Empirical Article

Fostering Diversified Cultural Perspectives in a New Era of the Globalized Higher Education System: Comparative Analysis of Arab and American Student Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Among the leading issues that dominated debate throughout 2020, diversity on higher education campuses surfaced once again demanding change of existing as well as future practices. Addressing and incorporating diversified cultural perspectives require universities to do much more than issuing diversity statements. This research study employed Q-methodology to explore and compare the perspectives that one group of international students and one group of domestic students hold regarding the American model of the research university. The groups included Arab students studying at a public research university in the United States, and domestic American students studying at a public research university in the United States. Fifteen students from both groups—representing a total of 30 participants—were interviewed. Factor analysis indicated that students from both cultural backgrounds held unique perspectives regarding the value of the American model of the research university.

"Covid-19 has the potential to radically reshape our world"

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2019.

INTRODUCTION

Education institutions and organizations were probably one of the first to address the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 on education. At the onset of 2020 and when the pandemic hit, we thought that the worse was over for higher education as it is the case with other sectors as well and that universities will be able to open their doors to local and international students by the fall semester of the same year. However, this assumption proved to be out of reach in the foreseeable future, at least. This new reality has shaken the pillars of the globalized education model that higher education universities have thrived on since the turn of the millennium.

There has been a push to create a more connected world in the age of mass information and technology. The challenges imposed by internationalization and globalization trends in higher education—in particular that of escalating competitiveness—is forcing higher education institutions worldwide to look for models to respond to this push for globalization in higher education (Agnew, 2010; Matta, 2010; Parsons & Fidler, 2005; Schoorman, 2000; Yao, 2009).

The effects of globalization have been studied, mainly, from a corporatization perspective (Kleypas & McDougal) and have used classic economic and academic capitalism theories (Walker, 2009), and administrative theoretical frameworks (Barrow, et al., 2003). Such views have contributed to the widespread adoption of a business model of the university that emphasizes knowledge production and the view of education as a commodity (de Wit, 2011; Murphy, 2006).

A common response to this trend of higher education globalization is the literal adoption, and in some cases the localized adaptation, of the American model of the research university (AMRU) [a model that has its roots in the United Kingdom and is employed in Australia, so it is also referred to as the Anglo-Saxon model of the research university (Teichler, 1998; Wanger, Azizova, & Wang, 2009; Wang &Wanger, 2011)]. The Bologna Accord, signed by 40 European countries, for example, utilizes the model as the base in an attempt to homogenize higher education degrees and to harmonize standards in Europe (Finn, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The effects of globalization on higher education is an issue that requires particular attention if the United States wants to remain as a leading nation in the domain of higher education. Hutcheson (2011) argues that U.S. higher education institutions should be leading not only because they are major academic engines to be imitated, but because they add to the quality of life of their students. Historically, the United States has played a dominant role, along with Europe and English speaking countries, as a nation that receives a great percentage of international students (de Witt, et al., 2012). However, the number of students who select the United States as their destination country is declining and it is expected to continue to decline (Yelland, 2011). This decline might be attributed to the increasing competition from higher education of other countries, in particular that from Australia, Russia, Canada, and many Asia-Pacific countries (Yelland, 2011), the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, and the subsequent changes in immigration requirements for international students as a result of heightened security threats to the United States (McCloud, 2004). In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about additional restrictions for International students. However, other factors such as perceptions of quality, graduation outcomes, and the academic experience have been found to have an impact on students' decision when choosing a country to study abroad (Hobsons, 2014; Institute of International Education (IIE), 2015).

In the Arab Gulf region, efforts to emulate the research university model have been documented (Obst & Kirk, 2010). In this region, also referred to as Al Khaleej region within the Arab World, reforming and modernizing higher education to create knowledge-based societies is ongoing (Obst & Kirk, 2010). The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—composed of the countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi

Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—shares a regional vision to make the Arab Gulf region a hub for world-class education (The Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf, 2014). Arab higher education systems that were long characterized by mass production of undergraduate programs and college graduates and incremental support of the state are shifting to new Western models. Several factors, as Acosta-Silva (2000) states, including the development of the knowledge economy, massive access to higher education, and increasing higher education differentiation—contribute to a push for universities to transition quickly and, in many cases, without certainty toward new models. To achieve the vision the AMRU has widely adopted (Mazawi, 2010), the model also is embraced through the large number of GCC students studying in American universities. According to *Open Doors* (2019) annual report that is produced by the Institute of International Education (IIE), Saudi Arabia and Kuwaiti are ranked two of the top twenty-five places of origin of international students studying in the United States. The report also noted that there is a steady and notable increase in the number of Arab Khaleeji students studying in the United States.

Mazawi (2010) asserts that the "Gulf educational policies are drawn mainly into the orbit of American and British educational policy making through the active involvement of think tanks and consultants" (p. 215). These educational policy reforms have significant implications. One main goal of globalization is to create new international partnerships. Therefore, policy borrowing form the global center represented by these two forces links the GCC States to educational systems of Western countries. This kind of partnership dictates the Arab Gulf dependency on policies and strategies foreign to the region for the sake of achieving international competitiveness status. For Donn & Al Manthri (2013), "this is not 'policy borrowing' but rather 'cultural replacement'" (p.24).

To achieve the GCC vision for building knowledge-based societies, the Western model of the research university is also widely adopted through hosting Western branch campuses in the region. In addition, the model is embraced through growing study abroad scholarship programs sponsoring large numbers of GCC students to study in Western universities. As highlighted above, according to *Open Doors* (2015) Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were ranked two of the top twenty-five countries of origin of international students studying in the United States. Within the United States, higher education institutions that once focused primarily on teaching are also increasingly emphasizing research to position themselves within increasingly competitive national and international environments. The impact of the developing AMRU on Arab Gulf students and their decisions to study in the United States can be significant. This study accordingly assessed the perceptions of Arab Gulf and American students of the AMRU and analyzed these perceptions in the light of the Cultural Dimensions Theory proposed by Greet Hofstede (1983).

Culture plays a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions and approaches to learning. It has been found by recent learning theories to be of central importance to any discussion about the relevance and rigor of the learning process. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) believe that culturally relevant education engages and empowers learners. It is logical to say that education itself is a cultural process. American higher education institutions reflect mainstream American culture. This situation might promote for under-recognition of other cultural backgrounds of foreign students. As a result, international students feel less engaged and disconnected in an educational system where their values and practices are ignored. Consequently, this might affect international students' decision to pursue postsecondary education in the United States. Therefore, what is needed here is the development of more culturally-based strategies in American higher education in order to enhance the educational experiences of foreign students as well as American students. Promoting a culturally diverse American higher education system benefits all involved as it fosters for an environment of innovation and creativity. Hence this presented study attempts to pave the way for more creative approaches to prepare higher education institutions to keep international students, especially those form the Arab region, interested in being part of institutions that better their needs and expectations.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory guided this study. Hofstede (2001) defined culture as a combination of thinking, feelings, and action patterns that are usually learned and shared in social environments such as ethnic groups and nations, with national culture defined by nationality or geographic location. Hofstede (2001) and Hofstede & McCrae (2004) initially analyzed culture through four cultural dimensions:

1. Power distance index: the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture accept the unequal distribution of power within a given culture;
2. Uncertainty avoidance: the intolerance of unusual and unexpected situations that members of a given culture show;
3. Individualism vs. collectivism: the degree of integration and sense of belonging within groups in society;
4. Masculinity vs. femininity: the distribution of emotional roles between sexes with the culture;

Two cultural dimensions were subsequently added to the theory:

5. Long-term orientation (vs. short-term orientation): the representation of perseverance in contrast to obligations of respect for traditions and social obligations, and
6. Indulgence (vs. restraint): the extent to which a society allows the gratification or suppression of natural needs of members of the society.

We analyzed the perceptions of Arab Gulf and American students through these cultural dimensions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study was to explore the values of Arab Gulf and American undergraduate students regarding core elements of the AMRU and to compare and contrast these values. Q methodology was used to determine extant views between and among two groups of undergraduate students enrolled at a public research university in central United States. The results indicate the presence of at least three predominant views of the model among Arab undergraduate students as well as three predominant views among American undergraduate students. The predominant views for both groups suggest that students view higher education primarily as a tool for economic advancement. The results suggest that students' views are aligned with the global trend that frames higher education as a private good.

Q Methodology

Q is a systematic methodology that utilizes a sorting technique and a combination of research methods to identify factors or subjective views that groups of individuals hold of a given issue (Brown, 1993; McKeown & Thomas, 1988, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This methodology has been used widely in the behavioral sciences and related fields for over eight decades (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology is increasingly used in higher education to explore the perceptions of students and personnel. Q was recently explored for the study of the subjectivity of university students and faculty members on issues such as media access and use (Riggs, 2011), emotion in the higher education workplace (Woods, 2012), and sustaining college students' resiliency (Seaman, 2014). Q correlates individual perceptions of participants (sorts) to determine if groups of participants (factors) sharing similar perspectives exist. Therefore, Q was determined as the methodology that best served the purpose of identifying the existence of different viewpoints of the AMRU between and among the groups of undergraduate students that participated.

Sites

Data for this study were collected at an American Public University (APU) during the 2015 spring and fall semesters. The APU is a comprehensive institution located in a rural area that grants Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral degrees in most knowledge areas. A total of 30 participants—15 American and 15 Arab students—comprised the P-sets. Approval to conduct research with human subjects was granted by the institution to which the researchers are affiliated. Data from both groups of students were obtained

individually on diverse campus locations. All students volunteered to participate and received no compensation.

Participants

Purposive snowballing was used to select participants. The only criteria established by the researchers was that students were classified as undergraduate students and matriculated from either the Arab Gulf or the United States. American participants included 11 females and 4 males. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25, with an average of 20. Ten of the participants self-identified as white, one as Hispanic, two as American Indian, and two as multi-ethnic. Their number of university semesters in undergraduate programs ranged from 1 to 13, with an average of 5. All participants in this group were students in education related fields. Arab participants included 2 females and 13 males. Their ages ranged from 20 to 30 years old, with an average of 23. All participants self-identified as citizens from an Arab country. Their number of university semesters in undergraduate programs ranged from 4 to 11, with an average of 7. Fourteen participants in this group majored in engineering and one was a science major.

Instrument

The basis of the instrument was a composite conceptualization of the AMRU, as developed by multiple researchers (Teichler, 1998; Arthur, et al., 2007; Finn, 2007; Gill, 2008; Wanger, Azizova, & Wang, 2009; Yao, 2009; Arthur & Little, 2010; van Santen, 2010; Wang & Wanger, 2011). The composite model comprised five key elements: (1) the use of English as lingua franca, (2) the presence of a relatively fixed structure of academic programs, (3) the presence of a flexible curriculum and a growing stratification of programs/institutions, (4) the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education, and (5) the integration of research into higher education. In addition to these elements, and derived from the literature, we added a sixth element conceptualized as "Understanding knowledge as national capital."

These six key elements of the AMRU were conceptualized as follows:

1. Use of English as lingua franca (ELF). This element refers to the increasing use in higher education of English as the primary language of instruction, academic materials, and publication of research (Baker, 2009; Bjorkman, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Hevey, 2013; Mauranen, 2003; Mauranen, et al., 2010; Smit, 2012; "The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca in the international university: Introduction," 2011; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011; Wilkins & Urbanovic, 2014; Zierer, 1974).

2. Structuring of academic programs in three tiers (SAP). This element is defined as the structuring of academic programs that incorporate a three or four-year bachelor's degree program, a two-year master's program, and a three-to-five-year doctorate degree (Leake, 2013; Montoya, 2004; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

3. Flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs and institutions (FSP). This element refers to the increasing flexibility of graduate curriculum and higher education programs, a greater institutional flexibility that allows students to transfer between institutions, and the increasing preeminence of university rankings in students' decision to pursue a program at a given institution (Aboites, 2010; Acosta-Silva, 2000; Bastedo, et al., 2009; Bougnol & Dulá, 2006; Davies & Zafira, 2012; Knutson et al., 2014; Leake, 2013; Ross, 1977; Wang, 2004; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

4. Promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education (PAD). This element denotes the promotion in higher education of students' autonomy in learning and scholarly work, as well as the governmental decentralization of higher education which allows institutions a greater autonomy to deliver educational services and to grant degrees with minimal legal regulations (Aboites, 2010; Acosta-Silva, 2000; Brown, 1990; Eaton, 2009; Larson, 2003; Leake, 2013; Merino Juarez, 2000; O'Donnell, et al., 2013; Overall, et al., 2011; Ross, 1977; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

5. Integration of research into higher education (IRH). This element refers to an increasing emphasis in higher education programs on the production and publication of scholarly research

(Aboites, 2010; Acosta-Silva, 2000, 2002; Knutson et al., 2014; Leake, 2013; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

6. Understanding of knowledge as national capital (KNC). This element is characterized by the growing emphasis in higher education on the understanding and the promotion of knowledge as a private good that serves for personal and national economic advancement (Alexander, 2000; Cucchiara, et al., 2011; Davies & Zafira, 2012; Judson & Taylor, 2014; Lynch, 2006; Sellar & Lingard, 2014; Taylor & Judson, 2011; Wanger, Azizova & Wang, 2009; Wang & Wanger, 2011).

The instrument for data collection included a set of 36 paper squares (Q-set) containing statements related to the six elements of the AMRU. Table 1 includes the 36 statements (six per element). These were numbered randomly to avoid interfering with the rank-order that students were asked to conduct. The same set of statements in English was used for both groups of participants because all participants were fluent in English.

Table 1

Statements Associated with Key Elements of the AMRU

Random Number	Statement with Element Code	ASM Element
34	[ELF] Getting university instruction exclusively in English	
14	[ELF] Reading academic materials in English	
6	[ELF] Publishing in English	Use of English as the lingua franca [ELF]
19	[ELF] Not using materials in languages other than English	
26	[ELF] Improving my English proficiency	
8	[ELF] Studying in English speaking countries	
9	[SAP] Having a graduate degree	
27	[SAP] Taking graduate courses	
2	[SAP] Studying a demanding program	Structuring of academic programs in 3 tiers [SAP]
35	[SAP] Having incremental graduation requirements	
21	[SAP] Studying more than four years at a university	
15	[SAP] Following the bachelor-master-doctorate sequence	
28	[FCS] Studying a flexible university program	
10	[FCS] Being able to transfer from one institution to another	
22	[FCS] Taking distance learning classes	Flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions [FCS]
3	[FCS] Taking courses without prerequisites	
16	[FCS] Conducting multidisciplinary work	
36	[FCS] Choosing a program based on university rankings	
17	[PAD] Developing independent learning	
23	[PAD] Getting a degree without government intervention	
4	[PAD] Studying a program that has minimal legal regulations	Promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education [PAD]
11	[PAD] Studying at a university with little bureaucracy	
29	[PAD] Getting preparation to be autonomous	
32	[PAD] Completing administrative processes easily	
18	[IRH] Conducting research in class	
24	[IRH] Improving research skills	
12	[IRH] Publishing research studies	Integration of research into higher education [IRH]
5	[IRH] Studying a program that emphasizes research over teaching	
31	[IRH] Writing a thesis or dissertation	
30	[IRH] Taking classes that integrate theory, research and practice	
7	[KNC] Creating new knowledge	
20	[KNC] Learning new knowledge in class	
33	[KNC] Studying to succeed economically	Understanding of knowledge as national capital [KNC]
1	[KNC] Acquiring knowledge that makes me more competitive	
25	[KNC] Getting preparation to be a professional leader	
13	[KNC] Obtaining a university degree to get a better job	

As Figure 1 demonstrates, the instrument also included two paperboards for students to glue their sorts onto, with a scale ranging from of a negative value of -4 to a positive value of +4.

Figure 1

Paper Board with Scale
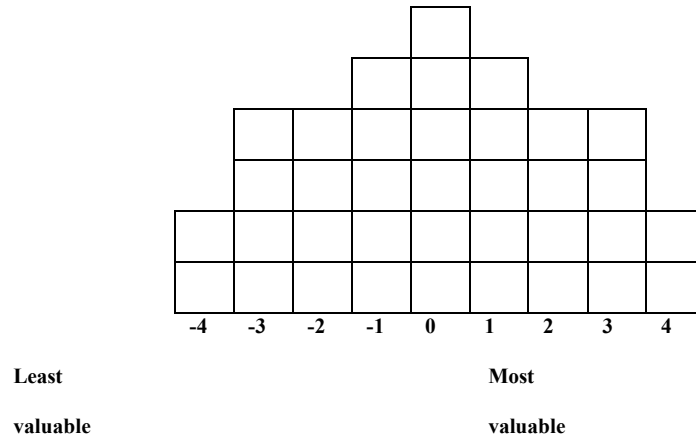
Students were provided with glue-sticks. A brief survey was also attached to the boards to gather participants' demographic data, as well as their feedback on their sorting experience and/or on the Q-set. A record sheet was also added to the instrument for the researchers' use. The components of the instrument, except for the Q-set, were stapled altogether.

Data Collection

All participants were informed, in English, of the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that the set of paper squares contained statements regarding elements of higher education that the literature suggests are key; however, they were not informed that the statements belonged to the six elements. We did this to avoid confusion and interference in the sorting process. Students were instructed about the procedures to rank-order the Q-set and were invited to express any doubt about the procedure at any time during the sorting procedures. We communicated to participants that all written information provided on the different components of the instrument would both remain anonymous and would be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Procedures

All participants were asked to sort the set of statements (Q-set) twice using two different conditions of instruction. The conditions of instruction were given in participants' native languages. The first condition of instruction for all participants was to rank-order the Q-set according to the question, "What elements of my undergraduate education are valuable to me?" To complete the sorts students were asked to first separate the statements into three piles that represented high value, low value, or neutral value. Participants were informed that, due to methodological purposes, any statement that was not understandable to them or any statement that had conflicting values should be placed in the pile of statements that they considered of neutral value.

Participants were then asked to select the two pieces of paper containing the statements that were most valuable to them (from the pile of statements they had presorted as being of a high value) and glue them onto the column with the highest value (+4) of the paper boards. They were informed that the position within the column was not important because any statement in the column would have the same methodological value. Next, they were asked to select the two pieces of paper containing the statements that were least valuable to them (from the pile of statements they had presorted as being of a low value) and glue them onto the column with the lowest value (-4). They were asked to go back and forth to the piles and glue the statements from the outside columns to the center. They were informed that once they ran out of statements on any pile that they could use a statement in the neutral value pile and place it in any column according to their perceived value. They were also informed that they could change the position of

statements among the piles or the columns if they wanted to, even if the statements were already glued onto the board.

After participants glued all statements onto the first board, we requested that they complete a second Q sort. This was done to capture if the higher education values they held for themselves differed from what they perceived were the values of others. Thus, the second condition of instruction for American participants was to rank-order the Q-set according to the question, "What elements of undergraduate education are valuable for American students?" For Arab participants the second condition of instruction was the same, "What elements of undergraduate education are valuable for American students?" Because the Arab participants in this study had firsthand experience both studying in the U. S. and interacting with American students, we asked this question to determine Arab students' views of the value of higher education held by American students. Participants followed the same procedures as they did for the first sort. After completing both sorts, participants were asked to provide anonymous demographic information and their feedback on sorting and/or on the Q-set.

Data Analysis

PQMethod was used to perform the Q methodological analysis of data. PQMethod is an access-free software widely used in Q methodology studies (available from http://schmolck.userweb.mwn.de/qmethod/). A first-order factor analysis was conducted for the 30 sorts for both groups to determine if participants in each group held more than one view of the AMRU. This meant: (1) creating a PQMethod project for each group, (2) entering the 30 sorts of each group in each project, (3) performing a principal components factor analysis and a Varimax rotation for each group, and (4) performing a final z-score calculation of the rotated factors. A three-factor solution resulted for each group indicating that participants in each group had three different views of the AMRU. A threshold of 0.45 significance (when rounded to two digits) was observed to flag manually the defining sorts for all nine views. These three factors are represented respectively for American and Arab students in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Values of Higher Education for Self and Others Held by American Undergraduate Students

Factors			
Q Sort	1	2	3
1 AU_1	0.6480X	0.0968	0.4066
16 AU_1_2	0.1930	-0.0064	0.6567X
2 AU_2	0.2841	0.7318X	-0.0979
17 AU_2_2	0.2930	0.7458X	-0.0577 Exemplar
3 AU_3	0.3765	0.2827	0.5235X
18 AU_3_2	0.3519	0.1449	0.6941X
4 AU_4	0.3886	0.3765	0.0480
19 AU_4_2	-0.0864	0.6841X	-0.0689
5 AU_5	0.5127X	0.1619	0.4223
20 AU_5_2	0.1799	0.3746	0.4494
6 AU_6	0.6700	0.0167	0.5284
21 AU_6_2	0.5594	-0.1340	0.6845
7 AU_7	0.6711X	0.2486	0.1304
22 AU_7_2	-0.1118	0.2572	0.7321X Exemplar
8 AU_8	0.7857X	0.1505	0.0749 Exemplar
23 AU_8_2	0.7324X	0.3806	-0.1542
9 AU_9	0.5894X	0.2765	0.1465
24 AU_9_2	0.1743	-0.1131	0.6907X
10 AU_10	0.4419	0.7064X	-0.0611
25 AU_10_2	0.1988	0.6486X	0.2005
11 AU_11	0.0391	0.5592X	0.1773
26 AU_11_2	0.0144	0.6673X	0.2266
12 AU_12	0.4134	0.4220	0.5058X
27 AU_12_2	0.2042	0.4777X	0.4074
13 AU_13	0.6177X	-0.0595	0.2712
28 AU_13_2	-0.0528	0.1134	0.6562X
14 AU_14	0.4936	0.2626	0.4584
29 AU_14_2	0.2780	-0.0402	0.6897X
15 AU_15	0.5784	-0.0082	0.5090
30 AU_15_2	0.7133X	0.2808	0.2557
% Expl. Var.	20	15	19
# Defining Sorts	8	8	8

Table 3

Values of Higher Education for Self and Others Held by Arab Undergraduate Students

Factors			
Q Sort	1	2	3
1 AR-1	0.0505	0.0313	0.7710X
16 AR-1-2	0.5714	0.4512	0.2418
2 AR-2	0.4378	0.1329	0.5178X
17 AR-2-2	0.0526	0.7516X	-0.1681
3 AR-4	0.3337	0.3201	0.6050X
18 AR-4-2	0.4542X	-0.3527	0.1747
4 AR-6	0.6763X	0.0301	-0.0453
19 AR-6-2	0.0648	0.6249X	-0.1150
5 AR-7	0.6446X	-0.0861	-0.0958
20 AR-7-2	0.3558	0.4853X	-0.3071
6 AR-10	0.7544X	-0.2377	0.1424
21 AR-10-2	0.1018	0.6734X	0.1864
7 AR-12	0.4055	-0.2228	0.6479X
22 AR-12-2	0.0633	-0.1489	0.8592X Exemplar
8 AR-13	0.5263X	0.1396	0.4185
23 AR-13-2	-0.4744	0.6054	-0.0555
9 AR-14	0.6235X	0.0660	0.2505
24 AR-14-2	0.4767X	0.4384	0.1558
10 AR-15	0.6409X	-0.3000	0.1648
25 AR-15-2	-0.1747	0.6929X	0.0238 Exemplar
11 AR-17	0.8174X	-0.0651	0.2376
26 AR-17-2	0.5325X	0.1232	0.1430
12 AR-18	0.7704X	-0.2262	-0.0043 Exemplar
27 AR-18-2	0.0751	0.2688	-0.0536
13 AR-20	0.6006	-0.3288	0.4877
28 AR-20-2	0.5354X	0.3825	0.1093
14 AR-21	0.6693X	0.2107	0.1563
29 AR-21-2	0.5701	0.5142	-0.0528
15 AR-23	0.4231	-0.6351X	0.1432
30 AR-23-2	-0.0449	0.6793X	0.1446
% Expl. Var.	**24**	**17**	**10**
# Defining Sorts	**14**	**8**	**3**

Tables 4 and 5 highlight the correlation between factors for both groups.

Table 4			Table 5		
Correlation between Factors for American Students			*Correlation between Factors for Arab Students*		
Factors 1	**2**	**3**	**Factors 1**	**2**	**3**
1 1.0000			**1** 1.0000		
2 0.4947	1.0000		**2** 0.2468	1.0000	
3 0.4716	0.2789	1.0000	**3** 0.4684	0.3391	1.0000

Correlations between factors 1 and 2, and 1 and 3 of the American students, were fairly high at 0.4947 and 0.4716 respectively. Such strong correlations may be explained in part by the number of consensus statements that are discussed in subsequent sections. A high correlation suggested at first that a homogeneous view among American students did exist. However, the low correlation between factors 2 and 3, and a deeper analysis of individual factors, suggested that American participants indeed held both strong and subtly different views. Correlation between factors 1 and 3 of Arab students was fairly high at 0.4684, also suggesting some degree of a shared view among some Arab participants. However, the fairly low correlation between factors 1 and 2, and 2 and 3, and a deeper analysis of individual factors, also suggested that Arab participants also held both strong and subtly distinct views at the time the study was conducted.

Factor arrays, distinguishing statements, consensus statements, statements' array positions, and z-scores were all used to interpret the views and values that participants held at the time the study was conducted. Factors were then named and characterized. The interpretation of the factors and their characterization is presented and discussed in subsequent sections.

FINDINGS

Two groups of fifteen undergraduate students participated in the study (30 sorts). Each group of participants (American and Arab undergraduate students) sorted statements belonging to elements of the AMRU twice, resulting in 30 sorts for each group and a total of 60 sorts. For both groups, statistical loading charts showed that three factors were statistically significant in each group. Of the 30 sorts produced by the American group of undergraduate students, 24 sorts were defining and six were confounded at the 0.45 significance threshold. Eight defining sorts were loaded on each of the three factors. This means that these three factors were statistically significant and that they were almost equally strong. Of the 30 sorts produced by the Arab group of undergraduate students, 23 sorts were defining and 7 were confounded. Seven sorts were loaded on factor 1, and an equal number of 8 sorts were loaded on factor 2 and factor 3. Analysis of the distributed sorting loads also indicated that the three factors identified by Arab students were statistically significant and reflected views that were almost equally strong.

Our focus was on analyzing and understanding all views of both groups of participants, as manifested by the factors particular to each group. Although the focus was on understanding positive and negative values, neutral views or views that had zero value on the array charts were also considered. It is worth noting, however, that neutrality toward certain statements could be attributed to a lack of understanding or the clarity of these statements.

The analysis of factors' arrays and statements' positions in the arrays indicated that students in both groups held clearly defined views of what is most valuable for them in their academic experiences as undergraduate students studying in American higher education institutions. Further analysis of factors' distinguishing statements and consensus statements among factors helped to characterize and to name each

view in accordance to their value orientation. Three defining viewpoints characterized the participants in each group as follows:

American Undergraduate Students

The Market-Oriented

Students of this group of participants are best described as the competitors. They assigned significantly high positive values to all statements related to the core element of understanding knowledge as national capital. In addition, they were in favor of the autonomy and decentralization of higher education. However, they placed negative or neutral values on the use of English as lingua franca. Also, they did not care much about either learning or producing research or the flexibility of programs and the stratification of institutions. In addition, they were significantly neutral about the structuring of the academic programs that might or might not follow the traditional 3-tier academic system.

The Planners

Unlike the previous factor, this group of American students positively valued preparation that might lead to further education, as exemplified in statements related to the core element of the structure of academic programs and the realization of knowledge as national capital that might help them get a better job. However, the array position of statements related to the core AMRU elements (the use of English as a lingua franca, the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education, and flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions) showed that these three elements had more of a negative value for this group of students. The array position of statements and z-scores related to the integration of research into higher education highlighted that these students are particularly neutral about this core element.

The Pragmatic

This group of American students held a view that seemed contrary to that of the planners and an extreme version of the market-oriented group. These students decisively placed all statements related to the understanding of knowledge of as national capital in array positions with the highest positive value, and therefore having the highest z-scores. Also, they assigned negative values to statements related to the integration of research into higher education. They were seemingly either undecided or neutral about the remaining core elements of the AMRU.

Arab Undergraduate Students

The Investors

This group of students placed positive value on three core elements of the AMRU: understanding of knowledge as national capital, the use of English as lingua franca, and flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions. On the other hand, they placed low negative value on the elements of structuring academic programs in three tiers and the integration of research into higher education. However, they placed zero value on the element of the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education.

The Creators

Participants in this factor highly valued the core AMRU element of understanding knowledge as national capital. They also positively valued the integration of research into higher education. However, they negatively valued the use of English as lingua franca, the structuring academic programs in three tiers, and the flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions. In addition, just like the previous group, this group of Arab students felt neutral regarding the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education.

The Progressives

In addition to valuing and understanding knowledge as national capital, this group of participants was particularly attracted to the traditional 3-tier structure of academic programs. However, they negatively valued the integration of research into higher education and the flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions. Similar to those in the two previous groups, these students negatively valued flexibility of curriculum and growing stratification of programs/institutions and the integration of research into higher education. Their views regarding the use of English as lingua franca and the promotion of autonomy and decentralization of higher education were seemingly neutral.

Distinguishing Statements

Data analysis revealed statistically significant distinguishing statements for each factor of the two groups of students sampled for this study. Distinguishing statements were especially important to consider because they highlighted the domains, or the degree of a given domain, to which participants in a factor were distinct from participants in other factors. Coincidently, these statements had statistically significant z-scores.

American Students

Distinguishing Statements for the Market-Oriented Group. Because these students were primarily concerned with obtaining better jobs they placed a high value on developing learning and leadership skills that prepare them to work independently. They highly valued academic and institutional flexibility that facilitate their end goals. They were definitely not in college for the sake of academic work. Therefore, research and publishing were not their interest They were in school in search of instruction. They were not concerned with the type or ranking of the institution from which they obtain their degree from, so long as they get the degree. They wanted to obtain their degree with the least bureaucratic and legal complications. Graduate education for them seemed of neutral value.

Distinguishing Statements for the Planners Group. Students in this factor strongly valued having a graduate degree and developing independent learning. Because they were considering and preparing for future opportunities, they cared about the structure of the higher education system. They were interested in academic work and therefore wanted to see research integrated into higher education. They also encouraged some level of autonomy. Unlike the previous group, and because they valued education as a means for academic training, they were not bothered by processed dominated by institutional bureaucracy and legal regulations.

Distinguishing Statements for the Pragmatic Group. Students in this group significantly valued obtaining a university degree to get a better job. Therefore, they were studying to be more successful economically. To them, education meant acquiring knowledge that makes them more competitive. For this reason, they were inclined to learning and creating new knowledge in class. However, they were not concerned with publishing research studies, conducting research in class, or improving research skills. Success for this group was measured by the economic status a degree can offer rather than by pursuing academic publication.

Arab Students

Distinguishing Statements for the Investors Group. Students in this factor strongly desired global employability. Therefore, it was important to them to study material in English and to use English as lingua franca. Mobility was thus a key factor that they considered when choosing a higher education program. They looked for flexibility in the structure and format of the classes and programs. They were part of a growing segment of students who are globally focused. They saw value in a universally recognized 3-tier system of higher education and the ranking of universities. In addition, this group realized that adequate training in research was an essential skill for global employability.

Distinguishing Statements for the Creators Group. This group was different from the other two groups of Arab students particularly with regard to the integration of research into higher education. They valued creating new knowledge. Therefore, improving their research skills, taking classes that integrate theory, research and practice, and publishing research studies were viewed as critical attributes of education that could prepare them to be knowledge creators. They viewed the bachelor-master-doctorate sequence of higher education as a viable structure of education. To them knowledge was universal, and so it was important that they improve their language skills, study, and produce knowledge in English.

Distinguishing Statements for the Progressives Group. Postsecondary education, for this group, was highly valued as national and personal capital. Therefore, rigorous education and acquiring language skills were viewed as important for positioning within competitive workforces. However, the structure of the educational system and observing the traditional bachelor-master-doctorate sequence was not

necessarily of concern. Here, a flexible educational system was perceived as an attribution that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and language skills.

Consensus Statements for American and Arab Students

Consensus statements highlight the statements with which the students most agreed; they reflect shared similar values and views.

American Students

Consensus Statements for All Groups. Data analysis revealed that American students shared similar views about statements that emphasized preparation to become autonomous, studying more than four years at a university, conducting multidisciplinary work, publishing in English, and taking courses without prerequisites.

Arab Students

Consensus Statements for All Groups. Agreement among Arab students clearly focused on obtaining a university degree to get a better job, studying to succeed economically, learning new knowledge in class, preparation to become a professional leader, preparation to become autonomous, conducting multidisciplinary work, publishing in English, completing administrative processes easily, and studying a program that has minimal legal regulations.

Because we are more concerned here with the cultural representation of each group, consensus statements for the two groups are examined below in reference to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Analysis indicates that significant differences exist in students' perceptions, both within and among the groups of participants and the aggregate of all participants. The results reported above emphasize collective perceptions, which correspond to the purpose of this study to examine Arab and American students' views of the AMRE and to compare and contrast their views.

The results reveal that students view the AMRU as educationally enlightening. A majority of participants perceive the model as holistic. However, examining the data through Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory highlights the distinctive perspectives of the groups with regard to four elements of the AMRU, namely, the structure of academic programs, the promotion of autonomy, the flexibility of curricula, and the recognition of knowledge as national capital.

The results also reveal that participants perceive that students in general value higher knowledge as national capital and for its promotion of autonomy and decentralization, the flexibility of curricula, and the stratification of programs and institutions. Cultural differences between the two groups of students—with regard to power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation—dominate how students view elements of the AMRU. Subsequent paragraphs examine these dimensions. Within these four dimensions the views include: taking courses without prerequisites, completing administrative processes easily, getting a degree without government intervention, studying a flexible university program, acquiring knowledge to be competitive, gaining preparation to be autonomous, obtaining a university degree to secure a better job, studying to succeed economically, gaining preparation to be a professional leader, and improving English proficiency. However, data reflect no significant values for the two cultural dimensions of masculinity/femininity and indulgence/restraint.

Power Distance

This is one of the original dimensions of the theory and the most prominent cultural dimension when examining the impact of culture on any group of people. As previously defined, power distance indicates the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture accept the unequal distribution of power within a given culture. According to Hofstede (2017), the American culture scores low on power distance; the culture promotes the belief that every person is unique. However, power is perceived as the individual's power to influence others. Accordingly, there is tolerance for attempts to challenge power by those who are at the bottom of the perceived hierarchy. In contrast, Arab cultures score high in this dimension, indicating that individuals expect and accept that power is distributed unequally because individuals are inherently unequal. Within the culture members follow a centralized system in which

decisions are typically made at the top of the hierarchy; the perception is that these decisions should not be discussed or opposed.

The power distance cultural dimension is prominent when comparing and contrasting the views of the two groups of participants in this study. For example, American students highly value the promotion of autonomy and the decentralization of higher education. Specifically, they value American higher education because they perceive it as preparing them to become autonomous. In contrast, Arab students in the study seem apprehensive about terms such as "authority," "administration," and "legal regulations," perhaps because these terms reflect power-related considerations that should not be challenged. Thus studying at a higher education system that promotes autonomy and decentralization is of a neutral or negative value for them.

Uncertainty Avoidance

This cultural dimension refers to the intolerance that members of a culture demonstrate for unusual and unexpected situations. It also refers to the perceived ability to control events in the future. Not surprisingly, cultural practices and reactions regarding avoidance of ambiguous and unknown situations differ from culture to culture. According to Hofstede (2017), American culture scores below average on the uncertainty avoidance dimension; the culture promotes accepting and embracing new ideas. We consequently see that American students prefer a higher education system where they can experience fewer rules. There is a consensus among the members of this group that highly values an educational system that allows students the flexibility to conduct multidisciplinary work and to take courses without prerequisites. Counter to American culture, Arab culture scores high on Hofstede's scale of uncertainty avoidance; individuals from this culture may be intolerant of unorthodox ideas or ways of doing things. Consequently, Arab students in this study demonstrate a clear preference for traditional and structured educational systems in which sharp distinctions between academic disciplines exist.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

This cultural dimension refers both to the degree of integration and to the sense of belonging within groups in society. It also refers to the degree of independence individuals of a certain culture enjoy. In this dimension, American culture ranks at the top of individualism, allowing members of this culture the maximum freedom to pursue individual rather the group needs. "I" is more dominant in American discourse than "we." On the other hand, Arab cultures score at the top of collectivism in that individuals provide unquestionable loyalty to the group, tribe, or sect to which they belong. Arab societies are highly collective societies in nature. Therefore, the good of the group overrides individual needs and priorities. This is resoundingly manifested in this study through a wide consensus among Arab students regarding the view of education, and thus individual betterment, as an individual contribution to national [group] capital.

Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation

This dimension contrasts perseverance with respect for tradition and social obligations; it is thus related to the previous dimension that compares individualism vs. collectivism. The focus of the dimension is on the ways in which cultures honor the past and face the challenges of the present and the future. Both American and Arab cultures score below average in this dimension Hofstede (2017). Although they demonstrate respect for tradition, both cultures endeavor to achieve quick results. In this study, both groups of students expressed long-term orientation with their own cultures by emphasizing what is culturally acceptable. For example, American students value the independence of the individual and the willingness to embrace untraditional ideas, whereas Arab students perceive individual success as a contribution to the success of the group.

Interestingly, comparing the consensus statements from the two groups highlights that both American and Arab students highly and positively value obtaining a degree from an American research university because they perceive it as a means to better jobs. Conversely, most students sampled in this study do not place high value on doing research and publishing. This certainly could be attributed to the fact that all participants were pursuing undergraduate education at the time the study was conducted.

In conclusion, this exploratory study highlights the importance of international and domestic undergraduate student perceptions of the American model of the research university. Focusing on two initial groups of students from the Arab Gulf and the United States, this research study is the first of its kind and,

as such, establishes a baseline for ongoing expansion of the line of inquiry. Exploratory in nature, the study only controlled for type of university, namely, the research university. Future studies may focus on other classifications of higher education institutions. In addition, considerations such as age, gender, disciplinary differences, or other demographics may be controlled. The massive impact of the 2020 pandemic on higher education institutions operating in the United States is expected to be devastating. Some universities will survive these difficult times, but many other are expected to cease. Now it is the time for institutions to rethink of ways to cater and recruit international students from the Arab region that have always provided a considerable portion of revenue. Given growing efforts across the globe to either adopt or adapt the American model of the research university as a means to strengthen national higher education systems and to compete within the global knowledge economy, understanding the perceptions of students educated or influenced by the model is an important addition to the literature that may inform higher education administration and public policy. Hence, this study may contribute to the emerging conceptualization of the research university model that is currently widely emulated around the world. In addition, understanding the perceptions of an important population of international students studying in American higher education institutions, such as Arab Gulf students, may be of value for university administrators when they endeavor to host students from this region.

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