INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPED THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCES IN QATAR: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural competence is a skill required by those who teach in transnational education – that is, at branch campuses located in foreign countries (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Leask, 2004). Despite the strong emphasis that has been put on the importance of having classrooms facilitated by interculturally competent faculty, there are strong indications that only minimal effort has been put into using well-structured professional development programs to build a high level of intercultural competence among faculty who teach transnationally (Gopal, 2011; Hoare, 2013; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Teekens, 2003). Thus, a narrative analysis study was used to investigate the experiences of transnational faculty members regarding the development of their intercultural competence in light of their cultural needs. The data coming from semi-structured interviews were analyzed and coded using MAXQDA-12 data analysis software. Results indicated that intercultural competence is an indispensable skill for faculty working overseas. Additionally, results indicated that transnational faculty members prefer to rely on their local or transnational colleagues to advance their intercultural understanding and skills. Further, results indicated that intercultural development training is critical for new faculty members, however, it is less critical for those who are working in branch campuses which uphold Western standards or in countries where the Western culture tends to prevail. Moreover, exploiting the intercultural opportunities inherent in transnational teaching to the full advantage of faculty members working in international branch campuses emerged as a significant requirement for the proper development of transnational faculty intercultural development.

Keywords: branch campus, culture shock, intercultural competence, transnational education.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Intercultural competence is the collection of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding that as a whole enable individuals to live and interact effectively and appropriately in cross-cultural situations (Deardorff, 2009). Intercultural competence is required not only for faculty members who teach in multicultural classrooms at their home institutions, but also for those who teach in transnational education—that is, who teach at branch campuses in foreign countries (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Leask, 2004).

Both accrediting agencies and the agencies that set policy standards for certified transnational education programs have stressed the importance of giving faculty members adequate preparation for teaching transnationally. According to the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE), which consists of educators, quality assurance agencies, and intergovernmental organizations, faculty members should possess, in addition to their own subject expertise, the cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness required to teach in an international setting (GATE, 1997; Greenholtz, 2000).

Despite the strong emphasis that has been put on the importance of having classrooms facilitated by interculturally competent faculty, there are strong indications that only minimal effort has been put into using well-structured professional development programs to build a high level of intercultural competence among faculty who teach transnationally (Gopal, 2011; Hoare, 2013; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Teekens, 2003). Factors such as disagreement on how intercultural competence is best developed, lack of institutional support (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Gopal, 2011; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Lynch, 2013; Smith, 2014) and vague understanding of faculty members’ intercultural experiences (Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013) stand as barriers to
developing the required skills in faculty members. In general, a wealth of evidence on institution’s engagement in transnational education points to a need to develop stronger support mechanisms to faculty teaching in international branch campuses (Dunn & Wallace, 2007; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013). Hence, the purpose of this doctoral thesis is to explore the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty in light of their cultural needs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Although culturally competent faculty can actively engage diverse learners and can navigate cross-cultural settings appropriately (Deardorff, 2006), the failure to enhance the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty with well-structured intercultural development programs continues to be a cause for concern in higher education (Dunn & Wallace, 2007; Gopal, 2011; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Lynch, 2013; Teekens, 2003). While transnational teaching may foster intercultural competence, the unsupported, on-the-job learning about culture can be a challenging and stressful intercultural experience (Bennett, 1993; Hoare, 2013). Faculty members may learn from the ambiguities they encounter during their transnational teaching, but “their preparedness to learn should not be left to chance lest it does not eventuate” (Hoare, 2013, p. 562).

**Research problem.** For many years and more frequently during the past decade, universities have struggled to acknowledge the need for- and to recognize the value of- well-structured, intercultural development programs geared towards transnational faculty (Ballard, 1987; Freeman, Treleaven, Simpson, Ridings, Ramburuth, Leask, & Caulfield, Simpson, Ridings & Sykes, 2009; Hoare, 2013). Consequently, they have resorted to sporadic strategies, such as informal workshops, debriefings, mentoring by more experienced faculty, learning on-the-job, and begging for an uncertain “sink or swim outcome” (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001;
in order to pursue this development. This is evident in the findings of several research studies, which suggest that faculty members who engage in transnational education programs receive minimal formal preparation (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Gopal, 2011; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Smith, 2009). For instance, in the study in which Gribble & Ziguras (2003) sought to assess the adequacy of the pre-departure cultural training of transnational faculty, the researchers concluded that “there has been less institutional interest in ensuring that lecturers are prepared for the specific rigors of teaching overseas” (p.213). Pre-departure training, when offered, has typically focused on travel logistics and on the history and society of the host country, not on helping faculty members acquire practical knowledge and skills appropriate to the destination. Similarly, in a more recent study, which examined the types of preparation and support given to faculty across 15 universities engaged in transitional teaching, Lynch (2013) found that there is a marked absence of formal institutional support for faculty before, during, and after teaching assignments. In addition to being rudimentary, preparatory sessions were filled in a reactive manner and arranged in response to sudden auditor checks or unforeseen problems. Moreover, they do not consider the varying and complex cultural needs of the faculty. They are not periodically evaluated, followed up on, or updated (Lynch, 2013). The learning potential embedded in the transnational teaching experience has been thoroughly overlooked.

Poorly designed programs as such have become very popular, and both faculty members and transnational program managers generally accept them, to the point that warnings about their pitfalls have come to seem counterintuitive (Hoare, 2013; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001; Ziguras, 2008). Still, these practices risk reinforcing stereotypes and strengthening undesirable attitudes (Friesen, 2011; Hoare, 2013).
Intercultural competence involves a complex set of skills in which certain skills cannot be acquired via college education, but must derive from exposure, firsthand experience, and self-reflection (Stier, 2006). Ongoing research into faculty members’ intercultural experiences does suggest that teaching in a foreign country enriches teachers’ cultural understanding and has the potential to transform their worldviews (Hamza, 2010; Smith, 2014). Nevertheless, unsupported, on-the-job intercultural learning is confrontational and confusing for both the transnational faculty and the people around them (Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013). Interacting with culturally different “others” can be an embarrassing and psychologically stressful experience, whereas careful preparation for cultural interactions may alleviate some of the difficulties associated with cultural contact and may foster higher levels of intercultural competency (Paige & Goode, 2009). Transnational teaching experience is a necessary but insufficient condition in which to develop intercultural competence (Heyward, 2002).

Intercultural scholars have documented that contact with another culture, a phenomenon known as cultural immersion, increases intercultural competence (Canfield, Low & Hovestadt, 2009; Wood & Atkins, 2006). However, intercultural competence is not a skill that develops automatically once people from different cultural backgrounds encounter each other (Hunter, 2008; Lane, 2013; Leask, 2004; MacDonald, 2012). Being among another culture is conducive to intercultural learning and to gaining intercultural competence only when conditions such as guided reflection (Bennett, 1993; Deardorff, 2006), mediation of expert facilitation (Dunn & Wallace, 2006), and frequent cultural contacts are present. Even then, the outcome of successful cultural immersion requires a longer duration of quality cultural contact (Lough, 2011). Or, else, the lack of support for faculty members engaged in transnational teaching paves the way for a higher level of anxiety, creates the potential to reinforce ethnocentrism, and ultimately risks “the
impoverishment of what could have been a dynamic intercultural learning environment” (Hoare, 2013, p. 572).

If institutions do not acknowledge the need for, and recognize the value of, well-structured intercultural development programs geared towards transnational faculty members, then those faculty members will learn a minimal amount from their intercultural experiences and will scarcely transform their worldviews (Hoare, 2013). It is thus worthwhile to gain an in-depth understanding of the faculty’s transnational teaching experiences and to recognize what they found valuable. It is also critical to identify any formal training mechanisms that can specifically address the unique needs of faculty members and that can genuinely assist in the development of the intercultural competencies necessary for successful transnational education.

**Justification for the research problem.** This study seeks to acquire an in-depth understanding of educators’ transnational teaching experiences in relation to the development of intercultural competence. The overarching question of this study is: What are the experiences of transnational faculty who are teaching in international branch campuses? Interviewing faculty members who have had years of experience in transnational education will reveal distinguished features of their intercultural experiences and of their varying and complex cultural needs (Lynch, 2013). To date, the few research studies that have been conducted on the experiences of transnational faculty have focused exclusively on the changing roles of these faculty members, investigating their professional and cultural challenges and exploring their means of preparedness (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Dun & Wallace, 2007; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Haeger, 2007; Lynch, 2013; Seah & Edwards, 2006; Smith, 2009; Teekens, 2003). Although the existing literature on transnational education underscores the importance of preparing faculty members for their intercultural teaching assignments, their perceived intercultural needs and the
manner in which their transnational experience contribute to the development of intercultural competence remain largely undiscussed and only vaguely understood (Dun & Wallace, 2006; Lynch, 2013).

This lack of research to identify the particular needs of transnational faculty members is very surprising, given that the effectiveness of any formal intercultural development program is largely dependent on the needs of those faculty members (Jauregui, 2013). Also, given that educators are the “primary facilitators of students’ learning,” it is imperative that quality intercultural development programs are designed and implemented in order to meet the perceived needs of those faculty members who deliver transnational education (Johnson, 2003, p. 22).

By informing the personnel in internationalization programs of how to enrich faculty members’ intercultural experiences, this study will fill a void in the literature on the development of transnational faculties’ intercultural competence. Program directors, senior management, and faculty members themselves all need to be aware not only of the challenges of transnational education, but also of its components that might enhance institutional intercultural development programs.

Well-structured intercultural development programs that meet the intercultural needs of faculty members would contribute to the success of an institution’s ventures into transnational education (Hoare, 2013; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Debowski, 2005). Additionally, these programs would have a positive effect on the overall international profile of any institution that implements those (Cummings & Finkelstein, 2012).

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** According to Smith (2014), existing literature on transitional education tends to cover areas such as quality assurance of transnational ventures
(McBurnie 2008; Stella, 2006; Woodhouse, 2006); preparation of teaching staff (Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hicks & Jarrett, 2008; Smith, 2009) teaching and learning practices (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Prowse & Goddard, 2010) and challenges (Debowski, 2003; Feast & Bretag, 2005; Leask, 2004b; Lynch, 2013). As such, the existing literature suffers from a shortage of studies in relation to the development of transnational faculty’s intercultural competence. There is a dearth of qualitative research studies regarding transnational faculty experiences and preparedness to teach in the international branch campus (Gopal, 2011). A better understanding of how transnational faculty make sense of their intercultural experience may produce more productive efforts to engage and support these individuals in more meaningful strategies.

Research literature on intercultural competence suggests that intercultural competence is a dynamic, interactive and self-reflective process involving staff and students with the potential to transform perspectives, knowledge and attitudes (Bennett, 2015; Feyen, 2007; Nam, 2011; Smith, 2009; Taylor, 1994). Yet, less attention has been given to the process by which faculty members develop intercultural competence and, in particular, to the various factors that may contribute to the effectiveness of development programs on faculties’ intercultural competence (McAllister and Irvine, 2000).

Few studies have used transformative learning theory to understand how the transnational teaching experience affects faculty’s cultural perspectives and worldviews. Presently, few studies have used the theory of transformative learning by Mezirow (1991) to understand the intercultural experiences of faculty as they are being stimulated to have new perspectives. According to internationalization of teacher education systematic review (2011), no other times
has the importance of intercultural understanding and global competence been greater. This study contributes to the growing literature on the process of achieving intercultural competence.

**Relating the discussion to audiences.** From a conceptual point of view, intercultural competence consists of a set of skills needed by students, faculty members, staff members, program managers, and college and university administrators. This need is the most salient, however, where there are wide cultural differences among the people interacting in a single educational setting, as is the case in transnational education. This study will therefore speak to more than one audience, and its findings should be applicable to more than one group of people. If they are to introduce well-structured intercultural development programs, program managers must first acknowledge and understand the cultural needs that faculty members perceive owing to insufficient intercultural preparation.

**Significance of the Research Problem**

While “Transnational education is not a new phenomenon” (Adam, 2001, p.4), the pace at which it is globally expanding, however, is (Ramsaran & Price, 2003). As of 2011, there were 200 international branch campuses in operation worldwide ((Lawton & Katsomitros, 2012). Thirty seven more were expected to open over the next two years (Lawton & Katsomitros, 2012). This accounts to a 43 percent increase since 2006 (Becker, 2009). Nearly half of the branch campuses are affiliated with American universities, while the other half are associated with Australian or British institutions (Lane 2011).

This large increase provides an important explanation as to why intercultural competence is necessary. Teaching in transnational education is a complex and demanding intercultural environment, involving diversity of individuals, cultures, roles and modes of delivery (Bell &
Keevers, 2014; Dobos, 2011; Leask, Hicks, Kohler & King, 2005; Sanderson, 2011). Cultivating intercultural competence is an important aspect of transnational education. Many researchers have emphasized the need for interculturally competent faculty members, particularly in transnational education (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Teekens, 2003). Many have also posited that interculturally competent faculty members are more skilled in tackling the challenges of culturally diverse classrooms (Deardorff, 2009). Interculturally competent faculty have unique ways of responding to cultural differences in backgrounds, expectations, and educational needs (Beuckelaer, Lievens, & Bücker, 2012). According to some experts in the field, (Beuckelaer et al., 2012; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Leask, 2004), one way to develop a high level of intercultural competence is to take part in a well-designed intercultural competence program.

The significance of this study lies in the effort to reveal the perceptions and responses of transnational faculty members regarding their intercultural experiences and perceived intercultural needs. The knowledge gained from this research can provide program managers with the information required to design efficient intercultural development programs. The faculty members’ perceptions about what is needed for them to develop and grow interculturally adroit can inform program managers of institutions engaged in transnational education. The results of this study will provide a platform for further investigations by other educational institutions that are equally involved in internationalization of their higher education.

By listening to faculty voices it is hoped that each faculty participant perceives a need for a well-structured, continuously updated and highly efficient development program. It is also hoped that each will make a specific suggestion on the basis of his or her unique experience. In particular, the findings of this study will specifically describe the level of faculty preparedness
and the impact of that preparedness on the success of transnational teaching. This description will add to the body of knowledge on transnational education as well as on intercultural competence. Hence, it is important that faculty members’ own perceptions of intercultural competence needs be explored. It is also critical that the aspects of faculty’s experience that were most conducive to their intercultural competency be identified.

As the world becomes a smaller place and old boundaries break down, countries are beginning to relate to each other in ways they have not before. To succeed, they need professionals, such as faculty members, who can function effectively in an international global environment. If faculty members lack the needed intercultural competence, negative stereotypes can continue to be perpetuated, and the quality of transnational education is likely to suffer.

**Positionality Statement**

As a former student at a branch campus, an international student at American universities, and a faculty member at American institutions, I grew up with culturally diverse peers, students, and colleagues. Throughout my college and professional life, I have had opportunities to develop my own intercultural competence and to adjust my attitudes toward culturally different “others.” As an academic advisor to international students sponsored by foreign universities, I know first-hand how intercultural competence can be translated into professional practice. Do all faculty members get the chance to do so? Do all managers support their faculty members grow more culturally competent?

In approaching this study, I may be mistakenly assuming that faculty members who are hired to teach transnationally carry themselves as experts in their fields, are not open to other cultures, and are resistant to change. I do suppose faculty members to be invested in passing on
to students their knowledge of a particular subject regardless of the students’ cultural backgrounds. I also presume that, since the students are the ones pursuing a western-style educational experience, transnational programs require cultural adjustment on their part and not just on the part of their teachers. In light of my own educational, cultural, and professional background, I find it interesting to explore faculty members’ experiences and identify faculty’s perceived cultural needs.

However, the needs of faculty members are not the only predictors of how interculturally competent they are or are willing to become. Adequate support from program managers is very important to their developing intercultural competencies. I am inclined to think that formal intercultural development programs are not being put in place because upper-level managers are not giving priority to such programs. Program managers do not value these programs.

Having reflected on my assumptions, I find it likely that my outlook on faculty members tints my own interpretation of my findings. It is thus critical that I listen to my participants with objectivity and neutrality. I need to broaden the scope of my thinking to accommodate not only my own perspective, but also those of transnational faculty members.

I truly believe that unless a sustained effort is made to develop the intercultural competence of faculty members, they will seamlessly learn from their own experience, particularly in culturally complex settings such as those they will encounter in transnational education. As a researcher and an educator, my objective is to contribute, even if only incrementally, to the quality of students’ education through the facilitation of formal intercultural development programs for transnational faculty.

**Research Questions**
To understand how transnational faculty members make sense of their intercultural experience, as well as the type of support they need to teach in international branch campuses, this study seeks to answer the following overarching question: What are the experiences of transnational faculty who are teaching in international branch campuses? Using Mezirow (1991) transformative learning theory, the study focuses on three sub-questions:

1. How do transnational faculty members understand intercultural competence?
2. What strategies do transnational faculty members employ to develop their intercultural competence?
3. What types of personal changes do faculty members undergo as a result of their transnational teaching experience?

**Theory of Transformative Learning**

This study is informed by the application of Jack Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning to intercultural experiences. The theory of transformative learning of Jack Mezirow implies that working in an environment which is culturally different from one’s own is an incongruent experience which, when advanced by critical reflection and rational discourse, produces a faculty who is interculturally more competent. Mezirow’s theory is an adult learning theory that is grounded in cognitive and developmental psychology. The theory has three major components: Disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and critical discourse (Taylor, 1998).

**Disorienting dilemma.** Mezirow’s (1991) disorienting dilemma is the precursor for transformation and the catalyst of change that leads people to develop a new frame of reference or meaning perspective. Such a dilemma results in a significant level of disturbance and disorder. It could be the result of extreme circumstances, such as the death of a loved one, a debilitating
accident, a life threatening illness, or a divorce. Or it could be the result of more routine activities, such as engaging in professional development, reading a disturbing book, attending a new university, or changing careers.

An extensive, multidisciplinary body of literature reports that employees working in a foreign country, such as transnational educators teaching in an international branch campus, encounter unfamiliar cultural environments, including signs, symbols, gestures, words, customs and norms (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Hoare, 2013; Debowski, 2003; Smith, 2009). Transnational faculty’s reactions to this unfamiliarity includes a flux of physically and emotionally challenging responses such as fear, sense of loss, rejection, confusion in role definition, anxiety and frustration, and in particular, culture shock (Oberg, 1960). Previously considered an overly stressful experience requiring medical attention, culture shock has been seen more recently as a transformational learning experience that can be fulfilling both personally and professionally (Bochner, 2003).

Mezirow’s disorienting dilemma is similar in nature to culture shock, which is “a necessary precondition for change and growth, as individuals strive to regain their inner balance by adapting to the demands and opportunities of the intercultural situation” (Kim & Ruben, 1988, p. 310). A disorienting dilemma of this kind leads adults to examine their frames of reference and meaning perspectives critically (Mezirow, 1990).

**Critical reflection.** Critical reflection refers to questioning the integrity and critiquing the presuppositions on which previously held assumptions and habits of mind have been built: “[I]t is the process of turning our attention to the justification for what we know, feel, believe and act upon” (Mezirow 1995, p. 46). Mezirow (1995) considers critical reflection to be the most
distinguishing characteristic of adult learning; only in adulthood does a person become critically aware of meaning perspectives that were acquired uncritically during childhood through socialization or emotional relationships. Critical reflection occurs in response to a critical awareness of inconsistencies among thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Bennett (1993) argues that development of intercultural competence should be based on critical self-reflection; otherwise the learning journey can be very confrontational and threatening. Intercultural competence involves a complex set of skills in which certain skills cannot be acquired via college education, but must derive from exposure, firsthand experience, and self-reflection (Stier, 2006).

Triggered by a disorienting dilemma, transnational faculty may critically reflect upon their intercultural experience and become more aware of their cultural dispositions. They can then securely and effectively develop the capacity to change their perspectives and adjust their behaviors to fit the norms of other cultures while marinating their own identity (Paige & Goode, 2009).

Smith (2014) empirically tested the proposition that “flying faculty” teaching in host countries for short periods could foster transformative professional development. She explored the extent to which flying faculty intercultural experiences can be the ‘disorienting dilemmas’ that provoke critical reflection and foster transformational learning. Using the biographical-narrative interpretive method (BNIM), she interviewed five male academics three times about their experiences teaching in a foreign country. The findings were that pre-departure support for transnational teaching hardly exists. Culture shock does trigger transformation; however, post-visit support that focuses on ongoing conversational approaches and targets faculty’s cultural
needs might be particularly advantageous for fostering critical reflection and triggering transformational learning.

**Rational discourse.** Rational discourse is the third theme of the transformative learning theory. It is defined as the ability to engage in a logical and objective manner with peers, colleagues, or friends on personally held beliefs and assumptions (Mezirow, 1997). Unlike usual, everyday discussions, rational discourse is used when there is reason to question the credibility of what has been asserted or the authenticity of the person making the assertion (Mezirow, 1991a). Discourse is the medium through which critical reflection is implemented, experience is reflected upon, assumptions and beliefs are scrutinized, and meaning perspectives are ultimately transformed. The validity of the perspective is established through rational discourse.

**Relevance and purpose of the theory.** The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of transnational faculty in relation to the development of their intercultural competence and the identification of their cultural needs. In the context of intercultural experiences and transformational learning, it is Mezirow’s theory “that has most often been referred to” (Feyen, 2007, p.4). Hence, employing the theory of transformative learning to interpret the meaning of faculty’s intercultural experiences and to understand their unique needs seems very appropriate.

Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning offers the advantage of approaching faculty’s development of intercultural competence from a learning perspective. Unlike other approaches that seek to identify the characteristics of employees indicative of their intercultural
competence, the learning approach provides a suitable lens through which the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty are analyzed and interpreted (Feyen, 2007; Taylor, 1994).

Mezirow’s conceptualization of transformative learning conforms to what the literature has previously suggested about the process of developing intercultural competence (Taylor, 1994). The literature seems to indicate that intercultural competence is a transformational process whereby transnational faculty members alter their frame of reference in order to adjust to the demands of the host country. Kim and Ruben (1988) consider intercultural competence a transformational process in which the “old” person changes and the intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes recently acquired construct a “new” person at a higher level of assimilation. Similarly, researchers have noted that the development of intercultural competence is more than a list of skills to be checked off: “[I]t is a conscientiousness which transforms an individual’s perception of the world and imparts a sense of unity between self and surrounding” (Mansell, 1981, p. 99).

In his seminal study, Intercultural Competency: A Transformative Learning Process, Edward W. Taylor (1994) argued that developing intercultural competence is a learning process. Transformative learning theory serves as a model for this learning process. Understanding the intricacies of this learning process facilitates the identification of the changes that take place and the manner in which these changes have occurred. This understanding is “essential to developing more effective education programs and identifying factors that would aid the sojourner during his or her intercultural experience.” (p.154).

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study is to explore the intercultural experience and identify the perceived cultural needs of transnational faculty members who teach at
international branch campus established by an American University. Chapter one, “Introduction” provided a brief overview of the research problem and justified the need of the study on the basis of the deficiencies existing in the literature. The chapter also introduced the components of transformative learning Theory of Mezirow (1991) as useful theoretical framework to guide the study. Chapter two, “Review of the Literature” presents a review of the literature on the basis of the research question. Chapter three, “Methodology” describes the research design and the methods of collecting data from research participants as well as from other sources. Chapter four, “Research Findings” will state the results of the study. Chapter five, “Discussion of Research Findings” will further elaborate on the findings. Limitations, recommendations for practices and suggestions for future studies will conclude this thesis.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

While the growth of transnational education has generated many benefits for higher education, it has also engendered numerous failures (Altbach, 2004a; Mazzarol, Soutar, & Seng, 2003; Ziguras & MacBurnie, 2011). Inadequate cultural preparation of transnational faculty by their home institutions harms the institutions’ international profiles and jeopardizes the quality of their transnational education (Healey, 2014). In particular, intercultural development programs that are based on informal debriefing and casual mentoring will hardly meet the cultural needs of transnational faculty or enhance their intercultural experience (Lynch, 2013). Teaching in the context of transnational education is a complex undertaking involving a diversity of individuals, cultures, and roles (Dobos, 2011). Transnational faculty have the opportunity to grow more culturally competent as a result of teaching in the transnational environment; however, their cultural growth must be well supported in order for it to be realized (Hoare, 2013). If home institutions do not enhance the intercultural experience of their faculty with well-structured intercultural development programs, the quality of their transnational education will be significantly jeopardized, and the students’ learning experience will be negatively impacted (Gopal, 2011; Haeger, 2007; Hoare, 2013; Leask et al., 2005). This literature review provides a framework for emphasizing the need to adequately prepare transnational educators for their teaching assignments, and the strategies that have been used to cultivate faculties’ intercultural competence.

The literature review will begin by providing an overview of transnational education. Then, it will delineate the basic constituents of intercultural competence. Additionally, it will discuss how intercultural competence can be developed and assessed. Further, this review will focus on the need for institutional support and the role of intercultural experience in promoting
transformative learning and fostering intercultural competence. A review of literature featuring
the importance of enhancing intercultural experience with well-structured intercultural
development programs may justify the validity of studying intercultural competence in the
context of transnational education.

Transnational Education

Transnational education, also called offshore, cross-border, or borderless education,
denotes any “teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a different country [the
host country] from that in which the institution providing the education is based [the home
country]” (GATE 1997, p. 1). Implied in this definition is that people, providers, programs, or
projects and services are to cross national borders, and the countries involved are labeled as the
home country and the host country.

Transnational education can be conducted under four different models, depending on the
type of movement across borders (Knight, 2003b). The first model involves the movement of
professors, scholars, researchers, teaching experts, and research activities. In the second model,
the institution moves to establish a physical presence in the form of a branch campus in the host
country. The third model involves the movement of educational programs between domestic and
foreign countries through partnership arrangements. The fourth model includes a wide range of
education-related activities such as projects, joint curriculum development, e-learning platforms,
and professional development.

The second model is at the core of transnational education programs. On the basis of this
model, Knight (2005) developed a typology of providers’ mobility that includes branch
campuses, independent institutions, acquisition mergers, study centers or teaching sites,
affiliation networks, and virtual universities (Stella & Bhushan, 2011). The current study is mainly concerned with the branch campus modality of transnational education.

An international branch campus, also termed satellite or offshore campus (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011), represents a brick-and-mortar structure that operates in the host country under the name of the home institution. It includes a library, laboratory, research facilities, and classrooms. It is wholly or partially owned by the degree-awarding institution, which facilitates face-to-face instruction of courses in more than one field of study (Lane, 2011). It is managed by permanent staff and employs at least some permanent academic staff. The student body in the branch campus is composed of students who are residents of the host country or its neighboring regions (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007).

The establishment of branch campuses in different locations around the world has been responsible for the significant increase in transnational education (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2012), a Britain-based research group, stated that as of 2011, there were 200 international branch campuses in operation worldwide. Thirty-seven more were expected to open over the next two years (Lawton & Katsomitros, 2012). This is a 43 percent increase since 2006 (Becker, 2009). It has been estimated that by 2025, transnational education will account for 44 percent of the total demand for international education (Bohm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002).

Of the total number of branch campuses operating worldwide, over one-third are located in the Arab region, including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). United Arab Emirates hosts the most
international branch campuses, 37 institutions (Lawton & Katsomitros, 2012) while United States (Fischer, 2012), followed by Australia, and United Kingdom are the largest source countries of international branch campuses globally (Becker, 2009; Hatakenada, 2004).

The literature in the field has identified several factors influencing the recorded growth of transnational education programs. Chief among these factors is the decline in government funding at the institutions’ home countries and the ensuing need for universities to generate revenue from other sources (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Lane & Brown, 2004; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003). Further, home institutions are driven by the need to enhance their international profile and establish a global presence (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Additionally, the overall demand for higher education is increasing at an exponential rate (Stella & Bhushan, 2011). The fast-growing younger generation in developing countries is exerting pressure on its domestic education systems. However, due to scarce resources and financial limitations, the countries in question are unable to meet their local demands or expand their national education systems. Hence, these countries turn to transnational education to satisfy the local demands and enhance their higher education capacity-building mechanisms (Knight, 2011).

From an academic viewpoint, transnational education enriches the intellectual capital of the home institution and stimulates its academic programs and research activities (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Leask, 2003; Stella & Bhushan, 2011). The physical proximity of different research groups to one another facilitates better understanding of other cultures, brings about intercultural learning, and fosters personal growth (Knight, 2011). This in turn may lead to mutual understanding in multicultural societies (Varghese, 2009). When Western institutions provide a physical presence overseas, students in the host country have the opportunity to earn a
degree from a reputable university without having to travel abroad (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000; Pyvis & Chapman, 2005).

For the host country, transnational education polishes students’ employable skills while reducing capital flow and brain drain—the emigration of intellectual people from a particular country (Khadira, 2007). Finally, this type of education improves access to higher education in underdeveloped countries where demand far exceeds supply (Bedi & Wong, 2013) and enhances teaching of international students at home (Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Smith, 2009).

Despite the many opportunities provided by transnational education to all stakeholders involved, an expansive multidisciplinary body of literature has reported that transnational faculty experience a range of challenges (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Debowski, 2003, 2008; Feast & Bretag, 2005; Heyward, 2002; Leask, 2004; Keevers, Lefoe, Leask, Sultan, Ganesharatnam, Loh & Lim, 2014; Smith, 2009; Ziguras, 2003). At times, these challenges stem from inequalities in power relations and the need to ensure quality standards across partner institutions (Hicks & Jarrett, 2008; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). However, they are often the result of differences in cultural expectations and inattention to issues of cultural empathy and cultural sensitivity (Bovill, Jordan & Watters, 2015; Dunn & Wallace, 2004, 2006; Garson, 2005; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hicks & Jarrett, 2008; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Pyvis, 2011). The following section will review the types of challenges that transnational faculty members face when transitioning into a new culture and teaching in a culturally different environment.

**Cultural Challenges.** Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) define culture as a collective programming of the mind that includes patterns of thinking, customs, values, and social behaviors that distinguish the members of one group of people from another. Culture is derived from one’s social environment, is never static, and so “it acts as a complex influence on
transnational teaching” (Bovill, Jordan & Watters, 2014, p. 21). Important cultural values and norms start at home and continue to develop in social settings, informing attitudes about knowledge and authority. Hallak (2000) states that “no education is neutral to culture” (p. 16). National cultural is reflected in a nation’s schools and universities (Lynch, 2013). According to Teckens (2003), “coded messages in speech, humor, body language, personal relations, and so much more make the classroom a miniature country, reflecting all the social and cultural interaction in society at large” (p. 114). A plethora of studies, mainly in the area of linguistics, illuminate the effects of culture on a person’s cognitive style, behavior, and modes of learning (Ginsberg, 1992). For instance, in Dunworth’s (2008) study of transnational English language teaching programs, he found that “cultural misunderstandings and communication failures were cited frequently as causes of problems while positive experiences were also often explained as the result of good communication and shared cultural values” (p. 98).

Teaching in transnational education exposes faculty to multifaceted settings involving a diversity of individuals, cultures, roles, and contexts (Dobos, 2011; Keevers, Lefoe, Leask, Sultan, Ganesharatnam, Loh & Lim, 2014; Sanderson, 2011). Literature suggests that initial interactions within this milieu are likely to engender culture shock (Di Leonardo, 1984; Smith, 2014). Culture shock, a term coined by Cora Dubois in 1951 and first introduced by Kalvero Oberg in 1960 is a “disorientating experience of suddenly finding that the perspectives, behaviors and experience of an individual or group, or whole society are not shared by others” (Furnham, 2010, p. 87). Culture shock was initially deemed as an overly stressful condition requiring medical attention (Bochner, 2003; Heyward, 2002; Taft, 1986). Although later research on this phenomenon shifted away from the clinical understanding of the term shock to the non-clinical understanding of the word, culture shock can be a devastating experience (Bochner,
Coping with the difficulties associated with culture shock requires considerable effort in addition to a transformation of a person’s ways of thinking and frames of reference (Smith, 2014).

In their narrative of the experiences of two Western faculty members working in Hong Kong in a university department of education, Bodycott and Walker (2000) state that teaching in a foreign country is beset by a number of challenges. Many faculty members working offshore experience stress related to high levels of anxiety and isolation from family and friends (Seah & Edwards, 2006). Many feel that their identities, their roles as facilitators of learning, and their approaches to teaching and learning are tested in every aspect of their work (Hebbani, 2007; Fast, 2000; Smith, 2009). Burton and Robinson (1999) describe faculty teaching in international settings as “a savior, as a libertarian, as an agent of empowerment, and as a subjugator and colonist” (p. 21). Local staff view transnational faculty as invaders, carrying “Western cultural and educational ideologies and values” (Bodycott & Walker, 2000, p. 81). Faculty view themselves as “[saviors] that is, bringing the best of the West to a developing country” (p. 81). This preconception may cause further cultural divides between faculty members and their colleagues. In the narrative, the foreign faculty members describe how their lack of experience and uninformed assertions had led them to believe that it is the students’ responsibility to adapt to their way of teaching. However, their recent experiences have taught them to rethink these beliefs. They now argue that “the development of intercultural understandings and related teaching practices must begin with the teacher’s attitude” (p. 81).

Faculty expectations of student behaviors are deeply rooted in their cultural perceptions (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). However, these expectations have at times led faculty to misinterpret certain classroom behaviors of transnational students (Bovril, Jordan & Watters,
Faculty may misconstrue certain types of behaviors as stemming from lack of interest on the part of the students, when in reality these behaviors stem from students’ definitions of respect for the teacher (Boyle, 2000). Wrong interpretations of students’ behaviors on the basis of misunderstood cultural assumptions were found to cause frustration and disappointment in both faculty and students (Dyer, 1998; Long, 1999).

The differing learning styles of students put extra pressure on faculty (Heffeman, Morrison, Basu & Sweeney, 2010; Sia, 2015; Teekens, 2003). Learning styles are defined as “characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment” (Ladd & Ruby, 1999, p. 363). Recognition of students’ learning styles is key to effective teaching (Boles, Pillay & Raj, 1999; Felder & Silverman, 1988). Research findings have demonstrated that when teaching styles are compatible with students’ learning styles, students will retain information longer and will have a more positive learning experience (Charkins, O’Toole & Wetzel, 1985; Felder & Silverman, 1988). However, transnational education serves students with differing learning styles (Hamza, 2009; Ladd et al., 1999). For instance, Middle Eastern students grew up in a passive education system that rewards absorption of knowledge and intensive rote learning (Russell, 2004). There is a lack of emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Burns, 2014; Mohamad & Abdul Rashid, 2006). Students are expected to regard instructors as a higher authority (Hamza, 2009). Students hardly ever engage in teamwork, lead an active classroom discussion, or raise questions. They prefer to be lectured and assessed on memorization of clear facts over critical analysis (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2012; Mohamad & Abdul Rashid, 2006). Hence, transnational faculty members need to be culturally sensitive to these differences (Heffeman et al., 2010; Sia, 2015).
Inevitably, confronting these challenges requires a complex level of intercultural competence. Dunn and Wallace (2006) state that “there is a range of skills, competencies and attitudes needed by those who teach in international settings” (p. 360). Leask (2006a) notes that “transnational teachers need particular skills, knowledge and personal attributes in order to be successful in what is a complex and demanding intercultural environmental” (p. 7). Teekens (2003) maintains that teaching in intercultural classrooms requires a specific set of skills, including language skills, knowledge, and reflection on personal attitudes toward diversity.

On the other hand, preparedness of faculty for teaching in transnational contexts has been highly underscored in the literature (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Dunn & Wallace, 2004, 2006a; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Haeger, 2007; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Sia, 2015). However, approaches to preparing faculty have been inconsistent. Gribble and Ziguras’s (2003) respondents propose that prior experience in teaching international students at home is an adequate preparation for transnational teaching. Whereas Leask (2004) argues that teaching international students at home, where Western culture is dominant, is qualitatively different from teaching students offshore (at the branch campus site). She also advocates for the reconstruction of the transnational teaching team to include local tutors who, as cultural insiders, can highly assist in the understanding of the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, Debowski (2003) posits that there is a need to provide professional development experiences in areas such as cross-cultural communication, while Smith (2014) contends that teaching overseas is a unique experience that can stimulate transformational learning through critical reflection. However, Kim (2008) believes that such a transformation is likely to occur whenever there are multiple intercultural encounters over a long period of time. Finally, Sia (2015) posits that “developing
intercultural competence in transnational faculty members can be included in a more comprehensive, integrated approach instead of through random, ad-hoc approaches that often occur at institutions” (p. 66).

Prior to elaborating on the specifics of these studies and while being informed by these perspectives, the following key questions arise: What is intercultural competence, and how is it assessed? How salient is intercultural competence in the context of transnational education in the Middle East? Even more importantly, how can intercultural competence of transnational faculty be developed, and what is the role of experience in cultivating this set of competencies? Furthermore, is teaching in a transnational setting a transformative experience? While this study investigates the experiences of transnational faculty in order to identify their understanding of intercultural competence and to understand the reflection of their experience on transforming their cultural perspectives, previous studies have addressed similar questions.

**Understanding Intercultural Competence**

Explicit understanding of intercultural competence is required to assist in the development of such competence through well-structured programs and to be able to monitor its progress (Fantini, 2000). The following section will discuss the terms and the approaches taken by authors to explain this concept.

Intercultural competence is a multifaceted construct whose dimensions may not be captured in a definition composed of one or two sentences. Much of the research on this concept tends to focus on identifying characteristics indicative of intercultural competence or on developing models to conceptualize it (Taylor, 1994). While some studies have depicted intercultural competence as a developmental process which engages the learner cognitively, affectively and behaviorally (McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby,
none have considered it a learning process. As such, it may be initiated by an incongruent experience, yet is better maintained by well-structured developmental programs.

Scholars have explored intercultural competence under many different synonyms including the following: Cross-cultural adjustment (Benson, 1978), cross-cultural competence (Ruben, 1989), intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993), cross-cultural effectiveness (Vulpe, Kealey Protheroe & MacDonald, 2001), intercultural competence (Dinges, 1983), intercultural communication competence (Sercu, 2004; Spitzberg, 1989), international competence, culture learning (Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2002) among many others. This study will use the term “intercultural competence” since the term intercultural is not “bounded by any specific cultural attributes” (Kim & Ruben, 1992, p. 404) and it is used by many scholars (Deardorff, 2004).

While there is no clear and consistent definition of intercultural competence, there are some common notions and an emerging consensus around its components (Deardorff, 2009; Fantini, 2009). Among the early definitions are those of Tewksbury (1957) who listed characteristics of internationally mature persons; Hanvey (1976), who outlined the interdisciplinary dimensions of global education, such as perspective consciousness, cross-cultural awareness and participation in local, national and international setting; and Benson (1978), who listed the skills required for successful overseas adjustment. Later definitions, however, were those of scholars who posited that intercultural competence should be understood from the perspective of interpersonal communication theories (Spitzberg, 1989). Hence, those scholars did not only focus on the individual characteristics, skills and abilities of each person, but also stressed the manner in which individuals communicate with each other (Pusch, 1994; Taylor, 1994). They cautioned that too often the definition of intercultural competence focused
on the person, “with little attention to the dynamics of the situation they find themselves in…” (Pusch, 1994, p. 205). They argued that successful intercultural experiences are related to the ability to withstand psychological stress, effective communication, and ability to establish interpersonal relationships (Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman, 1978). Inevitably, these scholars concluded that there is no definite set of characteristics that guarantees competence in all intercultural relationships and situations; rather, intercultural competence is contextual and dependent on the situations within which the communication occurs (Lustig & Koester, 2003). This view agrees with the view of other scholars who noted that the term “competence” is misleading if viewed from an instrumental skills perspective since it gives little weight to the importance of the socio-cultural context and attitudes that inform abilities to engage in intercultural situations (Trede, Bowles and Bridges, 2013).

Darla K. Deardorff (2004) made a great contribution to the literature of intercultural competence in a higher education setting as well. In her study entitled The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States (2004), Deardorff sought to determine a definition of intercultural competence as agreed upon by nationally-known intercultural experts, including Janet Bennett, Michael Byram, Mary Jan Collier, Mitchell Hammer, Michael Paige, and Brian Spitzberg, among many others. The primary findings of Deardorff’s research included the experts’ preference for a general definition of intercultural competence that would continue to evolve as scholars further refined it through ongoing research.

Deardorff’s (2004) study concluded that the highest-rated general definition of intercultural competence among panel members was the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and
attitudes” (p. 184). Effectiveness in intercultural communication is demonstrated when “people are able to achieve desired personal outcomes” (Wiseman, 2002, p. 209). Appropriateness, on the other hand, is achieved when the “actions of the communicators fit the expectations and demands of the situation” (Straub, Weidemann, & Weidemann, 2007, p. 41). Including effectiveness and appropriateness in the definition of intercultural competence becomes central, in particular, when facing the challenge of assessing intercultural competence (Fantini, 2000).

It is worthwhile to note that, although Deardorff (2004) offers the strongest and most specific definition of intercultural competence (LaRocco, 2011), this definition was derived from the consensus of Western scholars who held Western values. These values may conflict with other cultural norms (Deardorff, 2009). In addition, the Western perspective has been noted for its inefficiency and limitations in bringing forth particularities when conceptualizing intercultural competence (Dalib, Harun, & Yussoff, 2014). For instance, the unit of analysis for intercultural competence in Western perspectives is focused on the individual, while non-Western cultures often place more emphasis on interpersonal relationships. Hence, the lens through which the phenomenon of intercultural competence is being viewed must be reexamined before Deardorff’s definition can be fully embraced; otherwise, researchers might run the risk of misinterpreting certain types of behavior (Chen & Miike, 2006).

Summing it up, Fantini (2000) clarifies that intercultural competence is a construct with various components, including three domains: “1) the ability to develop and maintain relationships, 2) the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and 3) the ability to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others” (p. 27). Intercultural competence has four dimensions: “awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge…and
proficiency in the host tongue” (Fantini, 2000, p. 28). Intercultural competence has multiple manifestations, and it is often viewed as a process of development with various levels.

**Intercultural Competence Models.** Recognizing the need for interculturally competent individuals and lacking the measure to develop or assess intercultural competence (Byram, 1997, 2003) led to the development of more elaborate conceptual models that focus on context (Martin, Hammer, & Bradford, 1994) and process (Hajeck & Giles, 2003). Spitzberg and Changnon’s (2009) chapter in Deardorff’s (2009) study serves to delineate the important differences between the contemporary models of intercultural competence by classifying them into six different categories. Compositional models, the first category, identify hypothetical components such as traits, skills, and characteristics that are indicative of competent intercultural interactions without specifying the relations among them. Co-orientational models focus on conceptualizing the mutual understanding and shared meaning achieved through intercultural interactions. Developmental models portray the development of intercultural competence as a process that evolves with time. Adaptational models envision the existence of multiple interactions that interdepend on each other throughout the process of adjustment. Finally, causal-path models reflect specified interrelationships among components, examining how they influence each other and lead to a set of outcomes that denote competence. Of immediate relevance to this study is Bennett’s (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) and Deardorff’s process model of intercultural competence (2006).

The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity by the intercultural communication scholar Milton J. Bennett (1993) is among the most prevalent of the intercultural sensitivity models discussed in the literature. According to Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003), “The underlying assumption of the model is that as one’s experience of cultural difference becomes
more complex and sophisticated, one’s potential competence in intercultural relations increases” (p. 423). Based on the core concept of intercultural sensitivity, Bennett’s (1993) developmental model was designed “to explain the observed and reported experiences of people in intercultural situations” (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 162). As such, it is a model of cognitive development that is based on the personal construct theory of Kelly (1963), which posits that being in the vicinity of cultural events is not what fosters understanding; rather, understanding is fostered by reflecting and re-reflecting on the significance of the experience.

Bennett (1993) conceptualizes intercultural competence as a developmental process model that is composed of three ethnocentric stages and three ethnorelative stages that exist along a continuum (Figure 1). The ethnocentric stages, in which the experiences of an individual’s own culture are central to reality, take place in decreasing levels of ethnocentrism (denial, defense, and minimization). The ethnorelative stages, in which other cultures are considered worthwhile, take place in increasing levels of ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). Empathy, often referenced in other definitions of intercultural competence, is central to ethnorelativism; it is defined by Bennett (1993) as the “ability to experience some aspect of reality differently from what is given by one’s own culture” (p. 53).

People who are in the denial stage of ethnocentrism have limited knowledge of cultural differences. They experience their own cultures as the only authentic ones, and they assume that their worldviews are the only valid ones. In the defense stage, on the other hand, individuals tend to recognize cultural differences, but they might feel threatened by these, and they consider their own cultures as superior to all other cultures. They also might come to idealize and view another culture uncritically. In the minimization stage, people learn to value cultural similarities over
cultural differences. Similarities become the most important aspect of their relationships with other cultures.

Moving to the stage of acceptance represents a major change in an individual’s worldview, a shift away from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. During this stage, curiosity about and understanding of other cultures begins to grow. Other cultures begin to be viewed as viable. Stage five, adaptation, reflects a shift in an individual’s cultural frame of reference as he or she adapts his/her thinking and behavior to other cultural contexts. Adaptation is central to intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009). In the sixth and final stage, integration, people are not only sensitive to other cultures, but also able to integrate alternative cultures into their worldviews. Individuals who have reached the integration stage of ethnorelativism have developed competencies that are highly necessary for teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, such as perspective taking and reflection skills (McAlister & Irvine, 2000). Although Bennett identifies six stages in this continuum, he does conclude that his model is not comprehensive. Other stages might develop or become necessary as societies and individuals evolve (Olsen & Kroeger, 2001).
Figure 1. Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Adapted from Bennett, 1993)
DeJaeghere and Zhang (2008) used the DMIS to determine the relationship between professional development and teachers’ perceptions of intercultural sensitivity and competence in their classrooms. The study was part of a larger action research study in an urban, Midwestern U.S. school district. The findings suggest that professional development on cultural issues has positive correlations with and a large impact on teachers’ perceived intercultural competence. However, the specific types of professional development that contribute to intercultural competence have yet to be determined.

The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity can also be used to identify the training and educational needs of client populations and to assess training’s effectiveness. This model is a valuable guide in helping educators to design developmental programs that can facilitate learners’ growth (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). In addition, much of the research on intercultural development is based on the DMIS model because it was a breakthrough in the unremittingly evolving definition of intercultural competence. However, like any other model, DMIS has limitations. For one, “it cannot capture all of the intricacies and dynamics of intercultural development as they occur in the real world” (Paige, 2004, p. 80).

The DMIS model, however, provides a useful framework for understanding teachers’ cross-cultural growth; it also grants conceptual insight into how teachers can be more effective with their culturally diverse students. M. J. Bennett’s (1993) model has been highly influential for educators ever since it was first created. It has many advantages and uses, not the least of which is helping to determine the needs of transnational faculty members in accordance with their levels of intercultural sensitivity. The model is an especially important cultural mentoring tool for international education professionals (Deardorff, 2009).
Based on the unanimous agreement of intercultural experts, Deardorff (2008) proposed a process-oriented model of intercultural competence that encompasses three key elements: attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills. The attitudes that emerged in this study as facets of intercultural competence include respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery. Knowledge is defined to consist of cultural and sociolinguistic awareness, a deep familiarity with the culture, and an understanding of other worldviews. The skills that are related to intercultural competence, according to the study, are observation, listening, and assessment. Deardorff argues that an individual can begin the process of becoming interculturally competent at any given point; however, attitudes are a good place to start (Deardorff, 2009; Gopal, 2011).

Deardorff’s process model (Figure, 2) can also be used as a valuable guide and practical framework for preparing faculty to teach in international branch campuses. However, their intercultural competency must extend beyond acquiring the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to adapt to other cultures, manage cultural conflicts, and learn intercultural sensitivities (Gopal, 2011). While there are lengthy lists that describe which knowledge, skills, and attitudes constitute intercultural competence (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Yershova, DeJaeghere, & Mestenhasuer, 2000), these lists are just excellent starters for gauging the characteristics that are appropriate for any specific intercultural situation; no list is applicable to all cultural contexts and conditions. Bennett (2009) and Perry and Southwell (2011) observe that cultural knowledge is not equivalent to intercultural competence, since a person can be well-read on a particular aspect of a foreign culture, yet unable to interact smoothly with foreign counterparts. This gap between knowledge and competence might be caused by giving primacy to the cognitive domain while underestimating the development of affective and behavioral capacities. The section that follows highlights the importance of the process inherent to intercultural competence development.
Assessment of Intercultural Competence

Attempts to develop intercultural competence often draw attention to its assessment (Fantini, Arias-Galicia, & Guay, 2001). Assessing the intercultural competence of transnational faculty is especially important when specific intercultural insensitivities need to be identified and equivalent interventions need to be initiated (Fantini, 2009). Assessment can help in determining the effectiveness of the particular intervention program, and it also contributes to the conceptualization and refinement of intercultural competence models. Research indicates that intercultural competence can and should be assessed (Fantini, 2009; Deardorff, 2011; Steward, 2009). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods seems appropriate for this task (Deardorff, 2009). However, just as scholars have often disagreed on how to define intercultural competence or identify its core components, they have also disagreed on how to assess it.

An assessment tool must suit its purpose (Perry & Southwell, 2011). Whereas most educators are proficient at assessing knowledge and skills, abilities and attitudes are rarely included in traditional assessment forms (Fantini, 2009). Nonetheless, evaluators who are involved in international activities are often not seeking traditional quantified documentation such as letter grades; rather, they are concerned with evidence of intercultural competency and progress towards it (Fantini, 2009). Researchers have posited that a variety of methods, such as observations, interviews, written reflections, and portfolios, should be used to assess intercultural competence with more authenticity and possibly more accuracy (Byram, 1997; Sleicher & Burke, 1999; Mendenhall, Stahl, Ehnert, Oddou, Osland, & Kuhlmann, 2004). However, a review of the literature on this topic reveals that most of the existing assessment tools are predominantly self-reported instruments (Deardorff, 2004). What is often missing, at least in the area of intercultural education, is an assessment of the effectiveness of communication and the
appropriateness of behavior. These abilities can only be measured when using instruments that extend beyond self-reporting to include the perspectives of others.

Currently, it is not clear which assessment tools are most effective. This is owing to the many ways of conceptualizing intercultural competence and to the differing focuses of the various tools. Most assessments focus on the end result and disregard the process, thereby providing an incomplete picture of an individual’s intercultural competence development. Additionally, some assessment tools address composite abilities while others address subcomponents of intercultural competence. Furthermore, some instruments focus on language fluency instead of emphasizing the cultural aspects of competence, while some do just the opposite. Other instruments stress international rather than intercultural competence and thereby exclude differences within national boundaries; still others are simply confusing, and their focuses are not clear. Assessment should ensure the extent to which learners meet the intercultural objectives of the program that they are pursuing; it should consider both direct and indirect indicators, global and discrete information.

In a survey of intercultural competency practitioners during a worldwide seminar sponsored by the Intercultural Communication Institute, the findings suggested that the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) that was developed by Mitchell R. Hammer to measure intercultural sensitivity (Bennett & Hammer, 1998) is the most widely used intercultural competence assessment tool. Psychometrically designed and tested, the IDI is an assessment tool that is based on and aligned with the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) that was conceptualized by Bennett (1993). As noted by many researchers, the IDI is a rigorously developed, valid, and reliable empirical tool (Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaegherea, 2003; Greenholtz, 2000; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). It is a 50 item,
web-based instrument that is easy to administer, and it examines an individual’s or a group’s level of intercultural competence rather than quickly measuring specific attitudes, behaviors, or knowledge (Lantz, 2014).

Greenholtz (2000) notes that the IDI has been found to be very useful in a number of domains, including human resource management (i.e. of academic personnel like transnational faculty members), program assessment, and student services. Issues of hiring, promotion, and comprehensive training programs are all part of a total human resources portfolio. Since intercultural competence is one of the skills desired in prospective faculty members, academics with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity are greater assets to transnational programs than those who are grappling with cultural issues or have ethnocentric profiles. The same principle applies for those who are competing for promotions. Given its reliability and the ease of its administration, the IDI can be employed as an integral part of program reviews, of fulfilling certification requirements (such as GATE certifications), or of quality assurance programs such as ISO 9001. By measuring a faculty’s level of intercultural sensitivity, the IDI helps to fulfill the human resource component of the certification process and demonstrates that quality assurance is in place. Intercultural training programs, career planning, and counseling initiatives can also be administered as part of a faculty’s cultural assessment.

While the IDI has been widely used to measure intercultural sensitivity, it had also been the subject of some criticism. Greenholtz (2005) questions whether the IDI can be used across cultures and recommends further research on its feasibility among non-English speakers. Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, and DeJaeghere (2003) add that the IDI needs further refinement and caution its use when the relationships that are being examined are theoretical. Moreover, Perry and Southwell (2011) argue that one of the IDI’s weaknesses is that it assumes that intercultural
sensitivity progresses in a linear fashion, whereas this assumption is not supported by empirical research. The researchers add that the instrument categorizes individuals’ intercultural competence into discrete stages without considering the possibility that the participants could ascribe to multiple, conflicting aspects of intercultural sensitivity at once.

Two instruments that are designed to target specific components of intercultural competence include the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) that was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) and the Assessment Intercultural Competence (AIC) that was developed by Fantini (2000). The AIC is presented in a “YOGA” format, an acronym that stands for “Your Objectives, Guidelines, and Assessment.” The ISS addresses some of the IDI’s weaknesses, in that it divides intercultural sensitivity into five dimensions: engagement, respect for cultural differences, self-confidence, enjoyment, and attentiveness; as such, it measures attitudinal aspects of intercultural sensitivity (Chen & Starosta, 2000). The AIC is a pilot assessment tool that was developed to increase the clarity and consistency of the criteria used in assessing intercultural competence. It contains over 90 items that are classified into five different categories: awareness, attitude, skills, knowledge, and second-language proficiency. Furthermore, each category is subdivided into four developmental levels. The AIC can be used as a guide prior to, during, and after an intercultural experience; it can also be used to track the various stages of the intercultural development process. As argued by Fantini (2000), this assessment approach is normative, formative, and summative.
Figure 2. Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Adapted from Deardorff, 2009, p.198)
Figure 3. Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (Adapted from Deardorff, 2006, p. 254)
Call for the Intercultural Competence Development of Transnational Faculty

The call to equip transnational faculty with the intercultural competency skills needed to teach in transnational programs has been strongly featured in the literature on the subject (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Debowski, 2005; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hicks, Kohler, & King, 2005; Leask, 2004). However, studies have demonstrated that responses to this call have been slow or nonexistent (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Gopal, 2011; Haeger, 2007; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Prowse & Goddard, 2010; Stier, 2006). In addition to being rudimentary and overly general, intercultural competence preparatory sessions, when made available, have suffered from low attention to critical intercultural issues rooted in transnational environments (Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013). Consequently, faculty members continue to be culturally challenged and inadequately prepared for transnational assignments.

Scholars have reported that there is a paucity of research on the experiences of transnational faculty (Dunn & Wallace, 2004, 2007; Leask, 2004; Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011; Smith, 2009, 2014). Also, the majority of the studies on this topic were conducted by researchers working in Australian universities or on branch campuses affiliated with Australian institutions. Although the context of these studies is different, “the broad conceptual strokes of the analysis may be applicable to other intercultural teaching and learning contexts” (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004, p. 105) such as the Middle-Eastern context of the current study. Hence, this study will use the Australian literature as an example.

In addition to the narrative research of Bodycott and Walker (2000), Gribble and Ziguras’ (2003) study entitled Learning to Teach Offshore: Pre-departure Training for Lecturers in Transnational Programs is one of the most highly cited studies in the literature on the experiences of transnational faculty. Gribble and Ziguras (2003) note that their study was
performed at a time when a significant amount of studies had already been published about the ramifications of international students studying in Australian universities, but relatively little research had been conducted on the challenges facing transnational faculty. Gribble and Ziguras’ (2003) study sought to examine the specificities of transnational teaching and learning environments in order to better understand how much useful and relevant support institutions gave to faculty. The study revealed that none of the participants had been offered formal pre-departure preparation for transnational teaching, although many had attended informal cross-cultural workshops. Instead, new transnational educators were typically debriefed by more experienced faculty members and dealt with recurrent problems through trial and error. Faculty members commonly believed that extensive exposure to international students at home was a sufficient preparation for facing any cross-cultural issues that they might encounter offshore. In other words, the participating educators deemed teaching offshore to be similar to teaching international students at home.

These findings brought to the surface the viewpoint that “offshore teaching is a much more valuable learning experience for lecturers than any formal training that can be provided before departure” (p. 209). Gribble and Ziguras (2003) asserted that, in transnational contexts and other programs where cultural differences are pronounced, faculty members need to be able to bridge cultural gaps in order to meet the students’ needs without offending their cultural values. However, the authors concluded that there was little institutional interest in preparing faculty members for the rigor of transnational teaching.

Since the emergence of Gribble and Ziguras’s (2003) study, the literature on transnational teaching has sought to examine the preparation of transnational faculty in relation to intercultural competence. Although Gribble and Ziguras’ (2003) research was limited in scope, exploring the
intercultural preparation of faculty in the business departments of only three different universities, its implications are significant; furthermore, the issues that it brought to the surface became the center of debate among intercultural scholars for years to come. The lack of institutional support for faculty teaching transnationally was strongly highlighted in subsequent studies (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Leask, 2004; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Sia, 2015).

For instance, Dunn and Wallace’s (2006) study, which investigated the lived experiences and levels of preparedness of faculty working in transnational contexts, found that most academics experienced nothing in terms of preparation for transnational teaching. The findings also suggested that some intercultural competencies (such as cultural empathy, broadmindedness, and the knowledge of a foreign country’s cultural values and norms), as advocated by Teekens (2003) and Leask (2004), were missing. This occurred despite the acknowledgement by quality control agencies that “due preparations need to be made if a university is to engage in transnational teaching, particularly by helping its academics and administrative staff to develop intercultural competencies that translate to pedagogy, curriculum and student support curriculum” (Dunn & Wallace, 2006, p. 358).

In agreement with Gribble and Ziguras (2003), the comments of participants in Dunn and Wallace’s (2006) study show that the participating faculty members appreciated learning from their own experiences and by collaborating with other transnational faculty members. This finding also resonates with Seah and Edwards’ (2006) qualitative study of transnational faculty members, which found that the participating educators preferred being informally mentored by more experienced educators to undergoing professional development efforts. To these faculty
members, mentoring was a more useful way of inducting new faculty into the realities of
transnational education.

Conversely, it is a cause of concern that informal mentoring is a method of choice to
cultivate intercultural competence in those educators involved in transnational teaching (Hoare,
2013; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Paige & Goode, 2009; Smith, 2009). This is because fellow
faculty members, even the more experienced ones, can reinforce stereotypes (Hoare, 2013).
Indeed, “there is a real danger that mentoring by academics who have never had the chance to
engage in reflective intercultural development or who are, for various reasons, locked into a state
of defensive superiority…could enable an organizationally entrenched ethnocentrism” (Hoare,
2013, p. 565). In addition, relying on networking without expert facilitation exposes faculty
members to some of the risk identified by Leask (2004); this is because “there is a range of
skills; competencies and attitudes needed by those who teach in international settings,” (Dunn &
Wallace, 2006, p. 360), while “cultural inclusivity in curriculum and pedagogy are highly
desirable” (p. 360).

**Intercultural competencies required of transnational faculty.** Transnational education
is a complex undertaking that can be both challenging and advantageous for faculty members.
Leask (2004) argues that the experience of teaching international students in an educator’s home
country is different from teaching students in transnational contexts. In the latter case, the faculty
member is considered to be a minority in a foreign culture (Seah & Edwards, 2006). Moreover,
faculty members’ own cultures become “visible to them,” or they realize “that other people hold
stereotypes and prejudices about them” (Stier, 2003, p. 80). Hence, a complex mix of personal
attributes, teaching skills, and the cultural and disciplinary knowledge of non-Western learning
styles and languages is needed to address this challenge (Dunn & Wallace, 2008).
Teekens (2003) identified eight clusters when describing the ideal profile of the lecturer in the international classroom. Included in these clusters are the importance of dealing appropriately with cultural differences, the importance of paying attention to issues related to using a non-native language during instruction, the ability to acquire knowledge of foreign educational systems, and the importance of cultivating certain personal qualities. Additionally, professional development measures must be taken by higher education institutions in order to help their transnational faculty develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This is an essential undertaking if faculty members are to be able to function adequately and appropriately in intercultural settings.

McAllister and Irvine (2000) describes an effective teacher in a culturally diverse classroom as someone “who has achieved an advanced level in the process of becoming intercultural and whose cognitive, affective and behavioral characteristics are not limited but are open to growth beyond the psychological parameters of only one culture” (p. 4). According to some experts in the field, (Beuckelaer, Lievens, & Bücker, 2012; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Leask, 2004), one way to develop a high level of intercultural competence is to take part in a well-designed intercultural competence program.

Leask, Hicks, Kohler, and King (2005) conducted two research projects that lasted from 2003 to 2005 in order to identify the skills and abilities that are required of those who teach in transnational settings; they also wanted to formulate a framework for the advancement of these skills and proficiencies. Their first project involved 16 staff members and students who were participating in a business program taught transnationally by an Australian university in partnership with a Hong Kong university. Their second, larger study was funded by Australian Education International (AEI) and administered by the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee.
(AVCC). Its participants included faculty members, administrators, and students who were affiliated with the University of South Australia in two of its offshore locations, Hong Kong and Singapore. This research involved several stages and was informed by a literature review that identified 15 essential characteristics related to knowledge and abilities and assigned differing levels of importance to each of them.

The seven key teaching abilities that were identified as being of primary importance for transnational teaching were focused on being flexible, being interculturally aware and adept, being “skilled at identifying points of difference and adapting to these,” and being “aware of the cultural foundations of the discipline-based knowledge and concepts with which [educators] want students to engage” (Leask, 2006, p. 5). The characteristics that were identified highlighted the importance of cultural knowledge in the transnational context, the ways in which culture underpins the work of faculty members, and the strong influence that culture can have on student learning outcomes (Leask, 2006). Hence, institutions that are involved in developing intercultural competence in their faculty members need to focus their efforts on providing programs that help expert faculty members to respond in concert to student needs and expectations within a complex transnational context.

The uniqueness of a transnational program with diversity reflected in its cultural, linguistic and educational background gives greater precedence and a sense of urgency to the project of helping faculty members inform their teaching and learning practices with an intercultural understanding. Transnational faculty members particularly need to be efficient intercultural learners, “culturally aware and able to teach using culturally appropriate materials and culturally appropriate methods”; furthermore, they need to be able to “recognize the critical
role played by language and culture in learning and flexible enough to make adjustment in response to student learning needs” (Leask, Hicks, Kohler, & King, 2005, p. v).

**Quality assurance.** The growth of transnational higher education over the past decade has drawn attention to the issue of quality assurance in transnational programs. Quality teaching and learning is vital if transnational education is to make a profitable return on the investments put forth by higher education institutions and students (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013). When the quality of transnational education is poor, those who suffer include, at the very least, “the students who receive substandard education; the host-country that receives suboptimal human resource development, with damaging implications for nation-building; [and] the provider institution—and by extension the provider country—that suffers a damaged reputation and financial loss” (p. 193).

Preparing transnational faculty for the challenging teaching environment of transnational programs is a key component of quality assurance (Bell & Keevers, 2014; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Leask, Hicks, Kohler, & King, 2005). This preparation includes the need to “develop cultural understanding and [an] intercultural stance” (Bell & Keevers, 2014, p. 3). In addition, *The Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005) recommends that institutions and providers “use codes of good practice such as the UNESCO and the Council of Europe *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*, which states that “transnational education arrangements should encourage the awareness and knowledge of the culture and customs of both the awarding institutions and receiving country among the students and staff” (UNESCO & Council of Europe, 2001).
In reviewing some documentation on quality assurance processes and procedures in the U.S., the U.K., and Australia, Smith (2010) concludes that home institutions are the primary drivers of quality assurance control because they have the authority to set the policies and ensure the implementation of the quality control mechanisms. Although the external quality assurance of transnational education is being monitored by international auditing agencies, there is a general recognition that “providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and quality assurance” (Pyvis & Chapman, 2013, p. 71). However, it is the faculty members who are involved in these programs that bear the responsibility of meeting these expectations. Educators need continuous support and preparation if they are to deliver quality teaching offshore (Lynch, 2013).

Development of Intercultural Competence through Transnational Teaching: Is it a Transformative Learning Experience?

Well-structured intercultural development programs are essential to building an adequate level of intercultural competence among transnational faculty (Beuckelaer, Lievens, & Bücker, 2012; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hoare, 2013; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Teekens, 2003). When faculty members are offered well-designed intercultural development programs by their corresponding institutions, they are more likely to become invested in their students’ education and the quality of the institutions’ transnational programs (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013; Jauregui, 2013; Lynch, 2013). Intercultural experts have emphasized the advantages of formally developing intercultural competence, concluding that sustained and well-structured development programs are essential to faculties’ cultural well-being and to the quality of transnational education that institutions are able to offer (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013).
While a fair amount of research has been conducted on the effects of studying abroad on the development of students’ intercultural competence, significantly less research has been performed on how the experience of transnational teaching affects a faculty’s intercultural development (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Han, 2008). Research has not kept pace with the growth of transnational education, and little attention has been given to the processes through which formal development programs are initiated and maintained (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Of immediate relevance to this study is the finding that institutions rely on the effects of cultural contact and the transformative learning that is presumed in transnational teaching to help foster intercultural competence.

The studies that have investigated the development of the intercultural competence of transnational faculty members have used two major approaches to understand how the acquisition of these skills can be facilitated (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Leask, 2004; Lough, 2010; Smith, 2014). First, some researchers draw an analogy between business expatriates and the academic faculty members teaching in foreign countries (Albaum, 2011; Fenton, 2010; Haeger, 2007; Jais, 2012; Jauregui, 2013). Within the context of living in foreign cultures, both of these groups are called expatriates (Albaum, 2011). These researchers posit that the challenges, rewards, and occasional frustrations that are associated with teaching in foreign countries are similar to those faced by business managers on international assignments. In her thesis titled *Flying Academics – Examining Short-Term International Teaching Assignments Impact on Academics’ Career Success and Work-Life Balance*, Jais (2012) uses the context of expatriation and transnational education to investigate the strategies that academics employ to support their careers and work/life balance during their international short-term assignments. This thesis demonstrates that the complexity of transnational teaching requires skills that extend beyond the
scope of whatever subject is being taught; it also posits that, because of this, organizational support should to be tailored to fit academics’ needs. However, the author observed that relying on analyses of business expatriates to inform studies of transnational education might be problematic, since “the relevance and generalizability of expatriate literature to academics is unclear as multinational companies present a different [organizational] environment” (Jais, 2012, p. 4).

The second perspective for understanding how transnational faculty members develop intercultural competence is based on the work of researchers who examine the assumption that transnational teaching, like study-abroad programs, is essentially an intercultural experience that may foster intercultural sensitivity and develop cultural awareness. In other words, these researchers posit that transnational teaching assignments place faculty members in a unique position to learn and improve their intercultural competency skills through their own teaching experiences (Crabtree & Sapp, 2000; Hamza, 2010; Leask, 2004; Smith, 2009). This is because “intercultural experience offers a wealth of opportunities for teachers and students alike to experience the unpredictable, to discover something new about themselves which would not have [been] possible in any other situation” (Aired, Byram & Fleming, 2003, p. 171). Conversely, the general findings of these studies reveal that while transnational teaching affords the benefit of transforming educators, however, unsupported on the job cultural learning can be very embarrassing, frustrating and stressful (Hoare, 2013; Mohan, MacGregor, Saunders, & Archee, 2004). It may pave the way to entrenched ethnocentrism and ultimately impoverish what could have been a fruitful learning experience (Haore, 2013; Lnych, 2013).

**Intercultural experience.** Intercultural researchers in general have repeatedly argued that participating in an intercultural experience such as a study or a teaching abroad program is
one of the most powerful mechanisms for developing intercultural competence and skills (Fulbright, 1989; Hoffa & Depaul, 2010; National Task Force on Undergraduate Education Abroad, 1990). Yet, other scholars have warned that increasing the number of international placements does not necessarily translate into more intercultural competence (Webber, 2005). In the context of studying abroad, for example, learners might be participating in Asian events while still having what are essentially American experiences (J. Bennett, 2008). Only when the conditions are ripe and the competency programs have been fully supported and well-facilitated do the participants actually gain intercultural skills (Nam, 2011). Not preparing learners to make sense of their intercultural experience can be a wasted opportunity that may result in negative learning outcomes (Fantini, 2000; Coulby, 2006; Sercu, 2006).

Likewise, similar arguments have been made in relation to the intercultural experience in the domain of transnational education. Leask (2004), for instance, argues that the faculties teaching in transnational settings are given an unprecedented opportunity to achieve intercultural competence. By employing a case study as part of a research project, Leask explored the relationship between transnational education programs and intercultural learning, or “learning that is related to [the] diversity of cultures that exist within countries, communities and institutions” (Knight, 2003, p.). Leask found that most of the interviewed staff members felt that their intercultural experiences had changed them in some way and that they had become more actively engaged in intercultural learning. However, the assumption that intercultural competence is an automatic outcome of a range of cultures coming into contact with each other or that cultural proximity leads to intercultural contact, which in turn leads to intercultural learning and competence, is hard to realize; transnational teaching is an intellectual challenge. As Leask (2004) explains, “If intercultural learning does not occur automatically as a result of
intercultural contact ‘at home’, it is probably therefore unlikely that it will be an outcome of TNE [Transnational Education] for either staff or students without strategic intervention” (p. 4).

This finding resonates with similar literature that considers intercultural learning as an outcome of transnational teaching. For instance, in his ethnographic study of six American female faculty members, Hoare (2013) posits that the transnational context is a rich and dynamic intercultural learning environment. However, it is also a milieu in which significant cultural adjustment is required. Faculty members will add to their cultural capital by virtue of that environment only if they are supported. Unsupported, on-the-job cultural learning, on the other hand, “can be confusing and stressful, an experience that is potentially costly to individuals and the [organization] by virtue of the potential for significant anxiety, impaired self-esteem and delayed career progression” (p. 570).

Responses to Hoare’s (2013) study show that transnational teaching affords the benefit of enhancing educators’ teaching performances both at home and at foreign institutions. However, realizing these benefits in an erratic manner is risky to both the faculty members and their respective institutions. Also, the “ethical, healthy and constructive development of intercultural competence must rest upon a foundation of cultural self-awareness”; if not, “this learning journey can be one of the most threatening ideas” (p. 563). Additionally, unsupported intercultural development “opens the door to uncomfortable transgression-based learning, high levels of anxiety, the potential to entrench ethnocentrism and, ultimately, to the impoverishment of what could have been a dynamic intercultural learning environment” (p. 572).

**Transformative learning of transnational faculty.** The fundamental premise of the transformative learning theory is that the novelty of transnational teaching experiences will challenge faculties’ deeply rooted assumptions and trigger reflection, leading to more thoughtful,
inclusive, and open worldviews (Mezirow, 1991; Smith, 2009). This perspective transformation is indicative of a learning progression toward becoming interculturally competent (Bennett, 2015).

Transformative learning, however, does not happen automatically by placing transnational educators into foreign countries and expecting them to learn successfully from their experiences there (Hunter, 2008; MacDonald, 2012). By contrast, there are factors that promote transformative learning and factors that inhibit its progression. Experiences of “culture shock,” “panic anxiety” (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011, p. 1142), and feeling outside of one’s comfort zone (Hutchison & Rea, 2011, p. 557) all trigger transformative learning, while egocentrism, being overwhelmed, and vacation mindsets block and demote transformation (Foronda & Belknap, 2012).

Additionally, transformative learning does not happen without learning interventions and appropriate facilitation (Nam, 2011). Also, the key to a successful transformative learning experience is focused reflection (Savicki, 2008). Otherwise, “throwing unseasoned educators into the deep end begs an uncertain ‘sink or swim’ outcome” (as cited by Hoare, 2013, p. 570).

A multidisciplinary body of research anticipates that faculty members working in foreign countries are likely to experience a flux of emotional and physical challenges that result from the loss of familiar signs, gestures, and symbols (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Debowski, 2008; Heyward, 2002; Leask, 2004; Smith 2009; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Unfamiliarity often engenders culture shock, “a set of powerful and dis-equilibrating emotional or affective reactions often associated with [the] experience of another culture other than one’s own” (Dirkx, 2006, p. 3).
Scholars and practitioners have often viewed culture shock as an unpleasant and powerful reaction that is both distractive to learning and harmful to cultural adjustment (Mumford, 2000; Winkelman, 1994). In recent studies however, researchers’ focus has shifted from negatively interpreting the word ‘shock’ to a more positive understanding. Culture shock is the precursor for learning, the disorienting dilemma that triggers perspective transformation. Scholars now maintain that exposure to a different culture can be a successful learning experience, forcing learners to acquire intercultural competency skills that allow them to function appropriately and effectively in the new culture (Bochner, 1986; Smith, 2014). The acquisition of this set of competencies can result in personal growth and cultural development (Kim, 2008; Milstein, 2005).

Karen Smith is among the few authors who have used the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1991) to evidence the transformational learning potential of transnational teaching. Smith (2009; 2013; 2014) argued that

the experience of being a transnational teacher and working in a culture very different to one’s own forces reflection which can lead to ‘perspective transformation’; as such it could be a powerful professional development opportunity which should be nurtured and supported. (p. 111)

Smith relied on the small but developing body of published literature on faculty’s transnational teaching experiences and on her own experience as transnational faculty to back up her argument. Her data collection methods included documentary analysis, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and observations as well as narrations of teaching and learning experiences in different countries. She uses Mezirow’s (1991) three levels of reflection as a theoretical framework to reinterpret her data.
Smith’s (2009) paper shows that transnational experiences can foster reflection on the content, process, and premise of experience necessary for transformative learning. As such, this type of teaching opportunity can, with proper support, improve teaching in transnational as well as home institutions. The paper also suggested that transnational teaching is indeed “an under-exploited territory for transformative professional development which could be fruitfully supported within academic development structures” (p. 119).

Giving due emphasis to the importance of reflection in the work of professionals, Smith (2013; 2014) tested her proposed argument empirically. She explored the extent to which the novelty of a transnational teaching context is a disorienting situation that triggers reflection and subsequent transformative learning. She employed the Biographic, Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) to collect and provide in-depth and rich qualitative data of the interviewees’ offshore experiences and a description of the content, process, and premise reflection.

Smith’s (2013) study, furthermore, found that faculty’s cultural needs, including some basic cultural knowledge, advice on how to approach students, and access to other faculty members’ teaching experiences, were hardly being met. As for transformative learning, this study states that, “it is the expansion of the interviewees’ worldviews and enhanced global appreciation that provide the clearest benefits of flying faculty experiences” (p. 136). It appears that exposure to a different culture engenders culture shock, which in turn triggers transformational learning. Furthermore, “Numerous ‘cultural shocks’ over time can stimulate content and process reflection that can lead to transformation of meaning schemes; that is, the ‘specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience’ (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5); this results in perspective transformation and transformational learning. According to Smith, the study’s results suggest that, “beyond basic
orientation information, pre-departure support is perhaps not necessary as ‘cultural shock’
appears to trigger transformation” (Smith, 2013, p. 136).

Hamza (2010) uses the transformative learning theory to investigate how international
experiences may impact the professional learning of faculty in the context of higher education.
This qualitative study, which employed an exploratory interpretive paradigm, derived its data
from nine female faculty members who worked in six Arab countries in the Gulf region. The
author concludes that international experiences impact the attitudes of faculty members by
teaching them to become more patient, flexible, and tolerant of cultural differences. These
experiences seem to be multidimensional, since the participating educators developed a higher
level of awareness of self, a more complex cultural understanding, and a deeper appreciation of
others’ cultural values. The experiences increased their positive attributes such as patience,
flexibility, and tolerance. Furthermore, this study adds to the theoretical framework on
transnational education by suggesting that working overseas as an educator is a positive and
highly rewarding learning experience.

**Transnational teaching teams and intercultural development: Recent trends.**

Besides calling for the intercultural development of transnational faculty, a number of
researchers (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Debowski, 2008; Leask, 2004;
McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007) have advocated for local faculty members (residents of the host
country) to be fully integrated into the transnational teaching team. This team would include
“subject coordinators, lecturers, tutors, demonstrators and assessors, that is, all those teaching
and assessing in the subject across all sites” (Keeters et al., 2014, p. 233). Leask (2004), for
instance, argues that local tutors are valued team members who, as “cultural insiders, can assist
the cultural outsiders to understand the teaching and learning environment and to learn from it”
Dunn and Wallace (2006), moreover, note that “the expertise of local tutors and relationships with partner organizations were seen to be important and as yet largely untapped sources of learning about transnational teaching in particular countries” (p. 368).

It is only recently, however, that the literature has witnessed a shift from preparing faculty for the transnational teaching context to taking a more collegial teaching-team approach, advocating that team members collaborate to ease the cultural challenges of the transnational context (Keever & Belle, 2014). For example, Djerasicovic (2014) suggests that establishing a paradigm of partnership may lessen the cross-cultural gap between foreign faculty members and their students. It may also alleviate some of the power hierarchy that dominates transnational education programs.

Djerasicovic (2014) further notes that calling on home institutions to provide preparedness for faculty members “places responsibility and power on one actor” (p. 207), meaning the home institution, while considering the educators as powerless and “merely experiencing the effects of the former’s agency” (p. 207). The author adds that this ideology “is unproductive in thinking about the field and that a more nuanced and flexible approach is required” (p. 207). This nuanced approach would view both parties as participating in a partnership that does not hide a power hierarchy.

Keay, May, and O’Mahoney (2014), in their survey of transnational programs across the United Kingdom, also advocate for a collaborative approach in the form of communities of practices. The authors posit that communities of practice that are characterized by joint enterprise and mutual engagement among home and host faculty members can help to address the cultural challenges that currently typify the transnational education context. It may also provide a theoretical framework for creating effective transnational education partnerships.
Keevers et al. (2014), in their participatory action research study, investigates the professional development needs of transnational teaching teams and explored their work experiences in transnational programs. In agreement with other studies, Keevers et al. (2014) find that the most challenging aspect of transnational education programs is related to cultural issues. For professional development to be effective in transnational education, it needs to be collaboratively designed and negotiated, context-sensitive and specific, practice-based and involve teams engaging and learning together in their daily work contexts. Such an approach harnesses the diversity of transnational teaching teams and enhances dialogue and relationships amongst team members. (p. 232)

This study also suggests that focusing on the development of practice is a more useful approach than focusing on the development of the individual faculty member. The authors conclude that allowing faculty members to engage in a learning environment in which they learn from each other might be a more effective strategy than focusing on the acquisition of particular competencies and skills.

Lynch’s (2013) study of nine participants from nine different universities uses the team-teaching method to describe how they were prepared to teach transnationally. The study demonstrates that the team of participants used a mix of formal and informal methods to prepare and support one another across all three phases of offshore teaching (before, during, and after undergoing transnational teaching assignments). Still, when it comes to intercultural issues, Lynch finds that preparation focused on cultural matters was missing from team-based groundwork.

**Summary.** This review included contemporary as well as dated studies that discuss the following topics: (a) transnational education, its models, and the reasons behind its growth, (b)
cultural challenges associated with transnational education, (c) the context of the Middle East and the critical need for interculturally competent faculty, (d) intercultural competence, its definition, its developmental models, and its assessment, (e) the call for the provision of well-structured developmental programs to transnational faculty, (f) the professional development of transnational faculty as a key component of quality assurance, and (g) approaches to cultivating intercultural competence. A striking shortage of research studies was found in the area of developing the intercultural competence of transnational faculty members. Most of the research was small in scale and qualitative in nature, using a case study approach (Leask, 2004), semi structured interviews (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003), document analysis (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Prowse & Goddard, 2010; Feast & Bretag, 2005), and personal reflections (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Feast, 2000; Hebbani, 2007). Many of these studies explored home universities located in Australia and/or were written by Australian faculty members (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Feast & Bretag, 2004; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hoare, 2013; Jais, 2012; Leask, 2004; Lynch, 2013), although the United States is one of the largest providers of transnational education (Fischer, 2012).

An expansive, multidisciplinary body of literature has reported that transnational faculty members experience a range of challenges (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Debowksi, 2003, 2008; Heyward, 2002; Leask, 2004; Keevers et al., 2014; Smith, 2009; Ziguras, 2003). These are often the result of differences in cultural expectations and inattention to issues of cultural empathy and cultural sensitivity (Dunn & Wallace, 2004, 2006; Garson, 2005; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hicks & Jarrett, 2008; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Pyvis, 2011). Studies have consistently maintained that confronting these challenges requires a set of complex skills that extend beyond knowledge of the subject to cover the personal characteristics and
intercultural competencies that should be mastered by those who teach in culturally diverse environments (Dunn & Wallace, 2008; Gopal, 2011; McAllister & Irvine, 2000; Leask et al., 2005; Teekens, 2003). The majority of these studies also reveal that home institutions are doing very little to prepare faculty for this multifaceted environment. For instance, Gribble and Ziguras (2003), Dunn and Wallace (2006), Haeger (2007), Hoare (2013), and Lynch (2013) found that there was little institutional interest in preparing faculty members for transnational education. Additionally, the majority of the participants in these studies believed that teaching international students at a home institution was the best preparation for transnational teaching. Studies’ respondents also appreciated learning from their own experiences and through collaborating with other transnational faculty members.

Additionally, the literature on developing transnational faculty’s intercultural competence seems to indicate that institutions rely on the educators’ experiences of transnational teaching to help them foster these capacities (Hoare, 2013; Leask, 2004; Lynch, 2013). Hoare’s (2013) study demonstrates that this approach may pave the way for uncomfortable, transgression-based learning, a high level of apprehension, and the potential to encourage ethnocentrism and ultimately impoverish what could have been a powerful intercultural learning experience. Moreover, unsupported, on-the-job learning about culture can be a challenging and stressful intercultural experience in itself (Bennett, 1993; Hoare, 2013).

When it comes to understanding how intercultural competence can be developed, many studies draw on Bennett’s Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Cushner & Chang, 2015; DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008), Deardorff’s (2009) process model of intercultural competence (Sia, 2015), and the Allport theory of contact hypothesis. The majority of intercultural scholars readily agree that intercultural competence is not a naturally occurring
phenomenon (Hunter, 2008; Lane, 2013; Leask, 2004; MacDonald, 2012; Sia, 2015) and that cultural exposure is an essential but insufficient condition for fostering this set of skills (Heyward, 2002).

While Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning and the concept of perspective transformation have been used in relation to faculty’s professional development needs, they have not been employed exclusively to interpret the experiences of transnational educators in relation to the development of their intercultural competence and the identification of their cultural needs. Smith (2009; 2013; 2014), for example, uses the transformative learning theory to evidence the transformational learning potential of transnational teaching. She argues that the experience of teaching transnationally affords a professional development opportunity that should be nurtured and supported. She explores the extent to which the novelty of a transnational teaching context is a disorienting scenario that triggers reflection and transformative learning.

Smith (2013) also finds that transnational faculty’s cultural needs, such as some basic cultural knowledge, advice on how to approach culturally diverse students, and access to other faculty members’ teaching experiences, are hardly being met. Moreover, transnational educators were found to need more opportunities to reflect on their experiences. Also, exposure to different cultures engenders culture shock, which in turn triggers transformational learning. According to Smith, the study’s results suggest that, “beyond basic orientation information, pre-departure support is perhaps not necessary as ‘cultural shock’ appears to trigger transformation” (p. 136).

Besides the intercultural development of transnational faculty members, a number of researchers (Chapman & Pyvis, 2013; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Debowksi, 2008; Leask, 2004; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007) have also advocated for local faculty members (residents of the host country) to be fully integrated into the transnational teaching team. It was only recently,
however, that the literature witnessed a shift from preparing faculty for the transnational teaching context to embracing a more collegial, teaching-team approach in which team members can collaborate to ease the cultural challenges of the transnational context (Djerasimovic, 2014; Keay, May, & O’Mahoney, 2014; Keevers & Belle, 2014; Keevers et al., 2014; Lynch, 2013).

Critical reviews of this literature have paved the way for conducting further research regarding the need to enhance intercultural experiences with well-structured intercultural development programs, particularly in the context of transnational education. Future qualitative studies taking a narrative approach will greatly contribute to the existing literature on faculty’s intercultural development programs by producing a model that transnational faculty members can employ to facilitate preparation for the transnational teaching experience.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the experiences of faculty members with respect to their intercultural competence in the context of transnational education. This review brings to the surface the finding of several studies that there is no well-structured developmental program to meet the intercultural needs of transnational faculty members; this continues to be a pressing challenge in transnational education (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Lynch, 2013; Hoare, 2013). In the majority of cases, the studies’ participants believed that teaching international students in the home country is the best preparation for the cultural challenges encountered in transnational contact (Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Dunn & Wallace, 2006). The literature also indicates that the lack of well-structured developmental programs to meet the intercultural needs of faculty members accentuates these educators’ cultural challenges (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Dun & Wallace, 2007; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Haeger, 2007; Lynch, 2013; Seah & Edwards, 2006; Smith, 2009; Teekens, 2003). It also
deviates from the quality assurance guidelines of transnational education (Bell & Keevers, 2014; Healey, 2014; Chapman & Pyvis, 2013; Djerasimovic, 2014; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Leask, Hicks, Kohler, & King, 2005), widens the cultural gap between transnational faculty members and their colleagues (Bodycott & Walker, 2000), and jeopardizes the transnational education ventures of the sending institutions (Gopal, 2011). Additionally, this literature review reveals that institutions rely on the transformative potential of transnational teaching to foster faculty’s intercultural competence.

Taylor (1994) uses the transformative learning theory to elucidate the learning process of intercultural competence. Smith (2009; 2014) takes this approach even further and argues that the experience of transnational teaching is not only transformative: It is, in and of itself, a professional development opportunity that should be nurtured and supported. Putting both approaches together, it can be concluded that the transformative learning power embedded in transnational teaching can be an opportunity, when supported and reflected upon, for the development of intercultural competency.

Recent literature, furthermore, has shifted to a teaching-team approach of preparing faculty for offshore teaching. The general findings of this review reveal, however, that, although a teaching-team approach may serve faculty members’ professional development needs, it might not target educators’ cultural needs and ease their cultural hardships (Lynch, 2013).

Chapter 3 presents the research design and methodologies that will be used to conduct this qualitative study. It elucidates the actual strategies that will be employed to investigate the experiences of faculty members in transnational education in the city of Doha, Qatar.
Chapter Three: Methodology

The main purpose of this qualitative narrative study is to investigate the intercultural experiences of faculty members who have taught for at least three years in an international branch campus located in the city of Doha, Qatar. It will be a qualitative narrative study. Burns and Grove (2003) describe a qualitative approach as “a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning” (p. 19). Parahoo (1997) states that “qualitative research focuses on the experiences of people as well as stressing [the] uniqueness of the individual” (p. 59). In particular, the overarching question of this study is: What are the experiences of transnational faculty members who are teaching in an international branch campus located in Doha, Qatar? Using Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory, the interview protocol of this study will be informed by the following three research questions:

1. How do transnational faculty members understand intercultural competence?
2. What strategies do transnational faculty members employ to develop their intercultural competence?
3. What types of personal changes do faculty members undergo as a result of their transnational teaching experiences?

This chapter includes the research methodology and design of this study. It describes the purpose of narrative inquiry in qualitative research and justifies its use in relation to this study. It provides a depiction of the study site, the sampling techniques, the data collection methods, the handling and management of data, and the analysis procedures. Additionally, it portrays the precautions that will be taken in order to ensure the protection of human subjects as well as the
validity and trustworthiness of the research. Finally, it describes the probable limitations of this study.

**Research Methodology**

Qualitative studies are specifically characterized by the research paradigm underpinning the chosen inquiry approach (Ponterotto, 2005). Filstead (1979) defines a paradigm as a “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world” (p. 34). There are a number of paradigms that are typically used to guide research, such as positivism, post positivism, and critical theory. However, given the current research interest, understanding the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty members, a social constructivist paradigm will be adopted.

Constructivists hold that “reality is constructed in the mind of the individual” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Advocates of social constructivism emphasize the importance of understanding lived experiences as described by those who lived them. Dilthey (1997) believed that some of these experiences might not be within the immediate awareness of the individual, yet could be brought to consciousness through an interactive dialogue. It is this type of “interaction between the researcher and the object of investigation” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129) that helps scholars uncover deeper meaning and construct new knowledge.

Although, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods could be relied upon for the collection of data, the goal of this research is to understand the participants’ views of the situation or the phenomenon experienced (Creswell, 2012). It is important to learn from the personal perspectives of these faculty members about the types of cultural challenges that they encountered and the strategies that they used to confront cultural conflicts. It is equally crucial to
listen to the voices of faculty members in order to understand the cultural setting of transnational education (Creswell, 2012). As such, a constructivism-interpretivist paradigm seems to be the most appropriate form of inquiry for the purposes of this study.

**Research Design**

Since a lack of intercultural development for faculty members, their unacknowledged cultural needs, and the persistent cultural challenges that they meet present a complex research problem that needs to be explored, this study will adopt a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2012). The strength of this form of inquiry resides in its ability to provide, in textual form, a detailed description of a problem from the perspectives of those it involves (Mack, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Also, a qualitative design “will empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices and minimize the power relationship that often exists between a researcher and the participants of the study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 48).

According to Yin (2011), qualitative research has five distinguishing features. First, it studies the meanings of people’s lives. Second, it represents the views and perspectives of the research participants. Third, it reveals the contextual conditions within which people live. Fourth, it employs more than one source of evidence instead of relying on a single source. Finally, qualitative research provides insights on emerging concepts and assists in the explanation of human social behavior. These features serve the purpose of this study to a large extent.

If the purpose of this study were to confirm a hypothesis about a particular phenomenon, predict causal relationships, or assign numerical values for participants’ responses (Mack et al., 2005), then a quantitative research design would have been a good fit. Alternatively, this study seeks a holistic description of the individual experience of faculty members in the context of transnational education. Hence, qualitative methods seem well-suited for studying transnational
faculty members and hearing their silenced voices in regard to their day-to-day cultural challenges, wave of emotions, cultural adjustment, and intercultural development support and growth.

**Narrative Inquiry**

In this study, narrative is understood as “a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions [that are] chronologically connected” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17). Narrative inquiry is not about identifying objective truth; rather, it is about making meaning from the experiences recounted by the person who lived them in reality and from his or her own perspective (Daiute, 2014).

Narrative inquiry focuses on the collaboration between the researcher and the participants as they narrate or co-construct stories through an interactive dialogue (Creswell, 2012). The appeal of narrative research methods is in the unique collaboration that they establish between the researcher and participants as they narrate the characteristics of a situation, place, or insight together (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Daiute, 2014).

Researchers emphasize a variety of characteristics in narrative inquiries, including stories and/or individuals’ experiences, relevant identities, authentic expressions, and identity processes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). This research study seeks to investigate the experiences transnational faculty members and focuses on their intercultural development as they worked in the context of an international branch campus located in Doha, Qatar. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted that “narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience; therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Hence, a narrative inquiry format seems appropriate for this type of investigation.
Sample Selection and Strategy

Unlike quantitative research, which relies on probability or convenience sampling, qualitative research uses another category of sampling: purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2008). Maxwell (1996) defines this type of sampling as a “strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 70). As such, this strategy relies on the deliberate selection of individuals, settings, or events by virtue of the qualities and the information that they provide (Maxwell, 2008). Moreover, “[in] purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206).

Purposeful sampling has several advantages as a research method. First, it can be used to show the typicality of the individual participants, their settings, and their actions. Second, purposeful sampling can capture the heterogeneity of the population that it represents. The objective is to present the entire range of variation rather than just the typical characteristics of members. Third, a purposefully selected sample affords the ability to examine cases that are of critical importance to the theories that it has previously used or subsequently developed. Finally, purposeful sampling can be used to explain the reasons for differences between settings and individuals in qualitative studies.

What is important is to “obtain the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of study” (Kuzel, 1992, p. 37). It is highly important to include, in the sample, participants who might offer views that are contradictory to those of the researcher. Deliberately selecting participants whose preconceptions do not confirm the researcher’s perspectives will reduce biasing in the study or any appearance of it (Yin, 2011).
Given this set of advantages and taking the practicality of data collection and analysis into consideration as well as validity threats, goals, and the theoretical framework, this study employed a purposeful sampling procedure to select its participants. These participants were five faculty members who are currently working at the international branch campus that is located in Doha, Qatar.

A purposeful sampling strategy, particularly combined snowball/criterion sampling, with a focus on individuals who meet specific criteria (Creswell, 2013) was used here. As Patton (2015) explains, “the point of criterion sampling is to be sure to understand cases that are likely to be information-rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses that become targets of opportunity for program or system improvement” (p. 281).

The sample included both male and female faculty members, regardless of the subjects they teach or their socioeconomic statuses, races, or ethnic groups. However, since the cultural differences between the selected sample and the student population at the international branch campus are a key issue in the current study, due attention was given to make sure that the faculty members that were selected met the following criteria:

1) They were of American nationality and definitely not of Middle Eastern descent.
2) They have taught in the American higher education system
3) They have taught in the branch campus at Doha, Qatar within the last 3 years.

Snowball or chain sampling is “a prominent form of purposeful sampling “(Yin, 2011, 2009, p. 79) which was very useful in accessing hard to reach faculty members (Patton, 2002) and in increasing the number of participants. Once one key informant (a faculty member who
met the criteria outlined above) was recruited, he was then able to identify cases of interest because of his previous knowledge of them to be information–rich.

Recruitment and Access

The site of this research study is located in the branch campus of an American University in Doha, Qatar. To maintain the confidentiality of the home university, home university will be referred to from this point on using the pseudonym Internationalized American University. Having secured approval for this study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began contacting faculty members in different branch campuses located in Doha, Qatar to initiate the recruitment process and begin the data collection procedure.

However, since recruitment took place in the summer when most faculty members were in vacation, I hardly got any response. Eventually, one of the potential participants sent a mass-email to his colleagues who fit my sample criteria, asking them to communicate with me, and inviting them to participate in the study. Shortly after, few faculty members responded to the mass-email and volunteered to participate in the study.

A brief overview of the study explaining its purpose and its contribution to the field was then emailed to the respondents, inviting them to participate. A consent form that complies with the guidelines stated by Creswell (2012) was also be emailed to all participants. At first four faculty members were selected according to the criteria of the purposive sampling outlined above. Later, my key informant recommended a fifth participant, realizing that her novel experience in the branch campus will offer a different perspective. A copy of the invitation letter and the consent form are available as Appendix A and Appendix B of this document, respectively.
There were no extrinsic incentives offered to any of the participants in return for their participation in this study. However, based on the findings of recent research studies, it is hoped that “creating records of the present generates unexpected benefits by allowing future rediscoveries” (Zhang, Kim, Brooks, Gino, & Norton, 2014, p. 1851). In other words, individuals may underestimate the importance of recording the present; it is hoped that they will cherish having experienced these activities in the future, no matter how mundane they are. By participating in this study, the participants will have an opportunity to derive a future pleasure by documenting their present experience.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative research relies on three major sources of data: interviews, observations, and document reviews (Merriam, 2002). The choice of the data collection method depends on the research question of the study and the method that yields the most relevant information for answering that question. If the researcher is interested in the experience of a particular group or population, then the interviews with those who underwent that experience “would yield the most relevant information” (p. 12).

Field observation is also a tradition in qualitative research; however, given the distant location of the international branch campus, this type of data collection is not currently feasible. Also, Creswell (2013) indicates that narrative researchers are “less specific about field issues” (p. 176). Hence, for the current study, the data collection tools will rely on the digital means of semi-structured/web-based interviews. This choice of data collection technique “works most effectively in that situation” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 236) and will provide the researcher with the required data.
Online interviews can be performed synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously (non-real time). The researcher of this study will use an online communication service called Skype to conduct a synchronous interview. Skype is an online audio communication software application that is available to download for no charge from the internet and offers many communications options, including audio calling, video calling, telephoning landlines or mobile phones, and file-sharing capabilities (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Skype has gained a unique “national and international recognition more than any other available software application” (p. 606).

Using the internet to collect qualitative data offers “the cost and time efficiency advantage in terms of reduced costs for travel and data transcription” (Creswell, 2013, p. 159). It also provides the participants with enough time and space flexibility to deliver the requested information. Furthermore, online data collection provides a non-threatening environment in which the participants can reflect more deeply and with greater ease on sensitive issues (Nicholas, Lach, King, Scott, Boydell, Sawatzky, Reisman, Schippel, & Young, 2010).

However, data that is collected via the internet poses some methodological and ethical concerns, including “participants’ privacy protection, new power differentials, ownership of the data, authenticity, and trust in the data collected” (Creswell, 2013, p. 161). In addition, hosting Skype-based interviews necessitates that the participants have some technical skills, are able to access high-speed internet, and are familiar with online communication. Also, there is the issue of “online identity” (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014, p. 61). The researcher will be challenged to identify the differences between physical and virtual identity, since there is some potential of harm caused by mixing both identities or reporting them as similar. Likewise, there is the challenge of what data to include in the research when considering the factor that data becomes public information whenever it is available online. The researcher will be constantly sensitive to
ethical considerations for both face-to-face and online techniques, gaining the both verbal and written consent of the participants who are to be interviewed online.

The researcher needs to collect extensive information about the participants in order to have a thorough understanding of the faculty members’ individual and unique experiences (Merriam, 2002). The researcher will select six faculty members with critical intercultural life experiences and will spend considerable time in gathering their stories, focusing on their development of intercultural competence in relation to their transnational teaching experience at the international branch campus located in Doha, Qatar. The data that is collected will be illustrated using Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning and will be categorized according to the themes common throughout the literature, particularly those of: the context of transnational teaching, cultural challenges (including culture shock), the diversity of the student population, quality assurance, team teaching, power hierarchies, and perspective transformation.

Semi-structured/web-based interviews. While structured interviews try to strictly follow the word usage and meaning of the researcher, semi-structured interviews attempt to understand participants “on their own terms” and focus on “how they make meaning of their own lives, experiences, and cognitive processes” (Brenner, 2006, p. 357). As a result, “they tend to produce rich and interesting data” (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013, p. 66).

In this type of interviewing technique, the researcher does not adopt a formal demeanor or uniform behavior. Rather, the researcher adopts a conversational mode with the intention of facilitating a comfortable interaction with the participant and enabling both the researcher and participant to provide detailed accounts of the experience under investigation (Smith et al.,
When used effectively and sensitively, semi-structured interviews can facilitate rapport and empathy and permit greater flexibility and coverage. Hence, the researcher of this study will conduct semi-structured interviews in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences being narrated and the topics being discussed.

The researcher will also use a schedule that is prepared in advance in order to allow the interviews to progress more smoothly. The schedule will include written prompts based on main themes that the researcher has previously developed. This does not mean that the interests of the participants or their perspectives will be limited to the researcher’s selected themes. Instead, the prompts that the researcher provides will serve to establish a basis of conversation, cover the required material, and anticipate potentially sensitive issues (Smith et al., 2013).

The interview will be divided into two parts. The first part will cover the context of the participant’s experiences and personal background. The second interview will cover events that are relevant to the topic of study (Yin, 2011). Each in-depth interview will last for around an hour or a little longer. The participants will be provided with clear information as to what they are committing to in this study. As a part of the recruitment process, furthermore, the researcher will give the participants information on the style of interviewing that will be undertaken. They will also receive a copy of the proposed schedule prior to the interviews. The researcher will include questions that are open and expansive in the interviews, and each participant will be encouraged to talk at length while the researcher is actively listening and taking important notes (Yin, 2011). Prompts or verbal input from the researcher will be kept to a minimum.

The interviews will be digitally recorded in such a way that all verbal cues, pauses, rhythm, hesitation, and non-verbal body language as well as the verbal content will be captured
sensitively and accurately (Creswell, 2013). Although it is impossible to capture all of the meaning that is communicated throughout an interview, supplying these details will provide more clues for the interpretation processes (Elliot, 2005). The setting of the interviews, moreover, will involve a comfortable environment in which the participants are able to reflect on their experiences smoothly (Seidman, 2013). Finally, a qualitative data analysis software such as MAXQDA 12, will be used to transcribe each audio-recorded interview, code the data collected and analyze it for emergent themes.

**Data Management and Storage**

The researcher will pay due attention to protecting the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the data collected. The participants’ real names will be replaced by pseudonyms that are only known to the researcher. Creswell (2012) notes that what data is stored depends on the type of information that is collected and what approach to inquiry is taken. Since this study will narrate important events in the participants’ life stories, the researcher will need to develop a filing system for the “wad of handwritten notes on tape” (Plummer, 1983, p. 98) that results from the interviews. Hence, the following data storage and handling techniques will be implemented.

The written notes and paper copies that are collected during the interviews will be stored in a locked file cabinet with keys in the possession of the researcher alone. The interview audio files will be assigned a password that is known solely to the researcher. The files will be transcribed, backed up, and stored on a personal flash drive. The data that is collected will be retained for three years, after which all of the files will be destroyed, a process that is recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010).
Data Analysis

The researcher will use several techniques to conduct a thorough and rigorous data analysis for this research study. Substantive data analysis will start with data collection (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Next, interviews will be transcribed and then reread and member checked by participants. Using Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning, the researcher will employ categorization (such as coding or thematic analysis), connecting strategies (such as narrative analysis), and memos and displays (Maxwell, 2008) to analyze the data. Following Yin’s (2011) recommendation, the researcher will continually check for data accuracy, acknowledge any undesirable bias, and maintain a set of methodological notes.

Unlike quantitative analysis, in which the goal is to determine the number of occurrences of each category, qualitative analysis focuses on arranging the data into different categories and comparing items within and between them (Maxwell, 2008). This improves one’s general understanding of the situation, allows different themes to emerge, and aids in the overall organization and retrieval of supporting data.

However, Maxwell and Miller (2008) observed that this approach can lead the researcher to neglect contextual relationships in the data and overlook alternative perspectives on them. The selected categories might also represent the researcher’s concepts rather than the respondents’. Hence when planning the categorization process for this research, the researcher will follow Maxwell’s (2005) suggestion and distinguish three types of categories: organizational, substantive, and theoretical.

The organizational categories will be broad subjects and will serve mainly to organize the data and sort them by themes. They will function as subject headings in the presentation of the results. The substantive categories will be primarily descriptive. They will include descriptions
of participants’ concepts and beliefs and will be connected to the larger set of organizational categories. They will not imply more abstract theories, and generally cannot be anticipated prior to the research. The theoretical categories, by contrast, place the data into more general abstract frameworks derived from prior theories. These usually reflect the researcher’s concepts rather than the participants’. This type of distinction among kinds of categories ensures a formal organization in which substantive data is reliably retained and easily retrieved.

The researcher will also use connecting strategies: instead of dissecting the initial text into discrete elements, the researcher will attempt to understand the data in context by identifying the relationships among its components (Maxwell, 2008). This approach is required because the overarching research question cannot be answered through categorizing analysis alone (Agar, 1991). Reissman (2008) noted that applying a combination of analytical strategies to narrative texts can produce important insights and a deeper understanding.

The researcher will write analytic memos frequently to trigger and capture the researcher’s thoughts about the data. This is an essential part of qualitative data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Memos are “sites of conversation with ourselves about our data” (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). They document our reflections, particularly about the coding process and the emergence of themes, categories, and subcategories.

Memos will contain thoughts about the participants, phenomena, or processes being investigated; “future directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with the analysis, insightful connections, and anything about the researched and the researcher are acceptable content for memos” (Saldana, 2013, p. 42). The researcher’s objective here is to think critically about the data analysis process, challenge and confront his or her assumptions, and identify the extent to which his or her own involvement with the data shapes the results (Mason, 2002). The researcher
will also use tables to present the data in a more condensed way and let them be seen as a whole (Maxwell, 2008).

Validity and Trustworthiness

Constructivism, the most common type of qualitative research, assumes that there is no single interpretation. Rather, there are multiple interpretations of the same event, which are socially constructed (Merriam & Tisdall, 2015), or else reality is “holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research” (p. 242). Either way, there are multiple interpretations of the way people experience a particular phenomenon or how they give their lives meaning.

Because of their different philosophical views of the nature of reality, standards of rigor differ greatly between qualitative and quantitative research. The quantitative and qualitative paradigms also use different rhetoric to convince readers of their trustworthiness (Firestone, 1987), and even the criteria and terminology used for assessing rigor in qualitative research are in flux. Some authors (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) discuss trustworthiness and rigor using the terms validity and reliability. Others use credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to mean internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity respectively (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). They also use trustworthiness to mean rigor. The researcher of this study will use these terms interchangeably and will employ the following techniques to build trustworthiness and credibility.

Transparency. The researcher will ensure that the procedures followed in this research are transparent (Yin, 2011). That is, they will be thoroughly explained and fully documented so that others can review and understand them. The researcher will make the procedures, findings, and evidence open to scrutiny by participants, colleagues, and peers. This scrutiny may result in
Methodic-ness. The researcher will also ensure that the procedures were followed in an orderly manner. The procedures, data, and interpretations will be cross-checked to ensure accuracy and thoroughness. The researcher will be sensitive to the display of the data. The interaction between the researcher and the participants will be reported in a researcher’s journal containing a “record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems that arise” (Spardley, 1979, p. 76).

Adherence to evidence. The evidence will include the participants’ actual language and the context in which it is used. The language is valuable for its representation of reality. The conclusion will be reached on the basis of data collected and analyzed fairly.

Internal Validity or Credibility

The literature has described several strategies the researcher can employ to deal with threats to validity and increase the credibility of the study (Becker, 1970). Some of these strategies overlap. Not all of them are feasible for every type of study. The researcher has to foresee specific validity threats and use appropriate strategies to deal with them.

According to Becker and Geer (1957), long-term involvement and intensive interviews provide more thorough data than any other method. Sustained observation and repeated interviews help researchers rule out premature theories and false associations and allow for the collection of rich data (Becker, 1970)—that is, data that are diversified enough to give a full picture of the events. Hence, the researcher will follow intensive interviewing techniques and use “verbatim transcripts of the interview” (p. 244), not just notes about what seems important.

The researcher will also run member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or a “respondent
validation” procedure (Bryman, 1988, p. 80), which involves the solicitation of feedback from respondents on the researcher’s transcripts and notes. This is considered “the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what the participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 244). It also helps researchers interpret respondents’ perspectives and identify their own biases. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have contended that the feedback the respondents offer is not necessarily more valid than their original responses; used together, however, the responses and feedback may increase the validity of the researcher’s account.

In addition, strategies such as “searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases” (p. 244) are essential to validity testing in qualitative research. The existence of instances that cannot be interpreted or accounted for sometimes points to critical flaws in the account. The researcher will rigorously examine both supporting and discrepant data to determine whether to keep or alter the conclusion. Wolcott (1990) recommended reporting discrepant data to allow readers to evaluate them and draw their own conclusions.

Finally, a valid study is “one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied.” (Yin, 2011, p. 78). The researcher will work to produce research that is trustworthy, interpreting life experiences as they are recounted. By its nature, qualitative research is more flexible than other types of research, and hence the researcher will take due measures to conduct the research as accurately and as fairly as possible.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The researcher will recognize the dignity, respect, and welfare of the study’s participants. Because the study will focus on faculty members in branch campuses, the researcher will also
attend to the federal and state regulations and professional standards governing research with human participants (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011) in both the domestic and hosting countries. The researcher will respect the will of the participants to refuse to take part in the study and to withdraw from it at any time.

The researcher will ensure that no one else has access to the data after it is collected. Numbers will be used in place of names during the data gathering because participants’ real names should not be used in research publications. If the researcher needs to make in-class observations of faculty members’ classroom performances, the faculty should be told that the study is of different teaching styles at a branch campus, with no mention made of the specifics of the study.

The researcher will demonstrate with consent forms that the participants were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary. There will be no constraints on the participants’ decisions (Yin, 2011). Participants need to be understand the purpose of the study and what they are actually consenting to. The researcher will also demonstrate that participant selection is equitable.

Before collecting any data from the participants, the research will obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This study involves delicate questions about people’s cultural orientations (Yin, 2011). To protect the human respondents, the researcher will implement the following procedure, as outlined by the National Research Council (2003, pp. 23–28):

1. Obtain voluntary informed consent from participants, usually by having them sign a written statement. (*Informed* means that the participant understands the purpose and nature of the research.)
2. Assess the harms, risks, and benefits of the research, and minimize any threat of harm (physical, psychological, social, economic, legal, or dignitary) to the participants.

3. Select participants equitably so that no group of people is unfairly included in or excluded from the research.

4. Assure the confidentiality of the participants’ identities, including those appearing in computer records or audio- or video-recordings.

Limitations

This study deals with the intercultural competence of transnational faculty members, the way they understand this concept, their needs as they struggle in a foreign country, and how their home institutions prepared them for their host countries. Cultural issues depend heavily on context. The experiences narrated by faculty members working in Doha, Qatar might differ greatly from those they would narrate in another setting. Furthermore, the small number of participants (five) will limit the generalizability of the study to larger populations. The sources and methods of data collection may also pose significant limitations for the study. Narrative inquiry relies on the relationship between the researcher and the participants. If the participants are too intimidated to provide honest answers, if the relationship has not developed in the manner it should, or if the participant is less invested in the study than the researcher, there could be a negative impact on the study’s findings. In spite of the expected difficulties, the researcher will make every effort to cultivate smooth relationships with the participants and provide an environment conducive to truthful cooperation.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis process. It begins by restating the purpose of the current study and the research questions that guided it. Next, it outlines the demographic, professional, and educational backgrounds of the study’s participants. Additionally, it discusses the most common themes that emerged from the data analysis process. This chapter ends with a summary of the most important research findings.

The purpose of this narrative analysis was to explore the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty members in light of their intercultural training needs. The narrative that was obtained from the participants’ interviews tells a story about how each participant responded uniquely to exposure to cultural differences in backgrounds, expectations, and educational needs. The participants’ experiences of teaching in a foreign country offer insights into the level of faculty intercultural preparedness and the impact of that preparedness on the success of transnational teaching. The findings of this study may encourage university administrators to employ innovative methods of enhancing the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty.

The overarching question of this study was: What are the experiences of transnational faculty members who are teaching in an international branch campus located in Doha, Qatar? Using Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory, the data collection and data analysis were guided by the following three sub-questions:

1. How do transnational faculty members understand intercultural competence?
2. What strategies do transnational faculty members employ to develop their intercultural competence?
3. What types of personal changes do faculty members undergo as a result of their transnational teaching experiences?

The next section presents the demographic data for the five participants.

**Demographic Characteristics**

Demographic information about the five participants for this narrative analysis was collected using the questionnaires (Appendix D). Table 1 summarizes the demographic data on the assistant/associate professors’ interviewees. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect privacy and keep confidentiality.

**Table 1. Participant Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Ethnicity (race)</th>
<th>Household Composition</th>
<th>Primary Language</th>
<th>Knowledge of Arabic</th>
<th>Household Faith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Not proficient</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Knowledge of basic words</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>- knowledge of basic words - learning to read and write - understand spoken Arabic, but cannot speak it</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirk</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Knowledge of basic words</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Separated, soon to be divorced.</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>- Very poor! - In process of learning some words.</td>
<td>Atheism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant Profiles

Five faculty members participated in this study, three males and two females. All of the faculty members had previously taught at American universities located in the United States. To some degree, they had all interacted with international students in the American higher education setting prior to joining the international branch campus in Doha, Qatar. All except for Amanda were married and still raising kids. Amanda was divorced and did not have any children. Also, all of the participants except for Amanda had been in the gulf area for a minimum of 10 years and considered themselves to be fairly experienced in the Qatari culture. At the time of the interview, Amanda was only at the onset of her second semester of teaching in Doha, Qatar. All of the participants praised their current working and living conditions as well as the compensation that they received for their work.

As faculty members from the branch campus reached overseas for exemplary candidates in their corresponding subject areas, all of the participants possessed Ph.D. degrees and impressive publication records in areas such as psychology, literacy, pedagogy, world history, management, information systems, and organizational network analysis and information system security. They all had impressive curriculum vitae.

Although none of the participants could lead a conversation in Arabic (Qatari’s native language) fluently, they all used common Arabic words such as “Ramadan Mubarak,” “Insha Allah,” “Eid Mubarak,” “wasta,” “abaya,” “hijab,” etc. during their interviews; however, since the typical Qatari citizen can successfully lead a fluent conversation in English, none of the participants felt the need to learn Arabic.

Bill
Bill was born and raised in the western U.S. in a very well-educated household, “even educated for America in general and highly educated for black America,” he commented. His father was a college professor at a business school, and his mother was a lawyer. According to the participant, “[Having] one parent with a Ph.D. and another one with a law degree, among black families, that is like a 1% kind of thing. . . . I am saying it as a matter of objective fact. It is an unusual kind of thing.” He grew up as monolingual; however, having been educated in private schools for most of his life, Bill started studying French in kindergarten and continued all the way through high school, when he also studied German.

Bill has held academic positions since 1990. He started as an instructor in one of the most prestigious American universities. He then moved his way up to a visiting assistant professor and got promoted to an assistant professor at the school of management in a highly recognized American institution. He taught there for 5 years. However, when he became less interested in following a tenured faculty track, he decided to quit his academic position and began investigating his options overseas, but not necessarily in the Middle East.

In 2005, Bill moved to the United Arab Emirates where he taught in the school of business and management at an American university there. In 2007, he was hired as an assistant professor in one of the six branch campuses located in Doha, Qatar where he has been teaching there ever since. Bill described the decision to move to another country as being easy to make, stating, “I was not married. I did not have any children. All I had to do was decide for myself.”

Maria

Originally from South America, Maria grew up speaking Spanish. However, she started speaking English when she was eight years old. She explained, “I was fascinated by my English
teacher. I wanted to be an English teacher, just like her.” At first, Maria came to the United States as an exchange student for one year to study English. She then returned to her home country and finished her bachelor’s degree in Linguistics. Eventually, she moved back to the U.S., where she met her Swedish husband and got married to him when she was still working on her bachelor degree.

Maria described herself as a very multicultural person, saying, “I feel I am very global, very international because of all the mixes in cultures [I have been exposed to] and because of the places I lived in.” She lived in the U.S. for 10 years and has been working in Qatar for 10 years. She had also visited Sweden every summer since she got married. In comparing herself to people who have never traveled or gotten a chance to experience another culture, she observed, “I am much more culturally aware and much more culturally sensitive, and I appreciate cultural differences and . . . different kinds of people and food and cultures and languages.” She described her kids as bicultural and trilingual, since they spoke Spanish, Swedish, and Arabic. “They learned the language in school and in a very international setting,” she explained.

It is interesting to note that Maria graduated from the university home campus to which this research site is affiliated. While she was still working on her Ph.D. and while the branch campus in Qatar was still being founded, Maria was invited to visit the branch campus to interview some of the prospective students, assess their English abilities, and assist with their orientation. Later, she was offered a position at the branch campus as a visiting professor.

At first, Maria wanted to continue being based in the U.S. She was not ready to make the move, and she thought that the opportunity of going to Qatar would still be available after she graduated. In 2006 however, when Maria had finished her degree, she left the U.S. to explore her
opportunity in Qatar. Her intention was to join the branch campus for a year only. Nonetheless, she never moved back to the U.S. after she joined the branch campus.

In describing the period when she made the decision to move, she said,

I was very excited. There was a sense of excitement. It was the first few years of the university. Everything was new. Things were developing as they went. It was the first class of the university, very small student body, very small group of professors; we all knew each other. It was very new and exciting. It was a small community. It felt like a family. We sort of fit in right away, loved the students. ... Going to a Muslim country didn’t concern me at all. I wore pretty much what I wore to teach in the U.S. I never showed much skin or anything, so that was no concern at all.

As for her professional background, she related,

So I am interested in how people learn a second language, but I focus on academic language development. I focus on writing. I am interested in academic writing in English. I have done mostly English, although I have experience in teaching Spanish. ... I taught Spanish, English, and academic writing to international students, mainly from China. ... Now, I teach first-year composition classes, academic writing to the freshmen ... and I also do elective courses in linguistic, social linguistic, language, and culture bilingualism and immigration.

Mark

Mark is an associate teaching professor at the branch campus in Doha, Qatar. He has been there since it was founded and is “a pioneer faculty there.” His position that of an associate teaching professor, opened up because the university’s administrators were having a hard time
finding the right candidate. People were backing out from the job for a variety of reasons. They had already lost three candidates, and he was candidate number four.

Prior to joining the branch campus, Mark taught for a few years in K-12 education at a local high school in Abu Dhabi. He clarified that his decision to join the branch campus was influenced by the fact that he was already in the Middle East, the difficult job market, and teaching history, which he characterized as being “a hard field to get a good job in.”

Mark praised the working conditions and the quality of his job at Doha, Qatar, saying, “It is a very good job, well paid. I only have two teaching loads, and they [the administrators] are not putting me under any constraint in terms of teaching. They let me teach what I want and research what I want.”

However, he described the research track in the branch campus as being in somewhat of a “weird situation.” There was confusion regarding the difference between teaching track versus research track. Although a professor might be following a teaching track, he or she would be reviewed as on the research track. The professors are not only expected to be excellent teachers, they are also required to publish textbooks and conduct research related to their pedagogy. “So it is a little bit weird,” Mark explained.

It is a teaching track, but I am holding myself to the research track. . . . We came in to do primarily undergraduate education. But the problem with that, if you teach well and you don’t publish anything, then good luck getting a job somewhere else. If you are bringing in American faculty, then research will get done because it is in the interest of the faculty and not in the interest of the institution.
When asked about when he made the decision to leave his hometown and join the branch campus, Maria said, “when I first went overseas, there was a first amount of stress, but it was made easier because my wife had taught in Abu Dhabi for [a] couple of years, so I was going with somebody who had done the transition. That made it easier.”

Kirk

Born and raised in the northeastern part of the United States, Kirk’s parents were both American. English was the only spoken language in his home. Kirk claimed that he attended school in one of the best school districts in the nation in terms of education. He believes himself to be very fortunate to have been a student in a school system that was somewhat multicultural. Within the broader community, he was continuously exposed to people who spoke more than one language.

Kirk assumed a large amount of responsibilities from a young age. He had his first job when he was 11 years old and held volunteer positions when he was only thirteen. He referred to his parents as taking a “benign neglect perspective with respect to raising both my brother and I. What I mean by that is, the expectation was always that you are individuals capable of making contributions to the family as well as making reasoned decisions.” He explained that his family provided him and his brother with everything they needed; however, whenever they wanted anything extra, “the idea was [that] we had the capacity and the knowledge and the intelligence to go ahead and work for it, get the money and get it for ourselves.”

A current program director and an associate teaching professor, Kirk switched between different majors at the undergraduate level before graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and a minor in science. He started his master’s studies right after finishing up his bachelor’s
degree and earned his first and second master’s degrees. His third master (in Education) is still in progress. He holds a Ph.D. in information security in addition to numerous certifications in information system security.

Kirk is one of the faculty members who worked on the main campus prior to joining the branch campus in Qatar. While he was deciding to join the branch campus, he thought that going overseas would be a great opportunity for his children to see a different part of the world and to get an outside perspective of the United States. “So often when you are in the U.S.,” he stated, “your perspective is constrained by the fact that the media is all U.S.-centered. . . . It is very difficult to see the U.S. from a world perspective when you are in it.” Also, because Kirk had military experience, he claimed to feel comfortable traveling anywhere.

He further described his decision to join the Qatar campus by saying that, “When I first introduced the idea to my wife, my wife was like, ‘Are you crazy? To Qatar?’” However, he thought that since his contract was for only 2 years, the worst case scenario would be to return home if he did not like living abroad. He continued,

My wife went to the library. She learned more about Qatar. She comes back and says, ‘This sounds great! It is a great opportunity!’ We never been to Doha, we never been to Qatar. . . . So, I have to give my wife an immense credit for taking the huge risk because, at the time, my son was either eight or nine and my daughter was fourteen or fifteen . . . coming over to [a] completely new place.

In addition to his professional experience, Kirk has approximately 15 years of military experience. Since 1991 till the present, Kirk held positions at the US Navy Reserve and the US Air Force Reserve. He worked as a technician offering medical services and catering for the
health and safety of marines. His military experience also included collecting, analyzing and synthesizing intelligence information into one cohesive intelligence product to be delivered to a given audience. He was also responsible for briefing intelligence reports in support of combat mission planning. For the last ten years, Kirk was working in the domains of computer network operation, signal intelligence, information and psychological operations to ensure information superiority in the US Navy Reserve.

**Amanda**

Born and raised in the eastern part of the United States, Amanda had never traveled to another country prior to joining the branch campus. She has two younger siblings. She was married to a Japanese man, but they are now separated. She does not have any children. Although her family valued education, they never expected her to go to college, instead wanting her to assume life responsibilities.

Like the rest of the participants, Amanda was highly educated and well-published. Her bachelor’s and master’s degrees were in psychology, and her Ph.D. was in neuroscience. Amanda had held many academic positions. She was an instructor for 4 years and a teaching assistant for 5 years. She started in the current branch campus as a visiting instructor, but she was promoted within a few months to the position of assistant teaching professor.

Amanda was a newcomer to Qatar. At the time of the interview, she was at the onset of teaching her second semester. “I would say that I don't consider myself extremely knowledgeable about this culture I am in. I am going to be completely honest,” she explained in the interview. Her reactions to the interview questions and insights were very different from those of her colleagues. Although she agreed with the other participants on some issues, she
provided a totally different perspective. When asked about when she decided to leave her home country and travel to teach in a foreign country, she described her situation as follows:

Well, I have to admit, first it was really scary because I never lived outside of the U.S. Americans have lots of freaking views about going to the Middle East. So I have done some research and realized it was going to be really safe. I have to admit, the first semester, at the beginning, was really hard because I felt really homesick, and it was like a totally new environment, so I was experiencing a little bit of culture shock. Eventually, it started growing on me.

Emergent Themes

The themes that emerged from the data analysis of the online semi-structured interviews with faculty members working in branch campuses located in Doha, Qatar are: *Understanding intercultural competence as a combination of knowledge, actions, characters and skills,* *addressing learning styles owing to unique cultural orientations,* *relying on informal means to foster intercultural competence,* and *adjusting one’s views and perspectives.*

**Theme 1: Understanding intercultural competence as a combination of knowledge, actions, characters and, skills.** The participants’ understanding of intercultural competence was one of the research sub-questions that this study sought to answer. The question, “What do you understand by the term intercultural competence?” was also one of the main interview questions addressed to the participants. As well-read and well-versed academic professionals, all five participants attempted to give an intricate definition of the term intercultural competence and relate a genuine understanding of it. In doing so, they agreed on many components of the
construct. Among these was the importance of gaining specific cultural knowledge and the significance of acting upon this knowledge with an appropriate attitude.

For instance, Bill initially commented that intercultural competence was a hard social construct to define. He stated that the term intercultural competence “does not have a definition like force, or energy, or gravity, or plasma, or cell mass.” He explained that consulting different resources provides different definitions for the term. While some overlap does exist among these definitions, he asserted, there is also some distinction between what people think and what people do. Furthermore, collecting a vast amount of knowledge about a particular country, religion, or culture does not necessarily mean that people will function according to that knowledge. He also added,

Intercultural competence would be something that would be meant in the doing, not in just people say the right thing and know the right thing and mean the right thing. . . . To say I know a lot about the Middle East and I know a lot about Islam, about whatever, doesn’t necessarily mean that I’ll function well there.

As for Mark, not only did he define intercultural competence, he also clarified the types of knowledge that need to be acquired prior to merging with a new culture. He defined intercultural competence as “an awareness that other people might not have the same assumptions as you do.” That is, different cultures take different stances on issues of individualism versus collectivism, egalitarian versus hierarchical assumptions about society, power distance, and degree of respect given to elders or authority figures. He also said, “It is a good idea for someone going abroad to understand a little about some of the basic assumptions that the society they’re merging into [has].”
Additionally, the participants unanimously agreed on the importance of learning the language of the country as part of cultural knowledge. For instance, Maria commented that “language is a big part of culture and things are communicated orally, verbally, and with visual images. So communication is certainly vital, and I think knowledge of the country language would be ideal. . . . I think if you know the language, you can understand the culture and appreciate much more.” Also, Kirk explained that one “should learn a little bit about the language. You need to be able to say, ‘Eid Mubarak, Ramadan Mubarak’ . . .”

**Sub-theme 1a: Open-mindedness.** In their understanding of intercultural competence, most of the participating associate professors seemed to focus not only on acquiring specific knowledge, but also on maintaining specific characters. To those teaching professors, intercultural competence was not a collection of knowledge about a specific culture; rather, it was an open-minded, tolerant, appreciative, and culturally sensitive interaction among people belonging to different cultures.

For instance, Amanda observed that “It is not critical that people come to the situation with lots of knowledge, but people need to come to the situation with open-mindedness, tolerance, and willingness to acquire the knowledge. . . . It is necessary that people are very tolerant and open minded and not trying to put their mindset on anybody else.”

As for Mark, he stated that the most important tool that an American can take abroad is to:

> Just keep an open mind that other people don't necessarily hold the same opinions, habits, [and] standards. The yardstick you are used to is not necessarily the best yardstick, either. Going into an international situation with an open mind, to me, is the most important tool
for intercultural competency.

Kirk also agreed on the importance of open-mindedness. To clarify, he referred to the five factor model in psychology, a model that lists five core personality traits in terms of five basic dimensions: “Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience” (McCrae & John, 1992, p. 175). He remarked that, in this model, being “high in the openness” is one of the most distinctive traits that transnational faculty members should possess.

**Sub-theme 1b: Cultural sensitivity.** Other than stressing the importance of being open-minded and tolerant of cultural differences, this study’s participants also highlighted the need to be able to interact with people from other cultures with comfort and ease. As explained by Amanda, “You want to create an environment where your students are comfortable, and you want to create an environment for yourself that is comfortable.” This same sentiment was echoed by Kirk, who noted,

> My understanding of intercultural competence is that the individual for whom the term is being applied is one who not only has an understanding of the foundation of the other culture, but also can work within the confines of the different culture comfortably, understands the limitation, understands the taboo, understands what would be different but acceptable, [and] understands what would be different but unacceptable within the culture.

Furthermore, all of the participants referred to the importance of being sensitive to their students’ culture and being mindful and appreciative of their cultural differences. Bennett (1993) defines intercultural sensitivity as acknowledging cultural differences and showing respect,
appreciation and cultural understanding for people from different cultures. He also conceptualizes progression in intercultural sensitivity as a developmental process model that is composed of three ethnocentric stages and three ethnorelative stages that exist along a continuum. The ethnocentric stages, in which the experiences of an individual’s own culture are central to reality, take place in decreasing levels of ethnocentrism (denial, defense, and minimization). The ethnorelative stages, in which other cultures are considered worthwhile, take place in increasing levels of ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration).

For example, Mark observed, “If I were not sensitive to [students’] needs, I would imagine they would have less positive outcomes [than the students] . . . in the main campus. So, in my experience, it is possible to overcome the cultural differences, but it takes some time and effort.”

Continuing this trend, Amanda stated, “I don’t want to offend. I realize that I am a foreigner, but I want to be as respectful of the culture as possible, as I can.” On another occasion, she stated, “Because it is a different culture, I try to be mindful of that.” Also, given her multicultural orientation and international upbringing, Maria emphasized, “I am much more culturally aware and much more culturally sensitive, and I appreciate cultural differences.”

Bill also shared similar feelings, explaining,

My biggest worry was that I would go there, not that I didn’t know the material I was gonna teach. That was easy. I was worried that I was gonna go there and then totally mess up something cultural. That was . . . my absolute biggest worry, that I was gonna be culturally offensive.
Luckily, none of the participants encountered a situation where they were culturally insulting to students, staff, or other faculty members. At least, none mentioned such a situation during their interviews. However, the participants did reference having to discuss culturally sensitive issues in class. For example, as far as Title IX is concerned, addressing specific training with respect to sexual harassment and sexual assault was a very sensitive issue to discuss. Talking about issues related to mental health also required a sensitive approach. Kirk explained how he had an obligation, from the home university perspective, to address these delicate issues, although they would not usually be discussed openly in the local culture. He also added that consulting a qualified person who is aware of both cultures may provide the right balance and help in resolving these issues.

Additionally, not only were the teaching professors sensitive to differing cultural practices, the branch campus administrators were also aware of these differences according to several participants. For example, Kirk explained how the administrators were cognizant of the different Islamic rituals that students adhere to in Qatar. He explained how they put forth efforts to ensure that the branch campus building was equipped with the proper facilities to enable students to do their ablutions (washing before prayer) and offer their daily prayers. Additionally, he clarified how they took prayer times (five daily prayers spread throughout the day and night) into account when they were setting up class schedules. Finally, he remarked how the administration and some faculty members were more concerned with these practices than the students themselves.

Mark provided an interesting perspective in regards to the cultural sensitivity of new faculty members. He explained that this cultural sensitivity might, at times, stand out as being over-emphatic. As he put it,
There is kind of self-imposed cross-cultural sensitivity by our faculty . . . to an exaggerated degree. It kind of wears off as they gain experience. . . . They [new faculty] are really nervous and hesitant and very conservative and somewhat standoffish with the students because they don’t want to offend them.

**Sub-theme 1c: Appreciation for cultural differences.** Understanding intercultural competence as an appreciation for cultural differences was another recurrent character that the participants understood to indicate intercultural competence. Maria explained that being in a different country teaches an individual to appreciate and discover how religion and culture are intertwined. She also stated,

> It [intercultural competence] is having an appreciation for valuing what different cultures have and being mindful about cultural differences, but, you know, making an asset out of it and not a problem. . . . I learn how to appreciate . . . how religion and culture are so intertwined for some of these people, and how, you know, for some people, seeing women who are covered and saying, ‘How terrible for women. Why do they have to cover, and men don’t have to?’ I don’t see that, I don’t think that. To me, it is part of their culture, religion and . . . identity. And if we take that away from them, maybe we are taking their identity.

**Theme 2: Adjusting pedagogy in response to students’ cultural orientation**

This study did not specifically seek to explore which instructional strategies best fit the student population at the branch campus site. However, the way each participant handled learning styles that resulted from different cultural orientations took up a large portion of the discussion. Several times during the interview, participants referred to the uniqueness of the
country of Qatar, its culture, prevailing social divisions, and population demographics, and the impact of its culture on its students’ learning styles. Hence, this theme will start with a brief description of the context of Qatar.

**Context of Qatar**

Qatar is a small peninsula on the western shore of the Arabian Gulf. It is bordered by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to the south, Bahrain to the northwest, and Iran to the northeast. Its climate is subtropical desert with low rainfall, mild in the winter and intensely hot and humid in the summer. In 2017, the country had a population of approximately 2.6 million. Eighty-eight percent of these were expatriates, and the rest were Qatari nationals. The expatriates came from Southern Asia, the Philippines, and neighboring Arab countries. For every Qatari citizen, there are estimated to be eight non-Qatari expatriates in the country. This is the largest migrant-to-citizen ratio in the world. Because many of the expatriates come without their families, there is also an imbalance in the male-to-female ratio.

Islam is Qatar’s official religion and Arabic is the country’s official language, but English, Farsi, and Urdu are commonly spoken, and it is rare for expatriates to speak Arabic. Qatar has the third-largest reserves of oil and natural gas in the world. Its per-capita income and standard of living are among the highest in the world.

This study was carried out in one of the six branches campuses in Doha, the capital of Qatar. The participants there work under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation for Education Science and Community Development, a non-profit organization established by Hamad Bin Khalifah Althani, the emir of Qatar (Qatar Foundation, 2010a). Because its mission includes serving the people of Qatar and supporting them in education science, research, and community development, the Qatar Foundation has solicited a number of international universities to found
branch campuses in Qatar. At present, the largest collection of American universities in the Middle East are housed in the Education City, a 2,500-acre campus on the outskirts of Doha. These include

- Carnegie Mellon University Qatar
- Georgetown University, School of Foreign Services
- Northwestern University in Qatar
- Texas A & M University at Qatar
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar

These universities bring knowledge, expertise, prestige, and high-quality education to Qatar, offering degrees comparable to those offered by their U.S.-based counterparts (Qatar Foundation, 2010a). All six are located on the same campus, and while each has its own faculty and operates as a separate entity, they work together to achieve the goals of the foundation and further its mission.

The idea that Qatar is a unique place was something all participants shared with the researcher. They explained that Qatar is a small country occupied heavily by expatriates, mostly from India, Nepal, the Philippines, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and the neighboring Middle-Eastern countries. They confirmed that the ratio of expats to Qatari is very high. Participants noted that Qatari is minority in their own country.

Some expatriates live in labor camps with poor working and living conditions, although those are “not as bad as what they would necessarily experience in their own countries,” according to Mark. More professional and skilled expatriates are usually more privileged. They live in compounds where they enjoy a more comfortable life. In Mark’s words,
Expatriates live mostly in compounds, a lot of which are specific to the company. . . .

Indian and Pakistani and poly-workers mostly live in labor camps, and they are bussed to the work site every day and bussed back to the labor camps. . . . The skilled expatriates, the expatriates who have better jobs, they are living in compounds. Much better quality housing.

This difference in nationality and social class is also reflected in the student body at the branch campus level. Only forty percent of students are Qataris. The rest belong to other nationalities, even though the branch campus heavily recruits Qataris, according to Bill. The majority of the students are female. He elaborated,

Qatari men, if they are good enough to get into a place like [name of the branch campus], they are good enough to get into another school. And since they have the opportunity to leave the country, where most girls probably do not, then most of the Qatari men will go to Australia or England or the USA or somewhere else in Europe, and we get a higher proportion of the talented ladies.

**Contextual Considerations**

Shah (2004) acknowledges that while all qualitative studies have an intrusive component to them, however, researchers who chose to cross-multiple boundaries in search of understanding lives that are different from one’s own, confront particular issues. These include, difference of ethnicity, religion, and nationalities, where life experiences, values and belief that influence meaning and behaviors are polarized (Knez, Benn & Alkhaldi, 2014).

The researcher realizes that a study such as the current one poses particular challenges in terms of negotiating values and crossing cultural boundaries. Hence, it was with emotional intelligence based on respect and awareness of differences that the researcher attempted to
conduct this cross-cultural research. Additionally, it is with due sensitivity to the cultural context of Qatar and the importance of insight into the culture and values of people in Qatar (Knez, Benn & Alkhaldi, 2014) that the researcher presents and interprets the findings of this research. Furthermore, “while any cross-cultural research raises epistemological and ontological questions for the researcher, failure to embark on the journey closes the possibility for development of global knowledge” (p. 1762).

**Sub-theme 2a: Social segregation.** Most participants expressed frustration over the social division in Qatar. Although they have been in the country for at least ten years, they have not been able to make any Qatari friends. They explained that they do not get to meet Qatars in normal social settings, but only as students. They do not feel well-integrated into society.

Participants suggested that this social segregation might be due in part to the large number of expatriates living and working in the country. It might be also triggered by the disparities between the working and living conditions of the different social layers. One participant said that “different people end up living in their own bubble to some degree. The Qatars live where they live, and the oil people live where they live.” This is how Maria explained the social segregation:

So it is very divided. Local Qatari . . . protect their citizenship and their culture because they are minority in their own country and they want the Qatari culture to live. They don’t mix with the local residents, the people that are there, the other Arabs, the Indians and the Pakistani who have been there for three or more generations. You know they are not citizens, and they will not be citizens for the most part. So there is that sector, and there is the minor low-income workers who work for Qatari families as housemates, and in the service industry, and there are people like me—professional, highly educated—
who are in a different sector of the population. There are always these different sectors of
the population that many times, you know, don’t mix with each other; kind of us-versus-
them, or us-versus-the-Qatari. The Qatari-versus-us. It is like a very divided, segregated
society and culture.

In addition, having maids working and living in with the family is very common in Qatar.
These are usually English-speaking females or males who come from other countries to serve
well-off families. Maria found this type of household very bizarre. She explained,

The class difference is very hard for me to deal with, and as much as I want to be
culturally mindful, you know, in [participant’s country of origin] I would not ever have
someone working for me full-time and living in my house. I mean, that is something is
for the very well-off people in [participant’s country of origin]. . . . I grew up very poor,
and my mother has to be one of those ladies, so it would never occur to me to have
someone living in my house and serving me and doing all the cooking and cleaning and
taking care of my children. . . . So as much as I try to be culturally sensitive and say “Ok,
this is their culture, this is how they live, this is what they are used to,” you know, I am
just going to accept it like that, but many times it is difficult to see the abuse [and] to hear
about, to see the poor living conditions of the people.

Most participants also said that they had a hard time mixing with Qataris and interacting
with them socially. Amanda described Qataris as having a respectful but “reserved culture.”

Maria agreed and elaborated:

I have been there for many years and I can’t say I have a Qatari friend, and if you have a
Qatari friend, “Wow! Oh, you have a Qatari friend! That is amazing.” If you’ve been
invited to a Qatari home, oh wow!
So I have a few Qatari students and I get along with them pretty well, but just, you know, many times a very friendly relationship, and not to the point that they would invite me to their house. We would have tea or anything like that outside of the university. That happens with very few with them, that they continue their relationship outside of the university.

This feeling of not being able to socialize with Qatars also resonated with Amanda, who described her reaction to social segregation this way:

There is this social segregation. If you are from India or Pakistan and you are in the university, yes I can contact you, we socialize, but if I see you in the street and you’re a worker in your blue suit, we don't talk and . . . there is definitely a boundary. That is a weird thing for me, because I consider myself independent. I do like to walk a lot. So it is sort of bizarre, all these workers in blue suits, and they kind of ignore. . . . I am [this] strange American walking down the street by herself kind of thing. So it is just a weak dynamic, whereas if I were walking by myself in the street in, say, in [any American city], you wouldn’t even think twice.

Sub-theme 2b: Gender segregation. Gender segregation is another cultural issue that Western professors have to deal with in Qatar. Participants agreed that students tend to self-segregate when they join the branch campus. Some of them said that this is a hard issue to address directly in the classroom because it might distract students from learning. Others reported that they try to enforce the branch campus policy against gender segregation and require their students to integrate. But one observed that the issue became less problematic as students advanced through their educations. Here is how Maria described the situation:

Ah! It is hard, you know. I mean a couple of things. The first thing, it is a culture that is
gender segregated for the most part. When the students come into the university, especially the locals, the Qataris, the girls sit on one side of the classroom and the boys sit on the other side of the classroom. The first year is hard for them. By the time they are in the second or third year, they have no choice but to work with students from the other gender, and they get used to it. Maybe some never do.

But I teach mainly first year students, so dealing with that, with the gender issue, is hard. And last year I was putting students in groups, and I told one Qatari girl, “You go there,” and it was to work with two men, and she was like, “I can’t go there, I can’t go there.” My first reaction—no one ever told me that, so my first reaction was like, “You have to.” I said, “This is [name of branch campus].” Just sent her to work with two men. And I thought about it, maybe it was so hard for her. She had to sit so close to man who are not from her family. So then when she came to my office to talk about something else, I brought it up and she said, “What I meant was that I couldn’t sit there in that seat, like next to the guy, but I could sit on the other side kind of facing him, but farther away.” I said, “Well, I am glad you worked with him, because you chose to come to [name of branch campus] and you will have to talk and work with men. This is it.”

Amanda echoed this sentiment and said that students at times choose to self-segregate on the basis of both gender and nationality. She noted, “I have seen with the freshman group, the first year, they tend to self-segregate. I have noticed that few of my colleagues have mentioned that, as they move along in their schooling, they try to integrate a little bit more, not only with males and females [but] also foreigners and nationals as well.”

Kirk related,

So, I have been here for a long time. It becomes so natural. So, segregation: it is
interesting they do at times segregate, with males sitting with males and female sitting with females. But that being said, within our program we require a lot of group work. We even have a junior project and senior project that students present in some courses. Students are split into groups, both males and females, and we have not had any issues at all with people complaining about mixing together in group projects or that one gender is dominating conversation or group over another gender.

However, Kirk explained that the problems arising from the students’ family-based culture tended to be bigger than those caused by gender-segregation.

**Sub-theme 2c: Family-oriented culture:** Participants agreed that students’ families, sometimes their extended families, played a greater role in their college education and their cultural orientation than is typical for American students. Once the school day is over, Qatari students go home and spend the evening with their families. They also spend their weekends with family members. They are more family-oriented than other cultures.

Participants suggested that because most of the students still live with their parents, they have not had the experiences that typical undergraduates have in the United States. They do not assume similar financial responsibilities and rarely have a part-time job, much less two. They do not go out on weekends, and they remain sheltered until a little older than the average American student.

Bill commented that this type of culture “delays the onset of adult maturity” and may also “have an indirect effect in terms of the pattern of interaction.” Professors cannot build on these experiences or assume these expectations when communicating with students in the classroom, Bill also noted.

Another area where the family-oriented culture of Qatar might cause conflicts in
American educational institutions is family members’ use of social status to facilitate their children’s admission to the Qatar branch campus. Bill explained that when high-status institutions like Georgetown, Carnegie Mellon, Cornell Medical School, Texas A&M, Virginia Commonwealth, or Northwestern University set up branch campuses in places like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, “there are going to be people who want to get admitted just because of the status that is associated with it, and they will use their *wasta*, or connections—or tend to—to get admittance for their children, who may or may not be qualified.” This presents a real challenge, to make sure that people don’t get away with favoritism in admission for their children.

Additionally, all five participants agreed that although family members do not present serious cultural challenges, teachers do encounter very different problems from the ones they come across in the U.S. For example, Kirk remarked,

> Typically when I taught in the U.S., I didn’t deal with parents at all, let alone the extended family. . . . Here, however, it is quite—it is not uncommon, I should say, for not just the students but the students’ families to come when there is an issue, a question, or a problem. And obviously we deal with the whole issue that is associated with that.

To illustrate, Qatari students are funded by their government and non-Qatari students are funded by their parents or other sources. It is common for Qatari parents to request their student’s transcripts, but a family intervention like this might cause problems for American professors. As a U.S. institution, the branch campus has to adhere to FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), Kirk explained. So when family members ask about students’ records or any other protected information, professors have to politely explain that they cannot disclose that information and cannot talk about students’ academic progress without the students’ consent. However, “There are people out there who would try and work you,” Kirk
observed. He explained,

The onus is on me to make sure that I am adhering to the cultural standards and the cultural norms of that family as fast as I can, given the restraints that we have with respect to the law we have to follow being a U.S. institution. . . . [W]e have to adhere to FERPA.

Another area where family involvement might challenge a professor’s approach to teaching is families’ protection of their daughters. Kirk commented,

Family expectations [are] that having a daughter working here in the lab till two or three in the morning is much less acceptable than if their sons work. And so sometimes . . . they would rather work at home than be there in the lab.

Maria said that this sort of family-rearing of daughters affected the rules for joining the university’s main campus in the U.S.: being accepted to the branch campus in Qatar means that students are fully admitted to the home university and can continue their studies in the U.S. if they wish to. It used to be that after their first year on the Qatar campus, students would come to the U.S. and never return. Nowadays the rules about when students are allowed to come to the U.S. are a little tighter because this arrangement wasn’t practical for families with female students. Families used to arrange for a male, a family chaperon, to join their daughters whenever they traveled or studied in the U.S. He related,

In 2008, one of our students went in the summer, and her brother went with her. . . . They rented, like, hotel rooms or something off campus, whatever it was, and he walked with her to every class and he waited. . . . That is all he did. And he would hang out and have coffee, and when the class was over, he would walk with her to the next class, and went with her somewhere else.
**Sub-theme 2e: Collective society.** Participants described the students’ culture as a more “collectivist” one. They found the students to be more group-oriented than individual-oriented. Although the students know a lot about American culture, Westerners, and European lifestyles, they still “sort of think in a collectivist way, which is more traditional, more of a group-community-family center” remarked Amanda. The students tend to value the needs of their peers, families, and communities. They put the needs of friends ahead of their own. Maria noted, for example, that “it is hard for them to say no to someone who is asking for help.” This type of reciprocity seems to shape their identity.

When asked how they responded to this type of culture in their classroom, the participants agreed that group work functions best. Mark explained,

Students from collectivist cultures tend to do better in group work, in part because they are good followers. That allows the weaker students to get mentored by the better students. They are not competitive in those groups. They tend to help each other more than in the main campus. . . . I never did group work when I taught in America, but I do group work in Qatar because I think collectivist societies are good in it. I think you get better results from group work than you do in the United States.

**Sub-theme 2f: Oral tradition.** Participants seemed to agree that students at the branch campus were not interested in reading long texts. They commented that students were more comfortable listening to lectures, watching movies, or discussing topics among themselves. They also noticed that the students at the branch campus tended to read much less than those at the home campus. However, Bill commented, this “doesn’t mean [the students] are not quite competent and conversant in English, but for instance, one of the things I noticed is they do not like to read large amounts of material. At least not in English.”
The students’ lack of interest in long texts may be related to their lack of English proficiency. The participants explained that because English is often a second or third language for them, the students have some difficulty reading long texts. And although the students have demonstrated at least minimal competency in reading and listening to English, some of them still struggle with academic English at times. They also have difficulty parsing the questions posed in the tests to identify the right answer. Freshman students, for instance, tend to use Arabic-English dictionaries to find the meanings of some words on tests.

In the light of a study Kirk conducted on students’ own words, this indifference to textual information might be related to the students’ oral traditions too. Kirk suggested that students don’t read for learning. It’s something they’re not used to, and the task of reading a large amount of material, digesting it, and applying it is very difficult for them. He claimed that this could be “a component of the oral tradition that is commonly found in the larger community here, and again you see that oral tradition in the memorization and the repetition of the Quran, right?”

Mark complained that a lot of students come from schools that take passive approaches to learning. Therefore, the students join the branch campus “expecting to listen and regurgitate.” They assume that professors will be their sources of information: the professors will talk and they will listen, take notes, memorize information, and restate basic facts.

To address these differences in preferred learning style, the participants had to take new approaches to teaching. Mark said,

I tried to very self-consciously make the point, from the first day, that facts you can look up—facts in Wikipedia—that is lowest level of history. It is not important that you memorize names and dates. It is important that you understand broad concepts. Then you can apply those broad concepts to a body of knowledge and use theory to understand
specific instances in history to identify broad common themes, to make connections between different cultures solving the same problem differently or similarly, so forth and so on.

He added,

Teaching in Qatar, I haven’t changed how I teach, by and large. Good teaching is good teaching, I mean. Maybe the one difference is you have to offer a little bit more scaffolding. If you are dealing with international, especially ESL, students you have maybe to explain some words. . . . Sometimes I explain words while I am reading. . . . Sometimes I’ll have a little blurb at the beginning of a reading or written assignment explaining who the author is and what the time period is, and maybe I would do that more with international students than I would do with American students. I can’t take it for granted that they know some basic facts that American students would know.

Bill also said, “And so I had to adapt my style quite a bit in that regard, from making it a reading-based course to a more video- and visual-based course.” However, Maria, who teaches English composition, reading, and writing skills, asserted that every professor should be engaged in improving students’ reading and writing techniques:

It is everybody’s duty to engage in extensive reading and writing, but if we are going to sort of dumb down the curriculum and have them watch movies rather than read, I don’t think we are giving the students the service they are paying for. There is great value in using movies in classes, and I use a lot of that, but I have my students read and write a lot. . . . Yes, we should adapt, but that doesn’t mean we have to do less than [name of home campus] in the U.S.

**Theme 3: Relying on informal means to foster intercultural competence**
Given the similar amounts of time the participants had spent in Qatar and other Middle-Eastern countries, all four perceived themselves as culturally confident and culturally effective teachers. They communicated to the researcher that they are competent professors who can handle discrepancies between the home university and branch campus cultures successfully. As a result, they all felt that they were not in desperate need of intercultural training, particularly not formal training. Should unique or inter-culturally challenging situations arise, guidance from faculty members who were comfortable with Qatari culture or had been there longer would help them understand the situation and address the matter more efficiently.

To this end, participants’ inclination to learn about appropriate cultural interactions from their own experience, in an intercultural context, and by collaboration with other faculty members agrees with Dewey’s (1916) ideology about learning. Constructivists such as Dewey (1916), Piaget (1980) and Vygotsky (1934) maintain that learning is not a process of collecting isolated facts with little relevance to people’s life. They also hold that knowledge is not an abstract set of information.

By contrast, learning is an active process and knowledge is a constructed meaning that is influenced by prior experiences and new learning events (Arends, 2004). People learn best by doing, by actively engaging their senses in the learning process and by constructing their own knowledge. People learn in relationship to what they already know, what they believe in, their fears and their biases.

Moreover, constructivists believe that learning is closely influenced by the learning environment. What people learn cannot be separated from the context of learning. Placing the learner in a particular learning environment triggers a learning goal which determines what the learner attends to, what prior knowledge the learner uses and what understanding gets eventually
constructed.

**Sub-theme 3a: Faculty’s support.** All but Amanda (the new faculty member) preferred to seek guidance on cultural issues from colleagues rather than attend a formal intercultural training. Without that guidance, however, intercultural training would definitely be needed. Mark observed that one way to learn these competencies is partly from academics who have experienced similar situations and talk with them about it.

For example, learning styles resulting from students’ cultural orientations could have been easily misunderstood if it weren’t for the guidance of other faculty members. Faculty members who had experienced similar situations were the best source of knowledge about what was and was not appropriate in the culture.

For instance, Kirk explained that the case of the five freshmen who copied paragraphs verbatim from the textbook could have been misunderstood as cheating or plagiarism and resulted in serious academic consequences. The students’ entire perception of university could have been changed, and it could have negatively affected their achievement. However, because the participants consulted other professors, these problems were avoided. He related,

I was very fortunate to have a large staff, a large faculty here, many of which have come from the broader Middle East–North Africa region, and so they have a common understanding of the culture . . . they can go ahead and give an *ad hoc* training to me when I need a common understanding, but absent that, I would say definitely there is some need to go ahead and provide some sort of training.

Interestingly, none of the participants had received any intercultural preparation before joining the branch campus. As Bill narrated, “Not surprising how little they told us ahead of time about how to . . . learn from other faculty, and again I was worried that I would make that
mistake out of lack of knowledge, not out of, you know, disregard or simply not caring.”

Instead, participants go through a very structured orientation when they start their academic year. Some noted that the orientation can last up to four days and covers a wide range of academic responsibilities and expectations. It gives new faculty members a chance to meet with different departments, students, fellow faculty members, and students’ affairs administrators.

The focus of the orientation is twofold: to uphold the standards of the main campus and to understand the unique challenges posed by the culture. Bill concluded that “the limited number of severe problems that we have had suggest that [name of home university] does a very good job in preparing people for that.”

Participants agreed on the importance of the orientation. They observed that without an orientation, faculty members might get lost. However, as for the value of the formal intercultural training, that might vary among individuals. Formal training might be needed by people known for their cultural rigidity. For instance, if some people have the view that “[their culture] is the right way and everybody else’s is the wrong way,” then that would make it “very difficult for such an individual to come to Qatar, or to any other culture, really, and be able to survive.” These are the ones who would probably benefit the most from the training. Others, such as Maria, believe that being international is common sense and is second nature to them. She is culturally aware that things might be the same in other countries and might be different.

Participants also commented that the intercultural training must address specific issues to be successful and effective. Maria criticized the fact that the intercultural sessions were sometimes very rudimentary and simplistic. She said,

When we came to Qatar, we had this orientation, and this psychologist came to us and
she wanted to talk to us: “Oh, you know, you might experience culture shock.” But I felt it was so basic and felt she was so annoying at the same time. She said too many things, and I was like, uh, I don’t need to hear about these things, and she said, “Do not get used so much to the comfort here.”

Interestingly, although most of the participants did not perceive a need for intercultural training, the newcomers to the country took a different position. Amanda, for instance, felt clearly that knowledge of Qatar’s culture, official language, and customs was something she wished she had been informed about before arriving:

Like I said, I would’ve preferred to have a week orientation just on the culture itself... what methods of enculturation are available to me, as far as picking up the language, or learning about the food, or the way I am dressed or the religion or that kind of thing. I think that would have been more helpful.

In addition, when asked to describe the type of preparation and follow-up orientations she would like to have received, Amanda replied,

I would have preferred, before coming, to have... cultural orientation or some type of online course or resources sent to me that were accurate. Sometimes when you google, you can get misinformation, so something that is accurate. Also, from the university standpoint—that is, just me as an employer potentially hiring faculty—I want to make sure whoever I am hiring is prepared to be homesick, especially if they are going to be separated from their spouse or their children, and also prepared to embrace the culture and be very respectful and mindful. I don’t think there’s ever been a case where something backfired at my university, but that is not to say that couldn’t happen at different points.
Sub-theme 3b: Gaining cultural competence from experience. In addition to learning from other faculty members, participants related that their engaging teaching experiences were an alternative to intercultural training. They learned to be inter-culturally competent just by doing things or being in the classroom. As such, they have gained intercultural confidence not only from their own experiences, but from the experiences of other professors.

That kind of experience can be gained in an international context, in a foreign country, or at home by dealing with international students. Maria explained how her experience teaching international students in her home country, people from China, Korea, and Japan, advanced her intercultural skills with people from Asia. She learned to respond to her students better and how to put them in groups and meet their cultural needs. She reported to have had a very pleasant classroom environment and always received positive evaluations.

Sub-theme 3c: Self-selected group. Branch campuses affiliated with American institutions in Qatar are not for all types of students. Students who join these campuses tend to be a “self-selected” sample who favor an educational style with a Western focus. They arrive fully aware that although the school is sensitive to their cultural needs, it upholds a Western standard. The branch campus accommodates Muslim students and respects their religious rituals, but it does not enforce Islamic values. For instance, it does not enforce gender segregation. Men and women are educated together. The branch campus runs education in a way comparable to the main campus: “It is our institutional duty to provide the same education in Qatar that we have in the main campus in [home university],” noted Mark. At least, this is the kind of education Qatars requested the administrators to implement, Mark added. It is also the type of college life Qatars wanted the student population to experience. As such, the students are usually at ease with this style of education and conform well to it.
The self-selection of the student body is also evidenced by the number of women students who cover their faces on campus. Bill explained, “A broad indicator of self-conservatism there is that the proportion of women that we have who wear the veil, like this [covering his face below the eyes] and show their eyes, is maybe 1 or 2 percent, where in [local] universities it might be much higher.” Students who attend the local universities tend to be more conservative and less well-traveled.

This type of student body also reflects the students’ family backgrounds. Parents who elect to enroll their children in a branch campus closely tied to an American university, as opposed to a more conservative Qatari university, are themselves more liberal. They themselves have a Western focus. They went to a university in the U.S. and tend to understand the American institutions’ policies.

It is also an indication of where families previously sent their children to school. The students have generally gone through heavily Americanized curriculums and schools and have already been exposed to Western ideas. Even though some of their K-12 schools might have been all-girl schools, they had been recruited over and over to join the branch campus because the faculty knew that they were the kind of students who would succeed in that environment and would be more comfortable with the branch campus program. Mark elaborated, “We are relatively an expensive school. We cater to rich kids who are likely to have gone to good, high-quality international schools. It might be an unrepresentative sample of what the international population might look like.”

Teaching professors tend to be a self-selected group as well. For instance, professors who are not flexible, tolerant, and appreciative are less likely to apply for positions in Qatar and might not even consider these opportunities in the first place. Conversely, people who are open to new
experiences will self-select to take advantage of the opportunity. If faculty members did not think that being interculturally competent was important, they would not want to teach at that campus in the first place and would feel neither happy nor comfortable there.

Having a self-selected student population familiar with Western standards narrows the cultural gap and eases the conflicts that might arise between students, teaching professors, and administrators, so faculty members do not feel the need for structured intercultural development programs. Mark stated, “The bottom line is that intercultural training is less important to a branch campus that is closely tied to the main campus and much more important to an institution which is only affiliated with an American institution.”

**Sub-theme 3d: Dominance of Western culture.** All, but Amanda, claimed that having an intercultural orientation session on the culture of the country and adjustment to it is not critical for them because Qatar is a unique country. Qatar is an international hub for people of many nationalities and mixed cultures. People who live and work there come from India, Nepal, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the neighboring Arab regions. It is a country where Western culture tends to prevail over other cultures and where English has become more common than Arabic, the official language of the country. The layperson is fully aware of Westerners’ customs and lifestyles. Even the students’ jokes and cultural references are Western specific. If the participants were to teach in a branch campus in another country, an intercultural training program might have been required.

For example, Mark explained, “Maybe if [the teaching professors] were hired to teach in a branch campus which is located in another country, then intervention in the form of intercultural development would be required.” However, Maria elaborated,
We are in the Middle East. We are not in Syria, we are in Qatar. We live a very comfortable life, we teach in a very nice environment, the building is beautiful, the facilities are wonderful, we live in beautiful houses. We have lots of comfort. It is easy to get used to life in an international context. It might be different if you have to go to Africa. Even if you might have a very good job in Africa, just the infrastructure, the facilities, and just the life in Africa wouldn’t make it as easy for people to develop, you know, an appreciation for the culture.

Participants added that it is not simply that the country contributes to their assimilation of the intercultural context; this is the mission of the branch campus. The participants believed that their job is to uphold the home university’s standards, engage in diplomacy, and allow other cultures to understand the perspective of the West. For example, Kirk explained,

Our job for students is to provide them with Western education, which includes an understanding of the cultural norms of broadly the West, and give them not an experience but . . . an opportunity to become fluid in those cultural norms.

Kirk’s comment is in alliance with the mission of the Education City which, aims to be the center for educational excellence in the region and is also a forum where world-renowned universities share research and facilities with each other and with businesses and institutions in the public and private sectors. The campuses are extensions of their parent universities, and admissions standards, curricula and degrees are identical to those of the home institutions. (Embassy of the State of Qatar, 2010).

Branch campuses are supposed to provide students with a learning experience that is similar to their counterpart in the home country.

Having discussed teachers’ perceptions of intercultural training in Qatar, it is worth
relating how military personnel view this need, as one of the participants has a military background. Kirk related that people in the military receive a very structured training whenever they are dispatched to another country. The length and depth of the training depend on the length of their stay and the level of interaction they are expected to have with the culture. The training could last from one or two days to a whole year depending on whether the person is visiting, living there, or interacting with the general population. The training consists of classes geared toward learning the culture, becoming familiar with the language, and understanding of how to interact with the larger community. As Kirk pointed out, “The wrong thing at the wrong time probably leads to a conflict.” Hence, the military should be well positioned to take measures to ensure that they have well-trained individuals.

**Theme 4: Adjusting one’s views and perspectives.**

Among the outcomes of transnational teaching experience that this study sought to investigate are the personal changes participants underwent. The participants all perceived their experience as an eye-opener. Working in Qatar gave them the opportunity to see the US from the outside, from a world perspective: “So often when you’re in the US, your perspective is constrained by the fact that the media is all US-centered. It is very difficult to see the US from a world perspective when you are in it,” commented Kirk.

In addition, the participants were able to reflect on their own country and themselves. They have become more tolerant and more self-critical. They agreed that although, at their core, people do not differ that much (they all have the same basic necessities), the media portray the population of the Middle East as homogenous. Following are some of the interesting insights participants shared with the interviewer under this broad theme.

**Sub-theme 4a: Media.** Participants said that the media are ineffective in describing
people from the Middle East. The media do not distinguish different layers of the same population or the populations of adjacent Arab countries. Before their teaching experiences, the participants’ perceptions of the Middle East has been distorted by what the media had portrayed. But the participants believed that because they had worked in Qatar, their views of the Middle East had become more focused. For example, Kirk described his perspective as follows:

The media portray it as homogenous from Oman to Yemen. . . . [T]he only thing they show is conflict . . . they don’t give the perspective to that Qatar is one thousand miles away from any continent, and a bombing in Syria is about as close to Qatar as would be a bombing in Finland to southern California.

Coincidentally, all the participants’ interviews were conducted during the 2016 national election year. Because one of the presidential nominees undermined the presence of Muslims in the United States, it was hard for the participants, who live and work in a Muslim country, not to take a stance on this issue. Kirk observed,

The degree of xenophobia that is obviously so pronounced in the US now, we can see in the national election, it is causing huge concern to me because we are a nation of immigrants. The people that make up the census of the United States, outside the Native American population, are all immigrants to the country. We are that melting pot. That is, you know, where we derive our strength from. . . . I think now, with the demographics of the US—it is a white minority, we are a multicultural majority—it becomes more important to embrace that and take advantages of that. We need to have languages taught in our schools, we need to have other cultures being recognized, because we are, more and more, a continuing trend since World War II, dependent upon foreign trade and investment. . . .
I don’t think we have explained that as much to students in our K-12 education, and we have very brief social science education in the college system, which leads to this nationalism and the xenophobia that is going on. That being said, I think the larger government understands this and as such, the idea of having universities establish branch campuses in other part of the world is a way to engage in diplomacy and allow other cultures to understand the kind of perspective of the West.

Amanda, who is a novice to the culture, explained that the Middle East was a mystery to her. The news and movies only confused her about this population. Reporting on the media, she observed,

The media focuses on negative aspects. There is rarely any positive aspect. And, when you show graphics that are more on the violent side or extreme, it is very salient in mind and it is easy to image. So that is what you bring up when you think about a culture immediately, oh, that I remember that news clip or, you know, school got robbed or something like that, so unfortunately, that comes to mind first. Not, oh! hey, most of the people are actually peaceful and it is really not like that in all the countries, you know?

However, when Amanda described her students she said,

My students are absolutely wonderful. They’re extremely quiet, way more quiet than your typical American undergraduate, so that is very refreshing. And the other thing that I have learned is that people really, at their core, don’t really differ that much. My [students], much like American undergraduates: they have fears of public speaking, they get really stressed out about exams, about situations with their families, and they have a lot of similar stressors.

Sub-theme 4b: Qatari identity. Other participants emphasized the fact that intercultural
competence should not lead to jeopardizing local people’s identity or threatening their culture. Helping the locals preserve their customs and hold on to their habits while interacting with them effectively and appreciating their differences should help the students uphold their own identities and reinforce the host culture instead of imperiling it. For instance, Maria stated,

In the case of Qataris, their identity is in jeopardy because of all these foreigners who are in their own country, but at least they can hold on to their abayas. They can hold on to their hijab, because that make them Qatari. . . . [T]hey are speaking a lot of English, they are forgetting their Arabic. They are becoming so global . . . talking to other friends who are highly educated and are very smart but didn’t have experience of living there, they think it is terrible that these women are covering themselves.

Kirk also said, “You never realize that one: how much Western culture, broadly speaking, has been adopted and how much they truly understand about it.” He added, “For me the greatest impact has been in understanding truly how much Western culture had been injected in many places of the world. When the plane was landing, I looked out of the window and here is a McDonald’s, there is a Hardee’s, there’s the Gap store, so the commercialism of the West has spread itself in so many places”.

Mark’s perspective was,

I would like to think that I know a heck of a lot more about the Arab world and the Arabs than the typical American does. . . . I would like to think I was pretty laid back and cultural relativist before I went out there. I am sure that has been reinforced. Sometimes I come back to America and go “Eww! What are these idiots doing with the guns? What is wrong with these people?”

Sometimes you feel American: you are of America but not in America. It is hard
to be self-critical about that. At any given time, you feel like you’ve always been the way you are, unless you are more self-reflective than the average person is. . . . My wife says I am a lot more adventurous than I used to be. I am more willing to take risks as a result of the whole expat experience.

**Summary of Findings**

Several findings emerged from the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with the university professors. Based on the findings, it is evident that all five participants agreed on the importance of gaining specific cultural knowledge and the significance of acting upon this knowledge with an appropriate attitude. They also emphasized that one should approach teaching in another country with open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, and appreciation for cultural differences.

Participants observed the uniqueness of the country of Qatar, its culture, prevailing social divisions, and population demographics, and the impact of its culture on its students’ learning styles. They clarified that Qatar is heavily occupied by expatriates coming from different countries and experiencing different living and working conditions. They suggested that this difference in nationality and social class has resulted in some type of social segregation among the different social layers. They also expressed frustration over this social division, noting that it was preventing them from becoming well-integrated into the society and from interacting with Qataris in a social setting.

Gender segregation was another cultural issue which participants had to deal with in Qatar. Participants agreed that students tend to self-segregate on the basis of gender. The girls sit on one side of the classroom and the boys sit on the other side. The issue of gender segregation is most evident in the freshmen year, however, as students move along in their schooling, they try
to integrate a little bit more. However, this gender segregation was not preventing female students from advancing in their studies and earning a college degree.

Some professors felt that the problems arising from the students’ family-based culture tend to be bigger than those caused by gender-segregation. Students’ families play a big role in their college education and their cultural orientation that is typical for American students. Participants suggested that because most of the students still live with their parents, they have not had the experiences that typical undergraduates have in the United States. Hence, Professors cannot build on these experiences or assume these expectations when communicating with students in the classroom.

Participants seemed to agree that students at the branch campus were not interested in reading long texts. The students’ lack of interest in long texts may be related to their lack of English proficiency. The participants explained that because English is often a second or third language for them, the students have some difficulty reading long texts. Mark complained that a lot of students come from schools that take passive approaches to learning. Therefore, the students join the branch campus “expecting to listen and regurgitate.” Hence, professors had to adjust their pedagogy in accordance with the students’ learning needs.

As for intercultural competence training, participants perceived themselves as culturally confident and culturally effective teachers. Hence they were not in desperate need of intercultural training, particularly not formal one. Should unique or inter-culturally challenging situations arise, guidance from faculty members who were comfortable with Qatari culture or had been there longer would help them understand the situation and address the matter more efficiently.
In addition to learning from other faculty members, participants related that their engaging teaching experiences were an alternative to intercultural training. They learned to be inter-culturally competent just by doing things or being in the classroom. As such, they have gained intercultural confidence not only from their own experiences, but from the experiences of other professors.

Additionally, the target culture of Qatar and the mission of the branch campus seemed to minimize the need for intercultural training. Qatar is an international hub for people of many nationalities and mixed cultures. It is a country where Western culture tend to prevail over other cultures and where English has become more common than Arabic, the official language of the country. Finally, the participants stressed that their job is to uphold the home university’s standards, engage in diplomacy, and allow other cultures to understand the perspective of the West.
Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings

Chapter five summarizes the most important findings of this study and interprets them in light of the literature review and in relation to the theoretical framework. It also presents their implications for transnational educational practices and offers recommendations for future research. This narrative analysis gave the researcher the opportunity to investigate the teaching experiences of transnational faculty members in relation to their intercultural competence and the need for intercultural training at their respective branch campus in Doha, Qatar. The data were collected through online Skype interviews with five teaching professors at branch campus. The research was guided by Mezirow’s (1991) theory of transformative learning. In particular, the overarching question guiding the study was “What are the experiences of transnational faculty members who teach at an international branch campus in Doha, Qatar?” The data collection and analysis were guided by the following sub-questions:

1. How do transnational faculty members understand intercultural competence?
2. What strategies do they use to develop their intercultural competence?
3. What kinds of personal changes do faculty members undergo as a result of their transnational teaching experiences?

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first interprets the participants’ narratives on the basis of transformative learning theory. The second discusses the meaning of the key findings in relation to the review of current literature. The third highlights the implications for practice. Recommendations for future research and a conclusion end the study.

Interpretation of the Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

Disorienting dilemma. This study employed the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1991) as a theoretical lens to examine transnational faculty members’ development of
intercultural competence in light of their cultural needs. The fundamental premise of the transformative learning theory is that the novelty of transnational teaching experiences challenges faculty members’ deeply rooted assumptions and triggers reflection, leading to more thoughtful, inclusive, and open worldviews (Mezirow, 1991; Smith, 2009). This transformation indicates a learning progression toward greater intercultural competence (Bennett, 2015). Mezirow’s theory is an adult learning theory grounded in cognitive and developmental psychology. It has three major components: disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and critical discourse (Taylor, 1998).

On the basis of other research studies focused on intercultural experience, participating professors were anticipated to report having intense levels of disturbance when they assumed their teaching positions in Qatar (Di Leonardo, 1984; Oberg, 1960; Seah & Edwards, 2006; Smith, 2014). Interestingly, none of the participants but Amanda, mentioned feelings of homesickness, isolation, disorientation, or culture shock. Bill, Maria, Mark, and Kirk were indeed reluctant to accept the offer of teaching in a Middle Eastern country, but once they joined the branch campus they were keen to stay.

This discrepancy between the findings in the literature review and the data collected from the participants can be interpreted in a number of ways. First, the participants have been working in the branch campus for at least ten years and may have forgotten about that period of their lives. The lack of an intense disorienting dilemma, as in culture shock, could also be due to the uniqueness of Qatar’s culture; the country welcomes Western culture (Rostron, 2009). Naturally, the smaller the difference between native and target cultures, the less intense the dilemma. The Westernized culture of Qatar moderated the difference and might have also weakened the intensity of the dilemma, but it did not necessarily nullify it. This seems to align well with the conceptualization of transformative learning theory.
The mission of the branch campus, a factor not considered in other studies, might also have played a role in faculty members’ ease of adjustment. The participants explicitly stated that their branch campus upholds Western standards. Students who are expected to do well in this kind of environment are strongly recruited, and students who do join the campus are expected to be ready to assimilate and follow the rules and policies established by the home university in the U.S.

Furthermore, according to the transformative learning theory, the disorienting dilemma does not have to be intense to lead to transformative learning. It can also be the result of routine activities or less dramatic events (Pernell-Arnold, Finley, Sands, Bourjolly, Stanhope, & Finely, 2012). In the current study, participants’ daily exposure to students from a different culture and their yearly teaching assignment in a branch campus is the disorienting dilemma, and it might have resulted in their perspective transformation and the subsequent advancement of their intercultural skills.

**Critical reflection.** Critical reflection involves questioning the integrity and critiquing the presuppositions of previously held assumptions and habits of mind: “It is the process of turning our attention to the justification for what we know, feel, believe and act upon” (Mezirow, 1995, p. 46). Mezirow considered critical reflection the most distinguishing characteristic of adult learning: only in adulthood does a person become critically aware of the meaning perspectives he or she acquired uncritically during childhood through socialization or emotional relationships.

Mezirow (1997) also clarified that critical reflection fits into one of the four processes of learning. Taking as an example ethnocentrism, the habit of seeing the members of another group as inferior, one process of learning is to elaborate on one’s point of view by producing more
evidence to support one’s bias against a particular group. A second is to establish a new point of view by focusing on the shortcomings of that group, either because of an encounter with the group or because of one’s original propensity toward ethnocentrism. A third process is to transform one’s point of view by critically looking at one’s own misconceptions about a particular group because of an experience in another culture. This lets a person become more tolerant and accepting of members of that group. A fourth process is to completely transform the ethnocentric habit and build a general awareness of one’s biases toward other groups. Mezirow (1997) said that this is the hardest and least common way of learning because it requires an epochal transformation. He added that people do not transform as long as the new experience which they come across fits comfortably into their current frame of mind.

The findings of this study can be interpreted on the basis of Mezirow’s (1997) third way of learning. They indicate that the participants’ exposure to a new culture forced them to look at their long-held psycho-cultural assumptions with a critical eye. Their interactions with different others challenged their frames of reference and led to their engagement in critical reflection on their stereotypes and misconceptions about students belonging to Qatari culture. The participating professors strove for contextual understanding and justification of meanings. Eventually, they started considering alternatives perspectives.

Prior to their transnational teaching experience, the professors’ view of the Middle East was either obscured (Amanda’s case), distorted (Mark’s case), or constrained by what the U.S. media had portrayed (Kirk’s case). They were hesitant about accepting a job offer in Qatar and were not sure whether the country was safe place to raise a family. In addition, adjusting to a conservative lifestyle in an Islamic country such as Qatar sounded too challenging. Having received no prior intercultural training, they found the idea of culturally offending students or their
families too fearful. They reasoned that deriving a positive learning experience from being in Qatar would require a major adjustment of their perspectives and stereotypes about people of other cultures (although the other culture might still be too strange for them).

For instance, customs such as females covering the whole body except the hands and face, abstaining from eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset (as happens during the holy month of Ramadan), interrupting one’s flow of activities to offer prayers three times a day and twice at night, gender segregation, and male chaperons being required for travel abroad with related female students, might all sound bizarre to someone unfamiliar with Islamic culture, particularly when the media portray Muslim women as oppressed and the population of the Middle East as homogenous. The participants’ initial reactions to these so-called anomalies were passive. They seemed to have acknowledged these cultural differences and respected them to avoid offending people’s cultures and habits.

When the implications of these religious rituals and cultural practices became intertwined with educational commitments, however, the participants’ assumptions and beliefs about learning were disrupted—for example, when a female student refused to sit next to the opposite gender during classwork, or when five freshmen copied verbatim from the textbook, or when a group of students requested fewer homework assignments during Ramadan, or when students arrived late to class because they were offering prayers. Because of these anomalies, the professors’ habits of mind and their own practices became apparent to them. They have become aware of their own presuppositions and started assessing their validity.

Having received no prior training in this area, the teaching professors were at a disadvantage. Although they had all taught international students in their home countries, they had never faced incidents in which they had to choose between interrupting classwork and honoring a
religious practice. They had never come across cases in which religious commitments, cultural practices, and instructional activities coexisted. The incidents they faced in Qatar did not fit comfortably in their frames of reference (Mezirow, 1997). These so-called anomalies they faced became “trigger events” that precipitated critical reflections (Mezirow, 1997). The participants had to discuss these issues with other professors who had experienced similar incidents in order to resolve them. This type of dialogue is discussed in the following section.

**Rational discourse.** According to Mezirow (2000), rational discourse is “the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience. It may include interaction within a group or between two persons, including a reader and an author or a viewer and an artist” (p. 14). Unlike usual, everyday discussions, rational discourse is used “when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms), or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement.” (Mezirow 1991a, p. 77). Discourse is the medium through which critical reflection takes place, where assumptions are questioned and where meaning schemes are eventually transformed (Gordon & Brobeck, 2010; Mezirow, 1991; Sands & Tennant, 2010).

The participants declared that discussing the appropriateness of cultural behaviors with other faculty members was their preferred means of understanding the basis of cultural differences and intercultural encounters. Thus, they were engaged in constructive discourse to “use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying assumptions and making an action based on the resulting insight” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8).

By focusing on validating the authenticity of what was being communicated, in light of competing interpretations and alternating points of views, this discourse with other teaching
professors enabled the participants to learn about new customs by analyzing similar experiences and reaching a common understanding that would continue to hold true until new arguments became more apparent (Mezirow, 1997). Participants’ discourse with others became central to making meaning.

However, Mezirow (1991) also emphasized that rational discourse rests on a set of ideal conditions to produce more inclusive meaning perspectives. Among these conditions is that the participants “have accurate and complete information,” “be free from coercion and distorting self-deception,” “weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively,” “become critically reflective upon presuppositions and their consequences,” “be open to alternatives perspectives,” and “have equal opportunity to participate, including the chance to challenge, question, refute, and reflect, and to hear others do the same” (pp. 77-78).

Mezirow admitted that these conditions might never be met in practice. Similarly, in this narrative analysis it is not clear whether the participants met the conditions, or whether the faculty members they participated in discourse with were “informed, objective, and rational, to assess reasons that justify problematic beliefs” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 20). Still, these practices risk reinforcing stereotypes and strengthening undesirable attitudes (Friesen, 2011; Hoare, 2013).

**Interpretations of the Findings in Relation to the Literature Review**

The findings of this narrative analysis resonate with the literature on intercultural competence and transnational education in several areas: understanding intercultural competence, relying on informal means to foster intercultural competence, developing personal qualities, and maintaining a specific set of skills for teaching in intercultural settings. The findings also contribute substantially to the literature on transnational education and intercultural competence by emphasizing the importance of the target culture, underscoring the mission of the branch
Understanding intercultural competence. Darla K. Deardorff (2004) made a great contribution to the literature of intercultural competence in a higher education setting. In her study *The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States* (2004), Deardorff sought to determine a definition of intercultural competence as agreed upon by nationally known intercultural experts, including Janet Bennett, Michael Byram, Mary Jan Collier, Mitchell Hammer, Michael Paige, and Brian Spitzberg, among many others. The primary findings of Deardorff’s research included the experts’ preference for a general definition of intercultural competence that would continue to evolve as scholars further refined it through ongoing research.

Deardorff’s (2004) study concluded that the highest-rated general definition of intercultural competence among panel members was the “ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 184). Although the participating professors in this narrative analysis study observed that intercultural competence is a difficult construct to define, they collectively remarked that intercultural competence is not created by a vast amount of knowledge; rather, it is the appropriateness of the intercultural interactions derived by one’s knowledge and character. This finding is supported by a number of authors (Fantini, 2000; Perry & Southwell, 2011; Straub et al., 2007). Perry and Southwell (2011) observe that cultural knowledge is not equivalent to intercultural competence, since a person can be well-read on a particular aspect of a foreign culture, yet unable to interact smoothly with foreign counterparts. The professors participating in this narrative study commented...
that collecting a vast amount of knowledge about a particular culture does not necessarily entail being able to function appropriately in that culture.

Additionally, this study’s participants noted that not only should expatriate faculty acquire knowledge about a particular culture, they should also maintain specific attitudes and possess characteristics such as open-mindedness, tolerance, appreciation for cultural differences, and culturally sensitivity. This finding strongly agree with Teekens (2003) and Leask (2004) who advocated for intercultural competencies such as cultural empathy, broadmindedness, and in-depth knowledge of a foreign country’s cultural values and norms. Moreover, Teekens (2003) identified eight clusters when describing the ideal profile of the lecturer in the international classroom. Included in these clusters are the importance of dealing appropriately with cultural differences, the importance of paying attention to issues related to using a non-native language during instruction, the ability to acquire knowledge of foreign educational systems, and the importance of cultivating certain personal qualities.

Although none of this study’s participants referred in their definitions of intercultural competence to the different stages that individuals move through as their intercultural experiences become more complex, they did use terms that are descriptive of these stages. In this sense, the participating professors’ knowledge of intercultural competence supports Bennett’s (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity.

The underlying assumption of Bennett’s model is that “as one’s experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one’s potential competence in intercultural relations increases” (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423). Bennett (1993) conceptualized intercultural sensitivity as a developmental process model that is composed of three ethnocentric
The ethnocentric stages, in which the experiences of an individual’s own culture are central to reality, take place in decreasing levels of ethnocentrism (denial, defense, and minimization). The ethnorelative stages, in which other cultures are considered worthwhile, take place in increasing levels of ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, and integration).

Bennett (1993) theorized that, in the final stage of ethnocentrism, the minimization state, “elements of one’s own cultural worldview are experienced as universal” or “the experience of similarity of natural or physical processes may then be generalized to other assumedly natural phenomena such as needs and motivations” (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423). This stage features commonalities in both human basic needs and universal values and principles. Participating professors in this study stated that people at their core do not really differ that much and that, deep down, people are all the same and want the same things in life. They also defined intercultural competence as an appreciation of cultural differences. The use of these terms and description of these orientations support Bennett’s (1993) description of the minimization state of intercultural sensitivity.

In other instances, the participants stated that intercultural competence is an awareness that other people might not have the same assumptions as you or that different cultures take different stances on a variety of issues. In this manner, the participants described the state of those who not only recognize cultural differences, but accept other cultures as viable. In doing so, the participants supported Bennett’s (1993) first state of ethnorelativism, acceptance, in which people differentiate among the cultures and experiences of others that are different from their own. They can also generate contrasts among many cultures.
However, as a whole, the participants’ description of intercultural competence seemed to conform to the process-oriented model of Deardorff (2008). Based on the unanimous agreement of intercultural experts, Deardorff (2008) proposed a process-oriented model of intercultural competence that encompasses three key elements: attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills. In agreement with Deardorff (2008), the attitudes that emerged in this narrative study as facets of intercultural competence also include respect, openness, and curiosity. Knowledge, furthermore, was defined to consist of cultural and sociolinguistic awareness, a deep familiarity with the culture, and an understanding of other worldviews.

Moreover, the participants did not seem to distinguish between intercultural competence as defined by scholars who hold Western values and the definitions agreed upon by scholars in other cultures. These values may conflict with other cultural norms (Deardorff, 2009). In addition, the Western perspective has been noted for its inefficiency and limitations in bringing forth particularities when conceptualizing intercultural competence (Dalib, Harun, & Yussoff, 2014). For instance, the unit of analysis for intercultural competence in Western perspectives is the individual, while non-Western cultures often place more emphasis on interpersonal relationships.

Cultural Challenges

This study has been put forward to gain an in-depth understanding of faculty’s transnational teaching experiences in relation to the development of intercultural competence. An expansive, multidisciplinary body of literature has unequivocally indicated that transnational faculty members experience a range of cultural challenges (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Debowski, 2003, 2008; Feast & Bretag, 2005; Heyward, 2002; Leask, 2004; Keevers et al., 2014; Smith, 2009; Ziguras, 2003). Many faculty members working offshore experience stress related to high levels of anxiety and isolation from their families and friends (Seah & Edwards, 2006). The
literature also suggests that their initial interactions within this milieu are likely to engender culture shock (Di Leonardo, 1984; Smith, 2014).

Several observations can be made about the findings of the current research study in comparison to what the literature has suggested about experiencing culture shock. The findings of this study disagree with what the literature suggests in some areas and agree in others. They disagree with the literature in that Professor Bill, Professor Maria, Professor Mark, and Professor Kirk had not experienced the kind of culture shock mentioned in the literature.

However, the findings seem to agree with the literature on the effects of cultural immersion. Intercultural scholars have documented that contact with another culture, a phenomenon known as cultural immersion, increases intercultural competence and alleviates some of the intercultural difficulties (Canfield, Low, & Hovestadt, 2009; Wood & Atkins, 2006). All four of the above participants, Bill, Maria, Mark, and Kirk, had been in the foreign country for a minimum of ten years. Two of the participants, Bill and Mark, worked in another Arab country in the Middle East prior to working at the branch campus in Qatar. Kirk, furthermore, had years of military experience, during which he was often dispatched to foreign countries. Maria was multicultural by nature, was married to someone from Sweden (a different culture), and had a history of world travel. In brief, all four participants had frequent intercultural contact. Given the length of time that these participants had been teaching in Qatar, it was expected that they would not report any recent incidents of culture shock or high levels of anxiety and isolation from their families and friends (Seah & Edwards, 2006). As suggested by other studies (Lough, 2011), the participating professors seemed to have greatly benefitted from the longer duration of the intercultural contact.
The fifth participant, Professor Amanda, however, did mention that the first semester was hard for her. She started feeling homesick and experienced a bit of culture shock because the environment was totally new to her. This might have been due to the fact that Amanda was a newcomer to Qatar. At the time of the interview, Amanda was at the onset of teaching her second semester. Memories of her arrival in the foreign country were still fresh in her mind. She was staying by herself in a foreign country and had no family support.

**Need for Intercultural Competence Training**

The literature strongly highlighted the lack of institutional support for faculty teaching transnationally (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Leask, 2004; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Sia, 2015). Several research studies have found that faculty members who engage in transnational education programs receive minimal formal preparation before, during, and after their teaching assignments (Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Gopal, 2011; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Smith, 2009). The participating faculty members in this study, however, appreciated learning from their own experiences and by collaborating with other transnational faculty members instead of undergoing professional development efforts.

The literature also suggests that, in addition to being rudimentary and overly general, intercultural competence preparatory sessions, when made available, have suffered from low attention to critical intercultural issues rooted in transnational environments (Dunn & Wallace, 2005; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003; Hoare, 2013; Lynch, 2013). Moreover, they do not consider the varying and complex cultural needs of the faculty members. They were filled in a reactive manner and arranged in response to sudden auditor checks or unforeseen problems. They were not periodically evaluated, followed up on, or updated (Lynch, 2013).
In line with the literature reviewed, the findings of this narrative analysis study suggest that the participating professors did not receive any particular intercultural preparation from the home institution prior to joining the international branch campus in Doha, Qatar. Also, in full agreement with the findings of previous research studies, this study found that the participating professors were typically debriefed by more experienced faculty members and dealt with recurrent intercultural issues through trial and error.

In addition, four of the participating professors seemed disinterested in attending formal intercultural competence training. They did not see an urgent need for this type of training. They claimed that the content of prior training sessions was not substantive. For instance, Maria stated that, “When we came to Qatar, we had this orientation, and this psychologist came to us and she wanted to talk to us: ‘Oh, you know, you might experience culture shock.’ But I felt it was so basic and felt she was so annoying at the same time.” By contrast, the participants observed that guidance from their colleagues was a much more valuable source of information.

This is not to say that the participating professors did not recognize the importance of intercultural competence for people in their position or that their branch campus does not value this skill. By contrast, when the participants were asked about the importance of intercultural competence for their branch campus, they all agreed that it was highly essential; however, they noted that it was more important for American faculty teaching in Qatari universities than among the faculty at their branch campus, where Western standards prevail.

Having been in Qatar for a minimum of ten years, it was anticipated that this sample of professors would not be interested in pursuing a formal intercultural development program. However, Amanda, the assistant professor who was at the onset of her second semester of
teaching at the time of the interview, was in dire need of any type of cultural orientation or training. She was interested in learning the Arabic language. She wanted to become familiar with the habits and customs of the Qataris. She commented that, instead of learning the most appropriate ways to act from other faculty members or even students, she would rather have a whole week of training. In her own words, Amanda stated,

I would have preferred, before coming, to have . . . cultural orientation or some type of online course or resources sent to me that were accurate. Sometimes when you Google, you can get misinformation, so something that is accurate. Also, from the university standpoint—that is, just me as an employer potentially hiring faculty—I want to make sure whoever I am hiring is prepared to be homesick, especially if they are going to be separated from their spouse or their children, and also prepared to embrace the culture and be very respectful and mindful.

The participants’ races could have been another important factor that smoothed the transition to the new environment and lessened the need for training. This was apparent in the case of Bill, who explicitly stated that he did not have any intercultural training prior to coming to Qatar; however, attending schools where African Americans were not the dominant population, he claimed to have already experienced some cultural differences. He also stated that he was “used to the idea that there were certain cultural customs or displays which people would place different values on.” As supported by Taylor’s (1994) findings, Bill’s prior experiences of marginality within his home culture were somewhat advantageous. Living in the white-dominated world had been an experience of living in a different culture, for him. Bill felt that being an African American in the United States prepared him for his intercultural experiences in Qatar.
One additional insight from the data was related to the participants’ preparedness to embrace the new culture. The findings of this study agreed with Taylor’s (1994) study in that there is a degree of readiness for change that the participants brought to perspective transformation. By contrast, Mezirow’s (1991) theory starts with the disorienting dilemma, but does not recognize the impact of what learners bring to the transformative learning experience. As in Taylor’s (1994) findings, this study demonstrated that,

Those who learned to be interculturally competent were ready to change due to former critical events, personal goals, or prior intercultural experiences. This readiness for change raise a question about the degree of influence prior learning experiences have on the process of perspective transformation. It also suggests that the more participants can prepare themselves for major transitions, the greater control and influence they have over the dilemma that accompanies that transition.

There is an inclination to believe that a formal intercultural development program is not urgent or necessary for the participants interviewed because of the length of time they had already spent in the foreign country. Formal intercultural development programs might not be that critical to transnational faculty members who are teaching in a country dominated by Western culture, either. These faculty members might, however, greatly benefit from training that addresses pedagogical issues as intertwined with cultural issues. This issue is addressed in the following section.

Adjusting Pedagogy in Response to Students’ Cultural Orientation

The findings of this narrative analysis resonate strongly with several research studies that investigated the learning styles and strategies of students in the Middle East (Burns, 2014;
Hamza, 2009; Heffernan et al., 2010; Ladd et al., 1999; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2012; Mohamad & Abdul Rashid, 2006; Russell, 2004; Sia, 2015). Based on the way that the participants described their students at the branch campus, the results of this study indicate that Middle Eastern students prefer to be lectured and assessed on their memorization of clear facts over their critical analysis skills. Specifically, the participants reported that their students came from schools that took passive approaches to learning. They further asserted that the students assume that the professors will be their sources of information, that the professors will talk and while the students listen, take notes, memorize information, and restate basic facts. In situations like this one, the consideration of cultural differences that impact teaching and learning becomes of paramount importance for transnational faculty members in bridging the cultural gap between faculty and students (Burns, 2014; Hamza, 2009; Heffernan et al., 2010; Ladd et al., 1999; Mahrous & Ahmed, 2012; Mohamad & Abdul Rashid, 2006; Russell, 2004; Sia, 2015). Focusing on learning styles resulting from unique cultural orientation, Mahrous and Ahmed’s (2012) findings indicate that Middle Eastern students do not prefer practitioner readings. They are used to repeating information rather than making inferences based on readings.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

This narrative analysis revealed that several variables impact the development of transnational faculty’s intercultural competence. If these contingencies are considered, the advancement of faculty’s intercultural competence may be approached seamlessly. Four out of the five participants in this study felt confident in their interactions with students belonging to a different culture. However, the fifth participant was uncertain about her intercultural competency skills. Faculty should not rely exclusively on other faculty members to resolve cultural conflicts, and students should not be expected to dismiss their cultural values and norms to fit in with the
branch campus environment. Rather, transnational education stakeholders should establish innovative mechanisms to facilitate faculty’s embrace of the new culture and awareness of the students’ cultural backgrounds.

All of the participants in this study agreed that seeking to improve intercultural competence is critical for individuals in their position. They also collectively maintained that developing this skill through formal intercultural training is critical for new faculty members, whereas a lack of this training forces professors to rely on informal means of addressing intercultural issues, regardless of their intercultural orientation. It is urgent that administrators in the home country of the institution as well as program managers in the host country collaborate to enable transnational faculty members to reach their full potential through the proper advancement of their intercultural competency skills. Also, given that transnational teaching is an opportunity in and of itself to further improve intercultural competence, collective efforts should be organized to make good use of it.

Having developed a genuine interest in this topic and conducted an in-depth review of the literature related to it, I am hoping to become an active scholar practitioner in this field. I am now focused on polishing my research skills and presenting at conferences. I also have plans to visit my researched branch campus in Qatar as well as different branch campuses in the Middle East and Malaysia. I am looking forward to having face-to-face conversations with the local faculty, students, and administrators. Furthermore, I am currently in the process of designing an intercultural training program for faculty working in the Middle East.

**Designing an Intercultural Training Program**

Having highlighted the need to provide intercultural training programs for transnational
faculty members, this dissertation would not be complete without a description, however brief, of an effective intercultural competence program. In the following section, I will describe the design of an effective intercultural training program.

According to Stephan & Stephan (2013), there are six stages to designing an intercultural training program:

1. Knowing the target cultural group,
2. Identifying the objectives of the program,
3. Selecting a guiding cultural theory,
4. Selecting the communication process based on the theory,
5. Selecting practices to activate these processes, and
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

Hence, for the purpose of training transnational faculty members in Qatar, an effective intercultural training program will consider the following items:

**The target cultural group and sub-groups.** Knowledge of the dominant nationalities in the student body of the branch campus, elements of their cultures, and the relationships among their cultures, is central to the design of an effective program. Members of all the cultures should be included in the program.

**The objectives of the program.** These include questions like, what is it that the program seeks to accomplish? Does it aim to provide knowledge about the country, or purely cultural knowledge? Does it aim to enhance knowledge, understanding, and skills? Or does it seek to improve intercultural relations and cultural interactions?

The programs that have been developed recently in other fields were designed to enhance resident and immigrant relations, foster conflict resolution, promote social justice, increase
empathy, and reduce stereotypes and culture shock of all kinds (Stephan & Stephan, 2013). An effective program should be well aligned with its objectives. And the more specific the goals are, the easier it is to design a program that meets them. Once identified, these goals can be used to determine the empirical research to be reviewed and the cultural theories to be consulted.

**Theories of culture.** Culture is too complex to be understood without the guiding principles provided by the theory. Hence, the program design should be framed within a well-developed intercultural theory. The theory selected should address the variables that have been identified as contributors to intercultural competence. These theories include cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001), values (Schwartz, 2006), and the indigenous cultural approach (Kim, 2000), among other components. Likewise, some theories address intercultural relations among different social groups, intercultural education, and intercultural training programs. These include contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and social dominance theory (Sidanus & Pratto, 2010).

Additionally, because the field of transnational education involves cultural adjustment and development, theories of intercultural sensitivity and development should also be consulted. These include Bennett’s developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 2009a), attribution (Cushner & Brislin, 1996), and stereotype change (Paolini, Crisp, & McIntyre, 2009). Furthermore, it is wise to review the most recent research on the subject because cultures are dynamic constructs that are constantly changing. Cultural differences that existed in the past may no longer apply, and current events might have become more relevant to the groups the designer wants to reach with the program.

**Techniques to be used.** These could take the form of exercises, written materials, and online resources. Again, they might include resources to activate perspectives, reduce intergroup
anxiety, increase openness to others’ views, or encourage appropriate responses to misunderstandings of cultural origin.

As I picture it, the intercultural training program would take the form of modules given to faculty members during the following time periods: Before they embark on their transnational teaching journeys, a month or so into their work, and at the end of their first academic semesters (provided that faculty members regularly attend their other faculty orientation sessions and professional development programs).

The data I collected for this study and the intense literature I reviewed indicate that faculty members’ anxiety levels reach a peak prior to their departure. It is before leaving their home countries that people most often experience feelings of insecurity, whether in anticipation of change or because they will be leaving their comfort zones. In preparation for transition, faculty members seek information about the logistics of travel and adjustment to their new lives. At this stage, they seem to be most fearful of the unknown. Therefore, information given about the geography of the country, its demographics, and the habits of its people, dressing codes, appropriate intercultural interactions, and most importantly student populations will be well received during this stage.

The personnel presenting the program would include educators who have gone through the intercultural experience, intercultural trainers who are qualified to address the cultural aspects of the training, and ordinary volunteers who have far-reaching experience living in the target cultures.

**Implications of Findings for Research**

This study sought to explore the intercultural experiences of transnational faculty members in relation to their intercultural needs and the advancement of their intercultural
competency skills. The data collected through online interviews revealed that transnational faculty members prefer to rely on their local or transnational colleagues to advance their intercultural understanding and skills. The study also brought the role of the home institution in upholding Western standards to the surface. Thus, future research should honor the voices of local faculty members who have been in charge of guiding transnational faculty on intercultural issues. Program administrators’ voices should also be heard, since they are the primary drivers of quality assurance control and the ones who have the authority to set the policies and ensure the implementation of the quality control mechanisms. Furthermore, in advancing this area of research, it is critical that future research includes the content of intercultural development training programs and assesses their quality in comparison to the training offered to expatriates in other fields.

**Gender segregation.** Although the practice of gender segregation in Qatar is not as common as it is in other Arab/Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2012), it is not surprising that this study’s participants reported trends of gender segregation among their male and female students. However, how the participants viewed and interpreted this gender segregation is somewhat conflicting with how it has been viewed by the West.

Traditionally, Qatar has been among some Middle-Eastern and Gulf countries in reinforcing gender segregation through the physical organization of their facilities and the body covering of their female population (Knez, Benn, & Alkhaldi, 2014). In Qatar, government-funded education is single-sex from elementary school onwards (Lay, 2005). Qatar University has separate campuses for male and female students, and where separate facilities do not exist, separate queuing procedures are often put in place to discourage mixing between the sexes.
Gender segregation is also practiced within most Qatari families. For instance, whenever a female child reaches puberty, she is expected to cover all of her body except her hands and face, and she usually begins to wear an *abaya*—a long, black, coat-like garment—in the presence of all marriageable men, i.e., practically all men except for her father, uncles, brothers, husband, male children, and sons-in-law (Knez et al., 2014).

Outsiders to Arab or Islamic culture often struggle to fathom the practices of Muslim women. In the past decade or so, Muslim women’s body coverings have been “regarded by the West as an unambiguous symbol of female oppression” (Eid, 2015, p. 1902), with the Muslim woman “presumed to be this powerless victim of an all-encompassing culture bearing the imprint of patriarchy” (p. 1902). Furthermore, since the West takes gender equality as a prime feature of national belonging, Muslim minorities in the West have been denied their claims to national belonging because their cultures have been assumed to be incompatible with gender equality (Eid, 2015).

However, insiders or even Westerners living within Islamic cultures often view Muslim women’s act of covering themselves as merely a compliance with Islamic teaching and a right that each woman owes to herself regardless of her physical location and cultural or national demographics. In his study of veiled and non-veiled high school Muslim female teens in Quebec, Eid (2015) found that many women chose to cover themselves willingly because they saw it as a religious obligation.

As for Qatari women, “the practice of gender segregation through the regulation of space and clothing is not necessarily experienced as subordination by Qatari women, but rather as an expression of their power. That is, through the embodiment of dominant cultural practices, Qatari
women are afforded symbolic belonging” (Knez et al., 2014, p. 1759). Additionally, those women who cover themselves believe that they deserve different treatment in comparison to those women who are unveiled, since the covered woman “brings respect to her family and subsequently is afforded respect from those she interacts with in her day-to-day living” (p. 1759). Her abaya stands as a sign of her social status and shows her true Qatari citizenship, thus differentiating her from expatriates who reside in Qatar (Knez et al., 2014).

Furthermore, if the participants of this study are taken as our source of data from within Qatar, the monumental changes and unprecedented opportunities that Qatari women are experiencing through the expansion of Qatar’s Education City become evident. “The number of Qatari women graduating from university exceeds the number of Qatari men, and Qatari women are increasing their visibility within the business world” (Knez et al., 2014, p. 1757).

Both Qatari and Western-born covered women are becoming more visible in higher education institutions, whether here or in branch campuses overseas. At a time when intolerance for some cultural differences is at its peak and hatred is mounting, the need is urgent to hear the voices of this particular group of students and further encourage colleges and universities to help their female students balance their cultural needs with their educational rights.

**Revisiting Positionality**

Writing my dissertation had been a long and fascinating journey. Having a genuine interest in how people from different cultures interact, selecting the intercultural competence of transnational educators for my research, and consulting almost every prior study in the area while developing my own insights were all enlightening steps in the process. The data that I collected originated from highly educated, well-published, and interculturally experienced
professors. Yet, it is very difficult to generalize the results of this narrative study to a larger population or even to other faculty members in neighboring branch campuses. However, the information provided in the literature review and the data that I collected and analyzed enable me to make sound conclusions on the findings of my study. I am not transnational faculty myself, nor do I work in a branch campus; however, at various points during my college education/professional career, I experienced being a student in a branch campus instituted by the United Kingdom, an international student in a foreign country, and a faculty member in the American higher education system. While I value cultural assimilation, I will never sacrifice my cultural identity in the process of becoming interculturally competent. As a novice researcher, I trust that I acquired the skills to qualify me to pursue scholarly answers to arising research questions.

Conclusion

This study’s findings support the research discussed in the literature review regarding the development of intercultural competence among transnational faculty. This study highlights the importance of this set of skills in relation to educators working in a highly diverse environment. The participants did not see the importance of intercultural competence training, claiming that they had been in the country for a long time and that this type of training might be more critical for foreign faculty members who were working in local universities. They also noted that the mission of the branch campus to uphold Western standards and the dominance of Western culture in Qatar made them less likely to experience culture shock and intercultural conflicts.

This narrative analysis underscores the importance of critical reflection and rational discourse in advancing intercultural competence. As featured in other studies, collaboration with other faculty members regarding the appropriateness of academic interactions with students from
other cultures continues to be transnational faculty’s preferred means of facing cultural challenges. Consequently, the opportunities inherent in transnational teaching need to be exploited to the full advantage of faculty members working in international branch campuses.

The application of transformative learning theory to the development of intercultural competence was a sound choice for this study. Achieving perspective transformation and advancing intercultural competence share a common path and engage similar components. For instance, Bennett (1993) theorized that, the more ethnorelative a person becomes, the higher the level of his or her intercultural competence and the less ethnocentric he or she is. However, reaching this level of ethnorelativism requires a paradigm shift. This conceptualization closely resonates with how perspective transformation that results from a disorienting dilemma and critical reflection is thought to be achieved. However, in relation to this study, it is difficult to conclude for certain whether the participants had undergone perspective transformations and grown interculturally competent.

Future research on this topic should investigate the types of communication that take place between local faculty members and transnational faculty members. It is also of critical importance to compare the findings of this study to a similar study conducted on a branch campus that is affiliated with the same home university, but located in another country.
References


*Comparative Sociology*, 5(2-3). 137-182.


Appendices

APPENDIX A

Participation Request

Dear Participant:

I am interested in understanding how faculty members develop intercultural competence. For this research study, intercultural competence is defined as the ability to live and interact effectively and appropriately in cross-cultural situations. Specifically, I am interested in knowing more about intercultural development programs offered to faculty members in preparation for their transnational teaching. I am also interested in understanding whether transnational teaching is a transformative learning experience and an intercultural development opportunity. Moreover, my real interest lies in uncovering the types of strategies which faculty employ to surmount their cultural challenges and foster their cultural understanding.

To help me reach my objective, I kindly request your participation in a 60-90 minute interview. Listening to your individual transnational teaching experience will help me learn more how transnational faculty members develop intercultural competence.

You were deliberately selected for this study because you meet the following criteria:

1. American United States Citizens
2. Taught in higher education institutions in the United States
3. Taught in transnational branch campus in Doha, Qatar within the last three years.
4. Might have participated in transnational teaching team

All your personal information will be kept anonymous. The data selected will also be kept in a private and fully secured place. Once my research is over and my dissertation has been approved, all data will be disposed of appropriately.

Thank you for considering this research opportunity

Respectfully,

Razzan Itani
APPENDIX B

Participation Consent Form

Project Title: Development of Faculty’s Intercultural Competence as an Outcome of Transnational Teaching Experience in Qatar: A Narrative Study

Principal Investigator’s name: Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters

Student Researcher’s Name: Razzan Itani

Risks and Benefits: This research study does not include any foreseeable risks for you. Although you might not derive any direct benefit from it, your participation will reflect the experience of working in the context of transnational education and the relevant cultural issues that may arise while teaching in the city of Doha, Qatar. This participation will help educational practitioners develop programs that will help foster the intercultural competence of transnational faculty and improve the quality of transnational education.

By signing this consent form you are agreeing to the following:

- I received a copy of the Participant Information Sheet. I have read the research description and I fully understand the purpose and the nature of the research study.
- I understand the type of involvement required from me. Any questions or concerns have been discussed with the researcher.
- I understand that my participation is voluntarily. I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing my status as a faculty member or otherwise.
- I understand that the researcher may withdraw me from the study at any point at her discretion.
- I grant the researcher permission to digitally record my interview, take notes and observe me during the interview process. The information will be transcribed and the data will be coded. Data collected will be published, however my name and my identity will be kept confidential at all times.
- Data will be stored in a secure place and will be held for a period of three years after which it will be destroyed.
- I understand that I have the right to contact the student researcher or principal investigator if I have a question about the research. Or, if at any point I have comments or concerns about the conduction of the research, I may also contact Kate Skophammer, IRB Coordinator, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617-390-3450, Email: k.skophammer@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

My signature means that I agree to take part in this study.

Participant Signature _________________________ Date:_____/______/_____
Name: (Please print) ___________________________

Contact Information:

Researcher Razzan Itani, Ed.D student, Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, 6250 Fogle Street, VA. 22310. Email: Itani.ra@husky.neu.edu
Principal Investigator: Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters (b.sankofawaters@neu.edu)
APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol Form

Interview Protocol
Institution: Northeastern University
Interviewee:
Interviewer: Razzan Itani
Interview Site:
Date:
Research Site:

INTRODUCTION

You were selected as a research participant because you have been identified as someone who has years of experience in teaching in a country culturally different from one’s home country and because you possess the following qualifications:

1. You are a transnational faculty member who taught at an American University located in the United States (referred to as home institution),
2. You are working or, have worked within the last three years, at a branch campus affiliated with the American university located in Doha Qatar (referred to as host institution),
3. You have the skills required to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations.

My research study focuses on intercultural competence. I am interested in understanding the role of the home institution in helping transnational faculty members develop intercultural competency skills. This study will shed light on the intercultural development strategies required to support faculty members in their transnational teaching. Also, this study will highlight the faculty’s needs in relation to working in a culturally different environment. This research and your active participation will allow scholar practitioners to develop intercultural development programs that will target these needs.

Information collected throughout this interview will be handled with utmost confidentiality. Your personal information will not be used in the content of the research study. Pseudonyms will be used instead. Provided you give me permission, I will take notes down as you are narrating your experience, I will also record this interview (manner will be explained depending on the software used). Also, once I will transcribe this information, I will provide you with a copy so you may further verify the accuracy of the information, or make appropriate adjustment. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Please remember that there is no right or wrong answers. You may think of this interview as one sided-conversation. You may take your time in thinking and in talking.

Before we get started here are some forms which we would like you to sign. <hand in the form>
Part 1:

Interviewee professional background

This part of the interview focuses on your family and work background prior to joining the branch campus at Doha Qatar.

1. How would you describe your family background? Are both of your parents from the United States? Was there a language other than English used at home while you were growing up? How would you describe your family and home culture?

2. Tell me a little bit about your professional background <write pseudonym for university>.
   a. Where did you go for college? What degree do you now hold? What subject do you now teach? How long have you been teaching at the American University?
   b. At what time during your career at American University were you recruited to join the branch campus at Doha Qatar?

3. Describe the time when you made that decision to leave your home country and travel to teach in another country.

4. How can you describe your experience with international students at the time you were recruited to join the branch campus at Doha Qatar?

5. Do you think working with international students at home campus had an influence on your decision to join the branch campus?

Part 2:

Open ended questions

My research study revolves around intercultural competence. I am interested in assessing the importance of preparing faculty members for the intercultural experience of teaching in a foreign country. I am also interested in knowing the type of changes or you may call them transformation faculty undergo as a result of teaching in transnational education.

1. How would you describe the culture in Qatar?

2. What kind of challenges does this culture present to you while teaching?

3. Can you tell me of an experience where you had a serious cultural conflict with students?

4. What do you understand by the term *Intercultural Competence*?
5. How important is intercultural competence in the education context of your branch campus?

6. Are the problems which you face in Qatar with expatriate or local students similar to the ones you experience with international students at home?

7. Do you see a need to get some training or some type of intercultural development training to deal with these intercultural conflicts?

8. Do you feel that students need to conform to your culture or you need to conform to theirs?

9. Do these differences affect the quality of transnational education?

10. If there is some type of intercultural development that the home campus should provide to transnational faculty, how would you describe this program?

11. Do you see that the experience of teaching through transnational education an adequate experience to help you deal with the difficulties of teaching in a foreign country and with culturally different students?

12. How did the experience of teaching in a foreign country change your perspective?

13. How do you compare teaching in a foreign country to teaching international students at home?

14. Mention one embarrassing event due which you have experienced due to a difference in culture.