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WHEN THE WEST TEACHES THE EAST: ANALYZING INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT IN THE CLASSROOM

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Introduction

Culture is an important component of what makes us humans. It is the point from which we select certain features to construct our reality. Culture, writes McOmie (1990:177), is "a way of seeing, a way of perceiving, and a way of behaving on the basis of that perception." Culture flows and shifts between us; it both binds and separates us, but in different ways at different times and in different circumstances (cf. Holiday, 2005). One of its functions is to provide a highly selective screen between humans and the outside world. In its many forms, Hall (1976:85) notes, culture "designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore." Similarly, Triandis (1995:4) argues that "culture is to society what memory is to individuals; it includes the things that have worked in the past."

Hence, when cultural conflicts or clashes between two or more cultural systems are encountered in any setting participants will most likely revert to the past in their handling of intercultural conflicts. Many researchers have discussed that when teachers, for example, teach in a foreign educational setting, the familiar becomes unfamiliar; they struggle with a host of classroom difficulties due to differences in macro and micro cultural views of how teaching and learning should be conducted (cf. Le Roux, 2001; 2002; Fisch, Greenfield, & Trumbul, 1999; Ortloff & Ortloff, 2003; Crago, Brophy, Pesco, & McAlpine, 1997; Morain, 1983, Dyer, 1998; Minnis, 1999; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Despite the fact that using our past experiences, or familiar ways of doing things, might ordinarily work if we remain at home, once people venture abroad or even meet foreigners at home, past experiences might not be helpful at all. This becomes more complicated when two cultures are forced to interact on a regular basis in an environment that is limited in terms of space and requires constant interaction as in the classroom environment. Researchers (Thomas, 1997; Dyer, 1998 among others) have cautioned about the danger of transferring educational views,

ideas, and concepts to foreign classrooms, and emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity towards the host culture (see Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2004).

Perhaps one of the most common misperceptions of some people when encountering new cultures is to assume that all patterns in the world are basically the same. This sets the two systems, according to Hall (1976), on a collision course. This collision occurs all the time, and in various contexts, because each culture feels misunderstood, misrepresented, and unappreciated. For example, one of the major purposes of any educational institution is to provide knowledge and to expand the minds and ideas of students, young and old. However, when cultural conflicts occur in the classroom or on a campus, the intent of education is sullied and challenged in many ways. Encountering a new culture is always a challenge and one that must be met appropriately if we are to succeed in cross-cultural communication and especially so when the encounters are between students and teachers.

Since every culture places emphasis on different types of behaviors, communicative skills, and strategies, those concerned with teaching and learning need to look at culture's role in interactions as a crucial component of the total picture. The academic world is an excellent setting for intercultural encounters and a place that allows for the building of bridges between those cultures; however, it can also be an environment, as pointed out by Fitch (1986), where some clashes become inevitable since teacher-student interaction is so deeply rooted in the culture of a society.

As Maurice (1986) observes, in order for teachers and students to pursue cross-cultural communication effectively in the classroom and avoid cultural clashes, they need to delve into the cultural assumptions, beliefs, ways of viewing, and communicative styles that may hinder understanding. "Students and teachers alike need to be able to anticipate culturally divergent styles of thinking and develop cross-culturally appropriate ways of handling troublesome situations that inevitably arise" (43). Maurice further suggests that rather than ignoring the challenges that conflict presents, we need to face the conflict, analyze it, and then move toward turning it into cooperation. Thus participants in the classroom context need to be aware of their own cultural beliefs and values and attempt to work and coexist harmoniously while learning from one another.

Context:

The purpose of this article is to propose a model for the analysis of intercultural encounters in an academic (educational) setting, taking the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, truly

multicultural campus, as the case study. This educational establishment (cf. Al-Issa, 2004) is an excellent laboratory for examining the importance of understanding and appreciating cultural diversity and how understanding of different cultural norms can only serve to make us all better participants as we strive to resolve and comprehend intercultural conflicts we encounter.

With a student body of over 4,000 students of mixed cultural backgrounds representing over 70 different nationalities and with faculty and staff representing over 65 countries, the university is an oasis of ideas, languages, cultures and differing viewpoints in the arid lands of the UAE, a country in the Arabian Gulf that has more expatriate residents than natives. Such diversity provides ample opportunities to observe the interaction of cultures as we proceed through our daily lives. While the majority of our students are from Arab and Islamic countries, the faculty body, which consists of over 200, is mostly Western (Americans, Canadians, British and West Europeans) and Arab-Americans who were either born and raised in the United States or received their educational degrees from the US or Europe. At the American University of Sharjah the language of instruction is English. All students, faculty and staff can and do communicate in English. Unfortunately as Triandis (1995) argues convincingly, language on its own is insufficient to create a common culture. In fact, it is often at the intersection of language and culture that communication fails.

East vs. West

To understand the causes of classroom cultural conflicts, an understanding of the different cultural patterns between Eastern (i.e., Arabs) and Western (i.e., North Americans and West Europeans) cultures is a prerequisite. Most intercultural communication scholars tend to view the Arab and American cultures as opposites. Drawing on the literature of educational anthropology and intercultural communication, I will show in this section that classroom conflict is caused by differences in cultural patterns. Cultural patterns, as defined by Samovar and Porter (2001:58) are "the conditions that contribute to the way in which a people perceive and think about the world, and the manner in which they live in that world." Two of the major cultural patterns are discussed here: individualism versus collectivism and high-context versus low-context. Of course, these cultural patterns are by no means exclusive, but they are more important in causing conflicts, and their examination can yield ways of overcoming intercultural conflicts. Despite the fact that there are many value dimensions awarded to individualism and collectivism and low-context and high-context cultures, this article addresses

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primarily those which impact on the relationship between teacher and student in a university setting.

Although this discussion focuses on identifying common character-istics within cultures, in order to avoid the frequent trap of stereotyping, we need to remember that within any given culture, individuals differ in their beliefs and practices. In other words, it would be erroneous to assume that any one culture is totally a high-context or a low-context culture. There exist a great body of literature on the differences between the characteristics of people in the Arab world (cf. Almaney, 1981; Almany & Alwan, 1982; Meleis; 1982; Barakat, 1993; Nydell, 1996; Feghali, 1997; Al-Issa, 2003) and people in the Western/North American culture (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). The current debate acknowledges the many variations between the two cultures, but it goes further to search for and to establish some common grounds.

Individualism-collectivism dimension.

Perhaps one of the most well known cultural continuums is cultural variation in terms of individualism versus collectivism (Hofstede, 1980, 1983, 1997; Kim, Sharkey, & Singelis, 1994, Triandis, 1995; Hui & Triandis, 1986)**.** Individualism is a characteristic of cultures in which "the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede, 1997:51). In such societies, group membership is not essential in one's life, one may become a member of many groups, but none of the groups exerts strong influence on his or her behaviors (Hofstede, 1980). As maintained by Waterman (1984), an individualistic person is more likely to hold moral principles that are universal and behave in accordance with what he or she perceives is right.

Members of individualistic cultures are described as valuing personal time, freedom, challenge, direct communication style, and material rewards at work (Hofstede, 1980). In such educational institutions, teachers tend to encourage competition, risk taking, directness, openness, originality, and innovative approaches to problem solving. Independence and self-reliance are greatly stressed and valued. Students are usually motivated to take part in their learning process, become the center of the classroom, speak their minds in classroom discussions, and question their teachers. Teachers, on the other hand, interpret disagreement as a stimulating exercise. A good teacher is usually characterized as "one who is able to arouse the students' interests, explain clearly, use effective instructional methods, and organize a range of activities" (Watkins, 2000:168). Thus, teaching is not viewed as transmitting knowledge from the teacher to students; rather it is seen as the sharing and

negotiation of knowledge and meaning, a process that utilizes considerable interaction among students and teachers in a mutually accepting social context.

Collectivism, on the other hand, has been defined by Triandis (1995) as a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of and duties imposed by those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness to members of these collectives. One's identity is, in large part, a function of one's membership and role in a group, e.g., the family or work team. The survival and success of the group ensures the well-being of the individual, so that by considering the needs and feelings of others, one protects oneself. Harmony and interdependence of group members are stressed and valued. According to Hofstede (1997) collectivist cultures assume that any person through birth and possible later events belongs to one or more tight "in-groups," from which he or she cannot detach himself or herself.

Educational institutions in collectivist cultures normally operate within the norms of their cultures. For example, Arab students are expected to 'listen' to their teachers and dare not question their wisdom; they are expected to speak up in class only in response to a general invitation by the teacher. Arab students, as stated by Meleis (1982:443), "have learned that somebody who is more qualified, more educated, and more expert than they in matters of education should be responsible for decisions relating to education." Therefore, the teacher is usually the one responsible for his or her students' learning; if they fail, it is teacher's fault, and if they pass, the teacher is the one who gets the credit. Good teachers are usually described as those who are highly educated, who are caring, who know the answer to every question, formal, and highly skilled in classroom management. The teacher is viewed as the "epitome of wisdom inculcated by years of teaching, researching, and plain living" (Meleis, 1982:444). Unlike teachers from individualistic cultures, teachers from collectivist cultures do not put much emphasis on encouraging students to compete against each other; competition of this kind is discouraged and seen as a form of showing off. Moreover, while education in individualistic societies is viewed as a way of improving one's economic worth and self-respect based on ability and competence, in collectivist cultures, education is seen as a way of gaining prestige in one's own social group and of joining a higher social status group (Hofstede, 1986).

High-low context dimension

Much of the work that deals with the differences between high and low context cultures has been proposed by the anthropologist Edward Hall (1976). According to Hall, the difference depends on how much meaning is found in the context versus the code, or the verbal behavior. Hall points out that a high context communication or message is "one in which more of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person," while in low context communication, "the mass information [or message] is vested in the explicit code" (p. 79). In a low context culture, such as the American culture, people tend to place more meaning in the language code and very little meaning in the context. Therefore, communication "tends to be specific, explicit, and analytical" (Zaharna, 1995:241). That is, unlike exchanges in low context cultures, in high context cultures the meaning is inferred rather than directly interpreted from the communication. Because people in high context cultures already know and understand each other quite well, they have evolved a more indirect style of communication. They have less need to be explicit and they rely less on words to convey meaning – especially on the literal meaning of the spoken word – and more on nonverbal communication. The overriding goal of the communication exchange is maintaining harmony and saving face (cf. Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Al-Issa 2003).

In terms of classroom interaction, many of the characteristics of high and low context cultures are manifested in the behaviors of teachers and students. For example, both students and teachers from a high context culture, such as the UAE, tend to be more indirect, that is to say more implicit and vague, when asked a question or discuss a particular issue in a classroom. In other words, all participants in the exchange understand that the "burden of meaning" falls on the listener not the speaker (Zaharna, 1995). Not only in oral communication, but also messages communicated in writing are usually contextualized. In other words, they are implicitly and indirectly stated. On the other hand, students and teachers from low context cultures, such the US, are more direct in their communication style. As explained by Levin (1985, cited in Zaharna, 1995) Americans' preference for clear communication is reflected in many of their expressions: "say what you mean," "don't beat around the bush," "get to the point." Since mutual face saving is not a concern, participants in exchanges are expected to present facts, follow some sort of logical thinking, and avoid exaggerations and emotional tones.

Due to the nature of our university, an American-style system, with a US-based curriculum, and English as the language of instruction, some faculty may convince themselves that beyond the fact that they are in a foreign

country, students are just like students they taught in their American or other Western institutions. However, this is far from the truth. Westernized individualistic faculty encounter serious difficulties when they perceive their collectivist, high-context students to be similar to the US students. Hall (1976:53) addresses this issue when he observes that "those who do not realize there is another system, other than their own, will find a high-context culture completely mystifying, although they may not know or accept the fact that they are mystified."

A Framework for Analyzing Cultural Conflict

In this section I propose a framework for understanding and analyzing cultural conflicts/clashes in classrooms where people from individualist-collectivist and high-low context cultures come face-to-face within classroom interactions. The framework has been developed based on my experience teaching a course in intercultural communication at the American University of Sharjah for the last five years and on the many encounters I have had over the years with both teachers and students from numerous backgrounds and cultures. The framework is built on three assumptions. First, that teaching and learning are culturally determined activities. Second, teachers and students should work together as cultural investigators and cultural informants in order for effective teaching and learning to take place. Third, resolving cultural conflicts begins with knowing our own culture. This is easier said than done, because most of us take our own culture for granted and are not even aware of its tremendous hold on our behaviors.

The framework is referred to by the acronym RELAX, with each letter standing for one of its five stages (see figure 1 on the next page). The five stages should be looked at not only individually, but also in terms of their overlapping and intertwining roles within the framework. The final goal is for teachers and students to reach a higher level of cultural competence, which enables them to understand and resolve cultural conflicts in the classroom. What follows is an explanation of the stages and a brief discussion of ways to implement them.

*1. **R**aising cultural awareness--How different and similar are we?*

This stage refers to both teachers and students sharing information concerning their cultural expectations and views of teaching and learning, and the teacher's and student's roles in the classroom. This sharing of information should also branch out to touch upon how education, as a whole, is viewed by the cultures of teachers and students. The focus should be on discovering points of cultural similarities and differences among students and teachers and on developing awareness and sensitivity towards these points. The importance of this information-sharing process is clearly delineated in Olshtain's (1993:60) statement:

> It is the sensitivity to cultural differences that will explain to both teachers and learners why …subsequent breakdown in communication sometime occur. Being aware of differences [and similarities] may help us become more open to other ways of speech behavior and, as a result, ensure better communication across cultures, and more tolerance and understanding in interpersonal interactions.

This cultural awareness can be promoted in different types of classroom discussion, group discussion, writing assignments, and presentations of assigned readings selected by teachers or students. One method I personally use, which has proven effective, is an activity I call "Get to Know Me." In this activity, I simply ask students to write two to three pages about their own cultural backgrounds. I request that they discuss their parents, families, values, traditions, religions, languages, and especially themselves and how their own cultures have made them the way they are. As an extension of this assignment, I ask for volunteers to present their cultural backgrounds in class. I encourage students to complement their presentations with photographs, food, artifacts, clothing, etc. that represent their cultures. This has been really exciting for everyone involved. The presenters were exploring and sharing their cultural identities while at the same time helping their fellow classmates and their teacher learn about a new culture, or several in some instances, from a personal perspective. When students finish their presentations, I present mine. The discussion we have at the end of each presentation is very useful in promoting trust, rapport, and mutual respect among students and the teacher.

Another method I adopt to promote cultural awareness in the

classroom is the "cross-cultural problem-solving method" (see Gebhard, 1996). This method is very effective in showing that interaction among culturally diverse people is complex and therefore often results in communication breakdowns due to differences in verbal and non-verbal communication. One way to utilize this method is to design imaginary scenarios that involve cross-cultural problems. For example, with regard to the potential problems that may occur as a result of culturally different ways of performing refusals among Arabs and Americans, scenarios similar to the one below, in conjunction with the follow-up questions can be used:

> Ali is a Jordanian student studying in a university in the United States. One of his American classmates approaches him after class and asks if he can borrow Ali's notes from the previous day. Ali needs the notes to study that day and therefore gives the following refusal response, "I am really sorry my friend. I wish I could give them to you, but you know I have to study today and I have to have my notes. Please accept my apology and understand my situation." The American classmate thinks that that Ali's response is insincere, exaggerated, and overblown.

Follow up questions:
     What seems to be the problem here? Why does the American think that Ali's response is insincere and overblown? How would Ali respond in a way that is more acceptable to the American? Why? How do Americans and Arabs view sincerity, exaggeration, directness, and politeness? How do these views cause conflict in the classroom or in other settings?
Cross-cultural problem-solving activities such as this one, in addition to leading students and teachers to a better understanding of the values underlying Americans' speech behaviors, help them all become more conscious of their own cultural values and preferences. As Gebhard (1996:127) points out "much can be gained from studying one's cultural behaviors and values. As acquiring the rules of one's own culture is a fairly unconscious process, students [and teachers] are most likely not aware of many aspects of their own culture."

2. Examining culturally conflicting incidents/what conflict?
     This stage refers to collecting data that show how different cultural traits reveal themselves in classroom interaction among students-students and students-teachers. While identifying cultural clashes is as complex as

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resolving them, I have approached this by simply asking my students to report to the class any incidents that made them feel annoyed, surprised, uncomfortable, embarrassed, angry, out of place, afraid, etc. They were also asked to report incidents that happened to fellow students. In essence, the question was to discover what triggered certain emotions in them. Their arena was the university campus and classrooms and any encounters they viewed or took part in with other students, staff or faculty. My main goal was to get the students to focus on and be aware of their own behaviors, the behaviors of others, and how they reacted to those behaviors. Another goal was to obtain authentic data from the students' own life experiences to use in the classroom. This procedure generated rich data that revealed situations in which conflicting ideas were apparent (see appendix A for a sample of incidents reported by students). For example, the following five incidents were brought into class by different students and they reveal the broad range of conflicts that can be found on just one campus:

(1) "I did a great job on my project in one of my classes. When the professor returned our papers, he patted my shoulder in front of the class as he was telling me that I had done a good job. I felt so embarrassed because I was singled out. I also felt that it was inappropriate for him to touch me like this" (Female-Pakistan).

(2) "I once received my paper from my teacher with very rude comments. Some of her comments were: "so?" "I can't follow your thought" "what is your point?" "so flat and dry" I know my paper wasn't perfect, but couldn't she say it in a nice way" (Male-Jordan).

(3) "One of the things I hate about my writing teachers is that they don't give us topics to write about. They always ask us to come up with topics. Why can't they tell me what to write about?" (Female-UAE).

(4) "Girls from the gulf region are often taught to be soft-spoken, shy and not to make any eye contact with members of the opposite sex. During the final presentations of a communications course I had a lot of trouble presenting because my professor demanded that I be loud and make eye contact with the audience. The professor did not appreciate my "timidness" and gave me a poor grade for that course" (Female-UAE).

(5) "American professors have no appreciation of good writing. In my literature review for my research paper my teacher wants me to pick up some information from this paper and some from that paper and put them together and come up with a conclusion. If I understand the

material why do I have to cite this and that, I have already read them.
I really hate to read what I write in English" (Female-Bahrain).

*3. **L**ooking at the conflict/what went wrong?*

This stage refers to the discovery process encountered by the student who brings a particular incident to the attention of our class. This process identifies the cause(s) of the emotional discomfort of the student. Through classroom discussions of the incident and exchanges of ideas concerning cultural differences, both students and teachers can come up with a better understanding of what went wrong and why it happened.

The incidents reported in the previous stage are clear examples of how different cultural behaviors, verbal and non-verbal can bring about cultural clashes among students and teachers. For example, incident 1, reported by the Pakistani female, shows an interaction between cultures that caused embarrassment and shame to one of the participants. The positive side of this incident, however, was that it made this particular student – as well as others, including the teacher – become aware of the cause of such a conflict. The discussion of the incident made everyone more conscious of his or her own cultural concept of touch. Everyone came to realize that different cultures have different "rules" for whom to touch, where, and how often. Discussions about these rules and regulations can create an understanding of cultural differences concerning the concept of touch. Incident 2, reported by a Jordanian male student, raises another cultural issue. It clearly shows how different communication styles, in this case direct versus indirect, among students and teachers can cause misunderstandings. While the Jordanian male student acknowledged that his paper "wasn't perfect," he expected his teacher to be less direct in criticizing his work. Indirectness is a major characteristic of Arab cultural norms of communication. Unlike Americans, Arabs are more likely to feel obliged to show interest in what has been suggested, orally and/or in writing even when they do not agree with it (cf. Al-Issa, 2003). They do so not only to protect the hearer's face, but also to avoid potential confrontations. By discussing this particular incident and similar ones, students and teachers can begin to develop a better understanding of their own cultural styles of communication and how differences manifest themselves in classroom interaction.

*4. **A**fter the analysis: Now what?*

This stage refers to how teachers and students can make use of the collected data in order to promote an understanding of cultural diversity in

classroom interaction. Here, students, with the help of their teacher, investigate the value and belief systems that prompted students and teachers in the reported incidents (refer to Appendix) to behave as they did. This can easily be done if teachers and students work together as cultural informants, which involves reflecting on their own cultures.

Knowledge of the deep structure of cultures, which includes: values, belief systems, perceptions, orientations, etc., will lead to a better understanding of culturally conflicting situations. For example, teachers and students can prepare a list of values (see appendix B) that are touched upon in the incidents reported by students. When discussed among students and teachers of different cultural backgrounds, such a list of values can be a great cultural learning experience for all. While these values are almost universal, the importance given to each varies from culture to culture. Therefore, in addition to discussing them, teachers and students can work individually on prioritizing these values according to their own cultural views. This in effect will reveal some of that hidden deep structure and allow all to become aware of their own values as well as those of others.

5. *X-citement: Developing Competence/I see!*

This stage is the pinnacle in our race for intercultural competence, our goal as it were. This is the stage where empathy, appreciation and compromise come together to create understanding at a deeper level. Through empathy, as explained by Ting-Toomey (1999:160), "we are willing to imaginatively place ourselves in the dissimilar other's cultural world and to experience what she or he is experiencing." When teachers and students fully understand the cultural values and beliefs underlying the misunderstood behaviors or incidents, they have made a tremendous headway. Their ability to know what it is like to "walk in another person's shoes" will certainly start evolving. This is much easier said than done, but developing competence only comes about from confronting the conflict and attempting to understand it. Only then, will students and teachers become conscious of their own and others' cultural preferences. In the best-case scenario, tensions are dissolved or at least diminished. This can only be achieved when both teachers and students are motivated to learn about each others' cultures, become more knowledgeable of each others' cultural systems, develop tolerance for ambiguity, and avoid being judgmental.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to show how cultural differences among Western teachers and Arab students in university classrooms can lead to conflicts during classroom interaction. In order to resolve such conflicts, I suggest that both teachers and students work together as cultural investigators and cultural informants. The RELAX framework, proposed in this article, is meant to help teachers and students work systematically towards the process of attaining appropriate levels of cultural competence to enable them to deal with and find solutions for conflicting situations. The framework consists of five interrelated stages: raising cultural awareness, examining culturally conflicting incidents, looking at the conflict, after the analysis, and X-citement (developing competence). While I don't claim that this framework offers a panacea for all classroom cultural conflicts, it is hoped that by promoting an awareness of the nature of such conflicts and suggesting ways to resolve and/or minimize them will help learning and teaching in multicultural contexts.

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Appendix A
Examples of incidents

"In one of my classes, my male American professors brought in a photograph of his wife to share with us. The photograph showed her wearing a bikini which was very embarrassing to all of us in class. And the fact that it was shown in front of a class of male and female students made the situation more embarrassing. Following the class, I went with some of my classmates, mainly females, to the professor's office and told him how we felt. He was surprised, he didn't realize that what he did was very inappropriate" (female-UAE)

"In one of our classes at AUS, a professor once showed a video about tribal cultures, in which the members of a particular African tribe were undressed. This upset some students, especially girls, who walked out of the class" (Female-Saudi Arabia)

"There is a female professor that taught me …. Having a very special professor-to-student relationship for three years now, we developed a friend-to-friend or an older sister-to-younger sister relationships. After two sleepless nights, I was in her office discussing my project. She saw how much exhausted I was, so as an attempt to make me feel better, she stood behind me and started to massage my shoulders. All students who saw her were shocked and talked about it for weeks" (Female-Palestine)

"I am an Arab-American who spent most of my life in the US. When I came to AUS, I found that some of my Arab professors don't like to be questioned in class. If I found information difficult to understand, it was almost impossible to get the professors to clarify anything in class. They seemed short tempered whenever I asked a question."

"Our professor would often show a very negative attitude to anyone who interrupted his lectures to ask questions. He would merely state his points and give examples he thought reasonable, and no one else dared to interfere for the fear of having his negative attitude implemented on our grades. My friend however, was not used to sitting in a classroom and accepting whatever the professor said without clearing the ambiguities. Thus, he would often interrupt the professor and question the basis of the facts presented. Our professor would immediately change his tone into one of scorn, and his face would betray his displeasure at being questioned of his authority. His behavior after class—whenever my friend approached him with any more ambiguities—also emphasized his irritation, and my poor friend had to suffer quite a lot for his informal behavior in class, and students like me had to suffer because we were too hesitant to clarify most of the things that the professor would not willingly bother to explain" (Male-Syria)

"In the school of Architecture and Design, the majority of professors are from either American or European backgrounds. Many of the projects that are required to be completed in a course have set guidelines that are applicable to all students. There are two basic factors that students can be graded upon: their concept, and their actual productivity. I don't know why my professors do that. Sometimes I feel they don't care about the number of hours we spend in that building and the amount of work we do. I really don't like this. They only care about individual creativity and innovation. This is why, even if we put in a lot of effort into the

making of the projects, the grades on the form and presentation of our ideas are often poor. This is unfair" (Female-Kuwait)

"There is an American professor in this university who is very lenient on all matters except tardiness. This concept of being on time is very hard for the students of the Arab region to grasp. They are usually used to being late and handing overdue assignments without any complains from professors of the same region. A Lebanese student in particular could not get used to this and made a very bad impression on the professor. For this reason alone he dropped out of the class one month into the semester only to take it with an Arab professor the next semester to avoid more conflicts" (Male-Oman)

"Two years back when I was a third year architecture student, we had a project to draw the plans, sections and elevations of the Sharjah airport. Personally I thought that it was not logical for the professors to give us this assignment when we don't have access to neither the drawings of the airport nor the airport itself. So I went back to my professor and asked him to tell me where can I find the drawings. He looked at me and said "well, that's part of the assignment" and that I need to figure out on my own how to find this information! I tried to ask him again but he would not listen to me. Many time I thought of complaining I didn't" (Female-UAE)

"Last year, one of my American professors was arguing in class against having the mosque inside AUS campus. He argued that in America, everything is separated from religion. Therefore, according to him, how come we call AUS an American university and there is a mosque in the middle of its campus. I feel like he was expecting to have an American colony (so to speak) in the middle of the UAE, which does not make sense to me! I felt he was attacking us" (Male-Iraq)

"American professors have no appreciation of good writing. In my literature review for my research paper my teacher wants me to pick up some information from this paper and some from that paper and put them together and come up with a conclusion. If I understand the material why do I have to cite this and that, I have already read them. I really hate to read what I write in English" (Female-Bahrain)

"One of the things I hate about my writing professors is that they don't give us topics to write about. They always ask us to come up with topics. Why can't they tell me what to write about?" (Female-Palestine)

"It bothers me that many of the professors on this campus are either very young or women. How are we going to deal with them and get wiser if we don't have old professors, of course males" (Male-Egypt)

Appendix B
List of values

Value	Rank
Privacy	
Risk-taking	
Material possessions	
Formality	
Group consensus	
Seniority	
Time	
Spirituality	
Competition	
Silence	
Oral commitment	
Religion	
Honor	
Reputation	
Self-reliance	
Cooperation	
Confrontation	
Openness	
Equality	
Past	
Freedom	
Future	
Face	
Science	
Life	
Death	
History	
Hospitality	