of culture value their family. However, it is important to keep in mind that a family's role and its influence on expectations, customs, and behaviors are often rooted in a greater sense of culture, as both Hofstede et al. (2010) and Hall (1977) outline at length in their theories of culture. Her second photo—an image of a mosque representing culture to her in that "we should all be respectful of each other's religious beliefs"—initially appears as perhaps another commonality or perhaps even *ethnorelativism*. However, her interview instead reflects sentiments in line with the *defense* stage's concept of *reversal*, or the disapproval of one's own

culture and a newfound sense of superiority toward another (Bennett, 1993), as she explains that the US has "taken it a bit way too far" in respecting everyone else's religion by not allowing prayer in school, unlike in the UAE.

While Sandra's initial week of images and accompanying discussion demonstrate signs of *minimization*, her interview later becomes more solidly situated in the less progressive *defense* phase of the DMIS. She begins to focus on linguistic barriers and differences in communication styles, taking the stance that American writing conventions and email standards, for example, are "the proper way," describing how correspondence "needs to be written." She notes patterns of writing and communication styles among her students but does not exhibit a respect for or recognition of these tendencies as being potentially rooted in the cultural conventions of Arabic writing, in which repetition and indirectness are typically viewed as both favorable and persuasive (Suchan, 2014). She perceives her students' writing as "convoluted" and their requests for clarification as "coddling" or attempts to play dumb:

> *"I've been around long enough to know that these girls—sometimes they, you know, they play that card like, 'I don't know this.' But you really do– you just want to try to catch me. I'm like, 'No, I'm not playing that game with you.'"*

Furthermore, Sandra often generalizes Emiratis together as a single group, though she is visibly hesitant to do so, at times using phrases like "not all of them." Nonetheless, she addresses the socioeconomic situation in the UAE by referring to her submitted image of a Rolls Royce as the "everyday car," adding

that "they will often spend money on fancy things to show off, even if they live in a shack." Such grouping is repeated when recounting a conversation with her daughter in which she says "You're acting like my Emirati students;" her daughter retorts "Don't do that—I don't act like them." Though such groupings may at first seem to align with the broad generalizations that are characteristic of *denial* (Bennett, 1993), they are interpreted here as implicit within-group nuance acknowledgement. In the case of the Rolls Royce, Sandra's addition of "even if they live in a shack" was interpreted as an implied recognition that not all Emiratis can reasonably afford Rolls Royces; in the latter instance, she initiated the conversation with her daughter with reference to "*her* students" as opposed to "Emiratis" or "Emirati students" in general. She concedes that her institution of employment is a "catch-all" institution, noting that other universities in the country have higher standards. Nonetheless, the attribution of "showing off" and of shamefulness toward the student performance level of her students at a low-ranking institution—even though most if not all countries have similar variations in student ability and institutional offerings—was interpreted as a negative *ethnocentric* judgement, situating Sandra's perceptions in the *defense* phase of the DMIS.

5.1.1.3 Ariel

Ariel is a Caucasian woman born to Caucasian American-born parents. Raised in a rural community in the US, Ariel experienced minimal intercultural interaction as a child. Her primary school education took place among a student population of fewer than 15 students, six of whom were her siblings; her high school was slightly larger but enrolled one student of color. Since, both she and several

siblings have married non-American spouses, so she feels she engages in intercultural communication intensively. She studied abroad in London, taught kindergarten in the US, and has been teaching in the UAE for twelve years: three years at a government high school for boys and nine years at an urban women's campus at the target institution where she is also a departmental manager.

Ariel's responses were coded across the two ethnocentric phases of *defense* and *minimization* nearly equally with just two more occurrences of *defense* noted. Interestingly, her *minimization* instances were often in response to her own unease upon making generalizations about a group as a whole. Thus, she seems firmly situated within the *ethnocentric* half of the continuum, evidencing tenets of *ethnorelativism* only twice: once in temporarily switching cultural frames of reference (*adaptation*) and once in exhibiting an observation of a difference without an attribution of a positive or negative judgement (*acceptance*). She maintains her US-borne worldview as her point of reference and oftentimes appears to perceive its values as *superior*.

Similar to several UAE-based participants, Ariel *enthnocentrically* conflates US standards and values as the norms of most cultures, albeit not Emirati culture, using phrases such as "if you were in a college somewhere else, you wouldn't ever see that" or "it's quite different than anyone [elsewhere] I would meet at that age," clearly situating her own standards as her point of reference. She seems uncomfortable with her own generalizations, sometimes navigating them through *reversal* ("They pick up on other languages so much faster than us") but more frequently by minimizing and universalizing differences ("I don't know if it's culture or age;" "…but there are spoiled children all over the world"). Nevertheless, her

perceptions are interpreted as demonstrating the *superiority* tenet of *defense* (Bennett, 1993) for typically being accompanied by a sentiment of favorability toward her own culture's approach to communication, social engagement, protection, education, accountability, and workplace customs, which represent most of her photo-elicitation images. Consider the below example, in which Ariel seems to *denigrate* Emiratis as a single group with minimal if any in-group nuance:

> *"They don't have that experience with other cultures and they're coming to a school where they're basically, same population, same group of students."*

To provide context to this quote, Ariel is suggesting a possible cause for why "maybe not every student in our classroom is sheltered." Though she may initially seem to *not* be grouping them wholly, she refers to her Emirati students later in the same sentence as the "same population, same group of students." She goes on to discuss their communication patterns and "email etiquette" as infantile, stating she would "feel so humiliated" or "be embarrassed to communicate at a US college" to her instructors in such a way—feelings that are interpreted as negative perceptions of student practices that should be "countered," using terminology from Bennett (1993), with a standard more in line with that of the US. While a repeated infantilization of her students, referring to them as "adorable" and having a "very young innocence to them," does not at first seem to carry negative judgement, it evolves later in the interview into "immaturity," "shelteredness," and a detrimental lack of responsibility. She believes they are crucially lacking job experience and that not "worrying about finances or paying

for gas" is actually harmful. She immediately follows this statement by referring to her college-level students as "spoiled children," though she aims to minimize this by acknowledging that "there are spoiled children all over the world." She further affirms the importance of workplace accountability as vital in learning to take other perspectives. She only recognizes in-group nuance among Emiratis in recounting her experience with Emirati students who attend her daughter's high school, saying they "aren't the same" because they have experienced multiculturalism. She perceives attending a school with an Emirati-minority student population as helpful to these "different" Emiratis, particularly in "seeing how [other] people react to situations, how people treat different workers." She believes this has allowed them to gain different perspectives that would benefit them. Corroborating her *defense* placement again, she is interpreted as perceiving "people"—which, contextually, referred to all non-Emirati students at her daughter's school—as behaving in a manner that serves as a model from which Emiratis should learn. She extends this notion of American culture as exemplary, questioning Emirati students' ability to critically access or consider multiple sides of a news story and to discern research-sourced, reliable information, as she believes they gain cultural and global knowledge primarily from Netflix and social media and crucially "not ever, like, expanding their view into like, CNN or the New York Times." Thus, Ariel reasserts both her ethnocentrically American frame of reference as well as her perception of its *superiority* and its position as a generalizable standard, reinforcing her *defense* situatedness.

5.1.1.4 Katie

Katie is a Caucasian woman born in the US, raised by American parents in a monolingual English-language suburban household. The student populations of her childhood schools were fairly homogeneous. She engaged with large immigrant student populations during her early years teaching in the US and was thus inspired to transition to teaching ESL. She has taught in the UAE for ten years, five years at the target HEI. Her campus is rurally located; she has taught at both the men's and women's campuses. She also serves as a departmental manager.

Although her interview included a handful of *defense* and *minimization* instances, respectively stating that there "can be a sense of entitlement" among Emirati students but that "we also see that with different groups in the US", Katie predominantly demonstrates IS that is situated within the *ethnorelative* half of the continuum. Several of her perceptions reflect the *adaptation* phase while many fall in line with the characteristics of *acceptance*. Regularly throughout the interview, she makes direct comparison to American HE students, policies, and trends, reliably conveying the US as her cultural frame of reference.

Crucially, Katie discussed her photo-elicitation images and observations without expressing positive nor negative judgment toward her own worldview or the culture of the UAE, indicating a more *acceptance* level of IS—the first stage of *ethnorelativism* (Bennett, 1993). Her photographs and interview centered around differences in the socioeconomic status of Emirati compared to American college students, the emphasis on appearances in the UAE, and gender differences.

Katie often addresses the differences in spending power and the manner in which monies are allocated between Emirati and American colleges and their students without attributing an attitude of *superiority* to any group. For example, she notes that the target institution has "put a lot of money in this project—the Academic Success Center… a tutoring center... In the US… we didn't have, you know, a big splashy tutorial center… so, to me, it's different from where I last taught… in a city that was economically struggling." Discussion of spending also referenced the students themselves. She perceives that "branding is important here" when discussing the Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton bags she photographed, remarking that these are items that "most students in the US can't afford." These examples serve as a demonstration of Katie's situatedness on the DMIS in the first phase of *ethnorelativism,* or *acceptance.* She continuously makes comparisons to the US as her steady point of reference, respectfully acknowledging differences without attempts at an Emirati perspective or rationale for where these differences may be rooted, which is foundational to the following stage of *adaptation.* However, though recognizing differences, she does not minimize them by seeking to highlight commonalities and is not interpreted as presenting any form of judgement toward any culture's approaches or habits as superior, aligning with the *acceptance* stage (Bennett, 1993). Instead, this indicates a *respect for value difference*, defined by Bennett (1993) as an acceptance of different worldview assumptions and the value attributed to cultural alternatives in behavior, where individuals also see their own worldview as a cultural construct.

Though most of her perceptions of culture reflect *acceptance*, Katie sometimes switches worldviews during the interview, attempting to take an Emirati perspective regarding several topics and thus demonstrating a more progressive level of IS. For instance, she submitted several photographs of students' "impractical" jeweled, high-heeled shoes, heavy make-up, and crystal-laden abayas (traditional black dress coverings that female students are required to wear on campus). Katie believes that wearing such high heels, for example, are not typical of college students in the US, and explains that Emirati students on campus "walk very slowly" and are "never in a rush to go anywhere; that is very different than the US," explaining her perception that female students have "limited opportunities to… channel their beauty." The below quote provides additional context to her understanding:

> *"Some of them only come to the campus, and then they're home the rest of the time. Or if they do go out, they go out with male chaperones. So the only time that they're not with a male, brother, father figure, is probably when they're at university."*

She aims to change points of reference again with respect to "dressing up" at school and college, attributing it to what she perceives as possible "networking" on campus, recalling a time in which she had been told that school events can be considered opportunities for nationals to seek wives for their family members. Here, by attempting to understand the rationale behind a cultural difference, Katie is aiming to understand her observations through the lens of Emiratis instead of through her own frames of reference. This represents the *adaptation*-phase strategy of *empathy* (Bennett, 1993), which is marked by brief, temporary, and

intentional changes of perspective that take contextual differences—in this case, marriage customs and familial oversight of daughters—into consideration. However, Katie's IS does not progress to the *integration* phase, as Bennett (1993) makes clear that the maintenance of one's worldview as a frame of reference precludes further progression across the DMIS.

5.1.1.5 Madeleine

Madeleine is a Caucasian woman born and raised to American parents in a US suburb. She says her schools were not culturally diverse and had no non-native English speakers beyond short-term international exchange students. She met students of other cultures in college, which inspired her to eventually work abroad. She has taught in the UAE for 18 years. Of these, 11 were spent teaching in HE split between men's and women's campuses.

Madeleine demonstrated the most progressive IS of the UAE participant group. The majority of her interview indicated intercultural strategies from the *adaptation* stage of the DMIS. Bennett (1993) argues that this phase is defined by an adaptation to the effective communication conventions of other cultures while maintaining one's own original cultural worldview as central, crucially adding culturally stylistic adjustments in communication though not replacing one's own native skills.

Though indeed the exception, Madeleine's interview involves a few occurrences of *ethnocentrism*. Like other UAE-based participants, she conflates her own expectations of college students as universal yet uncommon in Emirati culture,

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and that this should be countered (*defense*). At several points, she also generalizes stereotypes to whole groups (i.e., "Arabs") for issues such as cultural approaches to time and punctuality. When discussing cultures with which she is less familiar, she tends to *minimize*; she discusses a culturally diverse environment but focuses on commonalities, such as a love for pizza, k-pop, or video games. Though approaching interculturality positively, she nonetheless emphasizes sameness—the heart of the *ethnocentric minimization* stage.

These cases are anomalies in comparison to the largely *ethnorelative* perspectives that Madeleine typically maintains throughout her interview. Interestingly, she is the only participant from the UAE-based group to address any non-Emirati cultures in her photographs despite the diversity among faculty and staff at the target institution and the country's resident population. The campus cleaning staff, for instance, consists predominantly of laborers from South Asian nations. Consider the below quote in which Madeleine comments on differences in cleaning practices:

> *"They're blowing the dirt around. They think this is cleaning… it's like, in India, you see people sweeping dirt all the time, right? It's something I can't grasp… I cannot get there. I don't understand. That's my culture."*

It is important to keep in mind that Bennett (1993) argues that an *ethnorelative* worldview does not require one to view a cultural difference as favorable. Here, Madeleine is interpreted as demonstrating *respect for behavioral difference* at the *acceptance* stage of *ethnorelativism* that Bennett (1993, p. 48) defines as

one's ability to "see alien behavior as indicative of profound cultural differences, not just as permutations of universal (and probably ethnocentric) laws." Intriguingly, this same quote from Madeleine exemplifies her American worldview as her cultural reference point and simultaneously exemplifies a *defense* viewpoint in that she not only overgeneralizes the cleaning standards of everyone from India but also disregards in-group differentiation among those from South Asia or the cleaners, as several were in fact not Indian.

Beyond this, Madeleine's perceptions of cultural difference reflect IS at the *adaptation* stage, particularly the *empathy* substage, when discussing a range of topics. In this phase, one maintains their own worldview as a cultural frame of reference through processes of shifting, or adapting, to other worldviews. Consider the following example, after she complimented a student's laptop case:

> *"When I said 'That is so cool. I love that…where did you get it from?'… he's like 'Here, miss, you can have it.' I'm like, 'Oh, I forgot. You can't, you can't say that something's nice because if you say something's nice, they're gonna offer it to you, because that's the right thing for them to do…' I still haven't learned how to tell someone that something is nice in a way that they don't then have to offer it to me."*

Here, Madeleine's reflective thinking on cultural differences represents *empathy* in two ways. First, she acknowledges the cultural, contextual differences of experience from the distinct reference points involved in the interaction. Second, she demonstrates that shifting perspectives is a process which, given her self-

perceived misstep and belief that she has yet to learn to navigate such interactions in a more culturally appropriate way, signifies shifts that are intentional and, in their fleetingness, temporary—two tenets that Bennett (1993) lists as central to *empathy* versus the more permanent *pluralism*. She is interpreted as wanting to *add* the communication skill of complimenting in an Emirati context, which Bennett (1993) lists as a principle central to the process element of this stage.

Other instances of *empathy* occur when she discusses differences between the genders, personal space, make-up trends, and eating customs. For example, she explains her selection of images portraying heavy make-up as representing an interaction in which an Emirati colleague approached her in a manner she perceived as "way too close for comfort;" the colleague was also wearing a "huge amount" of "not work-appropriate make-up." She details the occasion as another example of a cultural misstep on her part: although she knows that personal space and make-up customs are different in the UAE, she jumped back in reaction to her approaching colleague and regretted her reaction, fearing she may have offended someone who was behaving contextually appropriately.

The only instance of *pluralism* interpreted in Madeleine's interview takes place as she responds to a student's news of graduating. She uses the Arabic phrase "Mashallah," which she perceives as an invocation of God as protector. She explains:

> *"I'm definitely not a Muslim. I'm not even a Christian. So, God isn't*
>
> *really my thing. I'm not against God, God's cool. But I don't, I have*

no problem with it… it's not my culture, but it just came out because

it was the right thing to do in that situation."

Here, she demonstrates a more permanent shift in perspective in an unintentional response to good news from her Emirati student, noting what she believes to be the standards of a specific context outside of her own cultural frame of reference. Given her reference even in this case, however, to her own native worldview, she is not exhibiting the long-term state of disintegration from any one culture, or *cultural marginality*, necessitated by *integration*—the following and final stage of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993).

5.1.2 Thematic analysis

Several themes emerged from the data when employing the thematic analysis steps as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) to the photo-elicitation interviews. Any patterns in broader meanings among at least four of the five UAE-based participants are discussed here.

Theme	Number of Participants Addressing the Theme
Differences between sexes	5
Student engagement with HE	5
Accountability and responsibility	4
Wealth	4
Organizational management	4

Table 5.2 Final themes: UAE-based group.

5.1.2.1 Differences between sexes

Although the men's and women's campuses at all federal institutions are almost entirely separated, all UAE-based participants have incidentally had experience working with both sexes while teaching in the UAE. All five UAE-based participants perceive differences between male and female students and commented on these differences, unprompted, in their interviews. These differences were addressed across an array of sub-topics, most commonly as distinctions in independence, classroom behavior, and other daily habits.

All participants except Madeleine perceived female students as being protected or "coddled" to a detrimental extent. Carmen, for example, described how she believes that the women have been taught that others will do just about everything for them, leading to a learned helplessness or inability to problem-solve in basic day-to-day activities, such as logging into email accounts or resetting passwords. Both Ariel and Katie discussed practices of male family members serving as "chaperones" who at times take women's devices, such as mobiles or laptops. One of Katie's photographs featured a sticker on a student's laptop that read "Warning: The last person that touched my Macbook is in my backyard," with a stick figure covering the grave of a buried stick figure; according to Katie, the student said this sticker was a warning for her brothers. Ariel similarly discussed how male family members monitor women's interactions, even online, and "may not allow them to expand who they can interact with."

In classroom settings, Carmen, Madeleine, and Sandra perceived women as taking their education more seriously. While Ariel referred to male students as "very immature" and "silly," Sandra stated their behavior as "outright absurd." Madeleine provided more specific examples of classroom behaviors from her

men's campus workplace, stating instances of "really rude, terrible behavior—guys dumping sodas on each other, 'pants-ing' each other." However, she also states that this type of behavior appears to be decreasing over time.

In daily activities, habits, and hobbies, Madeleine noted that men engage in social media to take and share pictures of themselves, whereas women rarely agree to be photographed. Carmen commented that she perceives public visibility of women in society here to be largely limited to make-up influencers and perhaps singers, with only rare occasions of strong Emirati female role models. Across several interviews, participants mentioned relatively heavy make-up trends among Emirati women, noting that appearance seems disproportionately important here. Other noted behavioral differences include smoking and watching sports matches as uniquely male, as Sandra recounted a time she and her daughter were the only two females in a stadium of men watching a football match, with locals "secretly" taking photos of them in the stands.

5.1.2.2 Student engagement with HE

All participants expressed frustration with or concern for students' engagement in classes in the forms of an unwillingness to work through difficult tasks, attitudes toward academic achievement and grades, perceptively inappropriate communication styles, or the aforementioned behavioral issues.

Three of the participants elaborated on the "extreme coddling" and stunted independence that students are believed to have experienced throughout their lives and how this has, in the participants' estimates, created an expectation on behalf of students that "someone needs to do things **for** them," according to

Carmen, without much effort on their own part. The participants comment that students also seem unwilling or unable to think critically, problem-solve, or even attempt basic troubleshooting of relatively simple tasks. Similarly, students are described as needing extreme structure in assignments and examples from which they often copy verbatim in "their own" assignments and are either unable or unwilling to work on course assignments outside of class, with Ariel citing an exam review she assigned for homework which received zero submissions from a class of 30 students. Sandra commented that students produce poor work and nonetheless expect top scores, which she believes to be the result of years' worth of rewarding of low-quality performance throughout K-12 schooling. Two other participants corroborated this notion, adding they believe students to approach grades as negotiable and that they often find themselves in disputes over grades. Sandra went so far as to assert that she feels students hope to "catch" instructors on technicalities instead of simply complying with requirements and often report directly to upper management when they do not receive what they request.

Student communication styles with faculty are addressed by four of the participants. In this subtheme, participants predominantly recount student tendencies to largely rely on copying and pasting messages from translators without reading back the content, frequently resulting in nonsensical attempts at correspondence. Several participants' photograph submissions captured this, exemplified in the email below from a student requesting to re-take an exam:

> *"I have health condition lately after taking the third dose which is a continuous headache and before 2 days I diagnosed by improvidence and I have to wait for my glass."*

Issues of the last-minute, urgent nature of emails, demanding or improper email tone, and unprofessional communications containing emojis or several question marks or exclamation points in a row are other examples of the communication differences expressed by participants.

In concluding the theme of student engagement with HE, participants conveyed discrepancies between their expectations of and actual experiences with tertiary student behavior at the UAE-based target institution, at times alluding that students do not value learning or take HE as seriously as those in other cultures, exhibiting the behaviors outlined in the previous theme or missing exams for reasons such as staying home to color with younger siblings. Ambitions to tackle academic challenges are largely absent, according to several participants, with students being perceived as feeling entitled to marks or answers with minimal effort or knowledge. Student focus on learning is described as taking a backseat to the opportunity for leaving social impressions on peers and projecting appearances, with women described as doing their make-up in class, carrying expensive brand-name bags filled with make-up and perfume but without classroom materials like paper or pens, and often wearing stiletto, crystal-encrusted high-heels to nonchalantly walk around campus with little regard for punctuality. Several participants discuss how college may be seen by students as a place to impress family members of potential spouses or as places to express individuality through hairstyles, dress, or make-up, as women may have limited opportunities to exhibit such expression.

5.1.2.3 Accountability and responsibility

Relatedly, habits that may be viewed as common, expected, or even required in formal education and workplace settings in the US, such as the sense of efficiency or responsibility, are perceived by four of the five participants as being largely absent among the student population at the UAE-based target institution, attributed by participants to a lack of work experience, a lack of student accountability throughout the schooling system, and a societal overprotection of young people, especially women.

The participants outline a system of rewarding poor quality student work at the target institution, in which instructors instead fear punitive responses themselves for student failures. Carmen describes the institution's approach to academic dishonesty:

> *"Holding students accountable for plagiarism, for cheating, for academic dishonesty, it's just something that doesn't happen here… I won't report them, because I know that, one: I will get blamed for not preventing the cheating from happening, and two: there'll be like extra work for me to do… and in the end, like the student is going to sit the exam anyway."*

Ariel adds that this lack of accountability is instilled not just in educational environments but also at home, telling of a time that her student crashed a car before having his license, with his parents taking the blame for the incident. Three participants point out that women are often discouraged from being responsible for errands or tasks outside domestic settings. As a result, women are absolved of various responsibilities. Independence, in the participants' view, is not typically

valued or encouraged for them; instead, they expect tasks to be done *for* them and generally do not even attempt to "figure it out," according to Carmen.

Having rarely faced negative consequences throughout their schooling for producing poor quality work, for absences, or for behaving inappropriately in formal settings per American cultural standards, Ariel notes that the work experience common among college students in the US is also the exception for Emiratis. She considers this is a missed opportunity to learn both accountability and organizational skills. She elaborates on her experience teaching introductory business courses, in which students could not identify job positions below managerial posts. She discusses how the students who do take jobs quickly resign "when they realize they don't want to do it," and points at highly-visible nationality-based societal and workplace stratifications: she describes how students view entry-level and customer-facing jobs negatively, as positions they nor their family members would consider accepting, creating another missed opportunity for developing an awareness of accountability.

5.1.2.4 Wealth

This relaxed approach to accountability and responsibility is postulated by four of the five participants as potentially the result of wealth among Emirati nationals. Students seem to take for granted that they will be offered managerial positions immediately upon graduating; fears of not finding jobs are not typically expressed. The relative wealth of the general student population seems to be quite noticeable to participants, as images highlighting luxury brands and expensive cars were submitted by four of five of them, and references to "show

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off culture" were repeated as well. When asked why such brands were perceived as representative of "culture" to them, participants explained that they believe there to be differences in expendable income between both the teachers— typically expatriates—and their own students in the UAE, as well as between tertiary students in the UAE and US, where public university college students would not typically be able to afford such items. Katie extended this conversation to the spending of the government and institution itself, as she estimates the cost of both building and operating "flashy" tutoring centers at each of the 16 campuses. She believes them to be largely ineffectual but comments on the value of aesthetics here. Carmen corroborates the notion of institutional wealth, expounding upon the Abu Dhabi branch of New York University as a "luxury HE brand" and the government's willingness to spend on programming to promote intercultural exchange visually while she contrastively describes a teaching environment in which she does not feel comfortable teaching the cultures or values of native English-speaking countries in Emirati classrooms. Ultimately, the participants discuss an environment in which appearances are valued and where campus funding and focus often go toward preserving them with little evaluation of academic outcomes.

5.1.2.5 Organizational management

The final theme corroborated by four of the five participants addresses management practices at the target institution. They describe managerial employees as being largely absent both physically and communicatively. Consequently, participants discuss a reluctance to reach out to management, as they are often absent from campus workspaces and can make unpredictable,

retaliatory decisions, presumably based on minor criticisms. Extra effort is said to go unrecognized and consequences for poor faculty performance are, in the participants' view, absent as well, with terminations unexplained and, therefore, seemingly baseless and unaligned to employee performance. Unprompted, four participants explicitly stated that they actively avoid reporting issues or concerns to management: "Don't push back," Sandra warns. Interestingly, in follow-up correspondence, the only participant who did not express hesitance toward institutional management and referred to reporting issues to campus administration disclosed that the institution has since ended her employment contract without explanation. Katie noted that she believes "kowtowing" to be not just acceptable among faculty toward management at her campus, in contrast to her experience in the US, but that it even "seems like the expectation."

5.2 UAE-based quantitative results

The data below are averages derived from the UAE-based participants' responses to the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) as presented by Chen and Starosta (2000), detailed in the previous section. The ISS comprises 24 items that have been tested for reliability and validity across different countries and contexts (Davila et al., 2013; Fritz et al., 2002; Wang & Zhou, 2016). The instrument adopts a Likert-type scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with reverse-coding required for nine negatively-worded items (i.e., *I don't like to be with people from different cultures*). At the start of the study, participants completed the scale as a pre-test along with additional demographic questions used for gauging eligibility for the study. After completion of both the four-week photo collection project and follow-up, semi-structured interviews, participants

concluded the study by responding to the ISS as a post-test survey to compare any potential growth in IS. It is essential to note, however, that because of the small sample population (*n* = 5), the following descriptive data presented in Tables 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 are purely for indicative purposes only.

Participant	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Change	DMIS Stage
Carmen	4.04	4.29	+0.25	Defense
Sandra	4.38	4.21	-0.17	Defense
Ariel	4.08	4.29	+0.21	Defense
Katie	3.88	3.88	0	Acceptance
Madeleine	4.04	4.29	+0.25	Adaptation
Group average	**4.08**	**4.13**	**+0.05**	

Table 5.3 UAE-based participants' ISS scores.

Ultimately, as a group, there is a small, perhaps negligible, positive change in IS averages between the pre- and post-test administrations of the ISS. When evaluating individual participants' scores, three of the five participants increased their IS by more than one-fifth of a point, with a maximum increase of .25 points. One participant did not change in IS at all, according to ISS findings, while another participant actually regressed in IS following the photo-elicitation project. Possible explanations of why this might be as well as a comparison of participants' sensitivity through the lens of the DMIS versus the ISS will be outlined in Chapter 6.

As discussed in the *Methodology* section, Chen and Starosta (2000) posit five factors of IS identified through a principal axis factor analysis of the scale's initially-proposed 44 items. Based on the factor analysis, items with loadings of

≥ .50 and secondary loadings of ≤ .30 were selected to comprise the 24 items of the ISS that has been tested for reliability and validity over time and was used for this study (Chen & Starosta, 2000). When more specifically viewing the quantitative data across the five factors as shown in Table 5.4, for indicative purposes only, the factors of *Respect for Cultural Differences, Interaction Confidence,* and *Interaction Enjoyment* increase following the photo-elicitation project, while *Interaction Engagement* and *Interaction Attentiveness* decrease.

The largest differences in averages are in *Interaction Engagement* with a decrease of .17 and in *Interaction Enjoyment*, with an increase of .54. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), these factors align respectively with a drop in participants' feelings toward their involvement in intercultural communicative settings and a growth in positive attitudes toward different cultures.

Perhaps also of interest are individual participants' pre- and post-survey differences by factor, shown in Table 5.4.

	Interaction Engagement			Respect for Cultural Differences			Interaction Confidence			Interaction Enjoyment			Interaction Attentiveness		
	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff
Madeleine	4.00	3.71	-.29	3.83	4.17	+.34	4.20	4.20	0	4.00	4.00	0	4.33	4.00	-.33
Ariel	4.00	4.00	0	4.17	4.33	+.16	4.00	4.40	+.40	4.33	4.67	+.34	4.00	4.33	+.33
Sandra	4.14	3.71	-.43	4.33	4.5	+.17	4.80	4.40	-.40	3.67	4.33	+.66	5.00	4.33	-.67
Katie	3.86	3.71	-.15	3.83	3.83	0	4.00	3.60	-.40	3.67	4.67	+1.0	4.00	4.00	0
Carmen	4.00	4.00	0	4.17	4.00	-.17	4.00	4.80	+.80	4.00	4.67	+.67	4.00	4.33	+.33
Average	**4.00**	**3.83**	**-.17**	**4.07**	**4.17**	**+.10**	**4.20**	**4.28**	**+.08**	**3.93**	**4.47**	**+.54**	**4.27**	**4.20**	**-.07**

Table 5.4 UAE-based participant change in IS by factor.

This makes clear that within the factor of greatest negative change, *Interaction Engagement*, none of the participants demonstrate an increased feeling toward participating in intercultural communication. In tolerating diverse others' cultures and opinions as measured by *Respect for Cultural Difference* (Chen & Starosta, 2000), though only a small increase in group average ($\mu = .10$) is found, nearly all participants improved with the exception of one decrease and one non-change. With the largest increase in pre- and post-survey scores coming from items within the *Interaction Enjoyment* factor, averages show that in fact no participants decreased in their appreciation toward different cultures.

5.3 US-based qualitative results

The US-based participants all work for the International Teaching Assistant (ITA) program at a mid-sized state university in the mid-Atlantic United States, which also has an affiliate year-round English language program. ITA students are incoming graduate, generally PhD, students at the institution who are preparing to be teaching assistants for first-year university courses in their fields. All ITA students take courses in culture and pedagogy common to American universities and campus life; beyond this, based on their performance on several diagnostic tests, some ITAs may also be required to enroll in various linguistic-based courses. All ITA instructors, and thus the US-based participants, have a background in ESL, as is also the case for the UAE-based group. The composition of all of the US-based participants' classes were diverse with students representing South Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and for some, Canada and the UK. While the ITA program runs for only five weeks during the summer, full-time employment with non-native English

speakers throughout the academic year was a determining factor for eligibility in this study to balance for the experience of the UAE-based group.

5.3.1 DMIS

All US-based participants demonstrated IS that predominantly aligned with the tenets of the *ethnorelative* half of the DMIS. A further breakdown of their progression on the continuum is shown in Figure 5.2 below.

DMIS Distribution of US-Based Participants
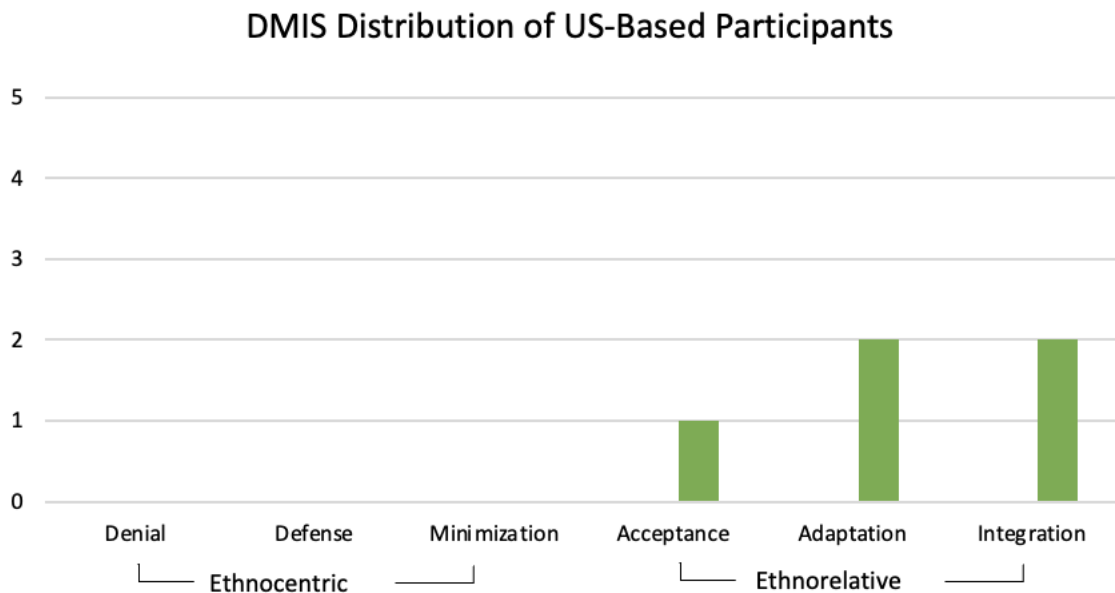
Figure 5.2 US-based participant situatedness on DMIS.

One participant was interpreted as exhibiting sensitivity at the *acceptance* level; two demonstrated an *adaptation* level of IS. The US-based group also yielded two participants demonstrating *Integration*-level IS—the most progressive stage of the continuum (Bennett, 1993). Table 5.5 below lists the stages of sensitivity of each US-based participant in order of DMIS progression.

US-based participant	DMIS stage

Erin	Acceptance
John	Adaptation
Amy	Adaptation
Emily	Integration
Abby	Integration

Table 5.5 DMIS stage of US-based participants.

5.3.1.1 Erin

Erin is a Caucasian woman born in the US to two American monolingual parents. Her father remarried a woman of Latin origin, who Erin says in part raised her. As a child, her aunt also married a Palestinian, and she herself later married a North African Arab. She describes growing up in an ethnically diverse neighborhood also. Erin cites over 25 years of teaching experience, several of which include work in Korea and ten of which are at the target institution, where she continues to work as a full-time ESL instructor. This is her second year teaching with ITA.

Erin's perceptions of cultural differences are most frequently representative of the tenets of the *acceptance* stage of IS, marked by respectful, non-judgmental recognitions of cultural differences. Nevertheless, her interview includes several instances of the less progressive *ethnocentric* phase of *defense* along with several perceptions aligned with the more progressive *adaptation* stage. This mix of attitudes toward differences were also reflected in Erin's photographic submissions, along with an overall greater representation of *ethnorelativism*.

Erin retreated to the *defense* stages of the DMIS when discussing Muslims and several topics related to American culture. With respect to the former, she outright states "Muslims kinda piss me off sometimes," an example of generalized judgement and unnuanced grouping that occurs only when she discusses this particular population. She critiques "the whole 'woman thing' with Islam and men," explaining that, in her view, women are perceived as "being in an inferior position" and that Muslim men "try and frame it differently," but that "that's what it is." These statements were interpreted by the researcher as hostile statements toward every member of a group, which Bennett (1993) states as the definition of the *denigration* strategy of the *defense* stage. At numerous points, Erin also directs *denigration* toward the US—her own cultural frame of reference; however, this *denigration* is not consistently accompanied by the superiority toward another culture that Bennett (1993) necessitates in his definition of the *defense* strategy of *reversal*. Nonetheless, generalized judgements such as "Poor Mexico, we've turned it into some kind of game show," and "You should be studying **this** culture—this culture is crazy," represent a denigration toward one's own cultural frame of reference, accompanied only once by a sense of superiority toward any other culture. Interestingly, Bennett (1993) states that *denigration* commonly interacts with *superiority*; perhaps it is because of her frustration toward several elements of American culture at the time of the study that such *superiority* was not present in her interview.

Beyond these statements, Erin's interview comprised only *ethnorelative* attitudes and perceptions toward different cultures. Aligning with the first phase of this half of the DMIS, Erin respectfully acknowledges differences without judgement at

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several points. She submitted several images that exemplify *respect for behavioral difference* (Bennett, 1993), highlighting an affection toward linguistic differences and distinct writing systems, such as the Greek alphabet. Another photo shows a toy monk from Korea. She explains that she "loves that this is a kid's toy," which, she says, rehearses the same chants as the traditional monks of Korea's temples and monasteries. Here, she is interpreted as respectfully recognizing that this practice is rooted in cultural context. Combined with the cultural self-awareness in her contrast of connecting children to religion in the US, this perception was interpreted as a *respect for value difference*, as she respectfully notes the centrality of context involved in alternative belief systems. Both *respect for behavioral difference* and *respect for value difference* are two forms of development within the *acceptance* stage, with the latter being slightly more progressive (Bennett, 1993).

At a couple of points throughout the interview, Erin did attempt to shift frames of reference when engaging with cultural differences, in line with the *adaptation* stage. For example, when trying to understand the intentionally erected concrete walls surrounding several parks and villages in her images of Crete, she shifts her cultural frame of reference, supposing the phenomenon to be related to a cultural sense of community and connecting it to similar sights she observed in other collectivist cultures. She later empathizes with students in certain parts of the world working to overcome infrastructure issues and tries to put herself in their shoes. She explains that she "had to admire them" and their resilience, venturing to guess how they must be feeling as they work to succeed in the program, which she reasonably believes is viewed by them as a "one in a million

chance to go get a free PhD in the USA." Here, she is demonstrating the primary traits of *empathy* of the *adaptation* stage of the continuum: her statement shows a consideration of one's context and from a distinct perspective beyond imagining what another may do or feel in a given circumstance. Nonetheless, these shifts are temporary, conscious, and intentional, precluding movement to the more progressive *pluralism* phase.

5.3.1.2 John

The only male in the study, John, Caucasian, was born and raised in the US to American monolingual parents. His experience with cultural difference as a child involves three years of elementary school and two years of high school at American schools in Jordan and Papua New Guinea, respectively; his father worked for the airline industry. He has over 30 years of teaching experience including several in Thailand and a decade at the target institution, though he had never taught for the ITA program prior to the study.

Throughout his interview, John demonstrates that he consciously considers the behaviors and perceptions that are appropriate to a given culture as he approaches intercultural interaction with culturally distinct others. This places him at the *adaptation* stage of the DMIS according to Bennett (1993). Quite consistent in his shifting frames of reference, only twice does his interview reflect any *ethnocentric* perceptions, while twice he demonstrates a respectful approach to cultural difference without shifting worldviews (*acceptance*).

John's only instances of *ethnocentrism* center around the issues of safety and violence. He submitted an image of his online ITA class with most students

having their cameras on. He selected this photograph not only to project the diversity of the group but to highlight that one student kept his camera switched off because of a shooting that was taking place nearby. While evoking feelings of sympathy, the situation resulted in John having an overgeneralized "concern about [his] students in Africa." This was interpreted as an example of *denigration* at the *defense* stage in that he is presenting a derogatory stereotype of an entire continent. In the same vein, elements of *minimization* appeared when he was asked follow-up questions about the safety of students in the United States or on campus. While he conflates the isolated incident surrounding his student's situation with the safety of the African continent, he somewhat minimizes the relative frequency of mass shootings or campus violence in the US, including at the target institution itself. At one point, he attributes a recent string of campus alerts to being "a TikTok thing." He states that the target institution is "as safe as a college campus can be," minimizing the violence that occurs in the US as a shared global norm yet also as somehow being less severe than the event surrounding his student.

Beyond this, his images and statements throughout the interview show an *ethnorelative* level of IS. He submitted several images representing cultures coming together with shared goals, such as creating music. He emphasizes the uniqueness that each culture brings over a minimization of their differences; such instances were interpreted at the *acceptance* stage of the DMIS. However, more frequently than not, he aims to shift worldviews to consider students' cultural perspectives when navigating intercultural interactions, situating him in the *adaptation* stage. For example, he describes how he approaches each of his

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classes individually, assessing the cultural background of each student when making decisions about partners, group work, lessons, etc. to ensure that all students are comfortable and represented equally. This DMIS stage necessitates consistent re-evaluation of one's own worldview in relation to other cultures, which John demonstrates. In responding to culturally distinct others, he reflects that at several points during the ITA program, he caught himself thinking "wait a minute, I can't say that" or checking himself to be sure he had not "crossed any boundaries or made any faux-pas or anything." He noted students' distinct perspectives on assessing American culture as well as their culturally rooted sense of surprise when approaching several context-based aspects of pedagogy, such as American students' expectations of question-and-answer interjections. Still, his self-reflection demonstrates that intention is needed for his shifts in cultural frames of reference to occur, in line with the *empathy* subphase of *adaptation*. Any progression beyond this requires permanent shifting between worldviews or a loss of a single cultural reference point (Bennett, 1993). On more than one occasion, John refers to "my culture," and explicitly states that his "cultural norms didn't really change," signifying a consistent, singular worldview, precluding him from progressing to the *integration* stage or even the *pluralism* sub-phase of the adaptation stage.

5.3.1.3 Amy

Amy was born to two Caucasian monolingual American parents and was raised in a US east coast suburb; she is married to a monolingual Caucasian male. While she attended a small private high school with some East and South Asian representation, as a child, she attended a Montessori school in a Chinese-

American cultural center, which she believed influenced her career direction. Pursuing a Master's degree in French, she lived in France for one year. Certified to teach in US public schools, Amy, at the time of interview, was teaching ESL at a US school, where she has worked for years; she has taught for the ITA program for six years.

Much like John's, Amy's interview reflected an *adaptation* level of IS in that she often considers others' worldviews when approaching situations of intercultural difference but with consistent comparison to American culture as her continuous frame of reference, precluding her from progression to *integration*. With only a few perceptions aligning with the *acceptance* stage and no instances of *ethnocentricism*, her placement on the DMIS is firmly *ethnorelative*.

Amy demonstrates an *acceptance* of cultural distinction. She recognizes cultural uniqueness and explains that she was explicitly taught in her early schooling to seek such difference, "that it was something to be treasured and not denigrated." Several of her photographs featured linguistic anomalies that she believes were specific to students' native countries or languages. Though she acknowledges that these phrases are "not something that American English speakers would say," she was interpreted as having positive feelings toward the unconventional phrasing, in line with the *respect for behavior difference* outlined by Bennett (1993) in the *acceptance* stage. She reflects *respect for value difference* at several points in the interview as well: she discusses what she believes to be an emphasis of peace in her "Indian friends'… religion," which she views as a cultural difference compared to the religion that she "grew up with," though she never places judgments of superiority on either.

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The remainder of her interview discussion signified perceptions at the *adaptation* stage of the DMIS. When encountering unusual phenomena, Amy was interpreted as regularly attempting to shift worldviews; though she shifted back to the US as her reference point, her shifts were continuous throughout her interview and, it seems, her ITA teaching experience. This may initially exhibit as the *pluralism* subphase of *adaptation*—slightly more progressive than the *empathy* subphase of this stage. For instance, when seeing a student use a Zoom avatar instead of the traditional "camera on" or "camera off" for the first time, she searched for a cultural explanation for its use—perhaps regional, perhaps "gaming culture," etc.. Similarly, in several cases, she noticed interesting linguistic variations, such as one student's use of "ma" or an Indian student's habit of "upspeak," an intonation pattern found in younger generations of American English speakers. In responding to each of these differences, Amy tried to extend students' context for their language production habits, wondering if "ma," for example, was an honorific in the student's culture, given that she had been a formal and respectful student throughout the program and addressing Amy, the instructor, as "ma" would therefore not likely be an example of vernacular language. Furthermore, like several other US-based participants, she demonstrates *empathy* with students' issues of infrastructure and connectivity, and, in addition, interpreted her Russian student's reservedness as perhaps cultural in light of the conflict in Ukraine. She explained that she "wanted to ask him so many questions" but held back out of respect.

Nevertheless, Amy's shifts in cultural reference points are intentional, as she seemed quite conscious of her own actions when approaching intercultural engagements or at times caught her own intercultural missteps in retrospect:

"You know the thing where you're not supposed to shake a Saudi man's hand? I always mess that up and I always feel so badly because I've heard it so many times—that you're not supposed to do that!"

In this example, she explains that she believes herself to be repeating this intercultural misstep because it is her "natural instinct" and "[her] culture," thus signifying an American worldview as her single, regular cultural frame of reference. It is this singularity, combined with relatively partial, incomplete cultural frames of reference when aiming to shift worldviews (i.e., attributing one religion to the people of India and generalizing an emphasis of peace within that religion), which situates Amy in the *empathy* and not *pluralism* subphase of *adaptation.*

5.3.1.4 Emily

Emily is a second-generation American, with both sets of grandparents having been born in the Balkans. Her parents are bilingual but chose to raise their children monolingually. She describes her childhood years as being filled with cultural experiences within the well-connected community of her family. Emily believes her family's background inspired her to continue exploring the world's cultures through archaeology and linguistics, which led to work in Brazil and a

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Master's in TESL. She has taught for the English program at the target institution for nearly 30 years and is a veteran of the ITA program.

Emily is one of the study's two participants who is interpreted as progressing to the final stage of *integration*. According to Bennett (1993), this stage is marked by a long-term state of disintegration from any one particular culture and a self-reflective, iterative evaluation of context in constructing reality. One's sense of identity is individual and taken from multiple cultures with no "primary cultural affiliation" (p. 60). Although Emily demonstrates elements of earlier stages at several points in her interview, her context-dependent negotiation during intercultural interactions, devoid of any mention of "my culture" or referring back to one consistent cultural frame of reference, situates her firmly in the most progressive stage of the DMIS.

Despite having the lengthiest interview, only two of Emily's perceptions toward cultural differences reflected *ethnocentric* IS. For instance, when discussing a cohort of refugee students from Afghanistan, she seemed to presume that the students would "have a really great future" because of their admission to the university despite her acknowledgement earlier in the interview that the students were visibly overwhelmed and struggling with numerous aspects of their transition, including language, life in the US, academic expectations, distance from family members—many who remained in crisis—and more. This was interpreted as an example of *defense* in that whatever the university was offering them and despite their extreme stress, their cultures and expectations were to be countered and replaced with the norms of their new environment. This was further demonstrated as she discussed rejecting a student's challenge, stating

"I'm the teacher… you can't challenge teachers about the way they teach." She also recounted a time early in her teaching career in which she had worked to build rapport with a group of Saudi women who moved to the US with their husbands. Seemingly none of her attempts to motivate them worked, as they "sat there stone-faced the whole time," with one student eventually telling her "they hate you… because you're an American woman." She described that she returned to class to tell them that she was giving up, which prompted another student to invite her to lunch the following day. All of the students, quite dressed up and perfumed, were present at the private lunch. Emily perceived this as:

> *"In public, we need to maybe treat you like we don't like you, because of what you represent, or I don't know, some, some peer pressure. But in here, we are just humans. We're women."*

Bennett (1993) would classify Emily's form of *minimization* as *physical universalism*, where an emphasis is placed on overarching commonalities resulting from "people's biological nature" (Bennett, 2004, p. 65) instead of an untangling of cultural differences or understanding of complex worldviews. Nonetheless, Emily did show a general awareness of students' acculturation and transition processes and aimed to be accepting of their newfound "freedom of expression," demonstrating at various points in her interview the *respect for behavior* difference that Bennett (1993) described at the *acceptance* stage.

In progressing beyond *acceptance*, Emily shifts between worldviews effortlessly and continuously. Initially, this may be interpreted as *pluralism* at the *adaptation* stage. However, her perceptions of cultural difference are most commonly devoid

of any central, consistent cultural frames of reference: by definition, according to Bennett (1993), *adaptation* entails repeated returns to one's own worldview(s) across perspective shifts, which is not present in Emily's interview. Furthermore, she iteratively re-evaluates the context of an action when trying to identify and comprehend the cultural norms in which it is rooted—a tenet of the *integration* stage of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993). Thus, Emily's perceptions of cultural difference align most closely with this final stage of IS progression. For instance, when explaining an intercultural exchange with friends, she considered their Irish background in greeting customs as she reflects on differences between American and Balkan greetings, describing how she explained to them her own mixed-influence habits and asked permission in practicing them. While illustrating the interaction, she made no reference to "my culture" or any comparison to any central worldviews; she simply discussed different practices and norms objectively and crucially exhibited a "natural use of contextual evaluation for the purpose of determining action" (p. 63). She also recognizes the diverse dynamics present in her ITA classrooms and strives to instill this cultural self-awareness within her students. The pedagogy and norms of the university are taught, as is the purpose of the ITA program, but Emily presents the characteristics of them as a contextual norm that is not conflated with any larger perceptually superior or "inferior" practices or moral stances of the ITA students' cultures that is typical of less progressive IS stages, thus definitively situating Emily in the *integration* stage.

5.3.1.5 Abby

Abby is the only participant born outside the US. Her parents are both natives of an East Asian nation, as is her husband. She was born in South America and, during the first grade, moved with her parents to the US, where she is a US citizen, completed all of her education, and has continued to reside. Nonetheless, she illustrates a childhood filled with multicultural experiences. Although she is an ESL instructor with a Master's degree in Linguistics, she does not consider English to be her first language. At the time of the study, Abby had been teaching at the target institution for 14 years; it was her first time teaching with ITA.

The only instructor from either participant group to exhibit no instances of *ethnocentrism* while also demonstrating IS at the *integration* stage, Abby is the study's most interculturally sensitive participant when viewing the phenomenon through the lens of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993). Her perceptions at times reflected IS at the *acceptance* and *adaptation* stages, but the absence of a primary cultural affiliation or discussion of "my culture/s" signifies that Abby is situated in *integration*. Her placement is corroborated by her continuous shifting of viewpoints, negotiation of context, and a lack of unquestioned assumptions. She pulls just as readily from the American, East Asian, and Hispanic worldviews that she believes herself to be most accustomed to yet is adept at shifting across others, denoting an existence on the periphery of multiple cultures, which Bennett (1993) defines as *constructive marginality*—the most progressive and final stage of IS development.

In progressing toward *integration*, Abby does express several perceptions of cultural difference at the earlier stages of the *ethnorelative* half of the continuum. For example, in discussing her work with American students in a non-ITA

program at the target university, she describes culture as extending beyond nationality and emphasizes the ways in which students' diverse ethnic backgrounds manifest in the program, noting that they all "celebrate their rich culture." Here, Abby was interpreted as showing both *respect for behavioral* and *value difference*, as she illustrates their holidays, ethnic traditions, attitudes of importance toward academics, and long-term ambitions. These descriptions, while respectful, do not entail shifts in cultural frames of reference in their approach to difference and therefore fall within the parameters of the *acceptance* stage of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993).

Abby describes taking students' cultural perspectives of both teaching and learning into account regularly, inviting student discussion on various related topics to better understand their worldviews, and adjusts her lessons as a result, recognizing that "everyone had a different perspective." While this may be at first viewed as *adaptation*-level IS, she never presents any approach to the topic as reflective of "her" culture, a "right" way, or as a conflated global norm. This therefore serves as an example of Abby's *constructive marginality* at the *integration* stage of the DMIS. Bennett (1993) suggests that this level of IS development may result in feeling uncomfortable or confusing to an individual at times, as they search through an array of frames of reference when engaging in intercultural communications. He explains that this subphase is more progressive than *contextual evaluation* in that an individual is not simply consciously developing a context-dependent understanding or action plan but rather utilizing cultural difference to inform a complete frame of reference. Abby, for example, was noticeably perplexed when explaining a photograph of a Zoom chat with a

student who addressed her by her last name. Although the interview took place five weeks after her submission, she was still unsure as to why a student would refer to her using her last name with no preceding title, especially after she had explained to students that using first names is acceptable. She explored a series of culture-based explanations as to why the student may have done this:

> *"The last name, Lin—for some people, maybe that's like a first name… I did explain that this is my last name to the class, but then this particular student sends me this note, 'Hi Lin.' You know, how that is culturally, I don't wanna say inappropriate, but we don't necessarily call people like, you know, by last name… Like 'Hi Jackson.' We don't do that, you know what I mean? And I'm not sure if… I know that in the Spanish language, we don't do that either. But I don't know why she thought this was okay. So that was a misunderstanding."*

Here, she shifts through her own and other cultural reference points in attempting to create a new perspective from which such an interaction might seem appropriate. Even in describing American culture at a later point in her interview, she goes on to describe it as being outside of herself and quite nuanced, conveying an individuality beyond a "pure American culture" that involves "a mix" of realities to be expressed and experienced on a somewhat personal level. This was interpreted as further corroborating Abby's *constructive marginality* at the *integration* stage, as she iteratively generates multicultural reference points and complex conceptualizations of culturally distinct realities.

5.3.2 Thematic analysis

When analyzing the photo-elicitation interview data, six themes emerged following the application of the six-step thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006). Any patterns in broader meanings among at least four of the five US-based participants are discussed here.

Theme	Number of Participants Addressing the Theme
Challenges to teaching in ITA program	5
Enthusiasm toward cultural differences	5
Cultural awareness	5
Empathy	4
Gender in the classroom	4
Changing demographics	4

Table 5.6 Final themes of US-based participants.

5.3.2.1 Challenges to teaching in ITA program

One may initially question whether the US-based instructors' teaching environment involved less friction compared to that of the UAE-based participants in that they were working with relatively motivated PhD students, which may have in turn influenced the level of positivity represented in photo submissions, interview conversations, and essentially, progression on the DMIS. However, all five US-based participants independently mentioned that teaching in the ITA program was challenging, making it one of the six themes emerging from this participant group. While several participants conjectured reasons

related to a lack of student interaction, others cited issues of timing and unfamiliarity with the program and its courses.

Two of the participants struggled with the engagement element of teaching. Both participants have taught in the program for years but comparatively believe interaction to have been lower than usual. Emily stated that she usually tries to "build some sort of rapport," but that students "seemed a bit formal… a little bit pulled back." Amy speculated online education burnout as a reason for student disengagement. Others expressed frustration with the amount of unanticipated program demands, such as the time needed to provide thorough and effective feedback or a lack of clarity on the direction of courses. Abby expressed that she was "overwhelmed," that courses were "intense… more than [she] expected," and "really time-consuming" with regard to one-to-one feedback. Nonetheless, several participants did emit a sentiment of fulfilment when navigating the challenges of teaching in the program, as shown by Erin: "I wouldn't say it was easy, but it was interesting because it was different from what I usually do."

5.3.2.2 Enthusiasm toward cultural differences

All US-based participants demonstrated positivity toward cultural differences and celebrating them, often describing a desire to seek out new cultural learning opportunities or excitement toward previous multicultural engagements.

The US-based participants consistently approached cultural differences as exciting opportunities to learn. Emily, for instance, recounted experiences in which she first discovered key cultural distinctions between Sunni and Shia Muslim students, as well as her recent discovery of the linguistic and cultural

diversity of her ITA students at the time of the study; she proactively sought additional resources on the different languages of her Nigerian and Indian students through social media and YouTube in order to better support them and to fulfil her own "curiosity." She also narrated her enthusiasm toward teaching the institution's first cohorts from Cuba and Afghanistan earlier in the academic year, as she approached the institutional director:

> *"'I don't care what level, what class you put me in, I need to be in a class with [the Cuban] students.' And you know, and I said the same thing with the women from Afghanistan. I was like, 'I need to know them."*

Others projected similar levels of enthusiasm toward differences and a proactive seeking of such newness: "I can't predict [the idiosyncrasies], so it's even kinda more fun!" expressed Erin, or "We learn to appreciate the things we get to experience, the newness… having this diversity was fun—you get to hear different ideas and perspectives," described Abby.

Even in discussing their previous multicultural engagements, the participants remarkably focused on distinctions, often illustrating positive experiences from their past such as extracurriculars, festivals, or national holidays. John, for example, submitted photographs from both his "International Guitar Club" at the university and a concert that featured instruments from both the East and the West, noting that they "meld together… as the coming together of cultures." Amy highlighted her enjoyment in attending schools where "everyone was celebrated" where "there was not this idea that any one culture was bad… different, yes, but

that it was something to be treasured." Additional cross-participant evidence of such celebration came in the form of photographs and conversations centered on holidays such as the US' take on Halloween, Chinese or Korean approaches to Lunar New Year, and Mexico's variations on Christmas.

5.3.2.3 Cultural awareness

The final theme corroborated by all five US-based participants centers around the notion of cultural awareness. This takes various forms, including viewing American culture from international perspectives, introspective self-awareness of cultural knowledge and knowledge gaps, and instilling cultural self-awareness in students, especially compared to the norms of American college and campus life.

The US-based instructors, as discussed in the previous section, were consistently aware of their own and others' cultural values and expectations. This, in part, requires an inward view of US and Western culture from an outsiders' perspective. Erin noted, for example, that the religious or cultural practices grounded in "black arts" or witchery, such as those often associated with Halloween and its historical origins, can "freak out" students. In acknowledging the presence of sensitivities, she also countered that part of the job of ITA instructors is "to teach them about 'our' culture," which she believes reminds her "how different we are."

The participants were largely aware of their own gaps in cultural knowledge, though this generally aligned with inexperience in previously teaching students from a specific country. In particular, participants expressed a lack of familiarity with the cultures of African nations, which had a noticeably larger student

representation this year than in the past. In response to such gaps, several participants mentioned approaching these students with added consideration. As noted by Abby, she tried "to be a little bit more careful," as she hadn't had "a lot of opportunities to interact with that culture."

Unsurprising given the program's focus on culture as it relates to HE pedagogy, several participants submitted images of lesson materials aimed at instilling cultural self-awareness in students. For instance, Emily included images of a classroom activity in which students discuss an academic practice that is accepted in their own country but that might "surprise others," in an effort to gauge their current self-awareness. She goes on to note that "as soon as they come here or anywhere abroad, they all of a sudden understand what it is about their culture that's unique because they're being faced with something that's different," which she felt might be missing more with this cohort of students compared to prior groups, as many had not travelled abroad previously due to pandemic restrictions—a difference noted by three of the participants.

5.3.2.4 Empathy

Unprompted, four of the five US-based participants mentioned newfound senses of empathy toward students. These feelings were rooted in having to work with students through issues related to either infrastructure or crisis situations across various nations.

Many of the ITA students were logging in to their lessons from their home countries as the course delivery method of the program was online for the third consecutive year. This gave instructors first-hand experiences in navigating the

obstacles of infrastructure that many of the students were facing daily, as both parties worked together to troubleshoot solutions. Below, Amy describes a time in which her student attempted to deliver an online lesson as part of a major program assessment:

> *"[Experiencing internet outages] changed my perspective towards like, expecting all of my students to have good internet access and being more gracious… if someone was having a problem sharing their video and talking at the same time, then, I had them send me their ppt and I projected it for them while they spoke … while I could have been harder on them…like "You MUST have working technology,"… if they had all been [on campus], they would have had working technology. I'm 99.9% sure that they would have. But they're connecting to the program from abroad, and that's definitely an uneven playing field."*

Similar experiences were corroborated by other participants, who addressed not only connectivity-related issues but also regular electricity outages that impede online learning. They often commended students' resilience.

Several participants also expressed sympathy toward crisis situations experienced by several student groups throughout the academic year. The university's affiliate English language program had sponsored several disenfranchised student cohorts, including groups from Cuba and Afghanistan. Reflecting on teaching a cohort of young Afghan women, Emily told how the students were really "going through culture shock" and seemed "overwhelmed":

"They felt a lot of people were grabbing for them…they went to the White House, they met the governor, [the institute] wanted to be hospitable. And I think in their head, they're just like, 'Stop—I'm still missing my family.' They're sapping their energy… it's not a show-and-tell."

John, who also worked with an Afghan cohort, connected his experience with them to violence encountered by an African ITA student during an online lesson in which gunshots became noticeably audible, followed by emergency sirens; the student explained that a shooting was taking place nearby but remained connected to the lesson albeit muted. John reflected, still visibly overcome by the event.

Also in the months preceding data collection, the Russia-Ukraine conflict had begun, with American media covering both the war itself as well as domestic mistreatment of US-based Russians, as noted by Amy. She outlined witnessing several instances of negativity toward Russians, lamenting that "it's hard for [her] to hear people say things about Russians… that's not how they all are. A lot of that is colored by what you're reading on the internet."

5.3.2.5 Gender in the classroom

The only theme overlapping between both the UAE- and US-based participant groups, the topic of gender was addressed by four of the five US-based participants; interestingly, only the one male participant did not corroborate the theme. Typically, gender was discussed as relating to a preference for co-ed

classrooms or an unfavorable attitude toward teaching males of specific backgrounds.

Both Amy and Emily commented on having a disproportionately higher number of male students in their ITA classes this year. They each commented on how gender balance brings out more classroom participation. Erin also raised the issue of noticeably different classroom dynamics in single-gender student populations, outwardly expressing a preference toward mixed groups. However, she went on to describe her perception of receiving distinct treatment from men from Islamic cultures:

> *"[They say] they want to treat us like queens. Gimme a break! How many times have I heard that?...Just treat her like a human being— that would be okay! So yeah, I still have a little problem with that."*

Abby more specifically conveyed an initial dispreference for "teaching Saudi Arabian males;" however, she attributes this more to a lack of experience and believes she has grown to be as comfortable teaching in such environments as in working with any other group.

5.3.2.6 Changing demographics

The final theme emerging from the US-based participant groups centers around changes to the student populations of the university's English language and ITA programs. While Amy and Emily noted a greater number of males in the ITA program, remarks were predominantly rooted in the significant decrease in Chinese students and an increase in African representation. Regarding the

former, Erin commented that she didn't have "even one Chinese student in either of [her] classes," and Emily mentioned that she "didn't have one Chinese student! How unusual is that?" John furthered this distinction, adding "There is not one dominant group like we had before, that was 95% Chinese, so it's more eclectic now, which is really cool." While Emily agrees that "it's a good thing, this diversity," she among other participants questions "Why this population? What is happening?" The four participants all viewed the uptick in African representation positively, with several detailing steps they had taken and their excitement toward becoming more familiar with the languages and cultures of these students.

5.4 US-based quantitative results

Below are the US-based averages from responses to the ISS (Chen and Starosta, 2000), as discussed in Chapter 3 and reviewed in the UAE section of this chapter. Revisited in brief, this measurement tool consists of 24 items on a Likert-type scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Participants completed a pre-test and demographic questions before engaging in the four-week reflexive photography program. They then participated in semi-structured, photo-elicitation interviews, followed by a post-test administration of the ISS. Like the UAE-based group, the US-based group had a small sample size of five Americans ($n = 5$). Thus, the descriptive data presented in Tables 5.7 and 5.8 are for indicative purposes only.

Participant	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Change	DMIS Phase
Erin	4.58	4.25	-0.33	Acceptance
John	4.33	4.67	+0.33	Adaptation

Amy	4.00	4.21	+0.21	Adaptation
Emily	4.71	4.83	+0.13	Integration
Abby	4.29	4.08	-0.21	Integration
Group average	**4.38**	**4.41**	**+0.03**	

Table 5.7 USA-based participants' ISS scores.

As shown in Table 5.7 above, the difference in IS averages between pre- and post-survey administrations and following the reflexive photography project and photo-elicitation interview is a positive albeit small change (μ = 0.03). Three of the US-based participants demonstrated greater IS of at least .13 up to one-third of a point; two participants' IS decreased.

When breaking the overall averages down into Chen and Starosta's (2000) five factors of IS, the US-based participants' averages increased in the categories of *Interaction Engagement, Interaction Confidence,* and *Interaction Enjoyment.* Conversely, following completion of the reflexive photography project, the group IS averages decreased in the areas of *Respect for Cultural Differences* and *Interaction Attentiveness* (Table 5.8).

Though only for indicative purposes given the small sample size, the largest differences in averages are in the increase of *Interaction Engagement* and the decrease in *Respect for Cultural Differences*. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), these categories respectively represent development in participants' attitudes toward their involvement in situations requiring intercultural communication and a decline in feelings of tolerance toward culturally distinct others' backgrounds and opinions. Reasons for such changes between ISS administrations will be hypothesized in the upcoming chapter.

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Individual participants' pre- and post-survey differences by factor, presented in Table 5.8, may also be of interest.

	Interaction Engagement			Respect for Cultural Differences			Interaction Confidence			Interaction Enjoyment			Interaction Attentiveness		
	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff	Pre	Post	Diff
Erin	4.71	4.29	-.42	4.67	4.33	-.34	4.20	4.20	0	4.67	4.33	-.34	4.67	4.00	-.67
John	4.00	4.57	+.57	4.5	4.83	+.33	4.40	4.80	+.40	4.33	4.67	+.34	4.67	4.33	-.34
Amy	3.71	4.00	+.29	4.33	4.17	-.16	4.00	4.00	0	4.00	4.67	+.67	4.00	4.67	+.67
Emily	4.57	5.00	+.43	5.00	4.83	-.17	4.40	4.60	+.20	5.00	4.67	-.33	4.67	5.00	+.33
Abby	3.71	3.86	+.15	4.67	3.83	-.84	4.20	4.40	+.20	4.67	4.67	0	4.67	4.00	-.67
Average	4.14	4.34	+.20	4.63	4.40	-.24	4.24	4.40	+.16	4.53	4.60	+.07	4.53	4.40	-.13

Table 5.8 US-based participant change in IS for the ISS' five factors.

Interestingly, although not the greatest factor of growth, *Interaction Confidence* is the only factor in which none of the US-based participants exhibited a drop in IS, with the average of two participants remaining stable while three in fact progressed. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), this signifies an elevated sense of self-assuredness in multicultural settings. Nonetheless, the largest increase is in the factor of *Interaction Engagement*, which represents elevated feelings toward intercultural interactions among four of the participants. This denotes a decrease in this category by only one participant, who incidentally decreased across all ISS factors. In a similar vein, the decline in *Respect for Cultural Differences* comprises a decrease for all US-based participants with the exception of John, whose ISS scores reflect the highest amount of sensitivity development in the US-based participant group.

5.5 Comparing results between groups

The contrast in results between the DMIS and the ISS was found in both participant groups of this study and is documented in previous literature. The ISS is a self-reporting tool that entails self-awareness on behalf of participants, which inherently creates the opportunity for discrepancy between self-perceptions and one's actual abilities (Sinicrope et al., 2007). As detailed in the literature review, it is not uncommon for the DMIS to conflict with participants' comparatively high self-perceptions of their own IS (Etri, 2023; Hernandez & Kose, 2011; McKay, 2017).

Nevertheless, though the results of this study suggest that the ISS may not predict the progressiveness of one's sensitivity on the DMIS continuum or vice versa, this quantitative measure did harmonize with the qualitative theoretical framework's findings in a general sense, projecting the US-based instructors as more interculturally sensitive overall compared to the UAE-based group following the reflexive photography project and photo-elicitation interviews.

Comprehensively, results suggest that the IS of American tertiary instructors is higher among domestically-based faculty working with internationally diverse non-American student populations compared to individuals teaching mono-national non-American student groups in the UAE. Figure 5.3 below compares the IS of the two groups' situatedness on the DMIS while Table 5.9 comparatively summarizes findings using data from both the ISS and DMIS. Note also that these are descriptive data from small sample sizes, yielding data for indicative purposes only.
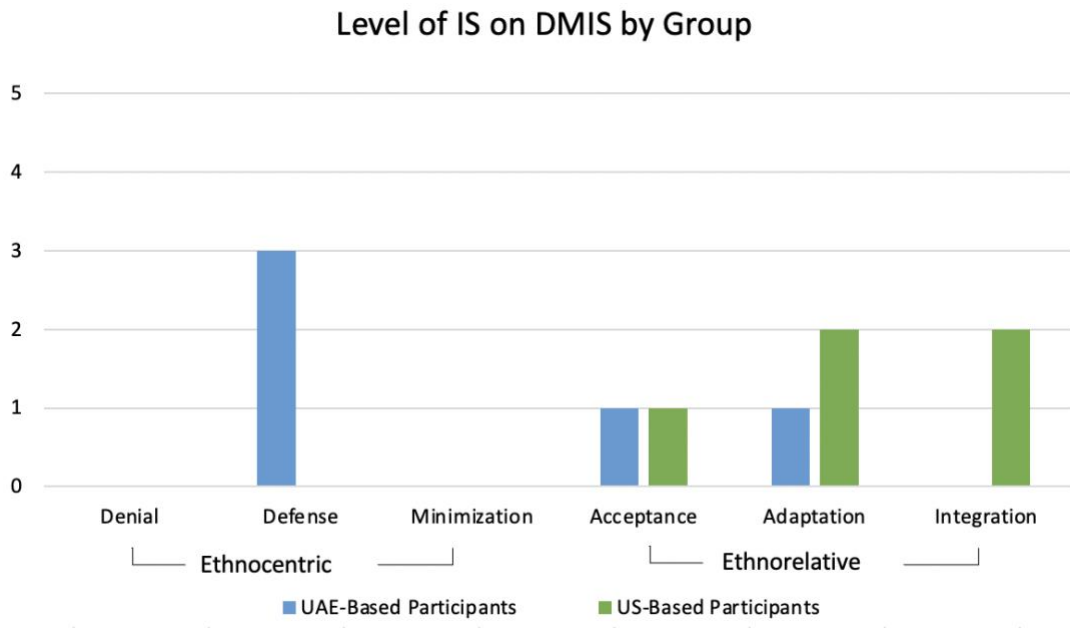
Figure 5.3 Level of IS by group as measured on the DMIS.

ISS	UAE-Based Participants	US-Based Participants
Pre-Test Average	4.08	4.38
Post-Test Average	4.13	4.41
Change	**+0.05**	**+0.03**
DMIS		
Ethnocentric	3	0
Ethnorelative	2	5

Table 5.9 Comparison of ISS averages and DMIS placement between groups.

The pattern of more developed IS among the US-based group was observed across all components of the study. Though the UAE-based group's IS showed slightly more growth between pre- and post-survey ISS administration than the US-based group, the domestically-based participants demonstrated both higher pre- and post-test ISS scores overall. In fact, the US-based participants' ISS average was higher on the pre-test ($\mu = 4.38$) than the UAE-based group's post-

test average (μ = 4.13). They also scored higher for each of the five factors of IS as conceptualized by Chen and Starosta (2000) in both survey administrations, as outlined in Table 5.10.

Five Factors of IS	UAE Pre-test:	US Pre-test:	UAE Post-test	US Post-test	UAE Difference	US Difference
Interaction Engagement	4.00	4.14	3.83	4.34	-.17	+.20
Respect for Cultural Differences	4.07	4.63	4.17	4.40	+.10	-.24
Interaction Confidence	4.20	4.24	4.28	4.40	+.08	+.16
Interaction Enjoyment	3.93	4.53	4.47	4.60	+.54	+.07
Interaction Attentiveness	4.27	4.53	4.20	4.40	-.07	-.13

Table 5.10 Comparison of pre- and post-test ISS surveys between groups by ISS factor.

Perhaps of interest is that, following the reflexive photography project and photo-elicitation interviews, both participant groups self-reported increased *Interaction Confidence* and *Interaction Enjoyment* while they both experienced a decrease in *Interaction Attentiveness*, or effort in meeting the communicative needs of culturally distinct others. Upon reflecting on their self-generated images of multiculturalism, the UAE-based participants exhibited a heightened sense of *Respect for Cultural Differences* while the US-based group appears to have lost sensitivity in this area. Conversely, the US-based group grew in their *Interaction Engagement*, or positive feelings toward participating in intercultural communications, as the UAE-based participants self-reported decreased positivity in this sense.

The inductive thematic analyses illustrate the types of cultural differences that each participant group views themselves as having to navigate in their respective

environments. The UAE-based participants' images and subsequent interviews center largely around perceptions of uphill battles in perceptively hostile workplaces while US-based participants' photographic and interview data point to a more positive institutional atmosphere that is consequently reflected in their DMIS situatedness.

The five emerging themes from the UAE-based group largely comprise what the participants view as obstacles to successful teaching and learning, where decision-makers often do not seek the input of faculty; instructors fear that unsolicited faculty input may result in disciplinary action; and where accountability, student motivation, academic value or rigor, and organizational management are largely absent. In contrast, the US-based group project positivity toward and awareness of cultural differences through their photographic submissions and accompanying interviews, with six emerging themes that largely reflect this. While all US-based participants expressed challenges related to teaching in the ITA program, these grievances were generally accompanied by discussion of rewarding teaching outcomes, empathy toward students, autonomy in teaching and overcoming issues, and colleague and managerial communication and support. It is not surprising, then, that *ethnorelative* IS was evident across all US-based participants but only two of the UAE-based participants.

When evaluating the pre- and post-survey administrations of the ISS for both participant groups combined, the study reveals that six of the ten participants' IS increased following the reflexive photography data collection project and the

photo-elicitation interviews; three participants' IS decreased and one exhibited

no change in sensitivity (Table 5.11).

UAE Participants	Change	DMIS Phase	US Participants	Change	DMIS Phase
Carmen	+0.25	Defense	Erin	-0.33	Acceptance
Sandra	-0.17	Defense	John	+0.33	Adaptation
Ariel	+0.21	Defense	Amy	+0.21	Adaptation
Katie	0	Acceptance	Emily	+0.13	Integration
Madeleine	+0.25	Adaptation	Abby	-0.21	Integration
Group Average Growth	**+0.05**		**Group Average Growth**	**+0.03**	

Table 5.11 Average IS change on ISS with DMIS placement for all participants.

Though these descriptive data are for indicative purposes only, they provide

evidence for PGVMs as a potentially promising methodology in measuring IS.

Chapter 6: Discussions and Conclusions

This chapter will begin with a review of the thesis as a whole, outlining in brief the study's objectives, methodology, and results. This will be followed by a concise discussion of the findings of the thesis and challenges to the theoretical framework. This chapter will then highlight the implications of the findings and propose its valuable implications and contributions to knowledge. From there, limitations of the study will be addressed along with recommendations for future research. The chapter will conclude with final remarks on the thesis as a whole.

6.1 Thesis summary

6.1.1 Aims of the study

In light of the unrelenting internationalization of both HE and workforces globally, interculturally sensitivity is of utmost importance in today's society. Thus, the purposes of this thesis were three-fold. The study set out to identify and compare the IS of tertiary American instructors teaching mono-national, non-American student populations abroad in the UAE and that of American tertiary instructors in multi-national, non-American student populations domestically in the US. It also sought to investigate the use of reflexive photography and photo-elicitation interview methods as both data collection approaches and as possible cultivators of IS and to then examine any variations in their impact between the two participant groups.

6.1.2 Review of procedures and methodology

The study investigated two participant groups: UAE-based and US-based tertiary instructors. All instructors are US citizens who completed the majority of their K-12 schooling in the United States. The participants first completed the ISS along with demographic questions to confirm their eligibility for the study. They were then asked to take and submit photos of cultural differences, exchange, or interaction weekly over the course of four weeks. Following, participants engaged in photo-elicitation interviews to discuss their photographic submissions. The study concluded with a second and final administration of the ISS.

This thesis made use of a mixed-methods approach in triangulating findings. Quantitative descriptive data from pre- and post-test administrations of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000) served as a measure of IS growth. Data collected from the reflexive photography (Harper, 1988; 2002; Schulze, 2007) portion of the study informed the photo-elicitation interviews (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002), which were analyzed to mark participants' situatedness on the DMIS (Bennett, 1993). This data further underwent inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify emerging themes that reflect the content of the cultural differences the participants in each group perceived themselves as facing.

6.1.3 Answering the research questions

In this section, the results of each of the research questions will be briefly reviewed along with discussion of the findings.

6.1.3.1 RQ1

What is the intercultural sensitivity level of American expatriate tertiary instructors in mono-national, non-American student populations when working in the UAE?

a. How do PGVMs of reflexive photography and follow-up photo-elicitation interviews affect this?

This study found that participants from the UAE-based group self-report as having a fairly high level of IS as measured by the ISS both before and after the PGVM project and interviews with $\mu = 4.08$ and $\mu = 4.13$ respectively on a 5-point Likert-type scale. While this average indicates that participants likely display advanced emotional competence when engaging in intercultural communications, Chen and Starosta (2000) do not postulate cutoff scores to classify high or low IS (Aksoy & Akkoç, 2020; Meydanlioglu et al., 2015). These findings clash to an extent with qualitative analyses through the lens of the DMIS, which situate three of the five UAE-based participants on the *ethnocentric* half of the DMIS continuum with three participants interpreted as showing *defense*-stage IS. One participant demonstrated IS in line with the first stage of the *ethnorelative* half of the spectrum—*acceptance*, and another mirrored characteristics of the more progressive *adaptation* stage. Interestingly, although only for indicative purposes given the small sample sizes, the participants who were interpreted as perceiving cultural differences most progressively—ethnorelatively—on the DMIS also had the lowest scores on the ISS administration preceding the reflexive photography project.

In answering RQ1's subquestion, the descriptive statistics for indicative purposes only do indicate a slight increase in IS of 0.05 points. Three of the five participants

in this group demonstrated heightened IS following the PGVM project and interviews. Reasons for such growth, lack thereof, and its effect size along with recommendations for further IS cultivation with PGVMs are addressed in the discussion of findings to follow.

6.1.3.2 RQ2

What is the intercultural sensitivity level of American tertiary instructors in multi-national, non-American student populations when working domestically?

a. How do PGVMs of reflexive photography and follow-up photo-elicitation interviews affect this?

This thesis reveals that the US-based participants also self-report a high level of IS on the ISS both before and after the PGVM project and interviews with respective averages of $\mu = 4.38$ and $\mu = 4.41$. These averages align with DMIS analyses that project all five US-based participants as demonstrating *ethnorelative* attitudes and perceptions toward cultural differences: in order of progressiveness, one US-based participant showed *acceptance*-stage IS, two demonstrated IS at the *adaptation* stage, and two reached the most progressive DMIS stage of *integration.*

As with the UAE-based group, three of the five participants' ISS scores signified development in IS, with the group's overall average growing by 0.03 points. Again, this increase is quite minor, and all quantitative measurements are to be evaluated for indicative purposes only. However, when looking at the ISS averages following the photo-elicitation project and interviews, the two

participants at the *integration* stage of the DMIS represent both the highest and the lowest ISS post-test scores, bringing into question the harmony of the two IS assessment tools. Moreover, pinpointing why some participants' IS progresses while others' does not is a topic in need of additional exploration and is touched upon in the following section. Further confounding any effect, the results indicate that the participants whose ISS scores decreased are the least and the most sensitively progressive participants when viewed through the lens of the DMIS.

6.1.3.3 RQ3

How does the IS of expatriate American instructors and US domestically-based instructors compare following the reflexive photography project and photo-elicitation interviews?

a. How does an inductive thematic analysis of the data shed light on the cultural differences faced by each group?

Both the ISS and the DMIS presented the US-based faculty members as more interculturally sensitive. This pattern held across all points of ISS administration: pre-test and post-test overall averages and when accounting for each of the five specific IS factors pre- and post-test (Chen & Starosta, 2000). The US-based participants' pre-survey ISS average (μ = 4.38) was already higher than that of the UAE-based group's upon completion of the PGVMs project (μ = 4.13). Whereas both groups averaged small increases in IS (UAEμ = .05; USμ = .03), only three individuals in each group demonstrated elevated levels of IS, for a total of six of the ten participants. One participant in the UAE-based group remained

stable with another's IS level decreasing; two participants in the US-based group experienced decreases as well.

As stated previously, overall, the US-based Americans' qualitative data also reflected more advanced levels of IS when viewed through the lens of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993). Whereas most of the UAE-based participants were interpreted as exhibiting IS situated at the *ethnocentric* stage of *defense*, all five US-based faculty members demonstrated IS at *ethnorelative* stages, with two reaching the most progressive *integration* stage, unlike any participants from the UAE-based group.

All participants from both groups have been trained in ESL and intercultural communication at some point during their formal education; they are all on fairly equal footing in this sense. All UAE-based participants have lived in the UAE for at least ten years, giving them quite a bit of intercultural communication experience. To summarize all participants' demographics as relevant to international trajectories and status as a member of a marginalized community for the purpose of evaluating its possible influence on one's sensitivity as measured by the DMIS, the following tables (5.12 and 5.13) are provided below. Participants are listed in order of DMIS situatedness from least to most progressive.

A checkmark in "International Experience" indicates that a participant lived, studied, or worked abroad previous to their current role. The "Marginalized Community" represents participants who are either a first-generation Americans and/or a person of color. The "Childhood Intercultural Experience" category

reflects that one had direct experience with another culture at home or lived in another culture as a child.

UAE-Based Group	DMIS Position	Participant Name	Childhood Intercultural Experience	International Experience	Marginalized Community
Ethnocentric	Defense	Carmen	✓	✓	✓
	Defense	Sandra	✓	---	✓
	Defense	Ariel	---	✓	---
Ethnorelative	Acceptance	Katie	---	---	---
	Adaptation	Madeleine	---	✓	---

Table 5.12 International trajectories and marginalization status among UAE-based participants.

US-Based Group	DMIS Position	Participant Name	Childhood Intercultural Experience	International Experience	Marginalized Community
Ethnocentric					
Ethnorelative	Acceptance	Erin	✓	✓	---
	Adaptation	John	✓	✓	---
	Adaptation	Amy	---	✓	---
	Integration	Emily	---	---	---
	Integration	Abby	✓	✓	✓

Table 5.13 International trajectories and marginalization status among US-based participants.

Two participants in the US-based group reached the most progressive DMIS phase of *integration*. While one of the participants, Abby, has had direct intercultural engagement in her childhood, lived abroad before her current teaching position, and identified as a member of a marginalized community in the US, the other participant is the opposite in all respects. While Emily *did* engage

in intercultural communication with her grandparents, she did not live with them, and she identifies as a monolingual European Caucasian—a group that is not considered marginalized, or someone who would be continuously shifting between cultures according to Bennett (1993). As many US citizens are second- and third-generation Americans, it is difficult to know where to draw the line, so to speak. However, as Bennett (1993) outlines the criteria of the more advanced phases as requiring constant shifts in cultural frames of reference, for the purposes of this study, this was coded in the "Childhood Experience" category as sharing a residence with a family member from another culture (for instance, Erin was in part raised by a stepmother of Latinx descent but is not herself a person of color) or as being either a first-generation American and/or a person of color in the "Marginalized Community" category: individuals with these experiences were interpreted as having to consistently navigate different cultures in their daily lives.

However, even if we were to hypothetically include Emily as marginalized for being a second-generation American, the comparative charts elucidate that one's marginalized status does not necessarily translate to progressive levels of sensitivity as measured by the DMIS. Conversely, the two UAE-based participants of color—Carmen and Sandra—were interpreted as demonstrating the least progressive IS per the criteria of the DMIS. This is the express opposite of the US-based group. There are a number of possible explanations for this. First, it could be that Abby is an anomaly and that the findings add support add support to previous literature that criticizes the framework as being white American-centric (Greenholtz, 2005; McKay, 2017; Punti & Dingel, 2021) or that,

as hypothesized by Bennett (1993), the persons of colors are "stuck" at the *defense* stage for longer than their Caucasian counterparts. However, this seems unlikely, as both participants have lived in the UAE for over a decade, with one having lived in four countries throughout her life. Alternatively, it could be the case that Abby is largely navigating the same cultures that she grew up in and is therefore able to thrive while, even though they are accustomed to regularly shifting cultural frames of reference, Carmen and Sandra are struggling to cope as being further marginalized within yet another cultural environment in the UAE. In either case, it seems that there is evidence that the specific cultures with which one is interacting plays a role in one's sensitivity as measured by the DMIS, which is discussed at considerable length in section 6.4.1.

Even when isolated, none of the three criteria in the charts above—intended to account for participants' marginalized status and international trajectories—appear reliable in making predictions for one's DMIS situatedness: Being marginalized correlated with enthocentricity in the UAE-based group and ethnorelativity with the US-based group; both the most and the least progressive participants in both groups have previous international experience; and both the most and least progressive participants in the US-based group, albeit both with *ethnorelative* sensitivity, experienced intercultural experience daily as children while only the least interculturally sensitive participants in the UAE-based group did. One may find the results in this category of the UAE-based group interesting in that the participants from the most diverse upbringings in the UAE-based group are interpreted as *ethnocentric* while the participants from perhaps the least diverse childhood backgrounds are most progressive; however, Ariel was

assessed as exhibiting sensitivity at the *ethnocentric defense* phase also and was raised in an entirely Caucasian, monolingual setting with minimal cultural diversity in her surrounding community, quite similar to Madeleine, who was the group's most progressive participant.

Potential reasons for these differences in IS between the participant groups may be better illuminated by the themes emerging from the inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The UAE-based participants, for instance, corroborated descriptions of a hostile and punitive workplace in which education was perceived as undervalued and of relatively little importance to students in light of entitlement: financial security is viewed by participants as not necessarily tied to employment, and employment is viewed as not necessarily tied to education, making teaching and learning a challenge. The US group, on the other hand, approached cultural differences positively and sought intercultural engagement opportunities. They substantiate one another's feelings of empathy toward student obstacles and describe environments of instructional support. Essentially, such drastic differences in environment may impact participants' IS; for this reason, taking into account the full contexts and cultures at play throughout intercultural engagement may have implications for one's progression throughout the continuum and sensitivity overall. This is addressed in sections 6.4.1 and 6.5.

6.1.3.4 RQ4

How can a photo-elicitation project serve as a methodology that leads to more representative results when investigating intercultural sensitivity?

As illustrated in the literature review at length, a variety of situational conditions and approaches to elevating IS have been researched over decades with inconsistent results, with American professionals in education specifically posing no exception (Bayles, 2009; Davis, 2009; Fretheim, 2007; Moore, 2015; Nieto, 2008; Sinclair, 2019; Strekalova-Hughes, 2017). This study in part set out to investigate the use of PVGMs as a methodology in assessing the IS of American HE faculty. As stated above, only small increases in IS averages were found on the ISS for each of the participant groups (UAEμ = .05; USμ = .03). Nonetheless, PGVMs show promise in providing researchers with richer insight on participants' lived experiences. Unprompted, four of the five UAE-based participants and one US-based participant noted that the photo-elicitation element of the study, in line with the literature, inspired them to reflect on cultural differences that they would have otherwise forgotten (Schulze, 2007). Several UAE-based participants also commented that taking the pictures redirected their attention to cultural differences that they had become desensitized to and added an element of enjoyment to the research. The discrepancy in attributing a refreshed focus on culture as a result of the reflexive photography data collection portion of the study between groups may be the result of the US-based group's relatively frequent need to negotiate multiculturalism in a single lesson on a more consistent basis; they must consider various cultural backgrounds when anticipating students' needs and expectations, which, in the ITA program, entailed at least ten nationalities per classroom and, during the academic year, changes demographically each semester. In this regard, taking photographs may have paled in comparison to the actual intercultural interactions they navigated daily. In light of this dissimilarity between the groups, one may hypothesize that PVGMs

may be particularly beneficial in developing the IS of expatriate American faculty teaching mono-national non-American student populations abroad.

Furthermore, this research design extended over four weeks. Arguably, this may capture a fuller representation of participants' IS, giving them opportunities to include varied occasions involving intercultural communications, competence, and emotion compared to studies involving single ISS administrations, interviews, or approaches that may more closely reflect a single point in time.

6.2 Discussion

Upon reviewing the data comprehensively, it is important to theorize reasons for the study's outcomes. It is also of value to revisit the definitions of IS as conceptualized by the study's key theorists. Chen and Starosta (2000) posit IS as an affective aspect of intercultural competence that involves thought processes that allow individuals to distinguish how culturally distinct others differ in behavior, perceptions, or feelings in intercultural communications. In other words, their conceptualization emphasizes identification of cultural distinctions and one's emotion towards difference when communicating interculturally. Bennett (1993) takes IS a step further in integrating one's own cultural frame(s) of reference as a comparative homebase—a crucial component in assessing one's situatedness on the DMIS continuum. He argues that sensitivity progresses when one respects values that exist outside of this central reference point and when one successfully shifts viewpoints beyond this homebase. Essentially, these conceptualizations are similar in emphasizing affect and recognition of differences, with Bennett extending beyond difference identification to include

shifting cultural viewpoints in relation to one's own frames of reference in measuring IS.

There are several potential explanations in accounting for the comparatively high IS of the US-based participants. These reasons center around senses of cultural self-awareness, freedom to engage in bidirectional cultural exchange, differences in the degree to which interacting cultures conflict, the intensiveness and type of intercultural engagement, and differences in teaching environments. Alternatively, this may be the result of possible shortcomings of the framework when applied cross-culturally or with participants of color as critiqued in previous work (Greenholtz, 2005; McKay, 2017; Punti & Dingel, 2021), addressed in section 6.4.1.

Cultural self-awareness. The US-based participants seemed to have a heightened self-awareness of the limitations of their own cultural knowledge as it relates to the cultures represented in their classrooms; they admitted to having to be more aware of and on the lookout for cultural differences. However, when asked follow-up questions, these limitations seem to refer primarily to their engagement with students from countries they had not previously taught. The UAE-based participants, without exception, conveyed a confident familiarity with Emirati culture despite their visible struggles in navigating HE culture at the target institution. Thus, it could be hypothesized that, across groups, faculty may have a falsely high sense of their own knowledge of a culture, common in the literature (Sinicrope et al., 2007), which they seem to equate with teaching experience with a given nationality. Logically, many actions seen among students are rooted in cultural standards and values stemming from constructs beyond the classroom

that faculty may not be aware of. Recognizing the relatively *ethnocentric* assumptions and perceptions present in the UAE-based interviews, the self-assessed depth of this group's cultural knowledge may benefit from reconsideration. Nonetheless, Bennett (1993) hypothesizes that it takes a minimum time of two years spent immersed in another culture to reach the *pluralism* subphase of *adaptation*—an amount of time that all of the UAE-based participants had well-surpassed but a DMIS progression that none had reached. This may lead one to question whether the differences in expectations of and values toward education between American and Emirati cultures (Ashour, 2020; Austin et al., 2014; Diallo, 2014; Moore, 2015; Noori, 2016; Singh et al., 2021) conflict to such an extent that additional measures should be undertaken to address them before commencing work in formal settings.

Opportunity to engage in bidirectional cultural exchange. The US-based group's goal is to teach American campus and pedagogical culture, albeit with others' cultural backgrounds and perspectives in mind; the participants expressly enjoyed integrating students' backgrounds into lessons and highlighting differences in both practices and expectations when presenting American norms. Conversely, one UAE-based participant noted that she had learned in her Master's program that teaching a second language inextricably entails teaching native speakers' cultures as well. However, in the UAE, she felt discouraged from teaching her culture, instead having to learn and conform to the culture of the Emirates. This is partly corroborated by the literature, which documents locals' censorship and concerns of the influence of outside cultures in their national education classrooms and systems (Diallo, 2014). Therefore, an emphasis on

culture was at the heart of the US-based group's teaching assignment while it seems largely discouraged in the UAE-based context.

Comparatively greater conflict in values between certain cultures. The UAE-based participants could be working with deeper cultural distinctions that diverge more significantly from US culture, given previous studies on the distinctions in viewpoints on HE between the two groups (Ashour, 2020; Austin et al., 2014; Diallo, 2014; James & Shammas, 2018; Moore, 2015; Noori, 2016; Singh et al., 2021) than cultures from, say, Europe or South America, with which the US-based group was often engaging. Moreover, the UAE-based participants' perceptions often reflect fear toward and frustration with the operations of their workplace, given the dissonance between the attitudes regarding the role of HE in the US compared to those of the UAE. When viewed through the lens of the DMIS, these perceptions were often interpreted as aligning with *ethnocentricism*, such as feelings of one's own worldview as *superior,* and other characteristics of *defense*, in which one aims to counter the values of a distinct culture in favor of their own—a finding corroborated by research from James and Shammas (2018). The idea that these differing worldviews on HE may be affecting the UAE-based group's IS situatedness may be substantiated in part by the interviews from the US-based participants as well: three participants from the US-based group independently expressed feelings of dispreference toward teaching Gulf students, despite no Gulf representation in their ITA classrooms. It is possible that US-based faculty may have previously experienced cultural differences in attitude toward education that some Gulf students may bring with them when studying abroad, though this was not followed up on in depth.

Variation in intercultural engagement. Several UAE-based participants noted that the PGVMs project helped them to regain focus on cultural differences to which they had been desensitized, which may account for the slightly greater increase in ISS averages. Data from other UAE-based participants, however, paint a picture of exhaustion in managing cultural differences, as reflected by the group's DMIS positioning. Because the UAE-based instructors are working intensively with students from the same foreign culture, they are engaging repeatedly with similar sets of conflicting expectations more frequently than the US-based group, in an environment in which the students' actions are more reflective of the norms of the dominant culture and are reinforced by one another both at and beyond the institutional context. Conversely, almost all the Americans' photographic submissions reflect differences that they view as "cool" or exciting. Their classrooms consist of student populations from roughly eight to ten different nations; this also gives them more regular practice in perspective shifting—essential for DMIS progression—as they navigate numerous cultures in any given lesson. Cultural difference may also feel relatively novel to them, as they spend most of their non-teaching time engaging in environments of shared cultural viewpoints and in which their frame of reference, for the non-*integration* participants, is generally the dominant one.

One of the motivations for positioning this study as contextually comparative was precisely for this between-group distinction: to shed light on whether having to also negotiate cultural differences beyond the workplace, as with the UAE-based group, may potentially cultivate greater IS. However, in the case of this study, that does not appear to be necessarily true. Alternatively, the UAE-group may

feel dissonance in having to adjust their pedagogical philosophies to meet the "new" dominant culture, unlike the US-based instructors. The US-based group, on the other hand, are not interacting with the same set of differences repeatedly; having internationally diverse populations, differences may feel less intense and "diluted" to an extent and may also lack peer unity in making any culturally distinct expectation achieve any status as a "norm" in a given classroom. This may be especially conceivable given that the US-based instructors were teaching online.

Difference in teaching environment. This virtual teaching environment may have also instilled a greater sense of compassion among the US-based group. By having students who remained situated in their home countries, the US-based participants were virtually "present" in students' countries in that they often felt, directly or indirectly, many of the consequences of infrastructure, connectivity, and overall environment that students were experiencing. For instance, when students lost internet connection during a presentation, it also impacted the instructor and his/her lesson; similarly, the sound of gunshots from one student's environment naturally affected John's lesson beyond a simple audio disruption but one that evoked emotionality. In this regard, several US-based instructors' feelings of compassion were likely elevated by the shared problem-solving involved in their teaching contexts. One may question whether empathy would have emerged as a theme if courses had not been delivered online and students had not remained in their home countries. In this sense, this lends support to programs in which US-based individuals may have to also co-navigate the obstacles of less developed nations alongside their internationally-based counterparts. Such trends in programming include Internationalization at a

Distance (IaD) and Internationalization at Home (IaH): the former refers to transnational education in which students, staff, and institutional necessities are geographically separate and supported by technology (Mittelmeier et al., 2020); with the latter, on-campus academic activity involves global interactions, collaborations, and coursework (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

6.3 Implications and contributions to knowledge

This thesis resulted in several implications and valuable contributions to knowledge. First, the study aimed to compare the IS of tertiary American instructors as it relates to the cultural diversity of their student populations and the environments in which they live. Another key objective was to shed light on what these differences in IS, if any, may show regarding these contextual distinctions. Lastly, it set out to uncover possible benefits of using PGVMs as a method for elevating the IS of American HE faculty. No publications to the best of the author's knowledge explore the relationship between PGVMs and the IS of American HE instructors teaching in the UAE or teaching fully-international classrooms domestically.

This thesis contributes to the knowledge in suggesting that American tertiary faculty teaching internationally diverse student populations in their own country exhibit more progressive intercultural sensitivity than instructors living abroad while teaching mono-national student groups. Previous studies have supported the idea that training in ESL pedagogy (Nieto, 2008), having ten or more years of teaching experience (Bayles, 2009), or length of time working with international students (Davis, 2009) can enhance IS. The participants of this study are all ESL-trained faculty with at least ten years of teaching experience and, for the UAE-

based group, at least ten years of working in the Emirates. Therefore, this research takes these findings a step further in considering the possible impacts of faculty's teaching environments. While the IS of participants teaching abroad did increase slightly, conflicting with findings from Sinclair (2019), their IS was not interpreted as being as progressive as instructors teaching domestically with internationally diverse student populations overall. Nonetheless, the abroad-based group's IS increased more than the US-based group's on the ISS, although its final mean value remained lower than the US-based group's. In other words, they experienced more change following the photo collection project and the photo-elicitation interviews. On the DMIS, evidence from this study points to more *ethnorelativity* among the US-based group, suggesting that teaching abroad may not have as positive of an impact on IS as teaching internationally diverse populations domestically. Therefore, in essence, the US-based group demonstrated greater IS in general on both the ISS and DMIS measures while the UAE-based participants showed more progression in IS on the ISS compared to the US-based group, whose progression was positive albeit less so.

Additional implications from this study are that the aspects of internationally diverse classrooms that foster IS could include frequent opportunities to practice cultural perspective shifting, as the participants in this study worked with students from eight to ten different countries in a single lesson. Participants also lauded opportunities to engage in multi-directional cultural exchange, sharing their own US-based norms while inviting discussion from students on the norms of their cultures. Self-awareness of one's own cultural knowledge or lack thereof may also impact IS development.

Relatively large differences or conflicting attitudes toward the value of HE between instructors and management and/or students may, conversely, hinder IS progression and lead to feelings of hesitance or negativity in intercultural interactions. Living abroad in the Emirati context signified that the American instructors were no longer working within their own, often dominant, culture; negotiating differences related to accountability, responsibility, entitlement, and communication became sources of frustration that precluded several participants' progression into *ethnorelative* levels of IS. Similarly, without the international diversity of the US-based group, UAE-based participants often had only two sets of perspectives to consider, perhaps pinning worldviews against each other comparatively. As a result, IS as measured by the DMIS was somewhat low among the UAE-based faculty, as most participants viewed their own standards of education as superior. The IS of these participants did grow nonetheless on ISS measures, implying that they may struggle with taking others' cultural perspectives as measured by the DMIS but adept at recognizing cultural differences nonetheless, as assessed by the ISS.

With the use of PGVMs being limited in general (Eberle, 2013) but especially in research on American HE phenomena (Kortegast et al., 2019), this study also contributes to the knowledge in indicating that PGVMs may serve not only as a data collection method that more fully captures participants' lived experiences but also as an approach for cultivating IS. Crucially, this research involved small sample sizes and data resulting from it can only be used for indicative purposes. Nonetheless, both groups' IS as measured on the ISS improved overall, and seven of ten participants' perceptions of intercultural difference reflected

ethnorelative worldviews through the lens of the DMIS. Participants commented that it helped them to redirect their focus toward culture and cultural differences, corroborating previous literature (Glaw et al., 2017; Kortegast et al., 2019; Pain, 2012). Others noted that revisiting the images helped them to recall ideas and feelings that they had otherwise forgotten, implying that the qualitative data reflects attitudes over time versus one's emotions at a single moment in time, in line with prior research (Byrne, 2012; Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002; Schulze, 2007). Though several adjustments should be considered when developing future research projects involving PGVMs, which will be addressed in the following section, this thesis suggests that this is an area of promise in enhancing American tertiary instructors' emotion, perceptions, and attitudes toward intercultural engagement. This methodology also led to rich qualitative data that provided insight beyond the lenses of the ISS and DMIS and illustrated the intercultural environments in which each group engaged. It gave context to their experiences and perceptions, which was vital in understanding potential explanations of the progression or hindrance of their sensitivity.

These insights derived from the inductive thematic analysis of the qualitative data imply that further research must be done on American tertiary faculty teaching mono-national students while living abroad in countries other than the UAE to be able to attribute an aspect of generalizability to the findings of this study. The data paints an image of frustration, instability, and caution among faculty which may not be present in other international environments; these feelings are likely to have impacted participants' IS.

6.4 Limitations

While this thesis may benefit from methodological improvements relating to the sampling and number of participants, changes to the reflexive photography program and IS assessment, and greater consistency in teaching environments, the findings remain valuable in shedding light on the IS of American tertiary faculty based domestically and abroad, the lived experiences of participants in each setting, and how PGVMs can be useful in assessing and enhancing sensitivity.

The research design of the study may likely have benefited from an inclusion of a DMIS pre-test. The study was initially structured to use the ISS as the indicator of potential growth in one's sensitivity while the DMIS was included for data triangulation, providing rich qualitative insight on participants' perceptions toward intercultural engagement. However, throughout the data analysis process, the usefulness of a pre-test bar for comparison when assessing the potential benefits of the PGVM program became apparent, especially given that the ISS is a quantitative scale and that this particular study had such a small sample size; these descriptive statistics could only be used for indicative purposes and were not as telling as they were hoped to be. As participants' DMIS situatedness was assessed with photo-elicitation interviews that stemmed from a PGVM program, the pre-test would of course have to take on a different shape; in future studies that facilitate participant observation in intercultural interactions such as an international classroom—as was the context in which Bennett initially developed the continuum—this may serve as an initial evaluation of one's DMIS placement.

Several other limitations may be controlled for in replications of this study with respect to its participants. Future studies may benefit from more optimal sampling

conditions that reasonably facilitate random sampling, which was impractical for this thesis given the parameters of this research. Further to this, ideally, participants could be controlled for gender: nine of ten participants are female and, as *issues of sex/gender* was the only theme common to both participant groups, this demographic trait may have implications for future findings. Additionally, Jin and Schneider (2019) found that place of birth, ethnicity, and multilingual skills were all found to impact faculty's views of international students. To maintain participants, while several demographic variables were indeed considered in eligibility criteria, these characteristics were not controlled for in this study and may be worth accounting for in future work.

Changes to the procedures of the data collection PGVM project may also yield insightful results. The reflexive photography program lasted four weeks and while small elevations of IS were found across both participant groups, these effects may be greater if the cultural awareness-heightening photo collection and reflection portion of the study could be lengthened, as several studies note that length of time engaging with cultural difference can be a significant factor in the cultivation of IS (Bennett, 1993; 2003; Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Hayden & Wong, 1997; Karimi et al., 2020; Shammas, 2017; Stone, 2018; Waterson & Hayden, 1999). Moreover, measuring participants' IS on the DMIS before the reflexive photography project, as with the ISS, may have further illuminated the impact of the use of PGVMs in elevating IS.

Another noticeable difference is in the teaching environments of the two participant groups. Whereas working with mono-national student populations abroad and diverse international populations domestically were the intended

environmental differences of investigation, it is likely other divergences in teaching conditions influenced findings. In this study, one participant group held classes online while another taught in-person; one group taught PhD students while another taught undergraduates. One group taught in a country of free speech while another taught in a fear-inducing environment of censorship. Nonetheless, while the US-based group's environment may initially appear less stressful, it is important to note that "challenges to teaching" was a universally supported theme of this participant group. Still, such variation would optimally be controlled.

6.4.1 Critiques in employing the theoretical framework

This study also recognizes several challenges in employing the DMIS. These involve the seemingly simplistic assignment of a single stage of IS to participants' varied perceptions, assumptions of the unidirectionality of the model, and a lack of clear definition and nuance in the role of dominant cultures in today's globalized society.

In later commentary on the continuum, Bennett (2014) addressed criticism surrounding the attribution of a single level of IS to participants who exhibit a range of DMIS stages in their perceptions and behaviors, arguing that researcher interpretation should identify "the general ways in which perception of cultural difference is being organized into experience," stating that "one position is predominant, although perceptual strategies may span several positions" (para. 4). In practice, one may question whether such instances may be better managed by allowing mid-point categorizations or notations of "in transition" for participants

who appear straddled over two neighboring stages. This is further problematized by participants whose perceptions divide nearly equally across stages that are *not* next to each other in progression. For instance, several participants in this study were divided between the *defense* (stage two) and *acceptance* (stage four) stages, with instances of *minimization* remaining low across all participants. The six stages are not numerically cumulative or averaged, as stages align with defined characteristics; participants therefore could not be "averaged" into the third stage of *minimization*, as the tenets of this stage did not at all align with their sensitivity to cultural difference. Bennett (1993) explicitly posits *minimization* as being common among those lacking cultural self-awareness and those working as expatriates abroad. Though both of these conditions are true for the UAE-based participants, *minimization* strategies were not abundantly interpreted across this group. This may lead one to question whether the placement of *minimization*, then, is situated appropriately in the DMIS, especially given that Bennett (1993) emphasizes that only progression across all stages yields effective *ethnorelativism* in intercultural communications versus sheer "landing" in a category by virtue of, for example, a person of color's upbringing in a largely white, dominant society and having to thus negotiate different cultural worldviews with little choice and without a focus on IS development.

Especially given that Bennett (2014) advises researchers to identify a participant's "general" perception of cultural difference, there is a subjectivity that is inevitable in assessing one's DMIS situatedness as well, which naturally poses its own issues (Greenholtz, 2000). To account for this, the researcher of this study carefully drafted notes to help in distinguishing closely related phases that

seemed to overlap with the exception of one key tenet, and reviewed these notes at the onset of each analysis session in line with the *introspective reflexivity* practices recommended by Patnaik (2013) to also minimize researcher bias. For example, the *pluralism* subphase of *adaptation* may at first seem quite similar to *integration* in that the participant is continuously shifting cultural perspectives when approaching a cultural difference; however, the distinction between these phases is that in the latter, the participant has never made reference to having any cultural reference center, while in the former, they have several that they are switching between. In application, this requires the researcher to first assess whether the cultural perspectives between which the participant is shifting are cultures that he/she identifies with as his/her culture.

This leads into yet another complication of categorizing participants on the DMIS and Bennett's "guidance" of using a "general" view of one's perception of cultural difference (2014). It leaves open for interpretation how a researcher is arriving at this "general" sense. For instance, one may simply situate on the continuum all of a participant's comments that reflect a perception of cultural difference and then tally which phase has the highest number of instances. Though this may at first appear a bit oversimplified, as stated earlier in this section, one cannot average between phases or situate a participant's sensitivity as landing between two phases, as each phase has its own definitional tenets attributed to it which may not at all reflect the participant's interview statements. One may also question whether the presence of statements reflecting a high or low end of the continuum may serve to "trump" one's progression or regression. For instance, in this study, Abby's IS is assessed as *integration*—the most progressive stage

in the framework, signifying she has no individual cultures that she views as her own as central points of reference. However, several of her interview statements are evaluated as *ethnocentric*. It seems oxymoronic for someone who is marginal to any culture, having essentially no culture of one's own, to also be assessed as at times centering around his or her own culture. One then questions whether this is an error in nomenclature or if Bennett would instead aim to put a ceiling on the potential progression to this most advanced stage if a participant exhibits perceptions in the *ethnocentric* phases. Conversely, a participant may at times demonstrate IS at an *ethnorelative* phase of also state several extremely racist, demeaning perceptions in line with the *denial* phase—the least progressive phase of the framework. Should the theory perhaps be re-evaluated to include some sort of "caps" that preclude progression, especially given that the framework is often used to inform workplace training based on one's categorization?

Aside from problematizing participant DMIS situatedness, this culminates in a larger question and is also perhaps a criticism of the framework that may dually— hopefully—galvanize future research: Are participant's statements that fall into distinct DMIS phases in response to different cultures? In other words, participants may approach different cultures differently—demonstrating more positive sentiments toward certain groups of people and more negative ones toward others. In this study, this is found to be a profound crack in Bennett's framework: what on its face initially appears as US-based instructors working in internationally diverse classrooms having higher IS than those working with mono-national groups abroad may instead be something more. Bennett at no

point in any of his DMIS conceptualizations to the best of the readers' knowledge takes into account the two cultures at play in an intercultural engagement. He posits IS as developmental strategies that are learnable for adjusting one's perceptions during intercultural engagement, which are thereafter a property of an individual that in turn informs their behaviors. He arguably doubles down on this by defending the notion of unidirectionality.

In line with previous literature (Bourjolly et al., 2005; Moore, 2015; Nemtchinova, 2020; Perry & Southwell, 2011, Shaules, 2007), this study takes issue with the concept of unidirectionality as proposed by Bennett (1993; 2014). Though he acknowledges that regression to previous IS stages is rare albeit possible though almost exclusively within the *ethnocentric* half of the spectrum, unidirectionality suggests that one's IS at the time of assessment is a generalizable representation of a person's overall mindset that would remain fairly constant, especially once an *ethnorelative* stage has been reached. In other words, IS is presented as one's attitude toward intercultural engagement *in general*. In the comparative nature of this study, this seems debatable, as it presupposes that the participants' IS is not in response to the environments in which they are interacting: it may feel like a simplistic judgment of who someone is at their core instead of a response to one's situational environment, unlikely to change in response to the culture with or in which he/she is engaging. Taken a step further, then, this implies that the US-based participants would not likely regress to the similar *ethnocentric* strategies adopted by the UAE-based participants when engaging in the high-stress context illustrated by the thematic analysis. Interestingly, several of the *ethnocentric* instances from the all-*ethnorelative* US-

based group involve comments on Gulf Arabs, Muslims, and issues related to gender in Islam from three of five participants, even though they did not have students of any of these backgrounds in their ITA classes at the time of the study. This implies that there is a good chance, then, that their DMIS positioning may regress if continuously engaging within these populations. However, the DMIS appears to neglect the potential for impact of one's environment in assessing one's sensitivity or making predictions about likely facilitation or hindrance of their progression while also disregarding the values and norms—and how harmonious or discordant these may be—of the different cultures at play in an intercultural engagement. Whether the involved cultures share similar values or clash greatly in fundamental ideologies is not taken into account or addressed, though it seems logical that there is more opportunity for judgment or negative perceptions between groups from certain backgrounds, instantly placing individuals in these contexts in *ethnocentric* phases based on the DMIS criteria. Such a stance may also trivialize the hardship, fears, and hostilities faced by the UAE-based group in that it suggests that these participants' sensitivity has not progressed despite having lived over a decade in the UAE and that the US-based participants would, hypothetically and theoretically by Bennett's claim of unidirectionality, maintain their *ethnorelativism* were they to ever face an equally distressing and opaquely punitive environment as that of the UAE-based group. By presenting the notion of cultural dominance (Bennett, 1993; 2004), Bennett does somewhat scratch the surface of acknowledging that the cultures of an interaction's communicators are impactful, but he does not go beyond this in this regard. This is somewhat surprising, given that Bennett (1993; 2014) pulls from Hall and other researchers on cultures and their characteristics, yet he does not account for the potential of

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cultural dichotomy when outlining the criteria or making predictions for his framework.

Returning to the concept of cultural dominance, Bennett arguably lacks sufficient nuance or definition in its description, exemplifying it predominantly if not only with examples of marginalized populations in the US and their juxtaposition with dominant white American populations. That the DMIS has come under fire throughout the years for being in itself Western- or American-centric and not cross-culturally generalizable (Greenholtz, 2005; McKay, 2017; Punti & Dingel, 2021) is a criticism of which Bennett himself is aware (2017). However, the question of how both marginalized Americans and dominant Americans react when their status is further reduced in a new culture such as the UAE remains. Though not necessarily impacting one's placement on the DMIS as interpreted by the researcher, assumptions and implications of the framework may be challenged by more nuanced considerations of what constitutes a "dominant culture" in non-American environments or discussion of the experiences of individuals transitioning from a dominant culture into one in which their culture loses this status. For instance, the UAE-based participants suddenly experience oppression of their free speech, fearing unpredictable repudiation, including imprisonment, job loss, or deportation. They are typically ineligible based on nationality for promotion into most management and decision-making positions, which are essentially reserved for UAE nationals only. They are offered considerably lower salaries for doing the same work as Emiratis. In everyday spaces, as locals wear their traditional attire—which non-locals are expressly forbidden from wearing at the target institution—identifying those of the dominant

versus non-dominant culture is instantaneous. The participants' shift to a lower status may in itself suddenly prompt *defense*-stage perceptions. "People who have been oppressed may spend more time in the superiority form of defense" (p. 38), argues Bennett (1993), which was often corroborated by the UAE-based group's data, regardless of whether the participants identified as being from an oppressed population in the US. Thus, as suggested earlier in this section, the environment with which one is engaging at the time of IS assessment may impact their sensitivity and should be considered.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

Both the study's limitations and implications illuminate several directions for future research.

First, while the developers of the ISS and DMIS conceptualize IS similarly, these tools nonetheless measure different constructs to an extent, with crucially involving one's ability to take on distinct perspectives as central to categorizing one's sensitivity. Thus, a DMIS situatedness pre-test may shed better light on IS progression between participant groups that is, in this study, only projected based on the ISS.

The stressful conditions faced by the UAE-based group may have led to negativity in navigating cultural difference and perhaps hesitance in interview discussions, thus affecting their IS. Future studies may investigate Americans teaching mono-national, non-American student populations abroad in countries with less punitive and fearful environments or with university systems that are more similar in academic expectations to their own; this would serve as a fairer

basis for comparison between the two groups. In assessing the extent to which the retaliative environment versus cultural student expectations and attitudes toward HE impact IS, researching American faculty teaching fully Emirati or Gulf Arab groups in the US may yield interesting results. To evaluate whether instructors from cultures more similar to the UAE's (by virtue of language or religion, for instance) perceive similar hardships expressed by the UAE-based Americans, replicating this study with non-Gulf Arab instructors, for example, may result in distinct outcomes.

In light of the environmental nuances addressed in the previous paragraph, perhaps the most profound opportunity for future research is in the modification of the DMIS or the development of an entirely new framework for evaluating IS to have implications for or make predictions that correspond to the specific cultures at play in an intercultural scenario. Taking into account a culture and its characteristics, as identified through a theory of culture proposed by Hall (1977) or Hofstede et al. (2010) for instance, may yield more accurate representations of an individual's intercultural sensitivity while potentially shedding light on challenges to Bennett's concept of unidirectionality (1993; 2004; 2013) simultaneously. While Bennett (1993; 2004) does hint at environmental factors impacting one's progression as demonstrated by his philosophies on the influences of cultural "dominance," further defining dominance and theorizing the impact of changes to one's status as dominant when abroad are also areas of potentially stimulating future research.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This thesis succeeded in comparing the IS of tertiary American instructors teaching mono-national, non-American student populations abroad in the UAE with that of American tertiary instructors in multi-national, non-American student populations domestically in the US. The study makes implications on the use of reflexive photography and photo-elicitation interviews methods as both data collection approaches and as possible cultivators of IS and provides possible explanations for the variation in findings between the two participant groups. To maximize the credibility of the results, data are triangulated using the ISS (Chen & Starosta, 2000) as a quantitative measure, the theoretical framework of the DMIS (Bennett, 1993) when reviewing qualitative data from photo-elicitation interviews (Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002), and further qualitative evaluation using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This thesis addresses gaps in the knowledge in that they shed additional light on the under-researched areas of IS in American HE instructors working in the Gulf or in the US with international student populations, which have been largely understudied and inconsistent in their results to date. Similarly under-researched are the potential impacts of photo-elicitation and PGVMs on IS. This work is the first to the best of the author's knowledge to compare the IS of American faculty teaching mono-national, non-American student populations in the UAE with American faculty teaching diverse, international student populations in the US.

The study is not without its limitations. Future research should aim to account for these gaps by controlling for participant demographics, attaining higher numbers of participants overall, better matching the teaching environments of groups, and adjusting the length and foci of the reflexive photography project. Other areas of

interest for follow-up studies may instead investigate participants from less distinct or conflicting cultures or Americans teaching in less contrasting environments abroad.

Chapter 7: Appendix One – Intercultural Sensitivity Scale and Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000):

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

5 = strongly agree	
4 = agree	
3 = uncertain	Please put the number corresponding to your answer in the
2 = disagree	blank before the statement
1 = strongly disagree	

____ 1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
____ 2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.
____ 3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
____ 4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.
____ 5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
____ 6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
____ 7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.
____ 8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
____ 9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.
____10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
____11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
____12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.
____13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
____14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.
____15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.
____16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
____17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
____18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.
____19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.
____20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.
____21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.
____22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.
____23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.
____24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

Note. Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 are reverse-coded before summing the 24 items. Interaction Engagement items are 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24, Respect for Cultural Differences items are 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20, Interaction Confidence items are 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, Interaction Enjoyment items are 9, 12, and 15, and Interaction Attentiveness items are 14, 17, and 19.

Semi-structured interview questions:

Tell me about a bit about your background. What experience did you have with different cultures growing up? What led you to this field and your current position?

Tell me about your classroom experience thus far this semester.

Why did you choose this picture? (Repeat this question for each image submitted.)
If not answered… Do you believe it represents cultural exchange? Mixture? Similarity? Difference? In what ways?

Has your view of or attitude toward any of the cultures represented in your classroom changed since the start of this teaching semester? If yes, how so?
If not answered… Do you feel you have a deeper knowledge of the background and norms of the culture(s) you work with now compared to other cultures? Why or why not?

Are you more comfortable or confident working with students from certain cultural backgrounds compared to others? Explain.

Tell me your thoughts toward the cultures represented in your current classroom(s).
If not answered…Do you feel any added level of enthusiasm, admiration, concern, or frustration toward any culture, whether represented in your classroom or not? Why? (And is this culture represented in your current classroom?)

Chapter 8: Appendix Two – Ethics and Informed Consent Forms

Educational Research | Lancaster University

25th January 2022

Dear Toni

Thank you for submitting your ethics application and additional information for **Photo-Elicitation and Intercultural Sensitivity of American Higher Education Instructors Abroad and At-Home**. The information you provided has been reviewed and I can confirm that approval has been granted for this project.

As Principal Investigator your responsibilities include:

- ensuring that (where applicable) all the necessary legal and regulatory requirements in order to conduct the research are met, and the necessary licenses and approvals have been obtained;
- reporting any ethics-related issues that occur during the course of the research or arising from the research (e.g. unforeseen ethical issues, complaints about the conduct of the research, adverse reactions such as extreme distress) to the Research Ethics Officer (Dr Richard Budd or Dr Natasa Lackovic).
- submitting details of proposed substantive amendments to the protocol to **Prof Malcolm Tight** for approval.

Please do not hesitate to contact your supervisor if you require further information about this.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Doherty
Programme Co-ordinator
PhD in Higher Education: Research, Evaluation and Enhancement

List of abbreviations

DMIS Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

IS   Intercultural sensitivity

ISS   Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

HE   HE

HEI   HE institute

Chapter 9: References

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