

**EXPERIENCES OF SAUDI STUDENTS ATTENDING A U.S. UNIVERSITY:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

To my wonderful children: Aoun, Zain, and my newborn baby Ahmed.

To my brothers and sisters, and especially to my brother Mohammad Alsabateen, thank you for your encouragement and support.

To my father, Yousef Alsabateen, no amount of thanks can ever express my appreciation for your limitless love and prayers.

To my husband, Mohammad Kanan, thank you for always being there! Without your love and support, I could never achieve this alone. Let us go to our next great adventure!

If you believe it will work out, you'll see opportunities. If you believe it won't, you will see obstacles.

Wayne Dyer

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain a detailed understanding of the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university. Acculturation theory was the theoretical framework through which the experiences of the Saudi students were analyzed and understood. The data were collected by using individual interviews with 21 Saudi students who were undergraduate and graduate students. Findings indicated that most Saudi participants chose integration to be their most preferred acculturation strategy. Yet, some situational factors affected their integration. The study provided implications for higher education policy and practice to enhance Saudi students' education in the U.S.; newcomer Saudi students who desire to pursue their higher education in the U.S. would benefit from understanding these experiences; and to acculturation theory.

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CHAPTER 1

One of the major features of contemporary higher education is an exponential increase in the number of international students. International students are generally considered to be “students who have crossed borders expressly with the intention to study” (Education at a Glance, 2008, p. 351). In the 21st century, these students have more options for choosing a host country to pursue higher education than ever before. Worldwide approximately two million international students are studying in higher education institutions. The number is expected to reach eight million by 2025 (Altbach, 2004). In the post-September 11 climate, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France have begun to compete with the United States in recruiting international students. However, the United States still remains the largest host country for most of the world’s international students (Altbach, 2004).

The number of international students who come to the U.S. to pursue their educational goals tends to change from year to year. According to the latest Open Doors Report, published annually by the Institute of International Education (2013b), there were 723,277 international students in higher educational institutions in the United States during the 2010-2011 academic year. In the 2011-2012 academic year, the number increased to 764,495 students. There were 819,644 international students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions in academic year 2012-2013, a 7.2% increase from the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2013a). Additionally, there were 270,128 new international students enrolled for the first time in the academic year 2013-2014, a 7.7% increase from the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2014). The top four countries sending students to the U.S. are China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia. They made up 49% of all international students in the United States.

China was the leading source of international students in the U.S. with 29% of the total, followed by India 12%, South Korea 9% and Saudi Arabia 5% (Institute of International Education, 2013c).

The majority of international students enrolled in U.S. universities are from developing nations (Altbach, 2004). Limited access to education and advanced technology are two of the major characteristics these countries share. This has contributed to a notable increase in the number of international students studying in developed nations such as the U.S. (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In addition, there are “push and pull” factors that could explain the worldwide pattern of international students’ flows to developed nations (Altbach, 1991; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors are inherent in the home country. One of these push factors is the courses presented in the host country are perceived to be better than the local offerings. Another push factor is to gain a better understanding of the Western culture (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Other push factors could be the highly perceived value of a foreign degree, better opportunities for higher education, as well as a changing combination of economic and political circumstances in the home country (Altbach, 1991). The decision to study abroad could be made by international students’ parents and family (Altbach, 1991; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Additionally, decisions could be made by individuals themselves or indirectly by their governments (Altbach, 1991).

Pull factors usually operate within a host country. Pull factors may include: (a) the overall level of knowledge and awareness about the host country through media; (b) personal recommendations that students receive from relatives and friends prior to making the final decision; (c) cost issues such as tuition, living, and travel; (d) the environment of the destination country; (e) the geographic and time proximity of the final destination to the home country; and

(f) social links which are related to whether a student has family or friends living in or who have previously studied in the destination country. Due to these push and pull factors, higher education institutions in the United States have witnessed an increasing flow of international student enrollment from Middle Eastern countries, particularly from Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is the top country in the Middle East in terms of sending its students to the United States (Institute of International Education, 2013d). In the late 1970s, the number of Saudi students in the U.S. quickly rose and reached its peak in the academic year of 1980-1981 with 10,440 students. After that, a period of enrollment decline took place until the number of students started to rise again in the 1993-1994 academic year. The increases continued until the 2001-2002 academic year when the terrorist attacks of September 11 affected enrollment patterns (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). Admission requirements put into place for Saudi international students were stricter than ever before. It became much harder for these students to get visas to study in the U.S. As a result, in the 2002-2003 academic year, enrollments declined 25% and continued to decrease for several years. In 2005-2006 academic year, the total number of Saudi international students in the United States increased 14% from the previous year, from 3,035 to 3,448 students (Institute of International Education, 2013d). As time went on, some of the restrictions were relaxed. Consequently, the number of Saudi students' enrollment started to increase. This was partly due to the Saudi Arabian government's large scholarship program i.e., The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) (Institute of International Education, 2007).

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) was an educational agreement arranged in 2005 between the former King of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and the previous U.S. president, George Bush (Saudi Arabia Cultural Mission to U.S., 2013). The first

scholarships were issued in 2005 and continued for a period of five years, and then it was renewed in 2010 until 2015. KASP provides opportunities for Saudi students to pursue their undergraduate and graduate higher education abroad in many academic disciplines needed by most government and private sectors. KASP sponsors Saudis studying in universities around the world, and it began by sending male and female students to study in the United States. KASP aims to build up qualified and professional Saudis in the work markets across the kingdom. Also, it aims to exchange educational, scientific, and cultural experience with global countries (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014).

With the scholarship program in place, the number of Saudi students studying in the U.S. showed a dramatic growth in 2006-2007, in effect, a 129% growth from the previous year. In the academic year 2012-13, there were 44,566 students from Saudi Arabia enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2013d). The number of Saudi students in the United States reached 111,000 in the academic year 2013-14, up from 10,000 in 2007 (Arab News, 2014). Consequently, Saudi Arabia is one of the top five countries of origin for sending students to the United States (Institute of International Education, 2013d).

Research Problem

International students contribute economic, academic, and cultural value to the United States. The desire to increase opportunities for higher education for international students is encouraged by numerous factors, the most noticeable being economic (Andrade, 2006b). During the 2012-2013 academic year, the National Association of International Educators (2013) assessed that 819,644 international students and their families contributed \$24 billion to the U.S.

economy. International students also add diverse perspectives to campus conversations and research (National Association of International Educators, 2013). They offer invaluable opportunities to the campus community to embrace the richness of worldwide culture (Bevis, 2002; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Through interaction with international students, domestic students' intercultural awareness can be increased (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013; Zhao et al., 2005). International students can build bridges between the United States and other countries (National Association of International Educators, 2013). A high rate of international enrollment can serve as a critical indicator of a higher education institution's prestige (J. J. Lee, 2010). Being keenly aware of all the previously mentioned benefits that international students bring to the educational institution as well as to the host country, higher education institutions in the United States are increasing their efforts to attract more international students (Altbach, 2004; Tompson & Tompson, 1996). As a result, the United States is the most popular country attracting international students from developing countries, specifically the Middle East (Altbach, 2004; Campus Explorer, 2014).

Even though the Middle East offers high quality education at the secondary-school level, its higher education system does not yet consistently meet high standards. As a result, many students from the Middle East decide to get their undergraduate or graduate degrees from the U.S. (Campus Explorer, 2014).. In addition, international students from the Middle East often desire to gain foreign qualifications or degrees by studying in the U.S. Hence, having foreign qualifications, graduates are more likely to gain higher salaries and promotions in their home countries (Altbach, 1991; Altbach, Kelly, & Lulat, 1985).

Recent studies about the experiences of international students from developing countries attending U.S. universities have highlighted three primary facets of their experiences: Academic, social, and cultural. The academic aspect includes students' level of English language proficiency (Altbach et al., 1985; Andrade, 2006b; Kuo, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yuan, 2011); exposure to different teaching styles (McDermott-Levy, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996), experience with a different educational system (Yuan, 2011), and availability of educational opportunities and degrees (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013). The social aspect involves developing friendship networks with co-nationals, Americans, and other international students (Altbach et al., 1985; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2013; Yuan, 2011). Also, some female international students have more freedom and independence (i.e., autonomy) to participate in activities in the United States which they seldom experienced in their home country (McDermott-Levy, 2011). Muslim international students have been reported to gain open-mindedness (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013). Finally the social aspect may involve opportunities for personal growth such as self-confidence (McDermott-Levy, 2011). The cultural aspect includes understanding and adjusting to the culture of the host country (Andrade, 2006b). The cultural aspect could involve unfamiliarity with the host country's cultural norms and life style (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Yuan, 2011). It also might include international students' confrontations with different preconceptions about their culture and religion (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Speck, 1997). These aspects of experiences can apply to Middle Eastern countries and, more specifically, to Saudi students.

Despite being a fast growing demographic in U.S. universities, Saudi international students and their experiences are underrepresented in the literature. A substantial body of research about international students in general exists, while there are few studies conducted on the experiences of Saudi international students. Sizeable studies about the experiences of international students of specific subgroups, such as Asian students, are found in literature (Shaw, 2010). However, the literature lacks qualitative studies focusing on and explaining the experiences of Saudi international students (Shaw, 2010). Most previous studies, which tend to be quantitative in their design, also tend to focus on challenges encountered by Saudi international students attending U.S. universities (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010).

The experience of studying abroad has a powerful impression on Saudi students that may last all their lives (Furnham, 1997). A considerable number of previous studies have focused only on academic and nonacademic challenges encountered by many international students (e.g., Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007; Yuan, 2011). However, my study will address the full range of experiences of Saudi international students attending a U.S. educational institution. In this study, I speculate that the experiences of Saudi students are complex. A deeper understanding of their experiences could inform higher education policy and practice to enhance Saudi students' education in the U.S. Moreover, newcomer Saudi students who desire to pursue their higher education in the U.S. would benefit from understanding these experiences as well.

Theoretical Framework: Acculturation

Acculturation is one theoretical framework used in the explanation of the varied experiences of cultural and ethnic minorities (Trimble, 2003). In this study, I argue that

acculturation theory represents an appropriate theoretical lens through which the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university can be analyzed and understood.

In its simplest sense, acculturation is a process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of continuous contact between individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds (Berry, 2005, 2006). A more formal definition of acculturation used in most studies was proposed nearly 80 years ago by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). Under this definition, acculturation is distinguished from assimilation and they are not used interchangeably. Assimilation is one of four strategies an individual may choose during the acculturation process (Berry, 1997). Additionally, Teske and Nelson (1974) viewed acculturation and assimilation as two distinct processes. Acculturation is potentially bidirectional and mutual in its influence; in effect, two groups in contact influence each other. Assimilation is unidirectional in terms of influence. A dominant group employs some influence on a non-dominant group, so one group changes to become like the other.

Most acculturation studies have taken place in culturally plural societies. A culturally plural society has more than one cultural, linguistic, or religious group living together (Berry, 2006). There are two contrasting implicit models of plural societies: melting pot and multicultural. According to the melting pot model, nondominant groups should be absorbed into the single dominant or mainstream society. If their cultural continuity is denied, it is more likely to disappear. The dominant society established the main features of the plural society.

According to the multicultural model, individuals and groups retain their cultural continuity and they participate in the larger society (Berry, 2006).

Acculturation was once viewed as a unidimensional process (Gordon, 1978). According to this early model, nondominant groups and individuals were expected to acquire the values, practices, and beliefs of the new society. At the same time, they were more likely to abandon their cultural heritage. Unidirectional acculturation has been considered synonymous to assimilation. Nevertheless, acculturation is currently conceptualized as a bidimensional process. Even though individuals of the nondominant culture might acquire the values and beliefs of the dominant culture, it does not automatically imply a discard of their own (Berry, 1980). To Trimble (2003), many options are available to individuals interacting with a new culture rather than expecting them to be isolated from their cultural heritage to approach full assimilation.

The Main Components of Acculturation

From the previous definitions of acculturation, three key elements or building blocks can be identified: *contact, reciprocal influence, and change* (Berry, 1990; Sam, 2006). *Contact* is a major prerequisite for acculturation. There are various types of contacts in contemporary societies. For example, living in the same apartment blocks, mass media broadcasting, or communicating via Internet. However, these types of contact lack the two distinctive features of an acculturative contact, which are continuous and firsthand. Therefore, to have a true experience of acculturation individuals and groups need to have interactions within the same space and time, and not through secondhand experiences or indirect contact. Additionally, the interaction needs to be for a period of time; this rules out short-term and accidental contact. Even though longer continuous contact is important, the resulting *change* following the contact is

what matters. For example, international students might undergo several changes and experience acculturation as much as indigenous people who have had cultural contact for a number of generations.

The definition of acculturation entails *reciprocal* or *mutual influences* which is the second building block of acculturation (Sam, 2006). Because of power differences such as economic power, numerical strength, or military might, the dominant group exercises more influence than the non-dominant group. However, this does not imply that only the non-dominant group is changing. During acculturation, changes are taking place in the dominant group as well as in the non-dominant group.

The third building block of the acculturation process is *change*. Change is an inherent facet of contact. Change involves a dynamic process and a stable outcome. For a better understanding of acculturation, the dynamic process is addressed (i.e., how does acculturation change come about?) Also, the stable outcome is addressed (i.e., what has changed during acculturation?) (Sam, 2006). For example, during the process of acculturation, individuals and groups may vary in making choices about their life preferences such as how to live, what to eat, or what language to speak. Later on, when these groups and individuals have their own preferred way of living in the acculturative setting, a fairly stable pattern of behavior might be noticed (Berry, 1990).

The formal definition of acculturation distinguishes between two levels of change: the population level and the individual level (Berry, 1990, 1997, 2005). At a group level, acculturation involves change in the culture of the group; that is, cultural practices, social structures, the economic base, or the group's political organization. At an individual level,

psychological acculturation involves change in the personal characteristics of individuals (i.e., behavior, beliefs, identity, and attitudes). Psychological acculturation refers to the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation (Berry, 1997).

In addition, acculturation is distinguished from cultural change (Berry, 1990). The latter refers to the “process that results in population level changes that are due to dynamic internal phenomena such as innovation, discovery, or major ecological disaster” (p. 234). Acculturation process results in population level changes because of continuous contact with other cultures.

Acculturation Strategies

In his framework, which outlines numerous techniques individuals and groups use to acculturate, Berry (1980) identified two dimensions. The first is the degree to which one prefers to maintain his cultural heritage and identity. The second is the degree to which one prefers to have contact and participate with the outside group or the larger society. These two dimensions intersect to create four acculturation categories: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (Berry, 2003). From the point of view of the non-dominant group, when individuals choose not to maintain or try to decrease their cultural heritage and seek daily interactions with the larger society, then the *assimilation* strategy is being implemented. In contrast, when individuals choose to hold on and retain their original culture as well as to avoid interacting with other cultures, then they are using *separation* strategy. When individuals show an interest in daily interaction with other groups while maintaining their original culture then they use the *integration* strategy. Finally, the *marginalization* strategy is used when individuals show little interest in interacting with the dominant culture of larger society. Marginalization

can also result from failed attempts at participating in the larger society because of discriminatory attitudes and practices of the dominant group.

According to Berry's model of acculturation, Saudi students as a nondominant group have the freedom to choose the way or the strategy they want to acculturate as well as the degree of that process (Baker, 1999; Padilla & Perez, 2003). In addition, acculturation is a mutual process in which both the dominant host U.S. culture and the Saudi students are involved. However, the dominant host culture is also likely to constrain and influence the chosen acculturation strategies of the Saudi students (Berry, 1974; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010). In this case, Saudis' chosen acculturation strategies might be affected and changed. So other terms of acculturation strategies that might be used from the point of view of the dominant host culture are: integration, assimilation, segregation, and exclusion (Berry, 2003; Bourhis et al., 1997). The *integration* orientation can be freely chosen by the nondominant group when the dominant society accepts that nondominant group's desire to maintain their cultural heritage. Thus, this strategy requires the dominant group to adapt its national institutions for example, educational institutions to meet the needs of all nondominant groups living in its plural society. The *assimilation* orientation implies the nondominant group is expected to adopt the traditions and norms of the dominant culture as their own. When separation is imposed by the dominant group, it is called *segregation*. When marginalization is forced by the dominant society, it is called *exclusion*.

To understand the acculturation process, the nature of the contact relationships is to be identified; whether it is based on domination of one group over the other or on a mutual hostility or respect (Sam & Berry, 2010). Thus, the success of the acculturation process relies upon a

good fit between Saudi students' acculturation strategies as well as the U.S. host dominant culture's orientation (Bourhis et al., 1997).

Therefore, in order to understand the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university, the variation of the interaction of the chosen acculturation orientations of both groups in contact was investigated. Hence, I looked at two aspects. First, I investigated Saudi students' own preferences of acculturation strategies as a nondominant group. Second, I explored the acculturation orientations adopted by the host dominant culture from the perceptions of Saudi students themselves. Finally, I determined whether Saudi students employed one or more of Berry's acculturation strategies.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The primary goal of this study was to gain a detailed understanding of the experiences of Saudi international students attending a U.S. university. The overarching question of my study was: How do Saudi international students attending a U.S. university describe their experiences?

The research questions of my study were:

- How do Saudi students describe their acculturation strategies while attending a U.S. university?
- How do Saudi students describe the host U.S. university's acculturation orientations?
- How do Saudi students describe what the host university does to support and facilitate their acculturation process?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Different aspects of international education have been discussed and examined in the literature. According to Alhazmi and Nyland (2010), most of these aspects can be divided into two main groups. The first category is international students' experiences. This division includes international students' social and academic experiences, their psychological and sociological needs, and their rights and security. The second looks at international education as a product. They discussed how to internationalize the product and pay attention to the quality and reputation of universities. However, in my literature review the focus is on the first category, which is the experience of international students. The review is divided into six major categories: (a) the value and benefits of having international students; (b) international students' decision to study abroad and goals sought; (c) academic, social, and cultural aspects of the experiences of international students; (d) experiences of domestic students versus international students; and (e) international students' persistence and institutional retention.

The Value of International Students to Institutions of Higher Education

International students bring a range of benefits to higher education institutions in the United States. International students contribute economic value (National Association of International Educators, 2013). They support services and programming on campus by paying out-of-state tuition funded by non-U.S. sources. During the 2012-2013 academic year, 819,644 international students at higher education institutions across the United States supported 313,000 jobs and added \$24 billion to the U.S. economy (National Association of International Educators, 2013). This is a 6.2% increase in job support and a 10% growth in dollars contributed to the

economy compared with the previous academic year. In addition to paying for their higher education, international students spend their money in various areas. Examples are health insurance, accommodation, marketing, dining, transportation, and telecommunications. This means that for every seven international students enrolled in an educational institution, three jobs are created in the U.S. (National Association of International Educators, 2013).

International students constitute a vital source of diversity on U.S. university campuses. International students not only enhance the student population, they enrich the campus culture (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Zhao et al., 2005). Their presence on campus creates opportunities for domestic students to be exposed directly to diverse cultures (Andrade, 2009b). The interaction between domestic and international students might lead to a mutual understanding of others' cultures. Such interactions nurture networks that would be helpful in the interchange of ideas, information, and support in the future (Andrade, 2009b). Luo and Jamieson-Drake (2013) examined whether interaction with international students benefited U.S. students' college experiences. Luo and Jamieson-Drake explored factors that might encourage such interactions on college campuses through the perceptions of three graduating cohorts of their collegiate diversity experiences. They found the presence of additional international students on college campuses will naturally lead to more interactions. Having international students on campus benefits both groups. Domestic students were more likely to have plentiful opportunities to engage in frequent international interactions. Additionally, domestic students expressed openness to diverse perspectives. They acquired intercultural awareness as well as tolerance and acceptance of others. They showed more willingness to challenge their own values and beliefs. Luo and Jamieson-Drake underscored the vital role educational institutions play in leveraging

international diversity. Having a welcoming and caring learning environment for international students provided meaningful educational experiences for domestic students. The main factors promoting active engagement and interactions were identified as extracurricular activities, regular contact with faculty, and involvement in cultural organizations.

Considering the positive aspects of their presence, Trice (2003) found that faculty members from four different departments recognized the important contributions international students made. Most professors emphasized these students' ability to provide high academic quality, fill research assistantships, enhance the department's academic reputation, influence the domestic students' perceptions of their own life circumstances, and establish global connections.

Regardless of the benefits accompanying the existence of international students on campuses, those students have their own goals in mind. Most international students' aspirations are to educate themselves and go back to their home country with the acquired knowledge and degree (Thorstensson, 2001).

Decision to Study Abroad and Goals Fulfilled

Various factors have influenced international students' decision to study abroad. Understanding these elements is critical in understanding their flow from developing countries to developed ones such as the United States (Altbach, 1991). Factors identified in the literature are the perceived value of a foreign degree, cost, and immigration (Altbach, 1991).

International students may choose to study in the U.S. because of the highly perceived value of an American degree in the job market. The perceived value of a foreign degree in a job market varies according to the country in which it was attained, as well as the prestige of the university. In the developing countries specifically, there are added advantages to the applicant

who gained his degree from an industrialized country. Moreover, many students in the developing countries found it easier to obtain admission to Western institutions than their local universities (Altbach, 1991). Additionally, to Chinese students, a degree from the United States could be a guarantee of economic and social status in the future (Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Cost is another factor influencing an individual's decision to study abroad (Altbach, 1991). Selecting a foreign country and a university depends on the cost of education, including cost of living. Some international students, such as Saudi students, are funded by external sources, while the majority of other international students are self-funded. The size of stipends as well as the cost of living is highly important for these students. Students' problems when being unable to cover these expenses include a disruption of studies, health issues, and failure to complete the degree.

The possibility of immigration is another factor influencing a student's decision to study abroad (Altbach, 1991). A great number of students who studied abroad did not intend to return to their home country. In some instances, a combination of political and economic factors played a significant role in the desire not to return home.

Arguably, higher education in the United States offers better quality of education in comparison with other countries. Higher education in the U.S. achieved this reputation because of its advanced teaching and research abilities, internationally acclaimed scholars, and diverse academic atmospheres (Yuan, 2011). Chinese participants in Yuan's study recognized these advantages and henceforth chose to study in the United States. They acknowledged the positive educational benefits they acquired from studying in the U.S. However, different cultural

subgroups of international students diverge in their experiences while attending U.S. educational institutions (Yuan, 2011).

Experiences of International Students in the United States

Since the mid-20th century, abundant studies have been conducted to explore the experiences of international students in the United States. Previous studies mainly examined three primary facets of international students' experiences: academic, social, and cultural.

Academic aspect. International students encountered a few academic issues. These challenges were more likely to focus on language barriers, both spoken English and listening comprehension. Consequently, English proficiency is a stumbling block for the majority of international students (Kuo, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yuan, 2011). Limited English proficiency not only affects international students' academics, but also the social and cultural aspects of their experience. To gain a detailed understanding of the academic, social, and cultural experiences of Chinese students in the United States, Yuan (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with 10 Chinese students and two American faculty members. Concerning their academic experience, Yuan found that spoken English was the main challenge for Chinese students. The American professors thought Chinese students did not participate in class discussion because of a cultural tendency to be quiet. Yet, Chinese students could not express their ideas in English. Chinese students' unskilled oral English prevented them from participation. Chinese students' lack of knowledge about American history prevented them from full engagement in class discussion. To Yuan, Chinese students' lack of confidence in speaking English could be attributed to the English educational system in China. Written tests taken to

evaluate student performance in China mostly emphasized writing skills rather than speaking and listening skills.

In another study conducted by Sherry et al. (2010), international students cited spoken English problems far more than written language barriers. International students learned English grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills better compared with the conversational English in their home country. In addition, Kuo (2011) conducted a study to explore the language challenges encountered by international graduate students at a university in Alabama in the southern United States. A survey was sent to 716 international graduate students by the Office of International Education. Only 152 international graduate students responded to the online survey. Findings indicated that, due to their oral language deficiency, international graduate students were unable to express their thoughts and feelings. These students faced difficulty completing normal activities they used to do in their home countries, such as shopping, bargaining, arguing, and communicating. Thus, many international students expressed a sense of low self-esteem. International students indicated that American students thought they were stupid and not smart. To Kuo, difficulties in communication and oral English skills created a barrier for international graduate students to build friendships with Americans.

Lack of spoken English proficiency hindered international students' social interactions, which further contributed to their academic problems. A study was conducted by Tompson and Tompson (1996) to investigate the perceptions of both faculty and international students about their academic concerns. Surveys were distributed to both faculty and international students in two universities in the southeastern U.S. Faculty members were requested to identify the international students' behaviors that undermined their academic performance, while

international students were asked to identify the most difficult aspects of their academic experience. Faculty members reported a few of the international students' behaviors to be problematic. One problematic behavior was international students preferred to work and sit with their international peers rather than interact with domestic peers. Another was the international students rarely asked questions for clarification about the given assignments. The international students reported spoken English deficiency was their major difficulty. Tompson and Tompson explained the reason for the problematic behaviors of international students perceived by their instructors was due to the students' spoken English deficiency.

Listening comprehension was an additional academic concern for many international students. Huang (2006) investigated the English academic listening challenges of 78 Chinese students at a North American university. All participants in the study achieved a score higher than 550 in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) before coming to the United States. This score is the minimum requirement for most graduate schools in the United States (Educational Testing Services, 2015b). Huang found that Chinese students were less confident about their listening ability. The students' self-ratings showed listening was their weakest area, while reading and grammar were their strongest areas. Chinese graduate students were more confident about their listening abilities than undergraduate students. Over 90% of Chinese students had difficulties understanding academic lectures. Ferris and Tagg (1996) investigated the views of 234 professors at an American university about the difficulties with listening tasks their English as a Second Language (ESL) students had. Respondents to the survey indicated their ESL students had difficulties with listening and lecture comprehension, asking and answering questions, and class participation. In addition, international graduate students in Kuo

(2011)'s study were unable to understand the lectures. They attributed the difficulty in understanding the lectures to the accent and speed at which professors talked. International students could not participate in class discussions because their American colleagues spoke in a Southern American accent. International graduate students described this accent to be fast, unclear, and different from what they learned at their home countries. Huang (2004) asked 78 Chinese students at an American university to complete a questionnaire about factors affecting their comprehension of the academic lectures. Participants reported that American faculty members' use of English in class affected their academic listening and comprehension. American professors (a) spoke English quickly and their pronunciations were unclear, (b) used complex and long sentences, (c) used slang and colloquial expressions, and (d) did not provide clear definitions or explanations of important concepts.

English language proficiency is related to both academic and social adjustment. A mixed method study was conducted by Andrade (2009a) to examine the effect of English proficiency on the academic and social adjustment of international students. The study was conducted in an undergraduate university with a high percentage of international students. The perspectives of international students and faculty members were investigated in this study. Student perspectives were derived from interviews and two Web-based surveys. Thirty-six interviews were conducted in two years (i.e., 2004-2006) and surveys were administered in 2005 to 449 students. Faculty viewpoints were gathered through a focus group and Web-based survey. Most international students reported they were comfortable speaking in the presence of international students rather than only native speakers. Students also expressed having difficulties with English even after having been at the university for four years. Nevertheless, some students

demonstrated their English had improved especially when they took general education courses. Others were pleased with their proficiency, they felt comfortable interacting in English, and they were close to getting their degree. Faculty members recognized the challenges international students encountered related to their English deficiency. However, faculty members were satisfied with the international students' English skills and they acknowledged students' further improvement in language proficiency was possible. Faculty members were sensitive to the academic needs of international students and they adjusted their pedagogical methods accordingly. For example, they used visual aids, talked slowly, used simple vocabulary while speaking, and explained difficult concepts.

In their research, Yan and Berliner (2011) identified three factors which accounted for the language barriers. These factors were lack of cultural knowledge about the U.S., rare opportunities to practice English, and insufficient language training. Chinese international participants in Yan and Berliner's study received English training to help them pass the standardized tests, such as the TOEFL and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE)(Educational Testing Services, 2015a). These tests are required for admission to higher education in the United States. However, TOEFL is not adequately indicating the students' proficiency for communicating in English (Huang, 2006; Kuo, 2011; McDermott-Levy, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996; Yan & Berliner, 2011). As a result, Chinese students expressed their failure to maintain successful communications with Americans. They tended to retreat to their "Chinese circle" so they could easily express their thoughts and feelings.

Learning about the educational system and environment of the U.S. host university was an academic concern for international students (Evans, Carlin, & Potts, 2009). Examples were

the grading system, classroom behavior expected, and format of assignments. According to Yuan (2011), Chinese international students appreciated the flexibility of the educational system in U.S. universities. They got the chance to choose the subject they wanted to study. They believed the quality of education in the United States was better than in China. Chinese students praised using advanced equipment and facilities, working on more hands-on projects, and having the opportunity to study the newest materials. As a result, Chinese students felt they benefited from the high quality of education they received in the United States. In addition, knowing ways and manners of interacting with academic advisors is part of learning about the U.S. educational environment. Chinese students in Yan & Berliner's (2011) study regarded their advisors as the link to the university and their future profession. Yet, Chinese students were hesitant to initiate a conversation with their professors. This could be related to the Chinese students' unfamiliarity of the accepted norms of approaching the advisor-student relationship in the U.S. In Yuan's (2011) study, the low engagement of Chinese students in class discussion was attributed to the educational culture students were accustomed to in China. For example, disagreeing with the teachers during class in China was considered inappropriate and challenging to the teachers' authority and credibility.

Social aspect. Living in the United States is a new and different social experience for a majority of international students. For example, a study was conducted by McDermott-Levy (2011) to describe the experience of 12 female Omani students while studying for their baccalaureate degree in nursing in the United States. Alone and away from their extended families, Omani female students had a unique experience. To illustrate, Omani female students experienced more freedom of participating in activities and independence in making decisions in

the United States, which they seldom had in their home country. Omani women were used to being taken care of and protected by a male family member, for example, a father, brother, or husband in their home country. Yet, in the United States, they learned how to handle personal finances, independently interact with people other than family members, and travel alone.

Omani female students described life in the U.S. as easy. If they could not drive by themselves in Oman, they needed to wait for one member of their family to drive them. However, in the U.S. they could take any kind of public transportation and go wherever they wanted without a companion. Eventually, their experiences of independence built self-confidence.

Because of language and cultural barriers, many international students found it difficult to interact and develop friendships with American peers. Omani female students found making friends with non-Caucasian and other international students was easier than with Caucasian-American students. Additionally, Omani female students felt rejected by American students when they tried to interact with them. Some Omani female students expressed they experienced some anti-Muslim sentiments. Because of wearing hijab (i.e., a headscarf) and the negative media interpretations about the Muslim and Arab world, some Americans felt uncomfortable being near them. Nevertheless, Omani female students acknowledged that although wearing the hijab is a sign of being Muslim, not all Americans acted the same. Some Americans stared at Omani female students more out of curiosity than fear.

International students preferred interacting and socializing with members of their own ethnic communities than with American students (McDermott-Levy, 2011; Sherry et al., 2010; Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yuan, 2011). For example, Chinese students were offered the opportunity to meet with an American host family which was

organized by the Office of International Affairs (Yuan, 2011). The local host family could help Chinese students understand the American customs. Yet, Chinese students did not meet with the host families very often. One of the Chinese students could not develop meaningful relationships with the host family and described it as superficial. Another Chinese student could not find topics Americans were interested to chat about. Another Chinese student noticed American students were not interested in learning about Chinese customs and felt that American students held some negative stereotypes toward China. To the majority of Chinese students, it was easier to interact with students from their ethnic group. Due to their insufficient English and cultural differences, Chinese students were uncertain and anxious when interacting with American students.

Having pre-conceived ideas about life in the United States could explain some of the social difficulties (Yan & Berliner, 2011). For example, some Chinese students felt disappointed about their experiences attending a university in the U.S. because their high expectations about living in the U.S. were diminished. Additionally, Chinese students ascribed their social ineffectiveness to the cultural differences between the United States and China.

Cultural aspect. Learning about U.S. norms, values, and regulations is a new experience for international students. Sherry et al. (2010) examined the experiences of international students at the University of Toledo to understand the challenges they experienced. An online survey was sent to 1,100 international students. Only 121 international students answered the survey. Sherry found that the majority reported having had no problems in adjusting to the U.S. cultural norms. International students were familiar with the cultural norms in the United States because some had the experience of visiting other countries before coming to the U.S. while

others perceived American people to be helpful and friendly. Only 16.7 % of the international students responding to the survey experienced difficulties adjusting to the U.S. culture. They indicated the initial stage of living in U.S was the most difficult period. They felt lonely and needed some assistance in learning the American culture.

Yuan (2011) found that, although Chinese students had little knowledge about American culture, they described American people as nice, upbeat, optimistic, outgoing, and confident. Some Chinese students noted that American society encouraged freedom and privacy, while in China there were many restrictions. American people did things for fun, while Chinese people tended to be more serious. Yet, most Chinese students had stronger relationships with each other compared to the American people. Additionally, although Chinese students experienced discrimination in the United States, they considered their professors open-minded and fair.

For the majority of international students, attending U.S. universities could be an overwhelming cultural transition experience (Zhai, 2002). International students come with their unique cultural backgrounds, which are different from American students and teachers (A. Lee, Poch, Shaw, & Williams, 2012). International students coming from non-Western countries tend to encounter more salient cultural adjustment challenges than their peers coming from Western countries (J. J. Lee, 2010). A quantitative study was conducted by Wilton and Constantine (2003) on 190 international students from Asia and Latin America attending a Northeastern U.S. university. Wilton and Constantine examined the relationship among cultural adjustment difficulties, psychological distress, and length of residence in the United States. They found that Latin American international students reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress in comparison with their Asian colleagues. The researchers attributed the reason for

these mental health difficulties to cultural adjustment difficulties. Even the host university's support services were limited and culturally irrelevant.

Cultural adjustment is a concern for a majority of international students in the United States. Tummala-Narra and Claudius (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the experiences of 15 Muslim graduate international students at a U.S. university. This study focused on the experiences of Muslim international students as a religious or cultural minority in the United States post September 11. Findings revealed five main categories. The first category was diverse views of the new cultural environment. Some Muslim students appreciated the educational opportunities they had in the United States compared with their home countries. For example, some female students admired the educational chances provided for married women or women with children. Also, Muslim students found that their sense of open-mindedness was increased through interaction with people from other religions. Whereas other Muslim students expressed feelings of discomfort with the American culture. The second category was social isolation. Participants reported missing the social and emotional support normally provided by their family members. Also, participants experienced challenges in forming friendships in the United States. The third category that emerged from their data analysis was experiences of discrimination. A majority of Muslim international students reported experiences of being discriminated in the United States, such as waiting in a separate room for long hours in the airport, being mistreated by professors because of their faith, and reading angry comments about Islam on the Internet. To face such misconceptions, some participants decided to educate others about Islam. The fourth category was religious identity. Most participants faced difficulty in following their religious practices in the U.S. Some students could not find a balance between

their spiritual life and academic requirements. For example, students may have exams on days designated as religious holidays in their home country. The final category found was protective factors in adjusting to living in the United States. Most participants attributed their initial communication difficulties to English deficiency. Yet, continuous improvement of their English proficiency helped them in their cultural adjustment. Finally, keeping their social relationships with family in their home country through phone, Internet, and Skype helped them in their cultural adjustment in the United States.

Cultural differences can obstruct international students from effectively exploiting the support services provided by the host university. Jackson and Heggins (2003) implemented individual interviews and focus groups with 28 Asian students to understand their transition to a U.S. Midwestern research university. Jackson and Heggins found that due to their native culture and traditions, Asian international students behaved as passive and shy learners in classrooms. Asian international students felt uncomfortable using some services provided by the host university. Talking with counselors about their problems or seeking help was avoided. They tended to keep challenges and problems to themselves. According to their cultural patterns and values, sharing emotional expressions with strangers was a cultural stigma. Asian students preferred to share their psychological problems with their friends and religious leaders.

Senior students could influence their peers in the home country concerning their decision to pursue higher education at U.S. universities. A quantitative study was conducted by J. J. Lee (2010) to explore the experiences of international students and to find out whether these students recommended study at their host university. Of the 2569 graduate and undergraduate international students subscribed to the online survey list, only 501 international students

responded. J. J. Lee found a majority of participants felt discriminated against and not treated equally as domestic students. Consequently, they tended not to recommend their host university to their friends in their home country.

Experiences of International Students versus Domestic Students

Higher education life is demanding for all university students. Both local and international students face academic and social difficulties in their first year of college, but with distinctive differences (Andrade, 2006b). International students were more likely to experience social problems in comparison to their U.S. peers. In a longitudinal study, Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, and Van Horn (2002) surveyed 294 domestic and international students at a mid-western U.S. university. Hechanova-Alampay et al. examined the adjustment and distress responses of these participants during the first six months of residency. Because their home culture and environment were distinct from the new host environment, international students had more social adjustment issues. Even though domestic students were deprived of their former social support sources, chances of interaction and access to their acquaintances were still available. In addition, many domestic students visited their families during official short vacations. In contrast, international students did not travel back to their home country because of the distance and cost. International students were disconnected from their family and friends, thus they had less social support in the host country. Additionally, the interaction between local students with international students had a positive impact on the latter's social adjustment. However, only a small percentage of international students had close friendships with domestic students. This was due to lack of opportunities for interactions as well as their preference for friendships with co-nationals.

International students were more engaged academically compared with the domestic students. Zhao et al. (2005) compared international students and their American counterparts' levels of engagement in educational practices. For example, they compared the extent to which the two groups wrote, read, studied, interacted with faculty members, and engaged in diversity related activities. Zhao et al. found that international students in their first year exceeded their domestic counterparts in academic interaction with faculty members. International students spent less time socializing and relaxing than their American counterparts. International students used computer technology in class activities. Because of lack of language proficiency, they preferred to use computer technology as a tool for interaction. In that way, they avoided the embarrassment of face-to-face interaction. Using technology rather than direct interaction with their domestic counterparts led international students to isolate themselves socially. Senior international students, however, faced fewer cultural issues and tended to spend as much time socializing and relaxing as their American counterparts did.

International students perceived higher levels of discrimination and homesickness in comparison to American students. Through random surveys, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) studied the level of perceived discrimination and homesickness of 198 international and 241 domestic students at a U.S. university. Poyrazli and Lopez found, due to their accented English and belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group, international students were at a greater risk of experiencing discrimination compared to their U.S. counterparts. The researchers also noted this level of discrimination could impede the international students' acculturation process or adjustment to the new environment.

International Students' Persistence and Institutional Retention

Berger, Ramirez, and Lyon (2012) differentiated between persistence and retention. Persistence is the “desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education” (p.12). Retention refers to the “ability of an institution to retain a student” (p. 12). Student achievement is the prime mission of educational institutions for both domestic and international students. Thinking of ways to facilitate their students’ success is also the institution’s priority (Evans et al., 2009). Therefore, higher education institutions provide many helpful support services and programming to increase student retention. These efforts include academic support centers, orientations, and counselors and tutors. However, not all of these services provide equal assistance to students and not all international students have the same support needs. To Evans et al. (2009), assisting international students with attaining and fulfilling their educational goals was required. Thus, support services could be expanded based on students’ background and needs rather than on institutional convenience.

Higher education statistical reports on the success of international students in the U.S. are lacking (Evans et al., 2009). The only reports available are on the numbers of international students’ enrollment, but not on the success rate of these students in the U.S. Neither government higher education agencies nor the Institute of International Education can provide information on international students’ achievement. This absence of data could be explained in two ways. First, despite the rising number of international students in the U.S., they still consist only of a very small share (i.e., 3.9% of the entire student population) (Institute of International Education, 2013a). Second, international students are in the United States for a short period of time, so they have no significant or long lasting impact on this nation (Andrade, 2009b).

There are a few contributing factors that could help international students to successfully persist. In her qualitative inquiry, Andrade (2006a) interviewed 17 international students from Asia and the South Pacific enrolled at a religiously affiliated U.S. university. Study participants were seniors about to graduate. The main purpose of her study was to examine the experiences of this group who had low retention and graduation rates. Andrade found two major contributing factors helped international students successfully persist. One factor was the ability to change and integrate into the norms and values of the institution. Although this change was difficult, international students viewed it as a positive part of their experiences. Another factor was the recognition of the salience of support from peers, family, and faculty that helps students to succeed academically. Most meaningful to international students' experience was institutional engagement. International students reported other contributing factors helped them successfully persist. These were engagement in spiritual life, involvement in courses, and participation in extracurricular activities. International students recognized two positive attitudes that helped them to integrate successfully in the new academic environment. These were open-mindedness toward cultural differences and time management skills.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

In order to deepen my understanding of the experiences of Saudi international students attending a U.S. university, a qualitative research design was my approach in conducting this study. Qualitative design gave me the flexibility and openness to explore what this phenomenon offered (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research design facilitated the understandings of the social phenomena and allowed a focus on giving voice to the participants of the study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). Qualitative design has “actual settings as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 4).

Topics included in this section are: Site of the study; description of study participants; sampling technique used for selecting study participants and reasons for choosing the technique; information on how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted; researcher positionality; and quality of the study.

Setting of the Study: Midwestern Multicultural University

This study was conducted at Midwestern Multicultural University (MMU). MMU is a public, four-year, coeducational university located in a Midwestern city in the United States called Edge Park. There are 500,000 citizens in the city and surrounding metropolitan area. To ensure confidentiality, both the university and the city have been given pseudonyms. MMU has 14,550 students and has a great number of diverse students compared with other universities in this state. There are 1,596 international students at MMU in the 2014/2015 academic year, which constitutes about 10% of the student population. The total number of Saudi students enrolled for fall 2014 was 365 students. The statistics of Saudi students enrolled for the

academic year 2014/2015 were provided by the university's Office of International Education and are included in Table 1. There are 12% of Saudi students enrolled in graduate programs, 55% are in undergraduate programs, and 33% are in the Intensive English Language Center (IELC). The majority of Saudi students are undergraduate students. Graduate programs have the least number of Saudi students. The majority of Saudi students enrolled in MMU are male (i.e., 84.11%). Female Saudi students constituted the fewest number in all the programs, particularly in the graduate programs (i.e., 6.67%).

Table 1

Saudi Students at MMU, Academic Year 2014-15

	Graduate	Undergraduate	IELC
Male	42	182	83
Female	3	19	36
Total	45	201	119

Participation Selection and Sampling

I did individual interviews with both female and male Saudi students who were undergraduate and graduate students at MMU. I focused only on Saudi students among all other international students for a few reasons. First, previous studies on international students' experiences in the U.S. have tended to place international students from diverse countries into one group. In this way, they have ignored the different cultural backgrounds of these international students and their distinct academic needs (Altbach et al., 1985; J. J. Lee & Rice, 2007). For example, Saudi international students come from the most gender segregated country in the world (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010). Therefore, Saudi international students have different

experiences from other international students. Second, the Saudi government through King Abdullah's scholarship program sponsors the majority of Saudi international students financially. Thus, they have fewer financial challenges compared to their international counterparts from other countries, such as finding accommodation, struggling with tuition, or finding a job (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010).

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling. The advantage of purposeful sampling resides in selecting and studying in depth, as Patton (2002) called them, "information-rich cases" (p.230). Information-rich cases are those Saudi international students I could learn from in depth pertaining to the goals of my study. Purposeful sampling is specifically concerned about understanding participants' views about a specific phenomenon. Therefore, it was necessary to select a sample from which the most can be learned (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

The aim of this study was to describe in depth the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university. Thus, criterion sampling was the sampling technique (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2002). The criteria used to select these information rich cases or participants were: (a) English is not their first language, (b) they hold a different cultural background from the U.S. host country, (c) they were born and raised in Saudi Arabia, (d) they are sponsored by their government namely King Abdullah's scholarship program, and (e) their length of residence in the U.S. ranges between six months and five years to be considered as sojourners and not as tourists (Jandt, 1995).

With the assistance of the Office of International Education, specifically the associate director, an e-mail was sent to all Saudi students who met the criteria (Personal communication,

March 5, 2014). In the e-mail, I explained the purpose of the study and Saudi students were invited to participate. A few instructions were explained in the e-mail such as the time and the place for the interview to be arranged at their convenience and each interview might take between 45-60 minutes. Also, I gave them the freedom to contact me directly. The e-mail was written in English as well as in Arabic (see Appendix A for the e-mail).

Initially, a few male students contacted me while none of the female students did. Thus, I used snowball or chain sampling as my second strategy for selecting the participants. The snowballing sampling approach began by asking the participants, who already responded to my e-mail and other well-situated people, who else could I talk to (Patton, 2002). These people were able to encourage a good number of male and female Saudi students to contact me. Therefore, I ended up having 22 participants. Only one male student was excluded because he did not meet one of my study's criteria (i.e., to be a KASP recipient).

Sample size can be determined according to how well the chosen sample generates data to learn in depth about this subgroup (Slavin, 2007). Previous studies that examined lived experiences included a sample size range between five and 20 participants to provide various perspectives (Slavin, 2007). With the flexible nature of qualitative research sampling techniques, my sample size was 21 participants, 14 male and 7 female. My emphasis was on quality rather than quantity. I continued gathering data until data saturation was reached. In other words, I stopped gathering data when I felt that information obtained was redundant as well as no new information was provided (Padgett, 2008).

Participants ranged in age from 20 years old to early 40s. Four of the study participants were working on master's degrees; four were working on doctorate degrees, while the remaining

13 participants were undergraduate students. Among these participants, 10 were single, 11 participants were married, and eight of them had one to four children. Their areas of study included 10 different disciplines at four different colleges: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering, School of Business, and Graduate school. Their length of study at MMU ranged from four months to eight years.

Data Collection: Interviews

The purpose of my study was to understand the Saudi international students' experiences while attending a U.S. university. Therefore, interviewing was the strategy implemented to collect data for this study. The interviewer is mainly accountable for the quality of data elicited during an interview (Patton, 2002). Hence, I chose the best interview strategy that served my study's purposes. There are three general types of open-ended interviews: (a) the informal conversational interview, (b) the general interview guide, and (c) the standardized open-ended interview (Denzin, 1978; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). The informal conversational interview provides maximum flexibility to gain information so the interviewer could ask different questions and gain different information. Yet, data obtained from this type of interview can be difficult to organize and analyze. The general interview guide is prepared to ensure that the same topics or subject areas are covered with each participant interviewed. In this way, interviewing a number of participants will be systematic and accomplished in the limited time available in the interview. Also, this kind of interview still remains fairly conversational. The interviewer has freedom in exploring, probing, and asking spontaneous questions on predetermined subject topics. The standardized open-ended interview requires interview questions to be written out and the questions' sequence to be determined before the interview.

Careful consideration is determined as to the wording of each question in advance. Further elaborations or probes are written in the interview at appropriate places. Since the interview is highly focused, the limited time of the interview will be used efficiently. The standardized open-ended interview facilitates the analysis of data because it is easy to find each participant's response to the same question and compare them.

I used the general guide interview approach. A common approach includes starting the interview with a standardized interview strategy then exploring any subject of interest in the latter part of the interview (Patton, 2002). Therefore, I specified main questions to ask each participant while leaving other items as topics to be explored at the end of the interview. Using this strategy provided me flexibility in probing, asking more questions, as well as exploring in more depth new and unexpected areas of inquiry (Patton, 2002). Using open-ended questions was suitable to give the participants the chance to best voice their experiences and to describe it in rich details (Creswell, 2012; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2004) (see Appendix B for interview protocol and questions).

Paying attention to any clues during the interview helped me understand and elaborate on important topics for the participants. Hence, I was open to hearing what the participants had to share about their experiences. Throughout the data collection, I identified common themes that arose in the participants' interviews. Gay et al. (2012) pointed out some guidelines to facilitate communication with participants and smooth the collection of interview data. Those are listen more and talk less, do not interrupt, tolerate silence, avoid leading questions, follow up on what participants say, and be neutral, as well as not to argue with participants.

Collecting interview data by digital audio recording is the preferred technique. It ensures the availability of data at any time. To Patton (2002), the raw data for interviews are the actual quotations spoken by real people. Following audio digital recording of data, it is beneficial to transcribe data directly. Taking notes was used while collecting data. Taking notes during the interview serves a few purposes (Patton, 2002). Taking notes helped me formulate questions for unexpected or emergent topics of inquiry. Also, notes taken during interviews can facilitate locating important quotations from the digital audio recording.

Collecting the data in the Arabic language and presenting the findings in English language involves some decisions in regard to the translation. Decisions such as translation procedures and resources used might influence the trustworthiness of the study (Birbili, 2000). Both the consent form and the interview guide questions were translated to Arabic. Then, they were translated again into English language by a colleague who was not involved with the study; this type of translation is called backward translation. The language used while interviewing is the participants' mother tongue, which is Arabic. Any quotes presented in the findings section have been translated into English. I translated these quotes, and they were double-checked by another colleague who was not involved in the study (see Appendix C for the Arabic- English translation of the quotes).

Translation relates to both language and culture. Hence, the translator renders a translation to make it close to the structure of the Arabic language and to consider the cultural nuances of the Arabic language (Chen & Boore, 2010). The translator's linguistic competence and knowledge of the participants' culture influences the quality of the translation (Birbili, 2000). In this case, I have the advantage. I am bilingual. I can speak both languages fluently. Also, I

am familiar with Saudis' culture because I lived in Saudi Arabia for six years. Therefore, my translations should be understandable for the reader (Halai, 2007).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorization, coding, and synthesizing. Collecting data, analyzing data, and writing the findings are not distinct steps in the research process. They are interconnected and go on simultaneously in the research project (Creswell, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2006) described the process of data analysis as a funnel where things are open at the beginning or top but more directed and specific at the bottom or end (i.e., inductive reasoning). Inductive reasoning involves determining patterns, themes, and categories in the research data. Findings emerge when I, as a qualitative researcher, interact with data (Patton, 2002). In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument. This means during the entire research process, I am the one who makes decisions about what data to collect, whom to interview, what questions to ask, and how data will be collected and interpreted (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

To analyze the research data, I was engaged in a process of moving into analytic circles as a spiral rather than a fixed linear method (Creswell, 2007). The first loop of that data analysis spiral was data management (Creswell, 2007). I organized the transcriptions of the interviews into different files according to the source of information. Following the organization of data, I scanned all of my data files to get a sense of all the data and to identify major ideas. In this second loop, I ignored the predetermined interview questions and heard what the participants said. As a reflection on the major thoughts and ideas, I started forming my initial categories and supported them with multiple forms of evidence or perspectives from data (Creswell, 2007).

Listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and reading the interview transcriptions were strategies I implemented to reflect on and analyze data. While reading and listening, I wrote notes and developed tentative ideas about categories and themes (Maxwell, 2013).

Description, classification, and interpretation comprise the third loop of this spiral data analysis. This loop is the formation of the codes which is the heart of the qualitative research analysis (Creswell, 2007). Coding is an inductive process of identifying and examining different segments of the data that describe general categories. Then, I labeled these small parts of information with broad category names (Lodico et al., 2010). To develop a coding system, I searched for themes throughout the data. Then, I wrote down words or phrases to denote these topics or themes. These phrases were my coding categories. Coding categories are a means of organizing the data, so that data related to a given topic can be physically detached from other data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). According to Creswell (2009), codes to be used in the data analysis were: (a) predetermined based on common sense and review of literature, (b) not anticipated at the beginning of the study (c) related to the conceptual interest of readers, and/or (d) related to the theoretical perspective in the study. Codes could be divided into major, subcodes, and supplemental codes (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Major codes are broad categories. Subcodes are more detailed categories derived from the major codes. Supplemental codes are marginal categories. Hence, I developed a matrix list of tentative codes that matched text segments or chunks. Then I expanded the categories during reviewing my data documents. By using the matrix of codes, I started coding my unitized interview transcript. I used the Excel Microsoft program to assist me in doing that. Using such a computer program in coding is more efficient than hand coding (Creswell, 2009). Also, it was easier to sort and locate codes.

The next loop of data analysis was looking for categories or themes for data analysis (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Themes were generated from data as well as a prior understanding of the phenomenon being studied. To identify themes, I used repetition and similarities and differences techniques (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Identifying five to seven general themes is an accepted form of analysis. These general themes are viewed as the family of the subthemes or sub-subthemes represented by segments of data. These themes became the headings for my findings section in my research study. These general families or themes showed multiple perspectives as well as being supported with suitable quotations from interviews.

A final loop of the spiral data analysis is an interpretation or making sense of the data (Creswell, 2007, 2009). In the process of interpretation, I stepped back and tried to interpret data from my theoretical framework along with my own hunches or intuition. I tried to explain what was going on and why. I compared my findings with the findings of previous studies in the same area of research. I ended my findings section with a few implications and further questions to be explored in future research.

Research Quality

Interview and other data were examined through two broad positional lenses: the lens of study participants and the lens of the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In other words, when collecting and analyzing data, two procedures were used to ensure trustworthiness or research credibility: triangulation and peer review or debriefing (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Trustworthiness. Triangulation was the second technique used to ensure credibility. Triangulation is a procedure employed from the lens of the qualitative researchers (Creswell &

Miller, 2000). Triangulation is used when looking for convergence among various sources of data to find common categories or themes in a study (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Patton (2002) noted triangulation procedure “really pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn” (p. 556). Denzin (1978) identified four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and method triangulation. In this study, I implemented data triangulation. For example, I compared interview data collected from Saudi participants with various views such as undergraduate and graduate Saudi students as well as female Saudi students and male Saudi students (Merriam, 2009).

Peer review or examination was another strategy implemented to enhance the credibility of my study. Peer review involved finding a colleague either familiar with my study or new to my topic who would scan, review raw data, and ask questions (Merriam, 2009). My advisor was the one who did the review for my research study. Using peer debriefing assisted me in “exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Implementing peer debriefing was to ensure that my qualitative study resonates with people other than myself (Creswell, 2009).

Research ethics. The confidentiality of participants in my study was protected. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form prior to the interview. The consent form clarified the purpose of the research, explained any minimal risks involved in participating, and ensured that participation in the study was an option rather than mandatory. One copy of the consent form was given to the participant. Consent forms will be kept for three years as required by MMU Internal Review Board (IRB) guidelines. Any hints related to the personal identity of the

participants were avoided while writing the findings section and will not be mentioned in any future published articles. Any data collected, such as audio-recorded interviews, were stored in a safe secure digital place (see Appendix D for consent form).

Researcher Positionality

Reflexivity involves deep and critical reflection about my own identity and my role in the research process as well as my influence on research practice. Additionally, reflexivity is a tool to reflect on how my own assumptions and identity could shape the research process (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). As a validity procedure, it is to self-disclose one's own assumptions, views, and biases about the research topic (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Rather than believing it is possible to be a neutral and objective qualitative researcher, Peshkin (1988) recommended qualitative researchers be more explicit and aware about their subjective selves, personal positions, perspectives, and values orientations. To Peshkin, subjectivity is similar to a "garment that cannot be removed" (p. 17). Hence, he recommended having a systematic monitoring of self to keep the qualitative researcher alert to her subjectivity during the process of research. This self-monitoring is a rehearsal, an exercise, or workout to keep the subjectivity outlines open. It is a warning to the qualitative researcher to avoid any trap of perceiving what his own views restrict him to see. Therefore, it was important to describe my own beliefs and biases in this section to allow the reader to understand my position. Besides, this would help me to suspend my own preconceived assumptions before I proceeded with my study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

My personal experience is linked to my study. In 2011, my husband and I decided to pursue our doctoral degrees in the United States. Both my husband and I are international

students. I am an Educational Leadership doctoral student. My husband is also a doctoral student in the Industrial Engineering department. Both of us are self-sponsored. Before coming to the United States, we worked in Saudi Arabia for six years to save money and be able to fund ourselves financially. Although living in Saudi Arabia was a new experience, living and pursuing my higher education in the U.S. is a different experience. However, according to Maxwell (2013), it is not the ultimate aim for qualitative research to minimize our own influence on data. Hence, I was aware of my influence on what the participants said and on my interpretations of the participants' experiences. Yet, to temper my influence on the data provided, I worked to bracket and suspend my own preconceived thoughts and ideas during collecting and analyzing data (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Slavin, 2007). For example, rather than interfere in and make assumptions on the experiences of Saudi students, I interviewed them, asked them about their own experiences, and described their experiences. In other words, I let themes emerge from data. In this way, I learned about their experiences as they are and not as I thought it would be. So when I suspended my preconceptions, my experience of what is going on became part of my consciousness (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). I kept a reflexive journal during the research process.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Saudi students who pursue their higher education in a U.S. university. Findings presented in this section are a result of my analysis of data collected from individual interviews with 21 Saudi participants (i.e., seven female and 14 male). Because of the small number of female students enrolled in MMU, especially the graduate students, I did not differentiate between graduate and undergraduate female Saudi participants while presenting the findings to protect their confidentiality. My findings are divided into two main sections: The experiences of female Saudi students and the experiences of male Saudi students attending a U.S. university.

Experiences of Female Saudi Students

In this section, I present the experiences pertaining only to female Saudi participants. The experiences of female Saudi students are distinctive from the experiences of male Saudi students. Because of Saudi cultural norms as well as Islamic religious rules, female Saudi students are not allowed to live abroad alone. Thus, to be eligible for KASP, female Saudi students must be accompanied by a husband or a mahram (i.e., any male family member who a female is not allowed to marry such as a brother, father, nephew, or uncle); husband is also referred to as a mahram.

In this section, I discuss: (a) their decisions to study abroad and choosing the U.S. precisely, (b) personal changes due to living and studying in U.S., (c) their interactions with Americans, international, and Saudi students, (d) their experiences while studying at MMU, and (e) their experiences while living in Edge Park city.

Decision to Study Abroad and Choosing the United States

Findings show these seven female participants do not only share cultural backgrounds, but also share some similar objectives and desires in earning higher educational degrees from a U.S. university. Numerous reasons led these seven female participants to study abroad and choose the United States specifically to pursue their higher education. These reasons were: (a) limited options of majors available at the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), (b) dissatisfaction with the Saudi higher educational system, and (c) having a mahram who was already studying in the U.S.

Limited options in KSA universities. The limited option of majors offered for female students at Saudi universities and colleges was the foremost reason why they chose to study abroad. One female participant explained the number of majors they have in Saudi Arabia for females was limited, “Majors available for female students are limited such as medicine, nursing, and education. Nowadays, they have new majors such as engineering and maybe bioengineering.... I wanted to study chemical engineering. It was my desire but it was not available.” Another female participant echoed the same idea, “Studying in Saudi Arabia is depressing. We do not have options.” Some female participants indicated their options were not only limited, but further restricted when the government assigned them to a major and did not honor their personal choices. One participant shared,

We are allowed to fill three options, but they [Higher Education Ministry] will choose for me, not I. They chose a desire that I did not want, even all the desires that I filled were not what I wanted. If you chose to get science high school diploma, then you have to study biology, physics ... agriculture, or computer science. If you were hard working in

high school and got a high GPA, you may study medicine. My desire was neither medicine nor computer science; I wanted to study English language. However, because my high school diploma was scientific, they did not allow me to study it. Therefore, they refused my first desire that was English language.... I will never choose what I like. It does not matter! Therefore, I studied X. I studied three years in Saudi Arabia and my years were wasted for nothing. I felt this was not what I wanted.

Thus, KASP gave these female participants an opportunity to study the majors they dreamt of and could not get in their home country.

Dissatisfaction with Saudi higher educational system. Being dissatisfied with the educational system and the academic culture of the Saudi higher educational institutions was another reason female participants elected to study abroad. In some majors at Saudi Arabia, students did not have the chance to apply what they learned in classrooms. They were not provided with advanced technologies such as computer programs. One female participant admired the educational system at a U.S. university compared with the one at KSA, “In statistics class here we have a program called SAS. You have to learn it so you will be able to do the assignment for that class.... Many computer skills and programs would help you develop yourself.”

Some female participants were dissatisfied with the academic culture of the Saudi higher education institution where female students had little freedom to choose their classes. “There was no freedom in choosing your own class schedule. They give it to you ready. It was stable and you cannot change anything. I could not drop or add any classes as I wish,” one female participant noted. While attending a U.S. university, she had more freedom to modify her class

schedule according to her needs such as having children. As she stated, “I have to put some considerations while making my schedule, like that I take classes at times works with my husband’s times, so when I am at school he could be at home with the kids.” Another female participant was unhappy about the restrictions she faced while registering for classes at a Saudi university and the way the administrators at the registration office treated her. She shared with me the following story about problems she encountered while trying to register for additional hours to fill out her schedule,

In my first semester there, I had had only six credit hours to study. When I asked them to register for six more hours, unexpectedly, I was treated in a mean way.... I mean when I went to the head of the department and told her that I have this problem and I am trying to register, she told me that I was late and yelled at me and scolded me and at the end she did not allow me to register for any further classes! I was surprised at such a way of dealing! How come they could not add one student in one class, in the time that I know that there is availability. I was late in my studies. If I stayed there for that major, I may need another three years to graduate.

Facing such difficulties in dealing with the educational system and fitting in the academic culture in KSA made female Saudi students to seize the opportunity to study abroad.

Having a mahram who was already studying in the U.S. Being accompanied by a mahram is one of the specific requirements female Saudi students must have to be eligible for KASP. Therefore, the chances of studying in the U.S. specifically were facilitated for most of the female participants because a husband or a mahram was already pursuing higher education in the U.S. One female participant shared, “I choose U.S. because my brother was already here

studying.” Another female participant echoed that the same reason brought her here, “My husband was studying here for two years.” Also, some female participants stopped their studies in Saudi Arabia to seize the opportunity of accompanying their husbands and pursuing their education in the U.S. As one female participant explained, “I studied X at Saudi Arabia for a year and a half then I stopped to come with my husband here.... I will continue my studies here.” Because of the presence of their husbands or mahrams in the United States, most of the female participants did not have the chance to choose any other country to study abroad.

Not having a mahram who was already studying abroad meant some female participants got the chance to choose the country and university. Two female participants did not have a husband or mahram studying abroad. Thus, they freely chose the country in which they wanted to study abroad and then asked one of their mahrams to join them. One female participant had three options to study abroad: Germany, Canada, and the United States. She made her decision to come to the United States for specific reasons, as she illustrated,

Studying in Germany is difficult and its language is difficult to learn and you gain nothing from learning this language unlike English; it is the worldwide language, so I did not choose it [Germany]. Also, I did not choose Canada because of its cold weather.

Therefore, the U.S. was the best choice among these countries so I chose it.

This participant had been accepted at three U.S. universities, but she chose MMU for two reasons. First, she found the exact major she was looking for at MMU. Second, talking with previous Arab students at MMU about their own experience made her feel “comfortable,” and helped her decide to come to MMU.

Another female participant was so enthusiastic about coming to the United States, even though she had other options, such as Australia and England. She explained,

I prefer the U.S., I feel comfortable. I love it. I do not know why, there is no specific reason. My mother advised me to go to Australia because my cousin was there. I refused and insisted to go to the U.S. To me, the U.S. is the perfect place!

Finding a mahram to be eligible for KASP was not easy for this female participant. She faced difficulty in convincing her husband to accompany her and be her mahram. To her, coming to the U.S. was “an adventure to learn about another world,” while to her husband, it was a frightening experience. “He was so depressed. He thought anyone here could pull a gun and shoot him. That was the idea he believed in,” she explained. When her husband decided to return to KSA, she asked her brother to be her mahram. This participant also admired the speed and the flexibility in the admission procedure at MMU. She explained,

I applied to more than one university but MMU was the fastest university in admission. I felt it is flexible in procedures. I mean the doctor who I contacted here accelerated the application process and gave me the admission before I even completed my graduate study at my previous university. The other universities asked me to finish my master's, then to apply. After that, they will decide to accept me or not. My doctor here gave me whatever I wanted quickly. Whatever I asked him today, the next day it will be sent to me.

Because of this speed in admission, she decided to come to MMU.

Overall, female Saudi participants enjoyed being in the United States. They were excited to share the changes that occurred to their characters because of living and studying in the United States.

Personal Changes Due to Living and Studying in the U.S.

All the female participants agreed their experiences studying and living in the United States provided them with independence and self-confidence they did not have in KSA. Female Saudi students were used to depending on their spouses or a mahram while living in Saudi Arabia. They relied on them for traveling, shopping, and financial matters such as paying the bills, opening a bank account, or managing the home budget. In the United States, these female participants learned how to depend on themselves. There are various things female Saudi have gained in the U.S. that contributed to building their self-confidence. Examples are having a driver's license, dealing with men, traveling alone, and making decisions without consulting the family.

Learning how to drive helped these female participants to depend on themselves while in the U.S. unlike in Saudi Arabia. As one female Saudi participant shared, "I learned how to drive which made a big difference in my life. ... You cannot depend anymore on your family members here. ... I drop my kids to daycare and school and go shopping by myself." Lack of transportation in Saudi Arabia complicated their lives and forced them to depend on their husbands or a mahram. One female Saudi participant complained about life in Saudi Arabia, "If I want to go to my parents' house, which takes ten minutes walking, I cannot walk in hot weather. I have to call my brothers and ask them where they are. ... It is difficult; I need a car." However, in the United States, she got the chance to drive a car and not have to depend on her family as

she stated, “Here I drive and I do not need anyone. I depend on myself. I go shopping by myself and with my kids. If I get bored, I would take my kids and go anywhere I want.”

Dealing with men in general added to the female participants’ growing self-confidence and becoming their own persons. Because of the gender separation in Saudi educational institutions, female students are not accustomed to interacting with male students. Most of the time, the mahram would do all official papers on behalf of the female Saudi student. However, in the United States, as one participant commented, “I have more confidence to talk freely and seriously with men now.... Here I do my official papers. I go and I feel myself like a man.”

In addition, traveling abroad without the companion of a mahram was something Saudi female participants were not familiar with. Yet, while living and studying in the U.S., these females learned to travel alone, which further contributed to feelings of independence and self-reliance. As one female Saudi student described, “I was afraid to travel abroad without my family but now I am fine. Now I became myself, I have my own personality.” The participant went on to comment how she became herself in making her own plans and decisions, “Before, I used to consult a member of my family because I live with them. I still consult them now but less than before.” Some female participants learned not to depend on their spouses as they did before. One female participant shared, “I became myself. I do my own decisions. I put my regulations in my house, do the budget, and pay the bills. In KSA, my husband did all that and I never knew the price of anything. Now I know!” As a result, living in the United States became preferable to living in Saudi Arabia because of the freedom they have enjoyed here. As one female Saudi participant stated, “My living in USA is full of advantages, even I do not want to

go back to KSA. If my family was not there, and KSA is my country, and my work is there... I would not go back.”

Because of living in the United States, female participants attained things they never expected to have while living in Saudi Arabia. They felt more empowered and learned a lot about themselves in the process. Additionally, to help me understand the experiences of female Saudi students, it was necessary to explore their interactions with American, international, and co-national students.

Female Saudi Participants’ Interactions

Female participants got the chance to interact with American, international, and other Saudi students while studying and living in the United States. In this section, I explore their interactions with each of the aforementioned groups. These interactions are a vital constituent of the experiences of female participants while studying and living in the United States.

Advantages of interactions with American people. Female participants recognized the benefits gained from interacting with American people while living and studying in the United States. The first advantage was the opportunity to strengthen their English language skills. All Saudi female participants agreed that interacting with American people was a good chance for “real practice” to enhance their English language, one female participant described. Some Saudi female students needed to improve their English language skills to help them in their studies. “The language is definitely important to help me in doing presentations and to understand” Americans, one female participant shared. Another participant echoed the same purpose, “I needed to improve my speaking skill even if I am pretty good in grammar and all the other English language skills.”

The second advantage was to learn more about the American culture and getting to know American people. Coming to the U.S. was, as one participant explained, “nice to see other’s culture. I would like to see how they think. I am curious to know. In KSA, we already knew each other. I would like to have [American] friends here.” While interacting with Americans, Saudi female students became more acquainted with American culture. They also learned how to “deal with Americans until [we] return back to home country,” one female participant pointed out.

Finally, interaction with Americans helped correct any negative perceptions Americans might hold about Saudi people and culture. Because of the media, many American people perceived Saudi people to be “terrorists...and underdeveloped... Also, there is no advancement in Saudi Arabia or in Islamic countries,” one female participant commented. Some American students wondered about the Saudi lifestyle. For instance, one female participant had the following conversation with an American woman, who thought life in Saudi Arabia was primitive,

She thought that we were still riding camels. I showed her pictures of the cities and she was shocked. She asked about driving cars. I answered, “Yes, we do not drive. We should, but we have our own drivers.” She exclaimed, “Wow, like a queen!”

Therefore, Saudi female students and newcomers were encouraged to show Americans their good Islamic attributes, attitudes, and behaviors. These female Saudi students believed positive interactions with Americans might lead them to convert to Islam. “There were two American female students in Ohio converted to Islam... they saw how friendly we are and found us different from what they used to hear from Media. Within two months, they converted to Islam,”

one female participant shared. At minimum, continuous interactions with Americans would help them learn more about Islam. One female Saudi participant was pleased to help an American professor, who converted to Islam 10 years ago, learn more about Islam. “She likes to have relationships with female Muslims wearing hijab,” one female participant commented.

The curiosity of American students to know more about Saudi female students also gave a chance to the latter for more interactions and opportunities to help them understand Saudi and Islamic religious customs. American students asked questions about Saudi culture and religion. A female Saudi participant shared,

When I was pregnant, they asked me “Which month are you now?” “Where are you from?” “Why you are wearing this [hijab]?” And they asked me about my religion and my hijab. ... The most frequent question I had been asked was: “Why do [Muslims] fast during Ramadan?” I told them because of humanity and we would feel with poor people. It is their first time they came to know about these things and they are interested to know. Also, they asked me “Do you wear hijab when you are with your husband and family?” I answered them: “No, it is just with foreign men. Even, I can show you my hair because you are female.”

Such inquires and questions did not bother female participants. On the contrary, they were glad to explain their Islamic rituals and clear any misconceptions about it. To female participants, clearing any misconception Americans might hold about Saudi culture and the Islamic faith could be achieved simply through continuous interactions with them.

Interactions with female American students. Most female Saudi students expressed their satisfaction with the way American female students treated and interacted with them on

campus. Because of study groups, some female Saudi students got the chance to have more interactions with American female students outside of the class. One female Saudi participant commented about American female students, “Honestly, they are very nice.... We have study group and projects and I deal with them. I came to know them and they knew me, even by names... so if they saw me they would say ‘Hi, how are you?’”

American female students were perceived to be cooperative. American female students seemed to understand the English language needs of Saudi female students and they kindly offered their help. As one female Saudi student commented, “I have a good relationship with them. They would help me if I needed something because they know I have a difficulty in speaking in the English language.” Another participant echoed the same sentiments of being pleased with the American female students’ kindness in helping and clarifying assignments for her, as she said, “If I asked them a question, they would answer me. If I told them I did not get it, they would try to explain more.”

Lack of English proficiency prevented some female Saudi students from smooth and continuous interactions with American female students. One female Saudi student explained due to her English deficiency, she might feel embarrassed in situations with them, “...if they asked me a question and I do not understand it.” English deficiency was also an obstacle they believed disallowed them from forming friendships with Americans. As one female participant shared, “If my English language was strong, I would make many relationships with them,” but she was afraid to be a “burden.”

Yet, most female participants were disappointed with not having enough interactions with the American female students on campus. To them, American female students seemed to be

very busy in their daily lives. One female participant explained, “They come from work to class directly. When the class finished, they would be already exhausted and wanted to go home.” Even if one had a conversation with an American female, it would be once a week or by accident. This same female participant went on to share an example of an accidental conversation, “There was a female student from my study group who sat with me until my husband came and picked me up because my car was broken. We talked only that day. After that we did not have that much of continuous conversations.” Not having many interactions with American female students on campus led female Saudi students to search for other avenues for interactions. The American friendship program sponsored by the IELC was their resort.

American friendship program. Female participants utilized the American friendship program offered by the IELC. They applied to the program and requested to have an American family to interact with. They could fill out an application and choose what they wanted to have in that family. For example, if they wanted to live with that family, to go on trips with them, and to visit them. They also could choose how many members in that family they wanted. One female participant chose to have a family with kids so her own kids could play with them. Another female participant shared her enjoyable experience of having an American friend through that program, “Our relationship started four years ago and lasts until now, even I saw her last week. I feel comfortable with her and even my kids love her because she brings gifts every time she comes to see us.” Another female participant had a pleasant experience too, as she stated, “I used to go with her; even my female Saudi friends come with us.” Female Saudi students participated in a few entertainment activities with their female American friends outside the campus. They visited each other, went to a movie theater, and went bowling together.

However, there were some problems related to the friendship program. One participant complained that some of the American families participated in this program with the intention of converting female Saudi students to Christianity. Some female Saudis invited one of those American women to a special prayer they usually do at the weekend. They wanted to show her they have their own religion and they are sticking to it. This participant shared how the American woman “kept talking about the Bible, and started her own praying and wanted us to repeat after her and called Jesus ‘Baba.’” Because of this incident, the female Saudi participant clarified to her American friend, the first time she met her, she was not interested in other religions because she had her own. As she stated, “I have no problem to talk and know your religion because I am curious to know. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you invite me to Christianity or I invite you to Islam.” Once they understand each other, their friendship, as she went on to say, “Lasted for a year. Then she [American friend] left the city. Now I have no American friends.” Another female participant did not continue her relationship with her American family because she got bored of their insisting on seeing her daily, as she explained, “They wanted to teach you, they called you ten times a day. I have no time for all that. The woman used to call me during my classes time and asked me to come and see her, so I stopped going!”

Interactions with male American students. According to the Islamic rules, interactions between females and males are to be controlled. These female Saudi students were careful while dealing with men in general, therefore, most of them tended to have fewer interactions with male American students compared to their interactions with female American students. One female

Saudi participant explained how Islamic religion prevents her from interacting with American males in a casual manner,

My hijab and religion make me differentiate in dealing with the boy and the girl. For example, I laugh with the girl, I go with her, and even I ride in the car with her, but with the boy- no way! I never laugh with him. I could discuss issues concerning my study only but not to ride in the car or talk with him. My religion prevents me from doing that.

Consequently, some of these female participants never encouraged male students to engage in more open or informal interactions with them. According to some participants, they acted and behaved with American male students in a way that signaled “space” or “boundaries.” Male American students got that message and acted accordingly. One participant described how she interacted with them and made her own space,

Our own behaviors make them feel that you have to make space between us. It depends on the girl, I mean, if he saw her free then he would not make that space. For example, I do not shake hands with men, but some female Saudi students here do it. They do it because they said it is embarrassing not to do that. To me, I do not, and this is my space. If he offered shaking my hand, I would say, “sorry, this is my religion” and all their reaction concerning that is positive. They never took a stand against me. I heard some Saudi females complaining that American male students took a reaction by saying “okay why?” I have never experienced this kind of reaction. Maybe it depends on your way in dealing with that. If you said “no way!” that would be different from saying “sorry” which would help tender the situation. This is the basic of the space. Another example, if one American male asked to meet with me at 9:00 p.m. I would tell him I cannot,

choose another time. I do not say I do not want to meet with you at night. I just tell him decide another time, which would make him wonder why she does not want to meet me at that time.

Making boundaries while interacting with male American students was to prevent any embarrassing situation that might happen in the future. One female Saudi participant blamed herself for not clarifying enough her own boundaries for a male American colleague, as she shared,

The last time he saw me he asked me “what is wrong with you? You act as we are strangers!” and he put his hand on my shoulder. I was shocked. I am not used to this. I made a mistake by talking to him and allowing him to talk to me. I am the one who is responsible for letting him do that.

The female Saudi student blamed herself for not establishing firm boundaries with American male students.

Interactions with co-national Saudi students. To the majority of female participants, interacting and forming friendships with female co-nationals was easier than with female American students. One participant described the smoothness of forming friendships with other Saudi females, “If I saw a Saudi female student for the first time in the class, I would introduce myself and she would do the same. We would exchange phone numbers and become friends.” Another participant echoed the same sentiments by saying, “From the first day we meet, we would learn about each other, visit, and help each other.” Ease in establishing Saudi female networks also was noticed, as one participant explained how this happened, “The first one who

welcomed me when I came here was a Saudi female. Also, she introduced me to another one and the latter introduced me to another until we became a group.”

Female Saudi students have commonalities such as culture, religion, language, and living away from the home country, which facilitated their union and collaboration. One female participant felt comfortable while dealing with Saudi females, saying, “I know how to deal with them.” She clarified, “I mean, I would not do mistakes and I know what to talk about.” While with American females, she was more alert and less forthcoming in sharing her thoughts. As she stated, “You have to be careful of what you are saying in front of them. You cannot be open and talk about everything with them. There are limits.” As a result, having Saudi female friends reduced the possibility of forming more friendships with American females. As another participant noted, “If there was no Saudi friends, I think things would be changed. I would be alone and I had to have friends.” She continued, “I had enough friends and there is no need for more relationships” with American females.

Due to the Saudi traditions and customs, the interactions between males and females are restricted and regulated. Male Saudi students already have clear understanding of these restrictions. Therefore, if one male Saudi student needed help from a Saudi female pertaining to their studies, he would ask the mahram’s permission to contact the female Saudi student. Usually in such cases, the mahram would be the mediator. One female Saudi participant described how a Saudi male student would reach her pertaining to their studies, “They do not communicate with me directly; they have to communicate with my husband first. Then my husband would deliver the message to me.” In this way, any misunderstanding that might occur was avoided. Therefore, most of the female participants described having even more “space”

and “boundaries” with Saudi male students than with American male students. As one participant pointed out regarding Saudi male students, “We usually try to avoid them. We might talk with them about our studies if we were in a group, other than that no!” One female Saudi participant explained the Saudi male students understood them and their customs, “He [Saudi student] already knew me and expected I would not talk to him. He knew I would be shy.”

Female Saudi students might answer a few questions asked by male American students (e.g., about their origin). However, when Saudi males asked them similar questions, Saudi females felt uncomfortable answering and tried to give short answers. Some of them explained this kind of reaction was to avoid any bad consequences might occur when interacting with Saudi males. As one Saudi female participant explained,

May be his [the Saudi male] intention is bad. If I answered him, he would wonder, “why she is talking to me and the other girls do not!” “What does she have to share with me?” Then he would go to my husband and tell him “your wife told me this and that!” Even if I did not say something wrong. Also, my husband would not be happy if I talked with male Saudi.

Because American males are outsiders to the Saudi community, female Saudi students felt more comfortable sharing information about their academic performance with them (e.g., their grades), whereas they would be reluctant to share the same information with Saudi male students. One female participant noted when a Saudi male student asked her, “How did you do in the exam?” He might tell the other Saudi male students about my grades... this is not good. Women have their own privacy in the community.” Female Saudi students perceived American students as

being rather naïve and innocent and Saudi students to be more threatening. Female Saudi students also interacted with other international students on campus.

Interactions with other international students. Female participants got ample chances to interact with other international students on campus, mostly pertaining to their studies. Saudi and international students have some commonalities such as living and studying abroad. Therefore, most female participants tended to have good relationships with them. One female Saudi participant explained, “What gathers us is foreignness.” Another female Saudi participant concurred, “We are in the same boat. We came here to study and we need someone to help us so we feel with each other.” These female Saudi students felt solidarity with their peers from other countries. Therefore, most female participants preferred dealing with and seeking the help of international students rather than American students. As one participant reported, “It is easier and closer to the heart to ask international rather than American student.” Some Saudi female participants were used to studying, exchanging lecture notes, and doing assignments with their international students colleagues.

However, most of these female participants did not interact with their international colleagues outside the campus. One of them attributed this to being busy most of the time with her studies and kids. Thus, she did not have time to make friends with international colleagues beyond the campus. Another participant felt the international students had their own groups and it would not be easy to fit in. “I do not think they would accept to have other people in their group. Also, I have not tried to be a member of their group,” she commented. Even though their interactions and friendship with international students were limited, Saudi female participants perceived it to be easier to form friendships with them than with American female students.

Exploring the nature of female Saudi students' interactions was critical to understanding their experiences. Moreover, exploring their perceptions about studying and living in Edge Park helped me learn more about their experiences studying at a U.S university.

Living in Edge Park

The majority of female participants compared Edge Park to other cities in the United States and in Saudi Arabia, which led to misconceptions and mixed opinions. Some female students expected Edge Park to be similar to other big cities in the U.S., which they were used to seeing in American movies. As one described, "I expected Edge Park to be as New York, Florida, California. I mean there will be traffic, wide streets, and Disney." Some participants expected to see Edge Park as a green area like another city in the U.S., and unlike the cities in Saudi Arabia, as one participant commented, "When we came to Edge Park, it was a shock because it was not like Ohio...I felt it is like one of the cities in KSA." Other participants considered Edge Park a beautiful city until they got the chance to explore other cities in U.S. One participant agreed, "I used to think Edge Park is a beautiful city, but when I went to Kansas City, I said Edge Park is not beautiful!"

Nonetheless, a majority of the female participants were satisfied with living in Edge Park for different reasons. One reason was Edge Park is a quiet city and convenient for students. Even though some female participants perceived Edge Park to be boring for not having entertainment, it offered them a quiet and conducive atmosphere for studying. As one participant explained, "This is a study city. It is better; I mean it is excellent for students. If you want to entertain yourself, travel to other cities." Another concurred with the same idea, "There is nothing that would distract you from studying here. Also, one would be more stimulated to

travel and see new things.” Another reason was Edge Park is a cheap city to live in compared to other U.S. cities. All Saudi students who have the scholarship from KASP take the same amount of salary wherever they live in the United States. According to female participants, this amount of money was plentiful for living in Edge Park unlike other cities. One participant compared the living expenses required for living here and in other U.S. cities, “In other states, the salary would not be enough. But, here, thanks to Allah, it is enough and more. I mean, I pay for residence, food, and entertainment.” Some female participants shared the expenses with other family members who were living with them in the same house. “I was living with my sister and my brother in the same apartment. So, we used to divide the bills between the three of us. This helped me financially,” one participant clarified. Finally, there was no discrimination noticed against Muslim female participants. One participant expected to face discrimination while living in Edge Park, but “I did not expect people here would treat me normally. This made me so comfortable in living here,” she pointed out.

Besides all of the above reasons that made Saudi female participants satisfied with living in Edge Park, other things facilitated their being comfortable in a new city far away from home. First, having a previous experience living in the United States was advantageous, as one explained, “I know everything. Life would be difficult for newcomers, but for me I have already had experience and English language fluency.” Second, seeing Arab people living in Edge Park gave participants “comfort,” as one shared. Third, living with one of the family members (i.e., husband, or sister) gave them a sense of safety. Finally, having a driver’s license facilitated their traveling in the city.

Some participants attributed their successful experiences to living in Edge Park. One female Saudi participant shared that her greatest success living in Edge Park was her children. Her daughter was shy and unsociable while living in KSA, but with the help of the teachers at her school in the U.S., she has transformed into a confident and outgoing child. She compared her experience in KSA with her experience in the U.S.,

In KSA, children having the same characteristics as my daughter's would be isolated. While here, they would be focused on. They may not pay that much attention to good students, as with my other daughter. They never called me concerning my second daughter. But with my first daughter, they would always call me to have meetings concerning her. Also, they would teach me things I never paid attention to. For instance, before she gets out of the car, I have to encourage her to greet [her teachers] and to raise her hand and voice.... Finally, she started interacting and giving high-fives. She has been changed!

Therefore, the female Saudi participant was thankful for having such help for her children, help she would never expect to receive in Saudi Arabia.

Other female participants shared their most difficult experiences while living in Edge Park. Saudi female students were used to having family support in Saudi Arabia during pregnancy and delivering a baby. Because of the absence of that habitual support in the United States, some female participants expressed worry. For example, one female participant was expecting a baby at the beginning of the new semester, which made her anxious about many things after the delivery, as she illustrated,

I was expecting my mom to come when I deliver my baby but now this possibility decreased to 20-30%. Even if I have a sister here, she would be busy with her studies and this is my first baby. These bleak possibilities made me think a lot, and I became tired of such thinking.

Another female expressed the same sentiments of anxiety. To her, having a baby would add psychological pressure, “In the U.S. life is different. If a female has a baby, she will have a new commitment and will be under more pressure,” she commented.

Studying at MMU

Female participants varied in their expectations before coming to study at MMU. Most female participants expected studying at MMU would be difficult. Therefore, their perceptions and experiences were explored concerning: (a) their MMU teachers, (b) their English language proficiency, (c) the American teaching style, and (d) being culturally involved on campus.

American and international teachers. Most of the female participants were satisfied with the way their American teachers and advisors treated them. One female Saudi participant was pleased with the feedback she got from her advisor, which was encouraging, as she shared,

They [American teacher and advisor] see me as ambitious. They do not care if you are an international student or not. On the contrary, they praised my English language and me. They admired my education and my questions. ... My advisor told me the first time I met him to do my study plan and schedule, “Your English language is very good and the way you speak showed you are an ambitious student.”

This kind of feedback stimulated Saudi female students to overcome any difficulties they might face.

Some female participants expected American teachers to behave prejudiced when they saw them wearing a hijab. One female participant thought, “They would be unfair to me, would not talk to me, and would be afraid of me.” Nevertheless, to her, this expectation turned out to be false. Teachers were nice and fair to her. As she stated, “If I asked, they would reply with respect.... They treated me like others and even better.” Another participant echoed the same opinion that American teachers treated Saudi female students with respect, “The teacher would only present his lecture then leave. If I needed him, I would go to his office during the office hours. I would ask him and he replied with patience,” she explained.

Concerning international teachers at MMU, some female participants felt underestimated by them. Some international professors were not convinced of the Saudi female students’ skills and knowledge. For instance, one female participant faced bias in convincing an international professor to be her advisor. She shared with me the following incident,

He told me “you do not have knowledge, what we do is difficult for you and you cannot do it.” I replied, “Just try me then decide.” Then he gave me an assignment to do. I told him I am going to submit it next week. He said, “This will take a month or two to be understood and you want to submit it after a week!”

When she turned in the assignment, as she went on to say, the professor was “astonished!” Thus, he was convinced of her potential and agreed to be her advisor. In addition, some international professors preferred to have students from their own cultural background on their research team and did not include other international students. As one participant explained, “What I heard and saw was that most professors here are Chinese and they would bring their own students and take them in their research studies.” Therefore, when she showed willingness to join them in doing a

research project, she felt the Chinese professors rejected her. “They would complicate things for you. This is what I did not like,” she commented.

Overall, female participants perceived their advisors and professors to be a good source of support in their academic endeavors. Most of the female participants sought their advice concerning the selected classes. They also believed such advice would assist them in selecting classes that “would help in raising my GPA and not to be difficult,” one female participant commented.

English language difficulties. Female participants who expected studying at MMU to be difficult attributed the reason to their English language deficiency. Saudi female participants faced difficulty in understanding the study materials and “studying for the finals, I did not know what to study,” one participant expressed. Another said, “When I open the book, I do not understand what it is asking me. I read it but I do not know what is important.” Thus, they were more apprehensive of taking more classes the next semester.

Even though they acknowledged their English difficulties, some Saudi female participants tried their best to be involved in the class activities such as presentations. For example, one female Saudi participant showed her willingness to be involved even though her American colleagues tended to avoid having her in their group. One female participant shared,

I do not like to be a burden for the group. I like to share with them everything, even though I noticed they do not prefer having me in their group. Most of the time, they are afraid that I would do mistake while presenting. If the decision were theirs, they would not allow me presenting. But the teacher required each one of us to have a part in the presentation.

To some female participants, overcoming the English language difficulties was the most successful experience they had at MMU. Taking difficult classes such as chemistry, physics, and mathematics, one participant expressed her initial fear, “At the beginning, I was afraid because it would be difficult. I mean because of the language. I need to understand.” Yet, each of her first three semesters ended with being rewarded from her department and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) to the U.S. As she shared, “I had three achievement certificates from the dean’s list. This is success for me to have this. Also, the SACM had the same thing.... they gave rewards for the outstanding students.” In spite of these successes, Saudi female participants referred to the inadequacy of the IELC to prepare them for the English proficiency needed for college level courses.

IELC. Most female participants agreed that studying the English language at the IELC does not prepare students for their academic studies at MMU. For example, academic and scientific terminologies were not taught at IELC. As one explained, “They teach basics such as conversation and writing. When I enrolled in the university ... I needed to know scientific terminologies...which I did not study at IELC.” Also, some participants attributed the reason they were having English difficulties in their academic studies to the simple English language they were used to while studying in the IELC. For example, one participant noted IELC teachers would “talk to us like kids.” When taking courses at the university, she noticed the “language and the speed of the language were different.” Therefore, they felt they knew nothing in English when they started their classes.

Yet, some female participants considered passing the IELC requirements to be their most successful experiences they had. Females were proud of themselves because they proved

themselves in front of their Saudi male colleagues who might underestimate their abilities. One participant described,

My husband did not graduate from the IELC quickly. Male Saudi students faced difficulties at IELC, while females passed it quickly. Most of the female Saudi students who were with me had passed the courses and graduated from the IELC. They did not face difficulties. My grades were good even though I did not study very hard. We have the potential.

Nonetheless, these female Saudi students agreed that attending IELC was not enough for learning the English language. “If you graduated, you would not be an English native speaker,” one female participant clarified. Therefore, Saudi female students were encouraged to depend on themselves and find other means to enhance their English language.

Ways to improve English language. Besides interacting with American students, female participants suggested watching movies, listening to the radio, and reading newspapers as ways to enhance their English language skills. To female participants, watching movies not only built up their English vocabulary, but also improved their listening skill. Strengthening listening skills would help newcomers understand their teachers because “teachers here speak with different accents. Some teachers would speak fast, while others would speak slowly,” one female participant explained.

Saudi female participants advised female Saudi newcomers to “break the shyness barrier,” and practice speaking English whenever they got the chance. For example, one female participant had difficulty convincing a relative to speak English when they were at a restaurant. As she expressed, “There was no need, every time she went out to ask someone else to help

her.... I told her, ‘You speak and order food for yourself.’” Her relative refused to speak English because she was afraid of making mistakes and believed people would laugh at her. Another female participant, who used to be shy, echoed the same thought and shared, “Try to speak with American students and find topics to talk about with them. Ask at least a question. This would help you pick out the language.” Increasing their English proficiency was one part of what these female Saudi students needed to learn. Another was adjusting to the style of teaching in U.S. universities.

American teaching style. In Saudi Arabia, the emphasis was more on memorizing and recalling information than in the U.S. Therefore, some female Saudi students perceived the American teaching style to be difficult compared to the Saudi teaching style. In Saudi Arabia, teachers tended to simplify the study materials for the students. “They would give us summaries. I knew that all of it would be required, so I would memorize and focus on it,” one participant explained. Whereas in the U.S., as the participant went on to state, “We have the book.... In the lecture, the teacher would read only her presentation. When we have an exam, most questions did not come from [the lecture], they come from the book.” Female students in Saudi Arabia did not expend as much effort studying as they do here, where they were expected to do more on their own. “It is enough for me to attend classes, do the assignments, and do the daily revisions,” one participant illustrated. The participant went on to describe the American teaching style, “They [teachers] would only explain what is written in the slides. They do not explain what is in the book.” Saudi female participants praised how teachers in Saudi Arabia did their best to explain everything written in the book for the students. This helped them retrieve information

during the exam, “If I stopped at a question, I would recall what the teacher said in the lecture, but here ... teachers said nothing” to be recalled, one participant compared.

When asked about what facilitated their studying at MMU, female participants identified several ways. First, having previous experience studying in the U.S. helped some female participants understand the teaching style here. Also, having previous experience studying in Saudi higher education institutions helped them learn useful English terminologies. “I studied Medicine at a Saudi university for two years, so I have a good background in the English terminologies. Therefore, I did not face that much difficulties [in language] while studying here,” one female participant explained. Second, navigating the Internet helped them find useful websites for their studies (e.g., Quizlet). “When the teacher gave us the presentation, I would copy and paste on google then search. Then I would find out from where she got the materials.... I would find more illustrations as well as helpful notes,” one female participant shared. Finally, some participants sought help from the centers at MMU such as the writing center and Math lab. For instance, one participant attributed the reason for having good grades in writing while studying at the IELC to her frequent visits to the writing center. As she explained, “I used to have a lot of weekly writing homework ... The teacher wrote me a note to visit the writing center.... I started visiting it regularly then all my grades got raised.”

Suggestions for instructors. These female Saudi students’ suggestions for instructors were to exhibit patience, increase the use of teaching aids and written materials to support the lecture, and implement fair grading practices. Some female participants requested more tolerance and sympathy from their teachers especially in the first few semesters. Saudi female participants needed help until they became familiar with the new teaching style and figured out

how to overcome such difficulties. Teachers were also requested to “use more teaching aids ...and provide supportive websites to help them understand the materials,” one female participant suggested. Another female participant asked to be provided with written lectures such as Power Point presentations because “we might miss something because some of us have no one to ask in the class,” she described. Distributing the total grade of the class to include projects, quizzes, and assignments would give students a chance to get good grades. “Instead of giving the grade only on the exams or the project, they need to distribute it on the assignments, and short quizzes,” one female participant suggested.

Being culturally involved on campus. According to most female participants, MMU is doing its best to encourage their interactions on campus through periodic cultural activities (e.g., food festival). At the food festival, students from different cultural backgrounds meet. “You feel it gathered people. It did not have specific subjects related to some people rather than others.... Every semester I attended it. Also, all the [Saudi] girls and boys participated in it,” one female participant described. Even though there were other activities being implemented on the campus throughout the year, some female participants had some concerns, which prevented them from attending a few activities. Some activities went against Saudi cultural norms and religious beliefs such as talk about homosexuality. One female participant noted, “We as Muslims are not encouraged to attend such activities.... We consider most of their activities to be deviant.” Other activities might include serving alcohol, which was another reason female participants were hesitant to attend. As one female participant illustrated, “My friends and I were planning to attend but when we heard that [serving alcohol] we changed our minds.” She went on to suggest how MMU could compromise this issue, “They might allocate a specific time for drinking. I

mean, when we leave they could drink. If I went, I would see drunken people.” Getting familiar with the American customs facilitated the female participants living in the U.S.

In conclusion, female Saudi students had distinctive experiences from their male Saudi counterparts. The culture they were raised and lived in was different from the one they were exposed to while studying and living in the U.S. Female participants shared many more positive aspects of their experiences than negative ones. To have a more comprehensive overview on the experiences of Saudi students, male Saudi participants’ experiences of studying and living in the U.S. were also explored.

Experiences of Male Saudi Students

In this section, I discuss the findings related to the experiences of 14 Saudi male participants (i.e., undergraduate and graduate) attending a U.S. university. Findings focused on their perceptions pertaining to: (a) decisions made to study abroad, (b) personal changes due to studying and living in the U.S., (c) interactions with the American, international, and Saudi students, (d) living in Edge Park, (e) studying at MMU, and (f) attending the IELC at MMU.

Decision to Study Abroad and Choosing the U.S.

The reasons male participants chose the United States over studying in their home country are discussed in this section. Some reasons are related to their home country, while other reasons were related to the United States. Additionally, male participants shared their motivations for choosing MMU among other U.S. universities.

Studying outside Saudi Arabia. Male participants chose to study abroad for a variety of reasons. First, most male participants chose to study abroad because of KASP. The King Abdullah Scholarship Program offered them full scholarships to study abroad so they did not

have to worry about any financial issues. This scholarship motivated them to study abroad. One graduate male participant explained, “The scholarship motivated me to study abroad, even though my work granted me a leave without salary.” The student’s employer granted him a leave of absence without salary, but the scholarship would cover all his expenses while studying and living abroad.

The second reason some male participants were encouraged to study outside their home country was their low Grade Point Average (GPA) at both the high school and undergraduate level. Studying abroad also gave them more options to choose their majors, because in Saudi Arabia majors were decided according to a specific GPA in high school and not according to the students’ preferences. Consequently, male participants decided to pursue their undergraduate studies abroad because “you can study whatever you want without worrying about your GPA,” one undergraduate male participant commented. Some male participants also chose to continue their graduate studies abroad because their GPA and “academic achievement as an undergraduate was low, so my acceptance in the graduate program was not possible,” one graduate male participant expressed.

Finally, some male participants referred to the difficulty of getting into the limited number of good and reputable universities in Saudi Arabia. Thus, they decided to get the degree from outside Saudi Arabia. One undergraduate male participant described when he applied to King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, he was denied two times, “I applied and they did not accept me. When I did readmission, they interviewed me and I was rejected for the second time!” Another male graduate participant recalled how difficult it was for him to gain admission as an undergraduate in another reputable university in Saudi Arabia, “Unfortunately,

in the first semester in that college they accepted only 20 students from hundreds. I had no luck to be one of them.” One male participant expressed that his preferred major, aerospace engineering, was offered by a limited number of universities in Saudi Arabia. Because of troubles encountered with enrolling in these universities, he decided to study his preferred major abroad. He shared,

In KSA, only two universities offered aerospace engineering. I applied to the first university and I was accepted, but because of some issues, I was not able to continue my studies there. Then, I applied to the second university and I was denied. I stayed in KSA for two years after high school without studying. Because I like this major, I did not give up.... I decided to study this major in the U.S. If you have money, you can study whatever you want in the U.S.

Therefore, pursuing higher education in the United States was a choice most of the male participants thought of as an attractive alternative to studying in Saudi Arabia.

Choosing the United States. Two main reasons encouraged male participants to pursue their higher education in the United States among other developed countries. The first reason was having a family member who had studied or was studying in the United States. The other primary reason was the policies and directives of KASP.

Familial ties. Several male participants decided to study in the United States because one of their family members had studied or was currently studying in the United States. Some of their family members who had positive experiences studying in the U.S. encouraged the male participants to come to the U.S. to obtain higher education. One undergraduate male participant decided to come to the U.S. based on the positive feedback given by two of his cousins who

studied in the United States. He explained, “I asked them how studying in the U.S. would be in general as well as about the requirements. They told me it was easy!” Another graduate male participant shared, “My father studied his undergraduate and graduate studies in the U.S. So he used to tell me when I was a kid, ‘When you grow up, you will study in the U.S.’” Some male participants chose studying in the U.S. because one of their family members is currently studying in the United States (i.e., brother, sister, or cousin). One undergraduate male participant was encouraged to live with his sister’s family, who had already been living in the U.S., rather than any other family members there. “She was closer to me than my cousins. Because I graduated from high school, my father was worried about me,” he explained. Thus, to be protected, his father advised him to live with his sister.

KASP. The policies and directives of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program were the dominant force in coming to the United States. Scholarships through KASP were given in two ways. First, students given a scholarship before leaving Saudi Arabia had to have a specific GPA in high school and pass certain measurement exams. Second, students who did not meet the compulsory requirements or wanted to continue their graduate studies abroad had to be self-funded for at least four months. Then they could apply to KASP. Although there are no clear criteria to meet for such option, some male participants explained providing their final grades in the classes they took in that period to KASP was proof of their seriousness in their studies. “They were convinced when I showed them that I completed my first semester and I was serious in my graduate studies,” one graduate male participant shared.

Due to such flexibility, many male participants were encouraged to join KASP rather than to be on their own. In addition to financial assistance, KASP provided advising and

guidance to Saudi students. As one graduate male participant noted, “I would be under the supervision of experts, so I would know where I am going. If I went by myself, I would not know where to go.” Male participants trusted KASP directions when selecting specific universities to study abroad and felt more secure than choosing by themselves. As the male participant went on to state, “What would guarantee me that after spending four years studying at a university then they would tell me ‘We were sorry... your diploma has not been acknowledged from that university.’ What should I do then?” KASP advisors ensured Saudi students attended a reputable and acceptable university.

Moreover, most of the male participants indicated that KASP played a significant role in guiding them to study precisely in the United States over other countries. “Procedures were facilitated for studying in the U.S.,” one undergraduate male participant indicated. One graduate male participant was offered an immediate scholarship if he chose the United States among other countries and he did. Another undergraduate male participant was advised by KASP, he stated, “The fastest way to be accepted in KASP is to choose the United States.” KASP directed Saudi students to pursue higher education in the U.S. because of the King Abdullah’s 2005 agreement with the United States.

Furthermore, due to the overcrowding of Saudi students in universities in specific countries (e.g., the United Kingdom), the Saudi Higher Education Ministry decided to send its students to the United States instead. “They easily gave scholarships to the U.S. because it has many universities. Whereas in other countries, universities were few and full of Saudi students so scholarships were not easily granted,” one graduate male participant explained. KASP aimed through sending Saudi students to countries that were not overcrowded with Saudi students to

afford them a new cultural experience besides a good education. Through its orientations presented to the Saudi students before leaving Saudi Arabia, KASP made that clear. “If there were many Saudi students in the same university, students would be confined and tied to their Saudi group,” one graduate male participant reported. According to male participants, KASP through SACM always encouraged Saudi students to be involved in volunteer work within the American community. Another graduate male participant agreed, “They wanted us to experience the American culture, not only to hear about it, and then to transfer it to our Saudi community.”

Choosing MMU. Male participants chose studying at MMU among other U.S. universities for different reasons. First, most of the male participants decided to come to MMU because of positive feedback given by a relative, a friend, or a Saudi student who studied or is currently studying there. They were the “link that facilitated a lot of things concerning admission,” one undergraduate participant commented. They provided male participants with important details about Edge Park’s atmosphere. “It is an academic environment, there are no entertainment places. Also, he enlightened me about the residence and all the details that anyone might need when traveling,” one undergraduate male participant shared. Second, some male participants chose MMU because of the “ease in admission to the graduate studies. They did not ask for GRE, GMAT, or any other difficult exams,” one graduate male participant commented.

Additionally, male participants were motivated to select MMU among other U.S. universities because of the good reputation of its programs. Some male participants enrolled in business administration at MMU because “through Internet search and its rank as a university... MMU is good in business administration,” one undergraduate male participant pointed out.

Finally, admission to MMU was facilitated by KASP because it was not overcrowded with Saudi students. Studying at MMU was a life-changing experience for many male participants.

Personal Changes Due to Studying and Living in the U.S.

Being exposed to the U.S. life style, male participants felt changes occurred in their attitudes, behaviors, and personalities. Male participants indicated being more responsible, organized, systematic, open- minded people than ever before.

Becoming more responsible. Because of their studying abroad experience, the male participants noticed they became more responsible. They took care of everything related to their studies and daily life on their own. In Saudi Arabia, Saudi students, especially the single ones, depended on their parents financially. Thus, because of living in the U.S., some male participants assumed responsibility for managing their own budget. They learned how to spend only the monthly salary they received from KASP without asking for extra money from their parents. One undergraduate male participant stated, “Sometimes, when I needed to borrow money, I tried to manage without asking anyone....I felt responsible.” Some male participants speculated about the bad consequences for acting irresponsibly. For example, “If I did not pay the rent, I would be thrown in the street. No playing games with such things,” one undergraduate male participant said. Some male participants learned responsibility from the Americans students’ lifestyles. One undergraduate male participant explained, “American students might have two jobs and still would go to school.... I rarely saw American students whose parents supported them financially.” Some male participants advised the Saudi newcomers not to depend on others to help them in registration and be responsible for their classes. For example, one undergraduate male participant shared the consequences for failing to register for classes on

his own, “I did not know how to register online...so I used to wait for someone else to register me for classes. I waited until the deadline passed!”

Becoming more organized and disciplined. Some male participants changed their lifestyles while living in the United States and learned to be more organized. For example, because both he and his wife were busy with their studies, one graduate male participant set up a daily plan to follow at home. As he illustrated, “There is a system. ‘What will we eat today?’ ‘Who will be responsible for washing the clothes today?’ ‘Who is responsible for cleaning today?’” He also learned to have a program for his day. As he went on to describe, “‘What is the plan for tomorrow?’ is the most important question I ask myself. ...I had to wake up at that time. I had to finish my work at that time. ... when I got home I had to cook.”

Following the traffic rules and regulations was an example of the discipline male participants acquired while living in the U.S. Because traffic laws in KSA were seldom enforced, male participants rarely felt worried when committing any traffic violations. One graduate male participant explained, “Because you were in your country; you did not have to follow the rules. If you did not follow the rules and you had a problem, you would be able to control that issue.” It was customary in KSA to ignore traffic laws whereas in the US, the rules are enforced. Another graduate male participant described how he learned the importance of adherence to traffic rules (e.g., speed limit and stop signs) while living in the U.S. “The law here is stronger and obligatory. I tried to do the same in KSA but there was no pressure on us,” he stated.

As a result, male participants acknowledged the consequences for any traffic violations they might commit while living in the U.S. One graduate male participant explained, “You should not play with the system. I mean when you drove a car without having insurance, you

might be taken to the court and your license might be suspended!” Some male participants learned the lesson in the hard way. “When I was an undergraduate, I used to drive the car carelessly and did not pay attention to the rules in the U.S. Thus, my driving license was suspended three times for a whole year... I begged people for a drive!” one graduate male participant reported. Another graduate male participant shared his story about when he violated the speed limit rules and did not pay the warrant on the due day; he was held in jail for one day and his driving license was suspended for four months. To him, that was his worst experience while living in the United States.

Behavioral changes. Male participants noticed that due to their living in the United States, they acquired new personality characteristics. For example, one male participant learned to be more patient, as he stated, “Foreignness taught me patience. I used to be inconsiderate, but with time I made mistakes and I saw the consequences.” Other male participants admitted that they used to be unsociable and preferred to be alone most of the time. Yet, living in the U.S. changed them to be more open and sociable. For example, one undergraduate male participant expressed, “What helped me to change my personality was that I needed to go out and ask. I made many mistakes.... I never presented a speech in front of people in Arabic. Now with progress, I present a speech in English!” Some male participants enjoyed the freedom of speech and expression while living in the United States. Additionally, male participants pointed out that because of living in a quiet city like Edge Park, they became more calm and focused than ever before.

Becoming open-minded. Living in the United States offered the male participants ample chances to interact with people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Some

male participants indicated that while living in Saudi Arabia they used to hold negative perspectives about people from religions other than Islam. For that reason, interactions with them were avoided. Yet, living in the United States led male participants to become more open-minded. Some male participants believed in having harmonious and friendly relationships with people from other religions. “You feel that even though he does not share with you the same religion, this does not mean that he is not a good person,” one graduate male participant expressed.

Being exposed to American and other cultures, male participants learned how to look at the same issue from different angles. For example, some male participants used to judge people from other cultural and religious backgrounds negatively, because “Saudis were controlled by one source of media,” one undergraduate male participant indicated. While now, as he went on to state, “I looked from my point of view and from the other’s point of view so I could make my own judgment.” Male participants advised the newcomers to be open-minded. “Interact with everyone regardless of his nationality. There are good and bad people. Do not judge people based on their nationality or religion,” one graduate male participant stated. Being more open-minded was a direct result of the interactions and relationships the participants developed.

Male Saudi Participants’ Interactions

Interacting with American, international, and co-national students was a vital constituent of the lived experiences of Saudi male participants. Detailed descriptions of each interaction are presented in this section.

Interactions with American students. A majority of male participants acknowledged their interactions with American students on campus were limited. Study groups were the only

chance they had to interact with American students. “I do not know if the problem was from me. I mean there was no interaction between us unless we were in a group study,” one undergraduate male participant commented. For some male participants, there were few numbers of American students studying in the same majors (e.g., engineering). Thus, interactions with Americans on campus were rare.

Most male participants pointed out that they rarely interacted with the American students outside campus. Male participants perceived American students to be friendly and nice, but as one undergraduate male participant reported, “Do not expect them to be your friends!” Even though some male participants tried and showed interest in interacting with American students outside the campus, “I did not receive their acceptance,” one undergraduate male participant commented. Another graduate male participant agreed, “It was hard to fit in.”

Americans avoided interactions with Saudi students. According to male participants, Americans did not show the willingness to interact with them for various reasons. Male participants believed Americans have negative stereotypes about Saudi students (i.e., Saudi people are perceived to be terrorists). Male participants attributed the reason for this misconception to the biased media representations in the United States. “Media distorted the picture of Saudi people... and made Americans turn away from us,” one undergraduate male participant explained. Another undergraduate male participant concurred, “Media showed Islam as a bad religion, which is not true.” Some male participants did not blame Americans for holding such negative perspectives about them. Media was held responsible for forming such a distorted and inaccurate image about Saudi people. One graduate male participant expressed his frustration, “Whatever Saudi students said in the morning to change these misconceptions, the

evening media dispelled. You do not know what to do or say!” Another male undergraduate participant added, “Media showed the bad side of the story and concealed the good side.”

Therefore, male participants recommended to do volunteer work in the American community to help correct any misconceptions about Saudi culture and people. The benefit of volunteering was to “represent Saudi Arabia in a good way. Each Saudi student does not represent himself. He represented Saudi Arabia as a whole country.... Thus, Americans would correct their negative perceptions about Saudi Arabia, that is, terrorism,” one undergraduate male participant clarified.

According to male participants, American students’ lifestyles were different from theirs. Therefore, no social harmonies existed between them. “When Saudis invited Americans to his house to have fun, he would not understand it. We [Saudi people] would sit and drink tea. American people might be unfamiliar with these traditions,” one graduate male participant shared. Saudi students might spend many hours doing social activities such as playing cards and smoking hookah. Thus, “Americans would be uninterested and bored. It would be hard to convince them of doing this,” one undergraduate male participant indicated.

Moreover, most of the American students lived with or near their families in Edge Park. Therefore, their social lives involved their own families and they would be “uninterested to do social activities with international students,” one graduate male participant clarified.

Benefits gained when interacting with Americans. Even though their interactions with American students were limited, some Saudi students looked forward to having more interactions with them. Some male participants admired the American students’ natures and personalities. One undergraduate male participant pointed out, “I respect them and see in them

features that we should apply on ourselves. They have good characteristics!” Another graduate male participant echoed the same opinion of the need to interact more with Americans; he stated, “We came here to learn from them. I am open-minded.” Some male participants acknowledged the necessity of getting familiar with American customs and culture to increase their interactions with Americans. One graduate male participant noted, “Americans preferred to have enough space between you and them while having a conversation. If the Saudi student was too close, the American student would misunderstand him.” Thus, because of their unfamiliarity with American accepted behaviors, Saudi students believed they would be criticized and avoided.

Most male participants acknowledged the advantages they might attain from interacting with American students, which enhanced their English language skills and improved their academic achievements. Thus, some male students preferred to be in study groups with American students rather than with Saudi students. One undergraduate male participant explained, “If we all spoke Arabic, this would negatively affect our studies. When you are focused in Arabic, you would notice a big difference and you might not understand most of the questions.”

Therefore, newcomers were recommended to interact with American students during and after completing the required levels at the IELC. During continuous interactions with American students, the male Saudi student would make an effort to “not take that much of time thinking of what to reply,” one undergraduate male participant pointed out. Some male participants advised the newcomers not to depend only on the IELC to learn English. One undergraduate male participant described, “We had a wrong idea that the IELC could teach you everything. Some might think that IELC is a magic stick that could make you speak English overnight!”

Living in the dorm or with an American family were viewed as good opportunities to increase their interactions with Americans and enhance the English language capabilities. One undergraduate male participant described living with the family of his American friend helped him enhance his English communication skills. “The family consisted of a mother, a father, a grandmother, a grandfather, a brother, and a sister. I lived with them the whole month of the Christmas vacation This gave me a big leap in improving my English language,” he expressed. To him, that was his most successful experience he had while living in Edge Park.

Another advantage attained from interacting with American students was to clear any misconceptions about Saudi people. Some male participants indicated that American students perceived them as “stupid,” one undergraduate male participant indicated. Therefore, while interacting with American students in the study groups, some male participants tried to deliver the message that “we do not need your help. I have the knowledge. I only wanted to share with you my knowledge.... I might have information that you might be unfamiliar with!” one undergraduate male participant explained.

Saudis’ reactions to Americans’ attitudes. However, even though some male participants expressed their willingness to interact with American students, other Saudis did not. Some of the Americans’ customs such as drinking alcohol go against Islamic rules and Saudi cultural rituals. Thus, some male participants showed hesitance and reluctance to join Americans in places serving alcohol. “If alcohol was served, I would feel uncomfortable sitting in that place,” one graduate male participant expressed.

Because of experiencing discrimination at a previous U.S. university, some graduate male participants felt interactions with American students should be avoided at MMU, too. For

example, at the previous university, while some Saudi students were distributing flowers and chocolate for a religious campaign that aimed to educate Americans about the merciful mission of the prophet Mohammad and the tolerant nature of the Islamic religion, American students yelled, “You are terrorists. We do not like you. Get out of here,” one graduate male participant described. Because of this incident, the graduate male participant was hesitant to interact with American students at MMU.

Some male participants noticed American students at MMU avoided asking them questions pertaining to class materials. Therefore, male participants’ reactions were the same, that is, to avoid any discussions with Americans in return. To illustrate, one graduate male participant expressed his stance of not interacting or discussing with American students because an American student did not ask him questions. The graduate male participant illustrated how the American student “was sure that I knew the answer because I used to participate in the class and I understood. Yet, he chose to ask another American student who sat 10 meters away and not to ask me!” Another graduate male participant felt the same, that Americans avoided interacting with him in the study group so he reacted accordingly, “I was not interested to interact with them, too!” he said. Saudi participants believed American students did not welcome having them in their PowerPoint group presentation because the Saudi’s English deficiency might negatively affect the score of the whole group, which led to unkind behavior. “Some American students’ behaviors were impolite. They ignored you and tried to avoid having you in their group. They had a concern about our English language proficiency,” one graduate male participant indicated. Therefore, male participants selected presenting slides needing less talk and requiring more mathematics to relieve the anxiety of their American colleagues.

Even though several male participants complained about these American students' attitudes, they still perceived them to be "rational," and "flexible," as some male participants described, more so than the ordinary people living in the city. According to some male participants, American students understand the university rules to not offend other students or criticize their religion or skin color. American students would never act or go beyond the "boundaries. In the class, we all aim to gain knowledge," one undergraduate male participant noted. Several male participants shared their unpleasant experience while interacting with American people in Edge Park.

Interactions with the Americans in Edge Park. Most male participants perceived American people in Edge Park to be unfriendly. One undergraduate male participant compared people in Edge Park with Americans in another city in the state, "People there were so friendly and I had many American friends. Here, I feel their gazes to me, as an Arabic person, expressed disgust!" he noted. One American made an insulting comment about Saudi people while having a political conversation with an undergraduate male participant, who told him, "You are from a rich country whose people are stupid."

Several participants believed that some older American people were affected by the media judgment and made false generalizations about Saudi students and people. For example, one undergraduate male participant had a discussion about the September 11 attack with the grandmother of the American family he lived with for a while. "She told me, 'It was so clear that Osama Bin Laden went out dancing happy of what happened to us that day!' She thought that Osama Bin Laden represented us as Saudis, which is totally wrong!" he exclaimed. The male participant was annoyed and disappointed that the family's grandmother had that

misconception about Saudi people and he wished, “I had more chances to change these negative stereotyping,” he commented. Yet, male participants perceived their interactions with their international counterparts to be a different experience.

Interactions with international students. Most male participants indicated their interactions with international students were easier and smoother than with American students. Even though they were from different countries, some male participants attributed the reason to having a few commonalities between them. “They are studying abroad and so am I,” one undergraduate male participant commented. Another graduate male participant added, “They feel the same thing we do.” Thus, this increased their collaboration in the class pertaining to their studies, as the participant went on to say, “When someone feels with you, he becomes more cooperative with you.” For example, they would do the assignments together and make summaries of the exam materials. One undergraduate male participant pointed out that, because the engineering college has large numbers of Indian students, he had many Indian male and female friends. “I had to have a few projects and assignments with them. I like the Indian morals,” he commented.

Interacting with international students enhanced the Saudi’s English language proficiency. Practicing English with international students provided male participants with the courage and confidence to use their communication skills, even if they were imperfect. One undergraduate male participant pointed out,

If I wanted to say a word in front of Americans, it would take time for me to say it. I need to think of it in my head and make sure that it is correct before pronouncing it.

Whereas with international students, I feel it is fine to utter that word without thinking of it in my head.

Another graduate male participant echoed the same opinion of practicing English with international students such as Indian students. “Once I began practicing English, I started speaking with Indian students. International students were easier to understand and comprehend than the native speaker,” he pointed out. The Saudi and Indian students shared the experience of practicing their English in a setting where they did not feel judged for their mistakes.

Therefore, Saudi newcomers were advised to practice speaking English at the beginning of their transition with other international students rather than with American students.

According to some male participants, American students might show unwillingness to make an effort to understand Saudi students when the conversation was difficult, whereas international students adapted their communication patterns to understand them. “The Americans wanted to enjoy their time and have a fun conversation; not to give you a lecture” on how to speak and/or understand English, one graduate male participant illustrated. Additionally, Saudi newcomers were advised to live in a dorm, even if it was expensive, in order to have more interactions with international students and ample chances to practice English. “If days go back, I would live in a dorm because you would make many friends there. I had friends who lived there and their English has been really improved,” one undergraduate male participant reported.

Furthermore, a few male participants participated in some off campus activities with their international peers from different countries such as India, Turkey, and Iran. These were bowling, going to the movie theater, or cooking food together. “My best friend is from Iran. We used to visit other friends especially in religious ceremonies.... Because we share the same religion (i.e.,

Islam), we became much closer,” one graduate male participant expressed. Some Saudi students preferred to form friendships with international students rather than American students. Some Saudi participants perceived American students’ interest to be “silly” as one undergraduate participant described. For example, American students kept talking about “a rap singer called Justin Bieber who drove his car while being drunk and drugged,” he commented. In contrast, there are many common topics to share and talk about with the international students such as cultural heritage for each country. Although there were off campus activities with international students, several male participants expressed more comfort and preference of having off campus activities with their co-national friends and network.

Interactions with co-national peers. A few male participants described their relationships and interactions with their Saudi peers inside and outside the classroom to be fairly good. Inside the classroom, “We cooperated extremely well,” one graduate male participant commented. Their cooperation might include exchanging old course materials. As another graduate male participant explained, “When someone took the course before you, you might use the materials that he had such as old exams and questions as a source for you.” Outside the classroom, they considered their relationships to be a kind of social support. “If I were in trouble, my Saudi friend would be the first one who would stand by me,” one undergraduate participant pointed out. However, some male participants tended to limit their interactions with Saudi peers for two reasons. Several male participants felt that reducing interactions with their co-national peers and increasing interactions with international and American students would help them to improve their English language skills. Therefore, Saudi newcomers were advised in their initial transition to the U.S. to limit their relationships with Saudi people, especially while attending the

IELC. One graduate male participant pointed out that all Saudi newcomers had limited English proficiency, and interacting with Saudi people did not help them improve their English, as he continued to explain,

You would keep conversing in Arabic. Thus, your English learning progress would be slow. When avoiding interacting with Saudi you would be forced to deal and interact with international and American students. You would have courage to speak English. You would be more motivated to learn English.

Continuous interaction with co-national peers would hinder interactions with Americans and international students. Consequently, Saudis' English abilities would not be developed.

Another reason that male participants tried to narrow their interactions with co-national peers was to have enough time and ample chances to be more engaged in the American culture. "I wanted to have a new experience. I lived in KSA and dealt with Saudi people... Now, because I have tried the Americans, I felt more happy and comfortable with them," one undergraduate male participant indicated. Living a new and different experience was their aspiration. As one undergraduate male participant clarified,

This is a four year chance for Saudi students. You might not value it until you return home and you would have regret for wasting it. I mean if you went to the U.S. and interacted only with Saudi people then you would not see anything new. You would be the same as the student who lives in KSA...What is the benefit from coming here then? Leaving their comfort zone (i.e., Saudi people) and trying to get involved in the American culture was a decision made by some male participants to enrich their experiences living in the U.S. To illustrate, one undergraduate male participant noticed the differences between his own

experiences with those of a German student who lived in the U.S. for a short period. He stated, “When we spoke, her English was stronger than mine. She even told me about many experiences she had in the U.S. that was much more than I had. That made me sad!” The student from Germany gained many benefits and advantages because of her frequent interactions with Americans while the Saudi student did not. That made him decide to leave his comfort zone and to become more involved with the Americans. Nevertheless, through the Saudi student association, most male participants stayed connected to the Saudi community and culture while in the U.S.

Saudi Student Association. The Saudi student association is a volunteer organization sponsored by SACM, and participants referred to it as a club. Saudi participants appreciated the vital role of this club because it helped Saudi newcomers in their initial transition as well as living and studying in Edge Park. The Saudi club was responsible for picking up the new students from the airport. The Saudi club assisted newcomers in finding a residence, opening a bank account, and helping any Saudi student who faced trouble. The Saudi club took the responsibility of educating the Saudi newcomers about the American legal system and rules. They used the IELC as the venue for sharing American rules and regulations, providing information at each new session, which started every two months. A male member of the Saudi club explained, “We arranged orientations for the newcomers every session. After they took the placement test at the IELC, we gave them a lecture about the regulations in the U.S.” male students were encouraged to seize the opportunity of the free entertainment activities provided by the club. “They arranged trips, gatherings, and cultural and sport activities. Once they

reserved the bowling hall for four hours. You could go to the movie theater. So choose whatever you like,” one graduate male participant shared.

Being aware of the misconceptions Americans might hold about Saudi students, the Saudi club members took responsibility for correcting such negative stereotyping. The Saudi club participated in some American domestic celebrations on campus such as Labor Day. Yet, one male participant expressed his disappointment that the Saudi club’s efforts in that regard were fruitless. “Saudi club gave gifts to Americans on campus including the fire and police departments on campus. Unfortunately, I have not noticed any changes in their negative perceptions about Saudis,” he commented.

Additionally, the club helped Saudi students academically. They made an agreement with centers (e.g., the Center of Development Management) to offer courses specifically for Saudi students. “We told these centers, we provide you with students and you provide us with courses in management skills, business management, and engineering.... Saudi students paid \$300 for having such certificates instead of \$800,” one Saudi club member explained. Providing all the aforementioned services, the Saudi student association had a vital role in facilitating the male Saudi students’ adjustment to living in Edge Park.

Living in Edge Park

The majority of male participants were satisfied with living in Edge Park. They shared what facilitated their living here. First, Edge Park was less expensive compared to other U.S. cities. Male participants considered the salary they received from KASP to be enough for living in this city. Therefore, Edge Park was an appropriate city for students economically. Second, Edge Park was perceived to be a quiet city. Even though some male participants perceived it as

a boring city for not having entertainment places, this helped them to “focus only on studying and complete my degree quickly,” one graduate male participant noted. Third, Edge Park has a good number of Muslim and Arab people. Thus, American people would be familiar with the presence of Saudi people, which facilitated their cohabitation. “When American people saw a female or a male Muslim every day, they would start getting along with Saudi people. Also, their wondering would be reduced,” one graduate male participant reported. Fourth, having a previous experience of living and studying abroad prepared some Saudi participants for such a new experience. Finally, the presence of relatives and friends in Edge Park helped male participants mentally as well as to overcome the culture shock. “At the beginning when I arrived here, I felt depressed which is normal because I left my family,” one undergraduate male participant indicated.

While living away from family members, some male participants expressed feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and depression. Being lonely and depressed negatively affected their academic achievement. One undergraduate male participant described that the worst experience he had: “I was alone and no one was there for me. I was depressed and I wanted to go back home.... I concealed my emotions from my family because they can do nothing to help me!” Another undergraduate male participant echoed the same sentiments of homesickness and depression in the first few months living in Edge Park. “Most Saudi people I knew went to KSA during Christmas vacation... The weather was cold and no one went out, so I felt depressed. I spent most of my time in the apartment, lonely and on the Internet,” he described.

Counseling services offered by the university were perceived by male participants to be unhelpful. “When you go there [counseling center], you would vent and release your feelings.

The counselor would try to comfort you. I did not need that, I needed something else!” one male undergraduate participant described. Thus, male participants dealt with such situations in their own way. For instance, some male participants highlighted the importance of practicing spirituality (i.e., praying). “Before I came to the U.S., I did not care about praying and I used to delay it. Now if the king was sitting with me, I would leave him and go praying,” one male undergraduate participant explained. Another undergraduate male participant asked for relief and peace of mind from Allah rather than sharing feelings and problems with others because “I do not like to show anyone that I need something or there is something that hurts me inside,” he explained. Male participants shared strategies that assisted them while living and studying in Edge Park.

Studying at MMU

Male participants varied in their expectations about studying at MMU. Some expected studying at MMU to be easy while others expected the opposite. Yet, male participants shared what facilitated and supported them while studying at MMU.

Studying techniques and methods. Male students described several techniques and methods that helped their academics. One technique was having old materials from previous students. These materials helped Saudi participants prepare for exams and pass with good results. “I came to know that if one focused on the old materials the night before the exam, he would pass the test without making any effort,” one graduate male participant pointed out.

Even though that was one of the ways, which helped them while studying, several male participants were upset with using such a manner to get good grades. One graduate male participant complained about this practice. He said, “Unfortunately, I noticed this widely spread

between Saudi students here at MMU. I am not pleased with their academic level. All that happened because of the huge number of Saudi students which made them help each other in this way.” Making an effort to understand the materials and face the academic difficulties, as the participant went on to state, “would positively affect your academic level because challenges would give you experience.” Another graduate male student echoed the same opinion that passing the exams using the old materials would mean ending up having a degree “without knowledge,” he commented.

Seeking the help of private tutors was another method some male participants used while studying at MMU. “I took calculus one class in the summer with a tough teacher. His teaching was excellent and the exams were very challenging. I decided not to get low grades, so I started searching for a tutor,” one undergraduate male participant explained. The participant indicated that was his most difficult experience while studying at MMU. He went on to describe the bad circumstances he had been through, “I was studying in the class and studying outside the class. That time was Ramadan. I was living in the dorm. It was summer and the class was in the morning.” So finding a tutor helped him successfully pass that difficult class. Some male participants preferred having a tutor rather than visiting the Math lab for academic assistance because “they expected that you understand everything except minor things,” as one undergraduate male participant commented. Another undergraduate male participant added, “My English language is weak. I do not understand if the explanation was not in Arabic.” Tutors offered more tailored and focused assistance versus the general Math lab.

In addition, some male participants who faced difficulties with the English language used Internet services to translate the study materials from English to Arabic. One graduate male

participant shared, “We used to translate the PowerPoint slides through Google to understand.... What would you expect from students whose English is their foreign language?” He implemented this method until he got familiar with the terminologies needed for his studies.

Family moral support. Some male participants indicated that family pride and moral support kept them motivated and focused while studying in the U.S. Fulfilling their parents’ dream of getting a higher education degree from the United States was the main goal of some Saudi participants. “Every time I felt lazy, I remembered my parents. They expected me to get my diploma. I am an expatriate and they missed me. That gave me a motivation not ever to lie down,” one graduate male participant shared. Therefore, his most successful experience was when he got his bachelor’s degree from the U.S. because his parents were proud of him.

These male students were further motivated because they wanted to avoid the shame and stigma associated with not finishing their degree. According to Saudi culture, studying abroad and not getting a degree was a sign of shame and disgrace that would stay with the Saudi student forever. “I do not want people to laugh at me and say, ‘he went to the U.S. and did not get a degree.’ Also, I do not want anyone to be better than me,” one undergraduate male participant expressed. Another graduate male participant clarified what returning to the home country after studying in a foreign country without gaining a degree would do, “This would mean that you had a problem. You were lost. You were playing there!” Consequently, being afraid of failure was a stimulus to study hard and succeed. Therefore, Saudi newcomers were advised to be alert when selecting their friends. Bad friends might distract and prevent them from achieving the goal they were in the U.S. to attain. “There are some students who did not know when to enjoy

their time and when to study. They thought they were here only to enjoy,” one graduate male participant shared.

MMU teachers’ and advisors’ support. Most of the participants were pleased with their teachers’ teaching style and considered them as support. Participants compared the teaching style at MMU to the one they were accustomed to in Saudi Arabia. Some of them were disappointed in the way they were treated by their teachers while studying in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, one could not question the teacher, even if he made a mistake. For example, one undergraduate male participant clarified, “It would be a big mistake or an offence to the teacher if you told him that he mistakenly solved the problem. If I debated a case that he was convinced of, he would look down on me.” This kind of attitude, the undergraduate participant went on to state, “would destroy the innovation in us!” In contrast, teachers at MMU encouraged their students to discuss and share their opinions. If MMU teachers committed mistakes while teaching, they would not be shy to admit and apologize to their students. One undergraduate male participant shared such an incident happened in his class and the teacher’s reaction was that he “sent an email to all the students in the class and declared that he was wrong and the student was right. The teacher said, ‘I apologize for this mistake,’ and he provided the link.”

Male participants perceived their teachers at MMU to be humble and not arrogant. Some male participants felt their teachers to be “close” to them, as one graduate male participant noted. MMU teachers made things easy for students. For example, one graduate male participant reported, “In the exam, his intention was not to make things more complicated for you... He would come before the exam and tell you if you understood this chapter, you would be good to go in the exam.” Also, some male participants appreciated the special help provided by their

teachers during office hours. “The teacher would explain to you and give you good resources to use,” one graduate participant reported. Therefore, newcomers were encouraged to exploit such access to faculty. In Saudi Arabia, professors did not have office hours, as one graduate male participant said, “The office hours in Saudi Arabia are something strange. To me, I only heard about it when I arrived here... I came to know the benefits of it.” Because of the previously mentioned, male participants felt more encouraged and motivated to study than they did in Saudi Arabia.

Male participants indicated they never felt discriminated against by their teachers at MMU. “If you always attended the classes and did your assignments and whatever your nationality was... you still would receive a point,” one graduate male participant noted. Teachers were “fair even if you are Saudi or Pakistani,” another undergraduate male participant acknowledged. According to some male participants, teachers were pleased to have international students in classes such as marketing, management, and business law. “Teachers would ask about international students’ experiences in their countries in classes... Teachers would ask us how this would be in Saudi Arabia ...to use as examples for the students,” one undergraduate male participant expressed. In general, teachers at MMU were cooperative and supportive of Saudi students.

Some male participants indicated the academic advisors were helpful. Thus, Saudi newcomers were advised to follow the instructions and the advice given by the advisor and not to rely on previous Saudi students. Some male students’ instructions could be misleading and wrong. “There were many Saudi students who took classes that were not required of them.

They took these classes according to some Saudi students' advice," one graduate male participant pointed out.

Academic and cultural support needed from MMU. Most male participants were satisfied with the academic and cultural support provided by MMU. Yet, they were eager to suggest what else was needed from MMU to help Saudi international student improve academically and engage culturally.

Academic services. Even though MMU increased the hours of the main library to midnight, several male participants expressed the need to have more study rooms. "If MMU built one floor in each building and dedicated it only for studying... it would reduce the accumulation of the students in the main library," one graduate male participant suggested. The small 24-hour library located next to the main library was one of the solutions provided by MMU, but according to one graduate male student, "it gathers good and bad people." Some MMU students did not always use the space to study, but to eat and play games on the computer. The same graduate male participant suspected the ones who attended the library at late time were not students. "I do not think students would come in at midnight to play games on computers! They ate there and the smell would be stinky," he described. Another graduate male participant complained about the facilities which existed in the 24 hours library, "It does not have restrooms even!" Therefore, to most Saudi participants, it was not considered an appropriate place for studying.

Moreover, some male participants whose major was engineering expressed the need for more practical classes instead of theoretical ones. For example, an undergraduate male participant pointed out how the engineering department does "have labs, but no one uses them. I

took only one class where I used my hands.” Another undergraduate male participant concurred, saying, “I took a class about dynamics. It was a theoretical class; the teacher explained and we had to imagine! I wish this imagination comes to be real.” To them, MMU has to combine theory and practice and to encourage more learning by doing.

Cultural services. Male participants appreciated MMU for doing its best to encourage the Saudi students’ involvement with the American culture inside and outside campus. There were a few cultural activities arranged throughout the academic year such as culture day. On the culture day, every international student group presents their culture to an audience. “Saudi people would show the types of clothes they wear as well as their traditions, which is good,” one undergraduate male participant reported. Another example of cultural activities was the River Fest held in Edge Park. With the help of the Saudi club, “More than 40 Saudi students participated in organizing that activity. We were able to encourage Saudi students to be engaged with the American community,” one Saudi club member indicated. Despite the availability of quite a few cultural activities implemented on campus, several graduate participants expressed their reluctance to be involved any longer. One graduate male participant commented, “I do not care anymore.” Another graduate male participant added, “For me I do not need any of these cultural activities, but the younger Saudi students might need them.”

Some male participants asked MMU to encourage the other student organizations to be more involved in campus activities and to support them financially. “When they arrange an activity, MMU has to encourage all the organizations to be part of it, not only the Saudi club.... This would prompt the students’ interactions,” one graduate male participant commented. Also, to increase the cultural interactions with American and international students on campus, a few

Saudi participants pointed out the importance of arranging trips. The IELC used to sponsor and arrange these trips, “but unfortunately, no longer they are,” one male participant expressed his disappointment.

Attending the IELC at MMU

To some male students, completing the required English language levels at the IELC was a good indicator of their success as students. One undergraduate male participant reported that his most successful experience was “passing the IELC and being better [in the English language] than before coming to the U.S. I mean, when I came here I did not know how to write my name in English.” Another undergraduate male participant expressed happiness that he was rewarded by the SACM for completing all the required class levels at the IELC in less than a year.

However, most male participants shared negative feedback about the IELC. Some male participants were dissatisfied with the way they were treated in the IELC. For example, one graduate male participant complained, “I called the IELC ‘The cemetery of Saudi students.’ They tortured the student... If a student was absent for two days, they would cut 5% from his final grade. This is not fair!” To some male participants, teachers at the IELC treated Saudi students as kids, “As you were in a daycare!” one undergraduate male participant commented. One undergraduate male participant cited an example of an instructor taking their cell phones during an exam due to the misbehavior of a few, “I agree some should be punished, but do not punish the whole class!” They felt teachers at the IELC did not respect Saudi students and embarrassed them in front of their classmates. “If I did not do the assignment, then give me a low grade. Do not talk to me in that way in front of the students,” an undergraduate participant expressed. Also, male participants described the administration office at the IELC as inflexible

and inconsiderate of the circumstances and the cultural customs of Saudi students. For example, being the mahram for their sisters and wives, Saudi male students were expected to transport them to and from school. When one graduate male participant asked to pick up his wife from her college and then return to his class, the IELC administration office refused to give him the permission.

In addition, according to most male participants, accepting a large number of Saudi students in the IELC was not a good idea. Because the IELC was overcrowded with Saudi students and did not have many students from other nationalities, male participants felt they were affected negatively. For example, one graduate male participant shared, “The presence of a large number of students who have the same nationality and speak the same language would cause problems.” There was little diversity among the students at the IELC. Consequently, they did not benefit from the classes, which were to learn English, because the majority of the classes have students speaking the same language. One graduate male participant exclaimed, “I came here to learn English. When I turned left I saw Saudi and when I turned right I saw also Saudi!” In order to assure diversity at the IELC, one graduate male participant suggested, “The percentage of Arab students should not exceed a specific percentage. It would be difficult to have 90% of students speaking the same language in the same class.”

Yet, even though its building is small, the IELC still allows large numbers of Saudi students to enroll. “The building was previously a bank ...it has five to six rooms. The capacity of each room is 18 students. Yet, the IELC has more than 200 students and it still accepts students!” one undergraduate male participant exclaimed. Some male participants indicated that the IELC’s aim was to collect money from Saudi students rather than teach them English.

“There were very serious students and they earned good grades who retook the level, especially the last levels. That made me wonder, ‘Why?’ There was no convincing reason except that he still had time in his scholarship,” one undergraduate male participant pointed out.

Therefore, according to some male participants, the SACM had stopped sending Saudi students to the IELC at MMU. The IELC was requested to do the same and not to accept any more Saudi students. Moreover, some Saudi students expressed that they would not recommend the IELC at MMU for any Saudi newcomer.

In conclusion, most Saudi male participants were pleased with having the opportunity to study in the United States. While they had some difficulties in their initial transition as well as in accomplishing their desire to form relationships with American people, the majority of Saudi male participants considered living and studying in the United States to be a positive experience as a whole rather than a negative one.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I present the conclusions and implications of this research as derived from the findings. The chapter begins by a discussion of the conclusions derived from the analysis of the findings through the lens of the acculturation theory. In this chapter, I also discuss a few implications of this study for U.S. universities, Saudi newcomers, and the acculturation theory.

Conclusions

The purposes of this study were to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences and the perceptions of Saudi students pertaining to their acculturation strategies preferences, the U.S. culture's acculturation orientation, as well as how the host university facilitated the Saudis' chosen acculturation preferences. Overall, Saudi students' experiences attending a U.S. university were positive compared to other international students' experiences indicated in the literature. Acculturation theory as well as the literature helped understand most of the Saudi students' experiences in this study.

Integration is the Saudis' Preferred Acculturation Strategy

The main conclusion was derived from the findings that the majority of Saudi female and male participants favored integration. That is, while maintaining their cultural traditions, they sought daily interactions with American students and desired to get along in the mainstream of the American community (Berry, 2003). Most Saudi students mainly aimed to pursue integration to learn more about the U.S. culture and to advance their English language proficiency. To achieve such goals, Saudi participants searched for chances to interact with American students on and off campus. Some lived in a dorm or with an American family,

participated in the American friendship program, and engaged in extracurricular activities. Additionally, they lessened their interactions with their co-national peers and network. Their interest and enthusiasm to have enduring interaction with Americans was obvious throughout the findings.

However, despite their eagerness to be integrated in the U.S. culture, Saudi participants noted their interactions with Americans were not as frequent as they desired. Also, chances available for them to increase their interactions with Americans were not enough. Thus, their ability to be fully integrated was not fulfilled.

In addition, acculturation strategies are neither static nor are they end outcomes in themselves (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010). Individuals may alter their acculturation strategies as a response to their changing experiences. Acculturation strategies might change and vary depending on situational factors. Female and male Saudi participants had distinct experiences. Also, factors affecting their acculturation attitudes were mostly dissimilar. Therefore, in separate sections that follow, I discuss the factors found to influence the females and males' integration. Any shared factors influencing both the integration of males and females have been discussed as well.

Situational Factors Affected Female Saudis' Full Integration

Female participants' integration acculturation preference was affected by these situational factors: their close relationship with their co-national network and religious and cultural constraints. These situational factors were internal, in that the females were largely influenced by their own personal choices and Saudi cultural customs.

Close co-national network obstructed females' full integration. Due to shared religious and cultural commonalities, smoothness of forming friendships and ease in establishing networks was observed to occur with co-national peers rather than with American students. Saudi female participants preferred interacting and socializing with their female co-national peers off campus rather than with female American students. Moreover, some Saudi females did not pursue more relationships with American females and limited their interaction with them to only on campus. Hence, in this context, the acculturation strategy chosen by the female participants was separation rather than full integration.

Religious and cultural constraints hindered females' full integration. According to the Islamic rules, interactions between females and males in general are to be controlled and restricted. However, in Saudi Arabia, the separation between males and females is even more pronounced than in other Islamic countries. Female Saudi students were alert and cautious while dealing with men in general (i.e., American, international, or Saudi), on and off campus. Female participants tended to limit their formal interaction on campus with American and Saudi students to topics related precisely to their studies. Moreover, Saudi females were prevented from interacting in a casual manner with males who were not one of their mahrams. Some female participants never encouraged male students to engage in more open or informal interactions with them on and off campus. Female participants acted and behaved with American male students in a way that signals "space" or "boundaries." Consequently, according to female participants, male American students got that message and acted accordingly.

Furthermore, most of the female participants described having even more space and boundaries with Saudi male students than with American male students. This was attributed to

the reason that male Saudi students already had a clear understanding of the Islamic rules and Saudi cultural traditions pertaining to gender interactions. In contrast, American male students knew little about the Saudi cultural and religious practices when it comes to females' interactions with males. In addition, female Saudi students perceived American students as being naïve and innocent while Saudi students were more threatening. Thus, female participants avoided any direct interaction with Saudi male students. If interaction was needed concerning their studies, their mahram would be the mediator of that communication. In that way, female participants avoided any possibilities of bad consequences when interacting with Saudi males. In this context, female participants chose to be separated from both American and Saudi male students.

Furthermore, some female participants expected to experience prejudice because of wearing hijab, which is mandatory according to the Islamic religion. Yet, they denied any sentiments of being discriminated against. They pointed out that their professors treated them fairly. Also, American females showed respect to Saudi females' religious custom and were curious to learn more. This finding was inconsistent with a previous study where Omani female students attending a U.S. university expressed feelings of anti-Muslim sentiments because of wearing hijab (McDermott-Levy, 2011). This contradiction could be explained due to the increasing number of Saudi females living in the U.S. and Americans being more familiar with them wearing hijab. Thus, female Saudis reported experiencing less discriminatory attitudes against them than did the Omani females.

Situational Factors Affected Male Saudis' Full Integration

Although they came from the most gender segregated country in the world (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010), because they were males, Saudi male participants were less constrained by

religion and culture than female participants. Therefore, their acculturation experiences were distinct from the females, as their integration was affected by the host culture.

Saudi male participants enjoyed more freedom in choosing and pursuing integration than females. Some Saudi male participants decided to reduce their constant interaction with their co-national peers and leave their “comfort zone,” in favor of having more interactions with Americans. Even though they acknowledged the importance of keeping connected with their home country network, they recognized doing so was a barrier to integration. They fully understood by choosing separation, they would be missing valuable opportunities to enhance their language proficiency and advance their academic achievement. As a result, most male Saudi participants preferred working with American students in a study group rather than with co-national peers. This is inconsistent with a previous study that found international students looked for students from their culture to work with rather than American students (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). The difference in both findings could be attributed to the degree of participants’ awareness of their acculturation attitudes and its impact on their acculturation process. In my study, participants showed a higher tendency to integration. They were fully aware that, by isolating themselves, they reduced opportunities to benefit from interactions with Americans. Additionally, some male Saudi students engaged in extracurricular activities and voluntary work on and off campus. Such behaviors were to improve their understanding of the American culture.

However, when constraints are enforced by the dominant culture, the acculturation preferences of acculturating individuals would change and alter (Berry, 1974; Bourhis et al., 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010).

Acculturation orientation of the host culture affected males' full integration. One of the factors influencing the Saudi males' acculturation preferences was the discriminatory behaviors Saudis believed Americans held toward them. According to Saudi male participants, most Americans on and off campus had negative stereotyping about Saudi people, that is, Saudi people are terrorists. Although the majority of Saudi participants did not explicitly state so, they felt they were subjected to discrimination, stigma, and prejudice because of the events of terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Research with Muslims in the United States since September 11 confirmed that perceived discrimination is related to difficulties in their cultural adjustment (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013). Difficulties in forming friendships with Americans were exacerbated because of the problematic history of intercultural relationships.

In response to the perceived feeling of discrimination, a number of male participants felt responsible to educate Americans about Islam and to correct the misconceptions about Saudi culture. They tried to do so through acting and behaving in a good manner. Speck (1997) similarly found Muslim students who attempted to educate Americans about Islam were clearly not promoting Islam for missionary purposes. Rather, they took the responsibility to promote a better understanding of it. Yet, when Saudi male participants felt their efforts to correct the distorted image of Islam and Saudi people were unworkable, they tended to retreat to their co-national network and separated themselves from further interactions with Americans. Accordingly, rather than being fully integrated, Saudi male participants felt excluded and segregated by the American host culture.

Situational Factors Affected both Male and Female Saudis' Full Integration

Although there was a variation in the acculturation strategies selected by females and males, some shared situational factors affecting their full integration were identified. These were length of residence in the U.S. and English language proficiency.

Length of residence in the U.S. The length of residence in the host culture is related to acculturation (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). This factor affected the acculturation process of both male and female Saudis. According to Berry et al. (2006), adolescent immigrants who lived longer in the host culture were more likely to seek interaction with members of the host culture and participate in the host culture. Yet, in my study, this did not apply to the Saudis as international students, because they did not intend to remain in the U.S. after completing their degrees.

Duration of stay in the United States affected the Saudis' full integration. While living and studying in the U.S., Saudi participants explored the acculturation strategies and changed their acculturation preferences to meet their needs. Even though most participants preferred integration, they were more likely to change their strategy when they were about to leave the U.S. To illustrate, most undergraduate participants were eager and enthusiastic to be integrated because they knew they would spend a long period living and studying in the U.S. Yet, some graduate Saudi male and female participants, when they felt their duration of stay in the U.S. would be short and about to end, tended to reduce their interactions with Americans and chose the separation strategy. They attributed the reason to being busy with their academic studies and family matters. Thus, the Saudis' desire for integration in the host culture was noticed in the initial stages of their living in the U.S. culture, but then started to diminish. In contrast,

immigrants' length of residence is in a positive relationship with their desire to be integrated in the mainstream culture.

English Language Proficiency. Saudis' inability to speak English fluently was a primary restraint to succeeding academically, as well as being culturally integrated in the American host culture. English language skills are essential in establishing relationships with members of the host culture and maintaining daily interactions with them. Yet, acculturation theory does not account for it. This supports previous research indicating that English language competency is a vital variable in the international students' adjustment in both the academic and social settings (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). A higher level of English language proficiency would help the Saudis in their adjustment to the new educational environment. Students would be more likely to be able to ask, discuss, and participate in class discussions. Additionally, students would be able to interact with members of the U.S. culture and establish relationship with Americans.

Academic domain. Saudi participants encountered a few academic issues related to both spoken English and listening comprehension. The difficulty in understanding the lectures was primarily due to unfamiliarity with scientific terminologies. Most Saudi participants attributed this to the IELC being insufficient in preparing them for the appropriate level of English proficiency needed for college courses. Teachers at the IELC tended to use and teach simple English language. Furthermore, with classes composed primarily of Saudi students, the IELC did not offer an atmosphere conducive for learning English. The unavailability of Americans or students from other cultures in the IELC led to shortage of opportunities to the practice speaking

English in a real setting. Some male Saudi participants wondered how they would learn English when the majority of the students spoke the same native language.

Social and cultural domain. Spoken English deficiency hindered Saudi participants' smooth and continuous social and cultural interactions with Americans. Other researchers have also pointed out that English deficiency impeded social interactions with members of the American culture (Kuo, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996). Saudi female participants, who were deficient in English, expressed feelings of embarrassment when speaking English in locations such as restaurants. Also, because of English deficiency, both male and female participants expressed failure to develop friendships with American students outside the campus. Thus, they tended to retreat to their co-national network because of ease in expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Therefore, Saudi participants who were deficient in the English language chose separation because of an inability to maintain interaction with Americans. In contrast, Saudi students who were proficient in the English language tended to pursue integration because of their capabilities of establishing and maintaining relationships with Americans. The role of English proficiency is described in the literature as a vital factor in increasing interaction between international students and members of the U.S. community. For example, Barratt and Huba (1994) found a positive relationship between international students' English proficiency and their interest and success in building friendships with Americans; thus developing English proficiency is critical to the successful integration of Saudi international students.

Sources Saudis sought to facilitate their integration. Saudi male and female participants shared the most and the least helpful resources to integration. First, living in the

dorm was one way to increase their interactions with Americans. Most male Saudi participants acknowledged that living in the dorm was beneficial, even though some of them did not live in it. Second, living with an American family also served as a good source for male Saudi participants to learn about American culture and customs. Even though living in the dorm or with an American family were the most helpful resources for male Saudi participants, female participants were not allowed to take the advantage of these resources because of religious and cultural constraints. Therefore, female participants found other avenues to have chances to interact with Americans, such as the American friendship program sponsored by the IELC. Last, most Saudi participants believed that being involved in the extracurricular activities implemented on and off campus would provide them plenty chances of interaction with Americans. However, that was not the case. These activities lacked the most important constituent that is, the American students' involvement.

Psychological Behavioral Changes Resulting from Acculturation

The concept of acculturation recognizes two levels of change: the group level and the individual level (Berry, 1990, 1997, 2005). Individuals who choose to pursue the integration strategy tended to be selective in the adoption of new behaviors from the larger society, as well as in the retention of valued features of their heritage culture (Berry, 1992, 1997). In addition, although all Saudi participants shared the same cultural background and live in the same acculturative arena, there was a noticeable difference in the female and male psychological behavioral changes (Berry, 1997, 2005).

Female Saudis' psychological changes. Independence and autonomy was one of the most significant aspects of female Saudi students' experience while living in the United States.

Saudi female participants expressed being more independent helped them while living and studying in the U.S. This was congruent with a previous research in which Omani female students felt independent while living alone in the U.S. (McDermott-Levy, 2011). Back in KSA, Saudi female participants rarely experienced living independently from their families. They were highly dependent on their mahrams for traveling, shopping, and taking care of financial matters such as paying the bills, opening a bank account, or managing the home budget.

Some female participants were anxious about losing the independence and freedom they enjoyed in the United States when they return to Saudi Arabia. Saudi female participants were used to driving by themselves in the United States and going wherever they wanted without a companion. Back in Saudi Arabia, they would need to wait for one of their mahrams to drive them.

Male Saudis' psychological changes. Because of being integrated in the American culture, Saudi male participants observed changes to their personalities. Saudi participants indicated being more responsible, organized, disciplined, and open- minded. First, being more responsible meant many male Saudi participants took care of everything related to their studies and daily life on their own and stopped being financially dependent on their parents back home. They acted responsibly by managing their own budgets. Also, some Saudi participants acknowledged the bad consequences if they were still acting irresponsibly. Second, some Saudi students learned to be more organized and disciplined. Some Saudi male participants learned to arrange and follow a plan for their daily activities. Other Saudi participants learned to follow the traffic rules and regulations. In Saudi Arabia, these Saudi participants rarely felt worried about committing any traffic violations. In contrast, while living in the U.S., they admitted the

consequences for any traffic violations they might commit, such as being held in the jail and the driving license being suspended. Finally, while living in Saudi Arabia, some participants used to hold negative perspectives about people from other religious and cultural backgrounds. Yet, because of living in the United States, participants became more open-minded. Saudi participants started to believe in having harmonious and friendly relationships with American people. Also, participants learned to look at the same issue from different angles and not to judge people based on their nationality or religion. As a result of their interaction with American and international students in the U.S., Saudi participants felt that their sense of open-mindedness was increased. This finding was consistent with Tummala-Narra and Claudius's (2013) study in which Muslim students noticed greater open-mindedness gained because of their interaction with people from different cultures while studying in the U.S.

MMU Supported Saudi Students Academically But Not Culturally

Most female and male Saudi participants were satisfied with the way they were treated by their American teachers and advisors. Although several Saudi male participants felt discriminated against by some of their American counterparts as well as by the Americans in the Edge Park community, they considered their American professors to be open-minded, supportive, and fair. Previous research reported Muslim international students experienced religious bias among their professors (Speck, 1997). At that time, Americans were not interested to know about Muslims, but after September 11 Americans were curious to learn about the Islamic ideologies and beliefs in order to understand what motivated such a terrorist attack.

Most male and female participants were pleased with their teachers' teaching style. When participants compared the teaching style in MMU to the one they were accustomed to in

Saudi Arabia, they expressed satisfaction and admiration. Saudi male participants praised the flexibility and the modesty of the American teachers at MMU. For example, disagreeing with the teachers during class in Saudi Arabia was considered inappropriate and challenging to the teachers' authority and credibility, while with MMU teachers that was not the case. Thus, Saudi participants were more motivated and encouraged to be creative while studying in the United States. Also, the informality of the classroom culture in the United States helped Saudi students better adjust to the academic setting rather than to struggle, as noted in Sarkodie-Mensah's (1998) study. For example, professors in the U.S. universities could be addressed by their first names, while in Saudi Arabia professors must be addressed with the appropriate title before their names.

Several Saudi participants reported missing the social and emotional support normally provided by their family members. Therefore, the initial stages of living in the United States were their most difficult times. Furthermore, because of English language barriers and difficulty forming friendships with American students, some participants expressed feelings of loneliness. Even though MMU offered counseling services, none of the Saudi participants reported utilizing these services. Most male participants tended to keep the challenges and problems to themselves and sought relief and peace of mind through praying to Allah. However, some male and female participants preferred to share their psychological problems with their Saudi friends here and family members back home country.

Moreover, Saudi participants valued the MMU efforts to encourage the Saudi students' involvement with the American culture inside and outside campus. There were a few cultural activities arranged throughout the academic year, such as culture day. However, in such

activities Saudi participants noticed that American students were not involved. Thus, chances provided to Saudis to form friendships with American students and to increase their English proficiency were lacking. Therefore, MMU was not successful, as indicated by most participants, in helping them in their most preferred acculturation strategy, that is, integration.

Implications

The implications provided in the following section derived from the findings and the conclusions of this study. These implications are intended to support the most preferable acculturation orientation selected by the majority of the Saudi participants, which is integration. In this section, several implications are provided for: (a) the higher education policy and practice, (b) the Saudi newcomer students who desire to pursue higher education in the U.S., and (c) the acculturation theory.

Implications for Higher Education Policy and Practice

The findings and conclusions of this study have practical implications for higher education personnel who work with Saudi students. These include faculty, academic advisors, the office of international students, the Intensive English Language Center, and any staff in the position of mentoring, counseling, and advising international students.

Implementation of intervention programs. Because of the potential benefits of the intervention programs, U.S. universities should recognize the implementation of these programs as an investment rather than extra expense (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). First, the findings indicated the need for intervention programs. With the cooperation of the Saudi student association, which is available in each U.S. university Saudi students attend, intervention programs may help current and newcomer Saudi students cope with the new cultural

environment (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Through brochures, Web sites, and orientation programs, Saudi newcomers could be informed about what they could expect to experience in the new culture and what psychological reactions they may have. With the assistance of the Saudi club, students could discuss issues or ask questions about their experiences. In that way, the transition of the Saudi newcomers would be facilitated into the new cultural environment.

Second, the findings and conclusions highlighted the importance of multicultural training about discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Intervention programs should target American students as well as faculty and staff on campus. Program administrators could educate U.S. students and campus personnel about how certain behaviors could be perceived as discriminatory by the Saudi students. Additionally, intervention programs could help Saudi students recognize and cope with any act of discrimination. The results of this study indicated that, when younger Saudi students perceived discrimination, they reacted by withdrawing from further interaction with American students and separated themselves from more cultural engagement with the American community. With the assistance of these training programs, both U.S. students and the Saudi students would learn how to recognize and cope with discrimination.

Last, higher education personnel could offer workshops to educate the campus community how a person knowingly or unknowingly could discriminate against Saudi students (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). During these workshops, Saudi students would have the opportunity to present examples of how they were discriminated against and how they felt in response. Expressing their emotions in such a way, Saudi students could help the listeners better understand the consequences of the discriminatory behaviors and attitudes against them.

Through implementing such programs, Saudi students would feel more comfortable while studying in the U.S. Consequently, Saudi students may encourage other Saudi peers from their home country to pursue their higher education at the U.S. universities (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007).

Increase chances of interaction with the host national students. The findings and conclusions of this study have highlighted the importance of increasing the interaction between the U.S. and Saudi students. In this study, a positive relationship was noticed between the Saudis' social interaction with the American students and their integration in the U.S. culture. When Saudi students have more chances to interact with the host national students, they adjust better to the host culture and society (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

For most Saudi participants, engaging in extracurricular activities on and off campus was with the aim of finding a valuable opportunity to meet with host nationals (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). Most undergraduate participants admitted spending a good deal of time engaging in various types of activities outside the classroom, including participating in sports, attending cultural events, and socializing with friends. Through these activities, Saudi participants sought the chance to make host nation friends. They also aimed to learn social skills for interacting with American people and to learn about the social customs and values of the American culture.

Furthermore, interactions during such activities could increase the understanding and the acceptance of the Saudi culture, as well as reduce misunderstanding and the likelihood of discrimination (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Also, the American higher education institution has the responsibility to nurture a better climate of international awareness and understanding. The

U.S. universities, through their international student offices, might sponsor international student groups, visiting speakers, and cultural groups to send a clear message regarding how the university cares about its international students (Perrucci & Hu, 1995).

Therefore, the higher education institution needs to provide ample opportunities of social gatherings and extracurricular activities to let Saudi students engage in the host culture (Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). In this way, Saudi students would be encouraged to integrate in the U.S. culture rather than being marginalized.

Align intensive English programs with student academic and cultural needs. The main academic challenge for most international students was their lack of English proficiency (Kuo, 2011; Tompson & Tompson, 1996; Yan & Berliner, 2011; Yuan, 2011). English deficiency not only affected the academic progress of Saudi participants, but also their acculturation attitudes. Therefore, English programs have a critical role in helping international students and Saudi students specifically in overcoming and improving their English proficiency.

Yet, according to Saudi participants, English courses offered by the IELC had inadequately prepared Saudis for college level courses. College level courses required more advanced English language skills than what IELC offers. The IELC failed to connect the Saudi students to their academic needs as well as in their transition to studying in higher education institutions. Therefore, intensive English programs like the one offered at the IELC must offer more advanced English courses equivalent to college course level. Because Saudi students' limited vocabulary is associated with their language inability, intensive English programs should design courses to teach general academic vocabulary. Additionally, Saudi students should be taught strategies on how to acquire and memorize new vocabulary.

The IELC was also unsuccessful in connecting Saudis with members of the U.S. culture, as it did not offer Saudi students opportunities to practice English language in real-life situations. Saudis felt ill-equipped for interaction with Americans. Consequently, the expected role for the intensive English program in assisting Saudis in their integration in the mainstream culture did not exist. Therefore, universities that offer intensive English programs need to provide the appropriate atmosphere for teaching English. That could be achieved by reducing the number of students sharing the same language in the same classroom and creating opportunities for Saudi students to meet with Americans.

Advertise and modify the academic and counseling services on campus. As findings indicated, some Saudi participants were neither aware of the services provided by the university such as the counseling center, writing center, and the math lab (Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington, & Pisecco, 2001), nor convinced of their efficacy. Thus, the international student office needs to advertise these available resources, as well as to educate Saudi students of these services' prominence in aiding their academic and social adjustment on campus (Poyrazli et al., 2001).

Most U.S. universities include counseling services to help both local and international students. However, a question remains concerning whether they are providing appropriately tailored services that international students, specifically Saudi students, require. Even though they faced problems, Saudi participants were reluctant to seek professional counseling. To them, it is shameful or inappropriate to speak of their troubles to others. The Saudi students need to learn how to use the services provided by the counseling center rather than to struggle on their own (Sarkodie-Mensah, 1998). Therefore, the counseling services have to be modified to be more culturally appropriate for them. For example, Saudi participants described that the

counselor's job is only listening to their clients' complaints. Yet, they looked for another way of being aided. They looked for spiritual help was gained through praying to Allah and reading Quran. Saudi participants would be more comfortable if provided with Muslim counselors who are familiar with Saudis' religious and cultural background. In that way, counseling services would be more convincing and encouraging for Saudis to use.

Implications for Saudi Newcomers Students

Saudi newcomers can learn from the experiences of Saudi participants while living and studying in the U.S. Most Saudi participants highlighted the importance of living a new experience rather than bringing their own culture to the U.S. Also, improving English language proficiency and communication skills is required for Saudis' integration in the host culture.

Live a new experience. Both KASP and the Saudi participants encouraged newcomers to take advantage of the opportunity of living abroad to have a new cultural experience in addition to gaining a good education. KASP and the Saudi participants encouraged newcomers not to confine their interactions to their co-national peers. Also, KASP, through the Saudi club, encouraged Saudi students to be involved in any volunteer work within the American community. The goal of studying in the United States expected from Saudi students is to experience the American culture and then to transfer it to the Saudi community.

Improve English language skills. Language is the means to social and cultural interactions. Saudi students need to be well prepared in English before they come to the United States. Taking English language preparation courses in the home country would be helpful. Also, female students need to change some of their attitudes. For example, female Saudis need to break the shyness barrier and try speaking English whenever they get the chance (e.g.,

restaurants, shopping centers). They need to learn that making mistakes while speaking English is a way to learn the language rather than an obstruction.

Implications for Acculturation Theory

There are different kinds of groups who seek acculturation. Some groups reside permanently, such as immigrants, while others reside temporarily, such as sojourners. International students are one example of sojourners who are temporary residents in a culturally plural society for a set purpose. Since international students are more likely to leave eventually, their acculturation process is complicated (Berry, 2006). For example, a hesitation to become fully involved or to establish close relationships with members of the host culture could be noticed. Acculturation theory is mainly intended for those who plan living in a different culture on a more permanent basis. Therefore, to understand the acculturation process of the international students, more investigation would be needed.

English language proficiency as one of the situational factors discussed in my study was not accounted for in acculturation theory. Even though English language proficiency is the main barrier for all international students in their acculturation experiences, acculturation theory never considered it as a constituent of the acculturation process. In this study, English proficiency proved to affect the integration orientation of Saudi participants in the U.S. culture. When Saudi participants felt proficient in English, their integration was smoothed. In contrast, when Saudi participants felt deficient, their integration was obstructed. Thus, language skills need to be added to the acculturation theory because it showed its prominence in the acculturation process for Saudi participants as international students.

Although the length of residence is one of the situational factors already existing in the acculturation theory, it needs to be modified when it describes the acculturation process of the international students. The length of residence for the immigrants tends to be in a positive relationship with acculturation process. Immigrants, who lived longer in the host culture, were able to better adjust. In contrast, among Saudi participants, the length of residence in the U.S. was related differently to the acculturation process. Saudi participants were more willing to pursue integration in their initial transition to the U.S. Yet, when they were about to leave the U.S., their desire to be involved and integrated in the U.S. culture was diminished.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
The e-mail sent to Saudi students

Dear Saudi Arabian Student,

My name is Hala Alsabatin and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Wichita State University. I am conducting a research about the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university. I want to know how Saudi students attending a U.S. university describe their experiences. I believe this research study could inform higher education policy to enhance the Saudi students' education in the United States. Also, newcomer Saudi students who desire to pursue their higher education in U.S. would benefit from understanding these experiences as well. Therefore, I would like to invite and encourage you to participate in my study.

If you decide to be one of my study's participants, I would like to share a few procedures for our individual interview. Although we will be on a first name basis, no names will be used in my study. Your participation and responses will be kept confidential. With your permission, I would like to record the interview digitally for accuracy and clarity. The interview session will last 45-60 minutes. The time and place decided for conducting the interview will be at your convenience. More details about these procedures will be explained to you prior conducting the interview.

I would greatly appreciate if you would participate in this research. If you decide to participate in my study, please contact me at (316)-461-1002 and hyalsabatin@wichita.edu.

I am looking forward to hearing from you,

Thank you in advance,

Hala Alsabatin

انا هاله السباتين طالبة دكتوراة في قسم القيادة التربوية في جامعة ويشيتا. حاليا اقوم بإجراء بحث عن تجارب و خبرات الطلاب السعوديين الملتحقين بجامعة في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية. اريد ان اعلم كيف يصف الطلاب/ الطالبات السعوديين بجامعة في الولايات المتحدة تجاربهم. من خلال هذا البحث فإنك سوف تستفيد من فهم هذه التجارب. كذلك سيتم الملتحقين سياسة التعليم للسعوديين في الولايات المتحدة عند اطلاعهم على خبراتكم. ايضاً ، ان الطلاب السعوديين تعزيز و تحسين الالتحاق بالجامعات الامريكية سوف يستفيدون من فهم هذه الخبرات و التجارب. و بالتالي ، اود المستجدين و الذين ينوون الدراسة البحثية اذا نويت ان تكون/ تكوني واحد من المشتركين في هذا البحث ، اود اشراكك دعوتكم و تشجيعكم للاشتراك بهذه و اعلامك ببعض الاجراءات المتبعة خلالالمقابلة الفردية معك. على الرغم من التواصل بيننا و معرفتي بإسمك ، فإنه لن يتم استخدام اي أسماء في هذه الدراسة. ان مشاركتك واجاباتك سوف تكون سرية كاملاً. بعد اذنك ، سوف اقوم بتسجيل المقابلة دقيقة. ان مكان و زمن المقابلة سوف تكون ملائمة لراحتك. سوف يتم الكترونياً للوضوح و الدقة. مدة المقابلة تتراوح ما بين ٦٠ توضيح اجراءات اخرى قبل البدء بالمقابلة. نني اقدر لحد كبير اذا قررت الاشتراك بهذا البحث. اذا قررت الاشتراك بهذا البحث ، الرجاء الاتصال ب

hyalsabatin@wichita.edu او على 1002-461-(316)

شكرا جزيلاً مقدماً و انني انتطلع للسمع منكم قريباً ... تحياتي ... هاله السباتين

Appendix B

Interview questions

Background questions:

- a) What is your name?
- b) How old are you?
- c) Are you graduate or undergraduate student?
- d) What is your major?
- e) What year are you enrolling now?
- f) How long have you been here in U.S.?
- g) What are your plans after graduation?
- h) Please, tell me about your English Proficiency level
 - How did you prepare your English to live and study in the U.S.? i.e., did you attend IELC or did you get TOEFL before coming U.S.?

Interview questions:

1. What have motivated you to study abroad?
2. Why did you choose United States to study abroad?
3. Describe your experience as a Saudi student living and studying at WSU. *Please, give examples/ stories for all the following probes.*
 - a) Describe your interactions with American (i.e., students and professors) inside and outside the classroom. How Americans treat you back?
 - b) Describe your interaction with students from your ethnic group i.e., Saudi students.
 - c) Describe your interaction with other international students (not Saudi students).
 - d) What changes have you made because of living and studying in Edge Park?
4. Describe your expectation of studying in WSU prior coming here, and what has it been like studying in WSU now?
5. Describe your expectation of living in Edge Park prior coming here, and what has it been like living in Edge Park now?
6. What do you think has facilitated your journey in living and studying in Edge Park?
7. What do you think has helped you living and studying in U.S.?
8. What was your best or worst experience while studying and living in Edge Park?
9. Who do you usually go to for support?
10. What kind of support do you need? (for academic, social, & cultural experience)
11. What advice would you give for your co-national friends here or at Saudi Arabia about studying in U.S.?
12. What other topics related to your experience you would like to share with me?

Appendix C
Arabic- English translation of the quotes

Female Saudi Quotes	
<p>Majors available for female students are limited such as medicine, nursing, and education. Nowadays, they have new majors such as engineering and maybe bioengineering.... I wanted to study chemical engineering. It was my desire but it was not available.</p>	<p>لانه هناك بالسعودية تخصصات النساء قليلة بس مختصرة لشيء معين مثل طب تمريض تعليم وهذه التخصصات . أما الحين جديد الهندسة الحين يمكن فيه هندسة حيوية ... لكن أنا أبيع هندسة كيميائية كان عشقي لكن مو موجود</p>
<p>We are allowed to fill three options, but they [Higher Education Ministry] will choose for me, not I. They chose a desire that I did not want, even all the desires that I filled were not what I wanted. If you chose to get science high school diploma, then you have to study biology, physics ... agriculture, or computer science. If you were hard working in high school and got a high GPA, you may study medicine. My desire was neither medicine nor computer science; I wanted to study English language. However, because my high school diploma was scientific, they did not allow me study it. Therefore, they refused my first desire that was English language.... I will never choose what I like. It does not matter! Therefore, I studied X. I studied three years in Saudi Arabia and my years were wasted for nothing. I felt this was not what I wanted.</p>	<p>عندنا رغبة أولى وثانية وثالثة أسجل وهم يختاروا لي الرغبة مو اللي انا ابيها وانا كل الرغبات اللي حطيتها انا ما ابيها كنت لانه ما في خيارات ما في تخصصات هناك اذا انت علمي روعي أحياء وفيزياء هذه كلية العلوم أو تروحين زراعة أو حاسب آلي اذا انت شاطرة وماخذة معدل عالي يمكن يحطونك طب أنا ما أريد طب وما أبيع حاسب كنت ناوية أدخل انجليزي بس لاني أنا علمي ما دخلوني لانه هذا التخصص حق أدبي يعني رفضوني أول ما سجلت لانه الرغبة الأولى مرفوضة لانه انت علمي !!!... خلاص أنا ما رح أدرس اللي أبيه فالآخر دخلت ودرست ثلاث سنوات بالسعودية وضيعنا عمرنا . فما حسيت انه هذا الشيء اللي أبيه يعني درست ثلاث سنوات بس ما عجبني الوضع.</p>
<p>In statistics class here we have a program called SAS. You have to learn it so you will be able to do the assignment for that class.... Many computer skills and programs would help you develop yourself.</p>	<p>في عنا مادة ستاستيك فيها برنامج اللي هو ساس تستخدمه تتعلمي كيف تستخدم البرنامج وتحلي عليها الواجبات هذا في هذه المادة... يعني برامج كثيرة يعني مهارات تطورك في هذا الشيء</p>
<p>There was no freedom in choosing your own class schedule. They give it to you ready. It was stable and you cannot change anything. I could not drop or add any classes as I wish</p>	<p>لا يوجد حرية في اختيار الجدول. يعطونا اياه جاهز. يكون ثابت و لا مجال للتغيير. ما قدرت اسحب او اضيف اي مادة.</p>
<p>I have to put some considerations while making my schedule, like that I take classes at times works with my husband's times, so when I am at school he could be at home with the kids.</p>	<p>تحاولي تخططي مزبوط . يعني أخذ الكلاسات في أوقات تناسب زوجي عشان وقت ما أكون أنا بالجامعة يكون هو بالبيت وزبي كذا</p>

<p>In my first semester there, I had had only six credit hours to study. When I asked them to register for six more hours, unexpectedly, I was treated in a mean way.... I mean when I went to the head of the department and told her that I have this problem and I am trying to register, she told me that I was late and yelled at me and scolded me and at the end she did not allow me to register for any further classes! I was surprised of such way of dealing! How come they could not add one student in one class, in the time that I know that there is availability. I was late in my studies. If I stayed there for that major, I may need another three years to graduate.</p>	<p>مثال أول فصل ما عندي غير (6) ساعات أدرسه ما عندكم مجال تسجلوني كمان (6) ساعات اضافية وارو حلهم وما توقعت يعني اسلوبهم فرق ... يعني رحت مديرة القسم في كلية العلوم وقلت لها اني عندي هالمشكلة وحاولت اسجل قالتلي اذا انت متأخرة وصوتت علي وشرشحتني وفي الاخير ما سجلتلي ولا مادة زيادة . فأنا تفاجأت شو هالاسلوب ؟! كيف يعني ما يقدر او يضيفون وحدة زيادة في كلاس واحد ؟ ايش دعوة !! وفي بعض الكلاسات يكون فيها مجال يعني . فاتأخرت في الدراسة لو اني تامة في السعودية لو اني اكمل هالتخصص احتاج (3) سنوات</p>
<p>I choose U.S. because my brother was already here studying</p>	<p>لانه كان أخوي هنا</p>
<p>My husband was studying here for two years</p>	<p>زوجي جاء قبلي امريكا بسنتين</p>
<p>I studied X at Saudi Arabia for a year and a half then I stopped to come with my husband here.... I will continue my studies here</p>	<p>درست واستمريت فيه سنة ونص وفتتها بعدين لحتى احببت هنا لانني كنت مرافقة لزوجي ... أكمل هنا كان بها</p>
<p>Studying in Germany is difficult and its language is difficult to learn and you gain nothing from learning this language unlike English; it is the worldwide language, so I did not choose it [Germany]. Also, I did not choose Canada because of its cold weather. Therefore, the U.S. was the best choice among these countries so I chose it</p>	<p>المانيا قالوا لي يعني شوية انها صعبة ولغتهم صعبة فلغيت المانيا يعني شو تستفيدين من اللغة الالمانية ؟ يعني ولا شيء أما اللغة الانجليزية يعني كأنك حادثتي العالم كله . أما كندا بصراحة من ناحية الجو وباردة وما أدري كيف فأنو أفضل وأفضل دولة تعتبر بينهم في الدراسة هي امريكا وقدمت على امريكا واحببت</p>
<p>I prefer the U.S., I feel comfortable. I love it. I do not know why, there is no specific reason. My mother advised me to go to Australia because my cousin was there. I refused and insisted to go to the U.S. To me, the U.S. is the perfect place!</p>	<p>نفسية احب امريكا لا أدري ما في سبب معين يعني أمي تقول بنت عمك تزوح استراليا روجي على استراليا قلت لا امريكا ما أدري يعني في مخي هي بيرفكت</p>
<p>an adventure to learn about another world</p>	<p>منها مغامرة منها أتعرف على عالم ثاني يعني امريكا وكذا</p>
<p>He was so depressed. He thought anyone here could pull a gun and shoot him. That was the idea he believed in.</p>	<p>هو كان مرة مكتئب يحس انه هله أي واحد ياخذ المسدس ويطخه . وخلص هذه الفكرة اللي براسه</p>
<p>I applied to more than one university but MMU was the fastest university in admission. I felt it is flexible in procedures. I mean the doctor who I contacted here accelerated the application process and gave me the admission before I even completed my graduate study at my previous university. The other universities asked me to finish my master's, then to apply. After that, they will decide to accept me or not. My doctor</p>	<p>تربية بس هي الجامعة الأسرع يعني حسيتها فليكسبل في التعامل يعني الدكتور اللي كنت أتعامل معه كان رئيس القسم في هذالك الوقت يعني سرع اجراءاتي أعطاني قبول قبل ما أخلص الماجستير يعني الجامعات الثانية يقولولي خلصي ماجستير وتعالني وبعدين نقرر نعطيك قبول ولا لأ أما هو لا أعطاني كل شيء أبغيه بسرعة يعني ما أطلب منه شيء الا على طول في اليوم الثاني يعطيني اياه</p>

here gave me whatever I wanted quickly. Whatever I asked him today, the next day it will be sent to me.	
I learned how to drive which made a big difference in my life. ... You cannot depend anymore on your family members here. ... I drop my kids to daycare and school and go shopping by myself	وصرت أسوق وهذا الشيء سوالي فرق شاسع بحياتي... وما تعتمد على احد من اهلك ... كنت أودي بناتي على الدوام داي كير وسكول بنفسي وأجيبهم وكنت أروح سوبرماركت أجيب أغراض الشقة
If I want to go to my parents' house, which takes ten minutes walking, I cannot walk in hot weather. I have to call my brothers and ask them where they are. ... It is difficult - I need a car	ففترة اني أروح بيت أهلي يعني لبيت أهلي مشي تقريبا ياخذ 10 دقائق يعني ما أقدر أمشي بالشمس أقعد أرن على اخواني يا أخوي فينك ؟ وكذا يعني السيارة صعبة
Here I drive and I do not need anyone. I depend on myself. I go shopping by myself and with my kids. If I get bored, I would take my kids and go anywhere I want	صعبة أما هون أنا أسوق هنا ما أحتاج أحد معتمدة على نفسي خلاص يعني هنا أطلع أتسوق لحالي بناتي وأنا زهقانيين نطلع نتمشى لحالنا
I have more confidence to talk freely and seriously with men now.... Here I do my official papers. I go and I feel myself like a man	عندي ثقة اكبر لما اتكلم بجدية مع رجال الان...صرت اعمل اوراقي الرسمية. اروح و اجي كأني رجل.
I was afraid to travel abroad without my family but now I am fine. Now I became myself, I have my own personality	كنت أنا أخاف ما أسافر بدون أهلي أما الحين عادي صرت بروحي شخصيتي كياني
Before, I used to consult a member of my family because I live with them. I still consult them now but less than before	خلاص انت بين أهلك لازم تستشيرني هذا لكن أقل
I became myself. I do my own decisions. I put my regulations in my house, do the budget, and pay the bills. In KSA, my husband did all that and I never knew the price of anything. Now I know!	صرت نفسي صرت صاحبة قرار أنا اللي أحط قوانيني بالشقة مثلا مثلا أقسم ميزانية الشقة هذا المبلغ لهذا الشيء فواتير أدفعها أنا فاتورة مياه في السعودية كان كل شي زوجي ما كنت أدري حتى عن السعر هله صرت أعرف كيف الفلس يطلع
My living in USA is full of advantages; even I do not want to go back to KSA. If my family was not there, and KSA is my country, and my work is there... I would not go back	ايجابية عيشتي بأمريكا كلها احسها ايجابية لدرجة اني ما أبغي ارجع السعودية يعني لولا انه أهلي هناك وانه هذيك بلدي وشغلي... ما كان رجعت.
The language is definitely important to help me in doing presentations and to understand	اللغة مهمة تساعدنا في التقديم و عشان نفهم.
I needed to improve my speaking skill even if I am pretty good in grammar and all the other English language skills	لأنو شوي سبيكنج مش مرة بيرفكت مع اني شاطرة بالمره في جرامر وكل شيء بس سبيكنج لا
nice to see other's culture. I would like to see how they think. I am curious to know. In KSA, we already knew each other. I would like to have [American] friends here.	حلو انك تشوفي ثقافات شعب أنا أحب أشوف ثقافة شعب آخر وكيف يفكروا وأحب عندي فضول هناك في السعودية عارفين بعض يعني وأحب يكون عندي صداقات

deal with Americans until [we] return back to home country	حتى نعرف نتعامل معهم لحتى نرجع لبلدنا.
terrorists... and underdeveloped.... Also, there is no advancement in Saudi Arabia or in Islamic countries	عنهم انه ارهابيين انه احنا متخلفين انه احنا ما عندنا تطور في السعودية والدول الاسلامية
She thought that we were still riding camels. I showed her pictures of the cities and she was shocked. She asked about driving cars. I answered, "Yes, we do not drive. We should, but we have our own drivers." She exclaimed, "Wow, like a queen!"	وحده مفكرة انه لسه عايشين على الجمال وطلعتلها صور المدن وانصدمت . ويسألوا عن السيارة والسواقة قلت لهم ايوا احنا ما نسوق المفروض انه نسوق بس عنا احنا سواقين يودونا قالوا واو مثل الملكة
There were two American female students in Ohio converted to Islam... they saw how friendly we are and found us different from what they used to hear from Media. Within two months, they converted to Islam	عن تجربتين في اوهايو ... وشافوا كيف احنا فرندي وشافوا غير عن الكلام اللي في تي في فسبحان الله خلال شهرين أسلموا .
She likes to have relationships with female Muslims wearing hijab	المسلمات فلما تشوف المحجبات تحب تكون علاقة معهم
When I was pregnant, they asked me "Which month are you now?" "Where are you from?" "Why you are wearing this [hijab]?" And they asked me about my religion and my hijab. ... The most frequent question I had been asked was: "Why do [Muslims] fast Ramadan?" I told them because of humanity and we would feel with poor people. It is their first time they came to know about these things and they are interested to know. Also, they asked me "Do you wear hijab when you are with your husband and family?" I answered them: "No, it is just with foreign men. Even, I can show you my hair because you are female."	يعني ما كنت حامل أكثر الناس اللي يجوني وأنا حامل يسألوني أي شهر انت ؟ وبعدين يسألوني من فين ؟ وشوي شوي يقولولي ليه لابسه كذا ؟ ويسألوني عن الدين الحجاب وشو كنت تجاوبهم ؟ أنا أحس انه عادي أعرف أجابهم شو الأسئلة اللي يسألوك اياها ؟مثلا أكثر سؤال جاني ليه تصوموا رمضان ؟ قتلهم أنه من باب الدين أنه من باب الانسانية نحس بالفقراء ونحس بالمساكين يعني هم أول مرة يعرفوا بهذه الأشياء فيجبوا هذه الأشياء يسألوني انت دايما تلبسين كذا مع زوجك ومع أهلك أقلمهم لا مو كذا هو بس عن الرجال الأجانب حتى انتوا الحريم ممكن أكشف شعري وكذا
Honestly, they are very nice.... We have study group and projects and I deal with them. I came to know them and they knew me, even by names... so if they saw me they would say 'hi, how are you?'	حلويين جدا صراحة... صار في جروب ستادي صار في ان بروجكت ويخلوني أتعامل مع الطلاب ويعرفوني وأعرفهم حتى بالأسماء يعني كنت معهم في هذا المادة كنت معهم في هذا فصل واللي بعده واذا شافوني يقولولي (هاي) كيفك؟
If my English language was strong, I would make many relationships with them,	لو لغتي قوية أعمل كثير علاقات
If I asked them a question, they would answer me. If I told them I did not get it, they would try to explain more	لو سألتهم سؤال يجاوبوني حتى لو قتلهم أنا ما فهمت يحاولون يوضحون أكثر
If they asked me a question and I do not understand it	ويسألوني سؤال وما أفهم عليهم
I have a good relationship with them. They would help me if I needed something because they know I have a difficulty in speaking in English language.	عندي علاقات جيدة معهم. يساعدوني اذا احتجت شي لانهم يعرفوا اني عندي مشكلة في المحادثة.

They come from work to class directly. When the class finished, they would be already exhausted and wanted to go home	أحس انو الامريكان مشغولين على طول يجون من العمل ويدخلون الكلاس. يخلص الكلاس خلاص يكونوا تعبانيين ويروحوا البيت
There was a female student from my study group who sat with me until my husband came and picked me up because my car was broken. We talked only that day. After that we did not have that much of continuous conversations	وحدة معاي من الجروب وكانت سيارتي خرابانة وزوجي رح يجييني فجلست معاي على أساس تواسيني يعني وسولفنا مع بعض لكن على طول لا
I used to go with her; even my female Saudi friends come with us	كنت أروح وأحي معاها حتى البنات يروحوا ويجوا معاها
Our relationship started four years ago and lasts until now, even I saw her last week. I feel comfortable with her and even my kids love her because she brings gifts every time she comes to see us	انها كبيرة في السن بس أنا جبيتها مرة وهذا الكلام من أول سنة اجيت فيه واستمرت العلاقة لين الحين توني شفتها الأسبوع الفات صار لنا اربع سنوات وعلاقتي معاها مرة مرتاحة معاها وأستفيد منها وأولادي بعد يحبونها لأنها ما تيجي الا لازم هدايا معاها
kept talking about the Bible, and started her own praying and wanted us to repeat after her and called Jesus 'Baba'	كبيرة لكن ظلت تتكلم عن بايبل وتقولهم خلينا ندعو وتقولوا (اوه بابا)
I have no problem to talk and know your religion because I am curious to know. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you invite me to Christianity or I invite you to Islam.	قلتلها أنا ما عندي مشكلة أتكلم وأتعرف على دينكم لانه عندي فضول بصراحة بس مو معناته انو انتي تدعيني للمسيحية وأنا أدعوك للاسلام
Lasted for a year. Then she [American friend] left the city. Now I have no American friends.	فمشيت معاها تقريبا سنة وهي راحت وأنا صرت يتيمة يعني ما في علاقات
They wanted to teach you, they called you ten times a day. I have no time for all that. The woman used to call me during my classes time and asked me to come and see her, so I stopped going	بس أنا يضيق صدري بسرعة لأنهم من كتر ما يبوون يدرسونك يطلبونك في اليوم عشر مرات بس أنا ما عندي وقت لكل هالشيء كانت تدق علي وقت كلاساتي تعالي أبغي أشوفك فصرت ما أروح
My hijab and religion make me differentiate in dealing with the boy and the girl. For example, I laugh with the girl, I go with her, and even I ride in the car with her, but with the boy- no way! I never laugh with him. I could discuss issues concerning my study only but not to ride in the car or talk with him. My religion prevents me from doing that.	يعني حجابي وديني خليني أنا أفرق بالتعامل مع الولد غير عن البنت. يعني البنت الامريكية أضحك معاها واني أروح وأحي معاها حتى اني أركب السيارة معاها لكن ولد امريكي مستحيل أنا أضحك معاها يعني ممكن أتناقش معاها بحدود المادة بس اني أركب معاها ولا أقول لان ديني يمنعي من هذا حتى حياتي (استحي أنا) يمنعي أنا أعدي هذا الخط

<p>Our own behaviors make them feel that you have to make space between us. It depends on the girl, I mean, if he saw her free then he would not make that space. For example, I do not shake hands with men, but some female Saudi students here do it. They do it because they said it is embarrassing not to do that. To me, I do not, and this is my space. If he offered shaking my hand, I would say, “sorry, this is my religion” and all their reaction concerning that is positive. They never took a stand against me. I heard some Saudi females complaining that American male students took a reaction by saying “okay why?” I have never experienced this kind of reaction. Maybe it depends on your way in dealing with that. If you said “no way!” that would be different from saying “sorry” which would help tender the situation. This is the basic of the space. Another example, if one American male asked to meet with me at 9:00 p.m. I would tell him I cannot, choose another time. I do not say I do not want to meet with you at night. I just tell him decide another time, which would make him wonder why she does not want to meet me at that time</p>	<p>يعني تصرفاتنا احنا يمكن كينت تخلي الواحد يحس انه ترى سوي بيبي وبينك سبيس وعلى حسب الوحدة يعني اذا شافها ممكن عادي يمكن ما يخلي هذا سبيس يعني مثلا أنا ما أسلم على الأولاد وفي بنات هنا يسلموا عشان يقولوا احراج وما احراج بس أنا ما عندي هذا أنا هذا سبيس حقي اذا أراد يسلم أقوله سوري ذيس از ماي ريليجن وتكون كل ردات الفعل عشان السلام تكون ايجابية بصراحة ما كانت انو ياخذ عني موقف وأنا أسمع بنات يقولوا لا أنا واحد أخذ عني موقف لما ما سلمت عليه باليد وصار يعاملني او كي ليه؟ أنا ولا مرة حصلي هذا ! يمكن على الأسلوب له قولتيله نو أي كانت تختلف لما تقويله سوري لانها تلطف الجو وهذا أساس سبيس . ويمكن كمان في الجروب معاي ولد مو اني أمنع التواصل معاه أبدا بس اذا قلي خرينا نجمع الساعة 9:00 بالليل أنا أقوله ما أقدر حدد وقت ثاني ؟ بس ما أقله أنا ما أبي اجتمع معاك بالليل . بس أقوله أنا ما أقدر خرينا لوقت ثاني هذا يخليه شوي يقول ليش ما تبي ليل يعني هذا ممكن يغير التفكير</p>
<p>The last time he saw me he asked me “what is wrong with you? You act as we are strangers!” and he put his hand on my shoulder. I was shocked. I am not used to this. I made a mistake by talking to him and allowing him to talk to me. I am the one who is responsible for letting him do that.</p>	<p>كذا آخر مرة شافني جه وقالني شو الدعوة احنا غريبين عن بعض ؟ وحط يده على كتفي وأنا مثل اللي يعني أنا مو متعوده كذا فأنا كأني غلظت اني سولفت معاه وأعطيته مجال يعني فتواخذت منه انه سوى هالحركة</p>
<p>From the first day we meet, we would learn about each other, visit, and help each other.</p>	<p>أول يوم نعرف بعض ونروح على بيوت بعض وزبي كده ونساعد بعض</p>
<p>If I saw a Saudi female student for the first time in the class, I would introduce myself and she would do the same. We would exchange phone numbers and become friends.</p>	<p>حتى لو وحدة أول مرة اشوفها في الصف أسألها هل ممكن نتعرف على بعض وأخذ رقمها ورقمي وخلص تصير علاقة</p>
<p>The first one who welcomed me when I came here was a Saudi female. Also, she introduced me to another one and the latter introduced me to another until we became a group</p>	<p>لانه أول ما اجيت هنا أول ما استقبلني سعودية وعرفتني على هذه وهذه عرفتني على هذه صرنا مجموعة</p>
<p>I know how to deal with them</p>	<p>وأتعامل معاهم مثل ما نفس أنا أعرف</p>
<p>I mean, I would not do mistakes and I know what to talk about</p>	<p>يعني ما بغلظ معاهم يعني أعرف شو هي حتى أعرف أتكلم معاهما</p>
<p>You have to be careful of what you are saying in front of them. You cannot be open and talk about everything with them. There are limits</p>	<p>أما الطرف الثاني تحاولي تكوني معاه حذر ما تقدري تكلميه على كل شيء ما بتصيري انفتاحية معاه وبتكوني بينك وبينه حدود</p>

If there were no Saudi friends, I think things would be changed. I would be alone and I had to have friends	لو ما كان في بنات سعوديات كان ممكن يتغير الحال وبكون وحيدة ولازم يكون عندي فرندز
They do not communicate with me directly; they have to communicate with my husband first. Then my husband would deliver the message to me	لكن ما يتواصلوا معاي على طول يتواصلوا مع زوجي وزوجي يتواصل معي أنا
I had enough friends and there is no need for more relationships	نعم لانه يكفيني اللي موجود وخلص انه ما في داعي لعلاقات ثانية
He [Saudi student] already knew me and expected I would not talk to him. He knew I would be shy	لانه خلاص عارفني ومتوقع اني أنا ما أكلمه اني أنا أستحي
We usually try to avoid them. We might talk with them about our studies if we were in a group, other than that no	أما الطلاب السعوديين عادة نحاول انه نتجنبهم وممكن انه نتكلم معاهم في أشياء عن الدراسة ومثلا نكون في جروبات عادي بس غير كده لا
May be his [the Saudi male] intention is bad. If I answered him, he would wonder, “why she is talking to me and the other girls do not!” “What does she have to share with me?” Then he would go to my husband and tell him “your wife told me this and that!” Even if I did not say something wrong. Also, my husband would not be happy if I talked with male Saudi.	عشان ممكن يكون ظنه سيء يعني ممكن يشوفني أتكلم يقول اش بها هذه تتكلم عادي . والبنات الثانيين ما يتكلموا وایش عندها تجلس تتكلم عندها عادي وأنه يعرف زوجي ويروحله ويقوله مرتك تتكلم كذا وكذا مع اني ما أقول شيء غلط بس أنا زوجي ما يمديه (يرضيه) انه أتكلم مع سعوديين .
I do not think they would accept to have other people in their group. Also, I have not tried to be a member of their group	ويكونوا مجموعات مع بعضهم ما أتوقع انهم يتقبلوا انه فيه ناس ثانيين يجوا معاهم وما حاولت اني أدخل معاهم
What gathers us is foreignness	هاي الغربية هي اللي تجمع
We are in the same boat. We came here to study and we need someone to help us so we feel with each other	تحسين انه احنا في نفس المركب .. جينا بلد ندرس ونحتاج الى احد يساعدا ونحس ببعض
How did you do in the exam?’ He might tell the other Saudi male students about my grades... this is not good. Women have their own privacy in the community.	كيف ساويتي في الاختبار ؟ يمكن يروح يقول حق الشباب ويعرفون درجاتي ويعرفون اذا أنا شاطرة مو شاطرة في الكلاسات مو حلو هالشيء يعني المرأة لها خصوصية ومكانتها في المجتمع
They [American teacher and advisor] see me as ambitious. They do not care if you are an international student or not. On the contrary, they praised my English language and me. They admired my education and my questions. ... My advisor told me the first time I met him to do my study plan and schedule, “Your English language is very good and the way you speak showed you are an ambitious student.	الدراسة فانهم يشوفوني طموحة يعني ما عندهم انه انت طلاب دوليين بالعكس يمدحوني ويمدحون حتى اللغة الانجليزية حتى تعليمي وأسألتي يمدحونها وتواصلني مع الأساتذة حلو جدا ويشجعوني. المشرف حتى أتذكر أول مقابلة معاه عشان أنقي المواد وأعمل جدولي حتى قلتي اللغة الانجليزية حقك جيدة جدا وانه حتى كلامك يدل انك وحدة طموحة
The teacher would only present his lecture then leave. If I needed him, I would go to his office during the office hours. I would ask him and he replied with patience,	اذا احتجتة أروحله للمكتب حقه في اوفيس أور وأروح أكلمه ويرد علي بصدر رحب ويجاوب علي سؤالي .

If I asked, they would reply with respect.... They treated me like others and even better	بس اذا رحنت سألت يجاوبوا بكل احترام... يعاملوني زي باقي الطلاب ويمكن حتى ما شاء الله أحسن
He told me “you do not have knowledge, what we do is difficult for you and you cannot do it.” I replied, “Just try me then decide.” Then he gave me an assignment to do. I told him I am going to submit it next week. He said, “This will take a month or two to be understood and you want to submit it after a week	انت ما عندك نولدج يعني احنا الشيء اللي نعمله مرة صعب ما أتوقع انك رح تقدر عليه قولتله انت جربني وشوف فلما أعطاني ورقة أنا أبغاك تسويها كذا قولتله الأسبوع الجاي احببها لك قلي هاه هذه ما تنفهم الا بشهر أو شهرين تجيبها انت في الأسبوع الجاى؟
What I heard and saw was that most professors here are Chinese and they would bring their own students and take them in their research studies	المشكلة اللي انا سمعته واللي شفته أغلب الدكاترة في الجامعة صينيين فكلهم هودل يجيبوا طلابهم معهم وياخذونهم معهم في بحوثهم
They would complicate things for you. This is what I did not like,	فيعقدون الأمور عليكي فهذا الشيء أنا ما حبيته
When I open the book, I do not understand what it is asking me. I read it but I do not know what is important	أفتح الكتاب ما أعرف شو المطلوب وأقرأ ما أدري شو المهم
I do not like to be a burden for the group. I like to share with them everything, even though I noticed they do not prefer having me in their group. Most of the time, they are afraid that I would do mistake while presenting. If the decision were theirs, they would not allow me presenting. But the teacher required each one of us to have a part in the presentation	أنا حتى مع اللي معاي أحب أكون في جروب أنا النقل عليهم ابي أشاركهم في كل شيء مع اني الاحظهم ما بيوني اني أساوي شي . أغلب الاحيان يعني يخافون اني أساوي شيء وأغلط حتى تقديم (بريزنتيشن) يحاولون أن لو كيفهم ما يخلونا نساوي تقديم بس دايما بشرط المدرس انه كل واحد يساوي التقديم
At the beginning, I was afraid because it would be difficult. I mean because of the language. I need to understand	في البداية كان صعب عشان اللغة . لازم افهم .
I had three achievement certificates from the dean’s list. This is success for me to have this. Also, the SACM had the same thing.... they gave rewards for the outstanding students	يعني عندي من (3) فصلز شهادة تفوق من دين ليست ل (3) فصل. فهذا نجاح لي اني أخذت دين ليست يعني للمتفوقين . وكذلك الملحقية عندهم هاذو الشيء ... يعني أنا أصير مميزة وأصير من المتفوقين عشان أخذ هذه المكافأة
They teach basics such as conversation and writing. When I enrolled in the university ... I needed to know scientific terminologies...which I did not study at IELC	جدا أنا في المعهد يعلموني أساسيات وكيف كونفرزيشن وكتابة بس لما دخلت الجامعة... ولازم اعرف المصطلحات علمية ... يعني ما درسته بالمعهد بس اتعلمته هنا
language and the speed of the language were different.	اللغة و السرعة كانت مختلفة
talk to us like kids	يتكلموا معنا زي الأطفال
My husband did not graduate from the IELC quickly. Male Saudi students faced difficulties at IELC, while females passed it quickly. Most of the female Saudi students, who were with me had passed the courses and graduated from the IELC. They did not face	نفسى زوجي ما تخرج بسرعة من المعهد الشباب عندهم صعوبات في المعهد بس البنات الظاهر احنا نمشي بسرعة أغلب البنات اللي معاي مشوا بسرعة وظلعوا من المعهد ما كان عندهم صعوبات في اللغة . وكانت درجاتي حيل ما كنت أذاكر كثير بس

difficulties. My grades were good even though I did not study very hard. We have the potential.	عندنا مقدرة في الموضوع
If you graduated, you would not be an English native speaker	إذا جيتي على المعهد ما رح تطلعي منه ناتيف
break the shyness barrier,	؟تحاول تكسر الخجل
There was no need, every time she went out to ask someone else to help her.... I told her, 'You speak and order food for yourself	يعني ما في داعي كل مرة تطلع تروح مكان لازم تستدعي حدا يساعده ... انت تكلمي انت اطلبي
Try to speak with American students and find topics to talk about with them. Ask at least a question. This would help you pick out the language.	يعني تحاول تتكلم مع الامريكان وتطلع أي موضوع معهم حتى لو بسؤال عشان تلقط اللغة مزبوط
They would give us summaries. I knew that all of it would be required, so I would memorize and focus on it	كانت تعطيك ملزمة و خلاص الملزمة هذه أعرف انها كلها مطلوبة أحفظها وأركز عليه
We have the book.... In the lecture, the teacher would read only her presentation. When we have an exam, most questions did not come from [the lecture], they come from the book.	وفي المحاضرة المدرّسة تقرأ العرض تاها فلما يجي الاختبار ما يجي منه كثير يجي من الكتاب وهذا العائق الكبير عندي
It is enough for me to attend classes, do the assignments, and do the daily revisions	انه كافي لي ان احضر الكلاسات و اعمل الواجبات و اعمل مراجعة يومية.
They [teachers] would only explain what is written in the slides. They do not explain what is in the book.	ولا يقولون الاشياء الا في الشرائح (سلايدز) بس . أما الكتاب ما يعطون ولا شيء منه
If I stopped at a question, I would recall what the teacher said in the lecture, but here ... teachers said nothing	شيء حتى لو وقفت عند سؤال في الاختبار اذكر في المحاضرة شو قالت المدرّسة أما هنا ... ما قالوا شيء !
I studied Medicine at a Saudi university for two years, so I have a good background in the English terminologies. Therefore, I did not face that much difficulties [in language] while studying here	انو أنا درست بالجامعة قبل كده في مكة و درست انجلش سنتين درست طب فكان كله انجلش و خلاص المصطلحات أعرفها فلما اجبت هنا ما تعبت كثير بالدراسة
When the teacher gave us the presentation, I would copy and paste on google then search. Then I would find out from where she got the materials.... I would find more illustrations as well as helpful notes	حقها فأنا أسويله نسخ (كوبي) وأحط أقواس صغيرة وأسوي بحث يطلعي من وين جابت هذا الشيء ... ألقى شرح أكثر وألقى الأشياء المهمة والملحوظات وفيه موقع اسمه كويزلت (كويزلت) أكتب كويزلت وأكتب اسم الفصل (تشابتر) واسم الكتاب تطلعي الأسئلة نفس الشيء
I used to have a lot of weekly writing homework ... The teacher wrote me a note to visit the writing center.... I started visiting it regularly then all my grades got raised	كثير كان عندي واجبات كثير كان أسبوعيا... وكتبت لي هي زوري مركز الكتابة وما كنت أعرف عنه فصرت كل مرة ارحله فصارت كل درجاتي عالية
use more teaching aids ...and provide supportive websites to help them understand the materials	أكثر يعطوهم وسائل تعليمية أكثر ومواقع تفيدهم في نفس المادة يلجؤون لها

Instead of giving the grade only on the exams or the project, they need to distribute it on the assignments, and short quizzes	يوزعوا الدرجات بدل ما يخلوها كلها على الامتحان أو على المشروع يوزعوها على الواجبات هذا يساعد
We as Muslims are not encouraged to attend such activities.... We consider most of their activities to be deviant	تحسين انه احنا كمسلمين ما نتشجع نروح لها.... فأغلب نشاطاتهم يعني احنا نعتبرها انحراف
My friends and I were planning to attend but when we heard that [serving alcohol] we changed our minds	يعني احنا كنا ناوليين نروح جماعة بس لما سمعنا كده تراجعنا
they might allocate specific time for drinking. I mean, when we leave they could drink. If I went, I would see drunk people	تراجعنا لو يحطون حدود حق الشرب عندهم أو يخصصوا وقت معين حق الشرب يعني لما نروح يروحوا يشربوا بس اني أروح وأشوف حد سكران عنها كأني بروح فلوريدا وكاليفورنيا ونيويورك يعني زحمة وشوارع وديزني وهذا اللي كنت أفكرها دايما
I expected Edge Park to be as New York, Florida, California. I mean there will be traffic, wide streets, and Disney	ويتشيتا فكانت صدمة مو مثل اوهايو. أحسها انها كمدينة من مدن السعودية.
When we came to Edge Park, it was a shock because it was not like Ohio. I felt it is like one of the cities in KSA	راحة أما هنا مدينة دراسية أحسن يعني حق الطالب ممتازة جدا. تبغي تستانس وهذا عندك مدن تسافر لها .
This is a study city. It is better; I mean it is excellent for students. If you want to entertain yourself, travel to other cities	أي شيء يلهيك عن الدراسة حتى انه يخلي الواحد نفسه يسافر ويشوف أشياء جديدة
There is nothing would distract you from studying here. Also, one would be more stimulated to travel and see new things	في بعض الولايات هذه المنحة ما تكفيهم لكن احنا الحمدلله كله يكفيني وزيادة يعني أدفع للسكن حقي والأكل وأرّفه عن نفسي وكل شيء بحدود يا اما يظل يا اما خلاص .
In other states, the salary would not be enough. But, here, thanks to Allah, it is enough and more. I mean I pay for residence, food, and entertainment	كنا ساكنين أنا وأختي وأخوي في شقة كنا نتقاسم الصرفيات ونقسم الفواتير على ثلاثة بالتالي سهلت علي من الناحية المادية
I was living with my sister and my brother in the same apartment. So, we used to divide the bills on the three of us. This helped me financially	ما توقعت انهم رح يعاملوني عادي بالعكس وهذا الشيء خلاني مرة أرتاح هنا
I did not expect people here would treat me normally. This made me so comfortable in living here	حاجة تكون الحياة صعبة اللي توه جاي أما أنا فخلص عندي خبرة وعندي لغة
I know everything. Life would be difficult for newcomers, but for me I have already had experience and English language fluency	

<p>In KSA, kids having same characteristics of my daughter's would be isolated. While here, they would be focused on. They may not pay that much attention to good students, as with my other daughter. They never called me concerning my second daughter. But with my first daughter, they would always call me to have meetings concerning her. Also, they would teach me things I never paid attention to. For instance, before she gets out of the car, I have to encourage her to greet [her teachers] and to raise her hand and voice.... Finally, she started interacting and giving high-five. She has been changed!</p>	<p>احنا في السعودية اللي يكون مثل صفات بنتي لا على جنب هنا لا يركزون عليه يمكن الطفل الشاطر ما يلتفتون اله أكثر يعني بنتي الثانية لأنها شاطرة ما يلتفتون لها كثير وما مرة استدعوني ما مرة يعني قالولي بنتك كذا كذا بس هذه دايم اجتماعات عشانها وحتى في أشياء يفتحون مخي عليها مثلا قبل ما تنزل من السيارة وصيها انها لازم تسلم لازم ترفع يدها لازم ترفع صوتها ... وتغيرت .</p>
<p>I was expecting my mom to come when I deliver my baby but now this possibility decreased to 20-30%. Even if I have a sister here, she would be busy with her studies and this is my first baby. These bleak possibilities made me think a lot, and I became tired of such thinking.</p>	<p>وكنت متوقعة انه أمي تجيني في وقت ولادتي الحين صار نسبة مجيئها 20%-30% حتى لو عندي أختي أختي تدرس وهذا أول واحد . وهذه النسبة اللي قلت من مجيئها خلنتي أفكر واجد وهذا التفكير قاعد يتعبني</p>
<p>In the U.S. life is different. If a female has a baby, she will have a new commitment and will be under more pressure</p>	<p>بس هنا في امريكا الوضع يختلف اذا الوحدة جابت عيال الوحدة لازم تلتزم وتتحط تحت ضغط أكبر</p>
<p>Male Saudi Quotes</p>	
<p>The scholarship motivated me to study abroad, so my work granted me a leave without salary and my job would still be available</p>	<p>البعثة كانت السبب لأنه العمل قالولي نعطيك اجازة بدون راتب ووظيفتك موجودة وخدمتك ماشية</p>
<p>you can study whatever you want without worrying about your GPA</p>	<p>انك انت تقدر تدرس التخصص اللي تحبه ما يهتمون بمعدلك الدراسي</p>
<p>academic achievement as an undergraduate was low, so my acceptance in the graduate program was not possible</p>	<p>لانه مستواي كان ضعيف في البكالوريوس وكان احتمال قبولي جدا ضعيف في الماجستير</p>
<p>I applied and they did not accept me. When I did readmission, they interviewed me and I was rejected for the second time</p>	<p>قدمت فرفضوني و عملوا معي مقابلة وبرضوا رفضوني مرة ثانية لما سويت ري-أدميشن</p>
<p>Unfortunately, in the first semester in that college they accepted only 20 students from hundreds. I had no luck to be one of them</p>	<p>لكن للأسف في أول فصل للبكالوريوس في الكلية ما قبلوا غير (20) طالب من المئات . فلم يحالفني الحظ اني أكون منهم.</p>
<p>In KSA, only two universities offered aerospace engineering. I applied to the first university and I was accepted, but because of some issues, I was not able to continue my studies there. Then, I applied to the second university and I was denied. I stayed in KSA for two years after high school without studying. Because I like this major, I did not give up.... I decided to study this major in the U.S. If you</p>	<p>وبالسعودية عنا جامعتين تدرّس هندسة طيران الجامعة الأولى قدمت عليها انقبلت وصارت مشاكل وما كملت فيها وجامعة ثانية صار فيها رفض ما قبلوني فظليت بالسعودية تقريبا بعد الثانوية سنتين من غير دراسة أنا حابب هذا التخصص فظليت وما استسلمت.... وفي أمريكا معاك فلوس خلاص تدخل اللي تبغاه</p>

have money, you can study whatever you want in the U.S.	
She was closer to me than my cousins. Because I graduated from high school, my father was worried about me,	وكانت هي الأقرب لي من أولاد عمي وكان أبوي مثل ما تعرفي واحد متخرج من الثانوية كانوا خايفين علي وما يريدون أن ينفلت من هنا أو هنا
My father studied his undergraduate and graduate studies in the U.S. So he used to tell me when I was a kid, 'When you grow up, you will study in the U.S.	الوالد درس في أمريكا . بكالوريوس وماجستير فلما كنت صغير كان يقولي لما تكبر رح تدرس هناك
I asked them how studying in the U.S. would be in general as well as about the requirements. They told me it was easy	سألتهم عن الدراسة بشكل عام و المتطلبات قالولي انها سهلة
They were convinced when I showed them that I completed my first semester and I was serious in my graduate studies	واقتنعوا بانني ورجيت لهم اني انهيت أول فصل لي هنا وانو أنا جاد في الماستر
I would be under the supervision of experts, so I would know where I am going. If I went by myself, I would not know where to go	ورح أكون تحت اشراف ناس خبرة أنا أعرف مساري لكن متوجه لحالك ما تعرف وين تروح
What would guarantee me that after spending four years studying at a university then they would tell me 'We were sorry... your diploma has not been acknowledged from that university.' What should I do then?	أنا ايش اللي يضمن لي بعد ما أتعب 4 سنين يجووا يقولولي معلش انت درست بالغلط ومش معترف فيها وشو أسوي بالشهادة .
The fastest way to be accepted in KASP is to choose the United States.	اسرع قبول هو التقديم على امريكا
If there were many Saudi students in the same university, students would be confined and tied to their Saudi group	لو كان في جامعة فيها تكدس طلاب كثير رح يكون الواحد منغلق على المجموعة اللي معاه
ease in admission to the graduate studies. They did not ask for GRE, GMAT, or any other difficult exams	سهولة القبول للطلاب للدراسات العليا لأنها ما تطلب جي آر اي وما تطلب جي مات وهذه الاختبارات الصعبة .
It is an academic environment, there are no entertainment places. Also, he enlightened me about the residence and all the details that anyone might need when traveling,	البيئة انه جوها دراسي مافي أماكن ترفيهيه وشرحلي عن السكن وشرحلي كل التفاصيل اللي الواحد يريد يسافر ويعرفها
They wanted us to experience the American culture, not only to hear about it, and then to transfer it to our Saudi community	عشان مش بس نسمع شو الثقافة الامريكية بل نعيشها ... وأنا أروح أنقلها للناس الموجودين هناك
through Internet search and its rank as a university.... MMU is good in business administration	تقريبا من خلال البحث وترتيبها حق الجامعة من خلال المواقع هي كويسه في ادارة الأعمال
Sometimes, when I needed to borrow money... I tried to manage without asking anyone....I felt responsible	اجت فترات صار اجباري أخذ فلوس من أحد حاولت أدبر أموري بدون ما أطلب من أحد... احساس بالمسؤولية

If I did not pay the rent, I would be thrown in the street. No playing games with such things	إذا ما دفعت الإيجار ممكن بكره أطلع بالشارع فهذه الأشياء ما فيها لعب
American students might have two jobs and still would go to school.... I rarely saw American students whose parents supported them financially	الأمريكان كيف عايشين تو جوبرز و سكول وظيفتين ويروح دوام نادر أشوف اللي أهلهم يدعموهم
I did not know how to register online...so I used to wait for someone else to register me for classes. I waited till the deadline passed	أنا ما كنت أفهم كيف أسجل مادة عن طريق النت وكيف أسجل للفصل القادم لكن كنت أقول لا خليني أنتظر فلان ويسجلني أنا ما أعرف . انتظر لحتى يروح الموعد .
What is the plan for tomorrow?’ is the most important question I ask myself. ...I had to wake up at that time. I had to finish my work at that time. ... when I got home I had to cook	أيش الخطة لليوم ؟ وهذا أهم سؤال بالنسبة لي أنا ...رح أفعد الساعة هذه رح أخلص الشغل هذا الى الساعة كدا... والساعة كده رح أرجع البيت رح يكون عندي طبخ
There is a system. ‘What will we eat today?’ ‘Who will be responsible for washing the clothes today?’ ‘Who is responsible for cleaning today?’	فيه نظام يكون شو رح يكون الأكل ؟ الثياب هذه مين المسؤول عنها والتنظيف مين المسؤول
you were in your country; you did not have to follow the rules. If you did not follow the rules and you had a problem, you would be able to control that issue	في السعودية يعني انت في بلدك يعني نظاميا ما تنقيد ولو ما تقيدت بالنظام وصارت لك مشكلة انت تقدر تسيطر عليها
the law here is stronger and obligatory. I tried to do the same in KSA but there was no pressure on us	لانه القانون هنا أقوى. هناك كنت أحاول بس ما في اضغط علي لكن هنا اجباري .
I mean when you drove a car without having insurance, you might be taken to the court and your license might be suspended!	انت لما تسوق سيارة وما عندك تأمين ممكن تروح للمحكمة وتتوقف رخصتك
When I was an undergraduate, I used to drive the car carelessly and did not pay attention to the rules in the U.S. Thus, my driving license was suspended three times for a whole year... I begged people for a drive	مثلا أنا كنت اسوق السيارة باستهتار وما اهتم للقوانين صار تعليق لرخصتي لمدة سنة ثلاث مرات فصار في مرحلة البكالوريوس مرة اسوق نص سنة لا استهتار فصرت أترجى الناس يوصلوني فتعلمنا خلاص
What helped me to change my personality was that I needed to go out and ask. I made many mistakes.... I never presented a speech in front of people in Arabic. Now with progress, I present a speech in English	والشيء ساعدني على تغيير شخصيتي لأنني كنت اضطر أطلع وأسأل وكنت أغلط كثير طبعا معروف وكنت تقريبا ما القيت خطاب أمام ناس في حياتي بالعربي الآن الحمدلله بعد تطور طلعت وصرت بالانجليزي
Foreignness taught me patience. I used to be inconsiderate, but with time I made mistakes and I saw the consequences	الغربة تعلم الصبر أول أنا انسان مندفع دائما لكن مع الوقت أكيد صار لنا أخطاء وشفنا العقاب .
You feel that even though he does not share with you the same religion, this does not mean that he is not a good person	هنا تحس انه فعلا هذا ما يشاركك نفس الديانة ولكن مش معناه انه انسان مو كويس
Saudis were controlled by one source of media	السعوديين متحكم فيهم نوع واحد من الاعلام
I looked from my point of view and from the other’s point of view so I could make my own judgment	أما أشوف حاليا من وجهة نظري ومن وجهة نظر أخرى عشان تعرف تقدر وتحكم بنفسك.

Interact with everyone regardless of his nationality. There are good and bad people. Do not judge people based on their nationality or religion	يخالط الجميع بغض النظر عن الجنسية . مهما تغيرت الجنسية فيه ناس طيبين وفيه ناس مش طيبين فما تعممي على جنسية أو ديانة
I do not know if the problem was from me. I mean there was no interaction between us unless we were in a group study	ما ادري المشكلة يمكن مني. لا يوجد تفاعل بيننا الا اذا كنا في جروب دراسي
Do not expect them to be your friends!	لا تتوقع منهم يكونو اصدقاءك
It was hard to fit in	لأنه صعب التداخل معهم
Media distorted the picture of Saudi people... and made Americans turn away from us	الاعلام شوه صورة السعوديين... و خلوا الامريكان يتجنبونا
Media showed Islam as a bad religion, which is not true	لأنه الاعلام عندهم يظهر الاسلام دين سيء على عكس الحقيقة
Whatever Saudi students said in the morning to change these misconceptions, the evening media dispelled. You do not know what to do or say	يعني تتكلم في الصباح يطلع في الأخبار شيء جديد يعني ما تدري شو تسوي مهما ترسم وتتكلم
represent Saudi Arabia in a good way. Each Saudi student does not represent himself. He represented Saudi Arabia as a whole country.... Thus, Americans would correct their negative perceptions about Saudi Arabia that is, terrorism	السعودية لأنه كل واحد سعودي ما يمثل نفسه هو يمثل السعودية . سوا كان تعامله كويس أو لا هو ما مثل نفسه أبدا هو مثل دولة كاملة.... وأفتح الناس على المفهوم الصحيح للسعودية لأنه المفهوم الخاطي منتشر بشكل قوي اللي هو الارهاب .
When Saudis invited Americans to his house to have fun, he would not understand it. We [Saudi people] would sit and drink tea. American people might be unfamiliar with these traditions	لما تقول لواحد نجلس في بيت و ننسب ما يستوعبها زينا العرب احنا نجلس نجيب براد شاي وهذه الجلسات ما يعرفونها .
Americans would be uninterested and bored. It would be hard to convince them of doing this,	الامريكي ما عنده الرغبة ولا الاهتمام اصلا صعب انك تجربه على الشيء هذا
uninterested to do social activities with international students	غير مهتم اني اعمل نشاطات مع الدوليين
Americans preferred to have enough space between you and them while having a conversation. If the Saudi student was too close, the American student would misunderstand him	مثلا الامريكان يحبون يكون فيه مسافة (سيبس) لما يتكلمون مع أحد أما السعودي تلاقيه يروح يلصق بوجه الواحد . تطلع أفكار عجيبة عند الامريكان
The family consisted of a mother, a father, a grandmother, a grandfather, a brother, and a sister. I lived with them the whole month of the Christmas vacation This gave me a big leap in improving my English language	وأهلي واللي تتكون من أم – أب – جد – جدة – وأخت صغيرة وأخ في الثانوية . سكنت تقريبا شهر مدة الكريسماس كامل.... ساعدتني على هذه القفزة الكبيرة باللغة وساعدتني أطور لغتي .
we do not need your help. I have the knowledge. I only wanted to share with you my knowledge.... I might have information that you might be unfamiliar with!	انا ما اني بحاجتك انا عندي معلوماتي بس اريد اشاركك فيها... يمكن عندي شي انت ما تعرفه
If alcohol was served, I would feel uncomfortable sitting in that place	واحد مادام هذا موجود الشراب أنا ما أرتاح بالجلوس

You are terrorists. We do not like you. Get out of here,	انتوا ارهابيين وما نحبكم اطلعوا
was sure that I knew the answer because I used to participate in the class and I understood. Yet, he chose to ask another American student who sat 10 meters away and not to ask me	بالدرس ويعرف اني فاهم ويشوفني اشارك بالكلاس وفاهم ما يسألني . يسأل الامريكان اللي مثله حتى لو يبعدوا عنه عشرة امتار ويسألهم هم ولا يسألني أنا
I was not interested to interact with them too!	ومن جهتي أنا ما كنت مهتم اني احتك معاهم
Some American students' behaviors were impolite. They ignored you and tried to avoid having you in their group. They had a concern about our English language proficiency,	الطلاب كمان بعض تعاملاتهم مش كويسة يعني يحاول يتجاهلوك خصوصا في الجروبات ما يعتمدون أو يتجنبون انه يدخلوا معك في جروب لأنهم يخافون عشان اللغة
People there were so friendly and I had many American friends. Here, I feel their gazes to me, as an Arabic person, expressed disgust	أحس نظرات الأمريكي كشخص عربي تشوف اشمنزاز منه
You are from a rich country whose people are stupid	أنت من دولة غنية بس شعب غبي
I had more chances to change these negative stereotyping	عندي فرص اغير هاي النظرة السلبية
She told me, 'It was so clear that Osama Bin Laden went out dancing happy of what happened to us that day!' She thought that Osama Bin Laden represented us as Saudis, which is totally wrong	كانت تقولي انه أسامة بن لادن واضح جدا طلع يرقص وفرحان باللي صار لنا وهم يعتقدون أنه أمثال أسامة بن لادن يمثلنا احنا كسعوديين ولكن غلط جدا
When someone feels with you, he becomes more cooperative with you	لما الواحد يكون حاسس بنفس الشيء يكون متعاون .
If I wanted to say a word in front of Americans, it would take time for me to say it. I need to think of it in my head and make sure that it is correct before pronouncing it. Whereas with international students, I feel it is fine to utter that word without thinking of it in my head	... يعني حتى لو عندي كلمة وحافظها أنا ومتأكد منها يمكن أمام أمريكي أنا أكون شوي تدور في راسي أحتاج وقت أتأكد منها قبل النطق فيها أما مع انترنت أحس انها عادي تعطيني الجراءة في استخدام اللغة
Once I began practicing English, I started speaking with Indian students. International students were easier to understand and comprehend than the native speaker,	أول ما بدأت أعمل ممارسة اللغة بدأت أتعلم مع الدوليين مع الهنود. كانوا سهلين الواحد أول ما يتعلم اللغة يشوف الطلاب الدوليين اسهل
If days go back, I would live in a dorm because you would make many friends there. I had friends who lived there and their English has been really improved	لو ترجع الايام رح اختار اسكن ب سكن لانو تكون اصدقاء. عندي اصدقاء سكنوا هناك و تحسنت لغتهم كثير.
My best friend is from Iran. We used to visit other friends especially in religious ceremonies.... Because we share the same religion (i.e., Islam), we became much closer	عندي صاحبي القريب من ايران وهو من أعز أصحابي. أحيانا نطلع نزور أصحابنا نقعد معاهم خصوصا في المناسبات الدينية كدرجة أولى... فالدين الاسلامي قربنا أكثر صار فيه شيء مشترك فصرت أطلع معه
a rap singer called Justin Bieber who drove his car while being drunk and drugged	مغني جاستن بيبير صارت له مشكلة ساق وهو شارب أو مخدرات .

We cooperated extremely well	نتعاون بشكل كبير
When someone took the course before you, you might use the materials that he had such as old exams and questions as a source for you	بالمساعدة مثلا واحد قبلك المادة تريد تستفيد منه بالأوراق والاختبارات القديمة والأسئلة القديمة تكون معاك كمرجع مفيد
You would keep conversing in Arabic. Thus, your English learning progress would be slow. When avoiding interacting with Saudi you would be forced to deal and interact with international and American students. You would have courage to speak English. You would be more motivated to learn English	وتعتمد على اللغة العربية وتسولف وتروح وتيجي . اذا ما . معهم والله ما رح تتعلم الا ببطء شديد اختلطت مع سعوديين غصب عنك رح تختلط بالأجانب الهدف يصير عند جراءة بالكلام باللغة الانجليزية بصير عندك الدافع تتعلم
I wanted to have a new experience. I lived in KSA and dealt with Saudi people.... Now, because I have tried the Americans, I felt more happy and comfortable with them	أنا أريد أن آخذ تجربة جديدة . أنا عشت بالسعودية وتعاملت معهم.... أنا جربت الآن الامريكان أنا مبسوط ومرتاح .
This is a four year chance for Saudi students. You might not value it until you return home and you would regret for wasting it. I mean if you went to the U.S. and interacted only with Saudi people then you would not see anything new. You would be the same as the student who lives in KSA...What is the benefit from coming here then	لانه هذه فرصة تقريبا اربع سنين للطلاب اللي رح يرجعون ما تعرف تمنها لكن لما ترجع رح تتحسر ... يعني تطلع امريكا وتطلع مع نفس الشعب ما شفت شيء جديد زيك زيه في السعودية ... ايش الفائدة انك تيجي هنا
When we spoke, her English was stronger than mine. She even told me about many experiences she had in the U.S. that was much more than I had. That made me sad	ولما صرنا نسولف انجليزي تااعها أقوى من انجليزي حقي بمراحل وثاني شيء تجاربها في امريكا والأشياء اللي تسولف لي عنها أكثر مني بمراحل أنا حزت في نفسي وكان فرق ليه كذا !
We arranged orientations for the newcomers every session. After they took the placement test at the IELC, we gave them a lecture about the regulations in the U.S.	عندنا محاضرات توجيهية للطلاب المستجدين كل فصل أو كل جلسة (سيشن) كل شهرين في المعهد . يعني طلاب المعهد ناخذهم بعد امتحان تحديد المستوى لغرفة ونعطيهم توعية عن قوانين أميركا
They arranged trips, gatherings, and cultural and sport activities. Once they reserved the bowling hall for four hours. You could go to the movie theater. So choose whatever you like	ورياضية الأسبوع اللي فات حجزوا قاعة البولينغ لمدة أربع ساعات في الجامعة . تقدر تروح سينما جمعات مع الشباب يعني أختار ما يناسبك .
Saudi club gave gifts to Americans on campus including the fire and police departments on campus. Unfortunately, I have not noticed any changes in their negative perceptions about Saudis	قاموا بتوزيع هدايا على أكثر من مكان وبالجامعة مثل بوليس ديبارتمنت و فاير ديبارتمنت كتعبير من مشاركة من النادي السعودي وقدموا هدايا للناس الموجودين هناك والشرطة والدفاع المدني هنا بس يعني ما حسيت انهم تغيرت نظرتهم
We told these centers, we provide you with students and you provide us with courses in management skills, business management, and engineering.... Saudi students paid \$300 for having such certificates instead of \$800	قلناها احنا نوفر لك طلاب وتعطينا أسعار معينة . دورات عن الادارة (مانجمنت سكيلز) وأشياء تفيد الهندسة وادارة الأعمال قبل فترة فيه دورة سعرها على الطالب 800 دولار جيبناها للطلاب 300 دولار

When American people saw a female or a male Muslim every day, they would start getting along with Saudi people. Also, their wondering would be reduced	مسلمين يعني الأمريكي لما يشوف كل يوم مسلم أو مسلمة أمامه التعايش يبدأ يسهل نظرات الاستغراب اللي كانت موجودة بدأت الآن تقل
Most Saudi people I knew went to KSA during Christmas vacation... The weather was cold and no one went out, so I felt depressed. I spent most of my time in the apartment lonely and on the Internet	أغلب الناس اللي أعرفهم رجعوا بالكريسماس ... الكريسماس برد وما حد يطلع صار عندي اكتئاب ... ما عندي حد أجاله كل وقتي بالشقة . وكل وقتي على الانترنت.
I was alone and no one was there for me. I was depressed and I wanted to go back home.... I concealed my emotions from my family because they can do nothing to help me!	اني كنت لحالي وما كان في أحد وكنت متضايق وأريد أرجع ... أهلي ما كنت أبينلهم على فكرة ما في ايديهم شيء
When you go there [counseling center], you would vent and release your feelings. The counselor would try to comfort you. I did not need that, I needed something else	تيجين تفضضين تطلعين اللي في بالك تحاول تواسيك وتطبطب عليك ما كنت بهذيك الحاجة أنا كنت بحاجة لشيء ثاني
Before I came to the U.S., I did not care about praying and I used to delay it. Now if the king was sitting with me, I would leave him and go praying	أنا قبل ما أجي أمريكا ما كان عندي اهتمام بالصلاة وكنت أخر صلاتي جيت هنا أتحدك لو الملك جالس صلاتي أخرها
I do not like to show anyone that I need something or there is something hurts me inside	بس ما أحب حدا يشوف اني مكسوف من حاجة وفيه شيء يؤلمني داخليا ما أحب أبين لأحد .
I came to know that if one focused on the old materials the night before the exam, he would pass the test without making any effort	فشفت اللي يركز على الأوراق السابقة ليلة الامتحان ينجح بدون ما يتعب
Unfortunately, I noticed this widely spread between Saudi students here at MMU. I am not pleased with their academic level. All that happened because of the huge number of Saudi students which made them help each other in this way	للأسف لقيته منتشر في هذه الجامعة بين السعوديين والمستوى الأكاديمي للسعوديين ما عجبني والسبب انه العدد الكبير للسعوديين صاروا يساعدوا بعض
would positively affect your academic level because challenges would give you experience.	فهذا الشيء كان له أثر ايجابي في مستواي الدراسي لانه التحديات تعطيني خبرة
they expected that you understand everything except minor things,	يتوقعوا انك تعرف كل شيء ما عدا اسياء بسيطة
I was studying in the class and studying outside the class. That time was Ramadan. I was living in the dorm. It was summer and the class was in the morning.	فأنا أنا كنت أشتغل جوه الكلاس وأدرس بره الكلاس خاصة انها كانت فترة رمضان وكنت ساكن في السكن وكانت فترة صيف وفترة صباحي
I took calculus one class in the summer with a tough teacher. His teaching was excellent and the exams were very challenging. I decided not to get low grades, so I started searching for a tutor	نزلت كالك وان في الصيف كان مع مدرس صعب شرحه كان ممتاز والاختبارات كانت بمستوى الشرح وجدا صعبة في هذه المرحلة قررت اني أتحرك عشان ما تنزل درجتي صرت أدور شخص مو بالكلاس يدرسنني ايدرسنني بره الكلاس بفلوس أنا لغتي ضعيفة بيمكا ما أفهم فلما حدا يشرولي
My English language is weak. I do not understand if	

explanation was not in Arabic	بالعربي غير لما يشرحي بالانجليزي .
We used to translate the PowerPoint slides through Google to understand.... What would you expect from students whose English is their foreign language	فكنا نرجع البوربوينت ناخذها نحطها في جوجل ونترجمها مرة مرتين لحتى نفهم ... ما تتوقع من ناس الانجليزي هي لغة ثانية
Every time I felt lazy, I remembered my parents. They expected me to get my diploma. I am an expatriate and they missed me. That gave me a motivation not ever to lie down	كل ما يجيني كسل أتذكر أبوي وأمي ينتظرون مني شهادة أنا ومتغرب وهم تعبانيين وأنا متغرب فهذه تعطيني دافع لا تستكين
I do not want people to laugh at me and say, 'he went to the U.S. and did not get a degree.' Also, I do not want anyone to be better than me	ما أريد حدا يضحك علي يقول طلع أمريكا وما جاب شيء وما أريد أي حدا يكون أحسن مني
This would mean that you had a problem. You were lost. You were playing there	بس عندنا بالسعودية خصوصاً لما ترجع من دولة أجنبية انت اذن عندك مشكلة انت كنت رجّال ضايع هناك ولعبت
There are some students who did not know when to enjoy their time and when to study. They thought they were here only to enjoy	فيه ناس ما يعرف متى يلعب ومتى يدرس فيه ناس يفكر انه جاي هنا فقط للعب
It would be a big mistake or an offence to the teacher if you told him that he mistakenly solved the problem. If I debated a case that he was convinced of, he would look down on me.	احنا في السعودية المدرس يعتبر انه غلط كبير أو خدشت كبرياءه اذا قلته انه هذه المسألة حلقتها غلط فاذا ناقشته بمسألة هو يعتقد انها صح فيطالعني بنظرة استصغار .
would destroy the innovation in us	وهذا يقتل عندنا الابداع
sent an email to all the students in the class and declared that he was wrong and the student was right. The teacher said, 'I apologize for this mistake,' and he provided the link	أرسل ايميل لكل الطلاب يقول ترى الطالب فلان كان صحيح وأنا أعتذر عن الخطأ وحط اللينك
In the exam, his intention was not to make things more complicated for you... He would come before the exam and tell you if you understood this chapter, you would be good to go in the exam	يجبك غالباً قبل الاختبار ويقولك لو فهمت هذا (تشابتر) الفصل أو الموضوع هذا رح تكون جيد في الامتحان
The office hours in Saudi Arabia are something strange. To me, I only heard about it when I arrived here... I came to know the benefits of it	احنا في السعودية الساعات المكتبية شيء غريب بالنسبة لي أول ما اجيت بس بعد ما رحنا اعرفت شو الفوايد اللي تيجي منها
fair even if you are Saudi or Pakistani	حقانيين كثير سواء كنت سعودي أو باكستاني
Teachers would ask about international students' experiences in their countries in classes... Teachers would ask us how this would be in Saudi Arabia ...to use as examples for the students	و بعض الدكاتره يبنسطوا بوجود عندهم طلاب دوليين حتى يسألوهم عن تجارب في دولهم... ويسألونا كيف هذا عندكم بالسعودية كيف هذا في دول أخرى ويستعملونها كأمثلة للطلاب
I do not think students would come in at midnight to play games on computers! They ate there and the smell would be stinky,	لأنني ما أعتقد ان طلاب اللي يجوها بالليل يجوها يتفرجوا ألعاب على كمبيوترات وكل واحد يدخل يجلس يأكل يعني الريحة مقرزة
It does not have restrooms even	فاتحين مكتبة 24 ساعة ما في دورة مياه .
have labs, but no one uses them. I took only one	يوجد معامل بس لا احد يستخدمها. اخدت كلاس واحد

class where I used my hands	استخدمت ايدي فيه
I took a class about dynamics. It was a theoretical class; the teacher explained and we had to imagine! I wish this imagination comes to be real	مثلا أنا أخذت كلاس كله عن دايناميك كله نظري رح أشرح لك وخيال . أتمنى انه هذا الشيء الخيال يصير حقيقة
Saudi people would show the types of clothes they wear as well as their traditions, which is good	السعوديين يظهر وا لباسهم كنوع من ثقافتهم و هذا جيد
More than 40 Saudi students participated in organizing that activity. We were able to encourage Saudi students to be engaged with the American community	وشارك فيه أكثر من 40 سعودي متطوع لتنظيم النشاط . كانوا ماسكين التنظيم لهذالك النشاط. قدرنا انه ندخل السعوديين مع المجتمع الامريكي .
I agree some should be punished, but do not punish the whole class	انا مع العقاب بس مش كل الصف
I called the IELC ‘The cemetery of Saudi students.’ They tortured the student... If a student was absent for two days, they would cut 5% from his final grade. This is not fair!	المعهد الانجليزي أسميه مقبرة الطلاب السعوديين يعذبون الطالب ... اذا الطالب غاب يومين تخصم من العلامة النهائية 5% ليش هذا حرام ؟
The presence of large number of students who have the same nationality and speak the same language would cause problems	وجود عدد كبير من الطلاب نفس الجنسية و يتكلموا نفس اللغة يسبب مشاكل
I came here to learn English. When I turned left I saw Saudi and when I turned right I saw also Saudi	أنا جاي أتكلم لغة كيف التفت يمين سعودي يسار سعودي .
The percentage of Arab students should not exceed a specific percentage. It would be difficult to have 90% of students speaking the same language in the same class	خلاص نسبة العرب ما لازم تزيد عن نسبة محددة لكن لما تجمع 90% من نفس اللغة هذا صعب .
The building was previously a bank ... it has five to six rooms. The capacity of each room is 18 students. Yet, the IELC has more than 200 students and it still accepts students!	المعهد مبني كان بنك ... فيه خمس الى ست غرف كبير هذه الغرفة الصغيرة مرتين بشيل 18 طالب. في المعهد بحدود 200 طالب وما زال القبول شغال !
There were very serious students and they earned good grades who retook the level especially the last levels. That made me wonder, ‘Why?’ There was no convincing reason except that he still had time in his scholarship	انا أعر فهم شخصا ناس جادين ودرجاتهم صح يسوا اعادة للمستوى خصوصا في المستويات الأخيرة. طيب ليه ما في أي سبب مقنع الاسباب واضح لسه باقي في بعثته فترة



Wichita State University
Institutional Review Board Approval
10/22/14 –10/21/15

Appendix D **Consent Form**

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study of the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university. I want to understand the full range of experiences of Saudi students while attending a U.S. higher educational institution.

Participant Selection: You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a Saudi student attending a U.S. university i.e. Wichita State University. Approximately 20 individuals are sought to participate in individual interviews.

Explanation of Procedures: In my data collection procedure, I am planning to have an individual interview with each Saudi student. If you decide to participate, the interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes. In case any clarification questions needed after reading the transcript, you may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview at any convenient time for you. At the interview, you will be asked a few questions concerning your experience as a Saudi student attending a U.S. university. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded. The transcript of your interview might be handed to you. This gives you the opportunity to give any additional feedback, add more comments, or make any necessary corrections.

Discomfort/Risks: There are no anticipated discomforts or risks associated with participating in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable with any question, you may opt to pass. During data collection, you are encouraged to be open in your responses. I will keep all responses confidential and your participation is voluntary.

Benefits: With your participation, you may benefit by gaining a better understanding of the experiences of Saudi students attending a U.S. university. Newcomers Saudi students who desire to pursue their higher education in U.S. may also benefit from understanding these experiences. In addition, this study could inform higher education policy and practice to enhance Saudi students' education in the U.S. The results of the study may be published in scholarly journals.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. A pseudonym will be

assigned in my study to maintain your confidentiality. All the digital audio-recorded interviews will be stored in a secure online password protected location. These data collected digitally will be retained for a minimum of three years. Some male participants who may hesitate to sit alone with me as a female for the interview for cultural and religious reasons, I will ask a colleague of mine who does not speak Arabic to join us. Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be

released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board.

The researchers may publish the results of the study. If they do, they will only discuss group results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me, Hala Alsabatin, (316-461-1002) hyalsabatin@wichita.edu or my advisor, Dr. Jean Patterson at 316-978-6392 and jean.patterson@wichita.edu. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date:

Witness Signature

Date: