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An Educational "Clip": Arab Students' Experiences of Curriculum in a U.S. University

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AN EDUCATIONAL “CLIP”;
ARAB STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF CURRICULUM IN A U.S. UNIVERSITY

by

DAAD ADEL RIZK

(Under the Direction of Grigory Dmitriyev)

ABSTRACT

This is a multicultural study of culture adaptation, language challenge, identity formation, and power struggle -”CLIP”- depicting three Arab students who have attended or are currently attending a University in the rural South East Region of the United States of America (circa 2009-2010) When Arab students go to college in the United States of America, two cultural extremities (East and West) meet and attempt to form relationships; two different languages, Arabic and English, written in opposite directions search for a middle page to help them communicate. Books in the Arab World are read right to left, while pages in the West are written left to right. Beliefs in “*No God but One God*” have to comprehend the complexity of the “*Holy Trinity*”. The purpose of this qualitative study is to construct meanings from personal experiences by Arab students; to explore the cultural transformational process of adjustments to the U.S. university curriculum; to unfold the process of reconciliation of vast differences between the two cultures. “*Guess who is coming to dinner*” takes on a new meaning in a complex multicultural diverse environment.

Diversity provides opportunities as well as challenges; it offers multiple possibilities to

acquire new knowledge and to re-examine current ideals (Banks, 2001; Cummins, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Garcia, 1998). Concurrently, diversity arise racial prejudice and discrimination as challenges for multicultural way of living (McCarty, 1990; Sleeter, 1991; West, 1988). Universities are ideal places for diversity to meet, tell personal stories, exchange customs and ideals, and savor the bitter sweet taste of cultural contact. The research shows that the complexity of the cultural transformations of the three Arab students depends upon the cultural heritage they bring from their countries – Saudi Arabia (conservative authoritarian monarchy culture), Jordan (culture of liberal monarchy), and Israel (democratic culture). The study of this complexity based on the “CLIP” model provides a more complete insight of cultural transformation in Arab students. The “CLIP” concept is a new approach to understanding marginalized groups that go beyond cultural groups. The “CLIP” concept can be used in other disciplines to study many different aspects of these disciplines.

INDEX WORDS: Arabs, Arab students, Arab students in the south, U.S. university curriculum, Students’ adjustment to college, East and west, Culture, Power, Culture shock, Culture transformational process, Language, Education, Academic, Identity.

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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by

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Electronic Version Approved:

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DEDICATION

For

My Parents: my raison d'être

My Daughter: my inspiration for living

And for all those who believe in humanity as the ultimate source of knowledge, peace, wisdom, and grace; who embrace all living creatures and nature with compassion.

“...And for all those who believe that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart” (Obama, 2009).

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“Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children.” (Gibran Khalil Gibran)

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I extend my gratitude to the participants in the study, my Arab friends who gave their time, knowledge, and their hearts to make this study possible. I appreciate the shared laughter and tears that wrote every word and weaved every sentence.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	7
LIST OF TABLES	10
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	11
Autobiographical Roots of My Inquiry	15
Justification of the Topic	21
Purpose and Context of the Study	24
Research Questions “CLIP”	29
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	30
Multiculturalism in Education	30
Education of Arab Students in the United States	38
Cross-Cultural Narrative and Narrative Inquiry.....	47
3 METHODOLOGY.....	50
Multiculturalism as a Theoretical Framework	50
Selecting Participants, Criteria and Methods	54
Participant from Israel	55
Participant from Jordan	57
Participant from Saudi Arabia.....	63
Collecting Narrative Stories	66
Analyzing Emerging and Recurring Themes of “CLIP”	68
Limitation of the Study.....	69

4	“CLIPS BY THREE PARTICIPANTS.....	70
	An Educational “CLIP” from Nazareth, Israel.....	72
	An Educational “CLIP” from Irbid, Jordan.....	82
	An Educational “CLIP” from Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	96
5	REFLECTIONS ON INQUIRY	114
	REFERENCES	129
APPENDIX		
A	Research Questions “CLIP”	137
B	Specific Challenges	140
C	Definition of Terms	143

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Analysis of Student Enrollment	52
Table 2: Country of Origin	53

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Culturally diverse students are disempowered educationally in very much the same way that their communities have been disempowered historically in their interactions with societal institutions...[A] genuine commitment to helping all students succeed academically requires a willingness on the part of educators, individually and collectively, to challenge aspects of the power structure in the wider society (Cummins, 1996, Preface iii)

Some individuals might challenge the notion that the United States of America offers a quality higher education system through its colleges and universities, but many will agree that receiving college education in the U.S. universities is extremely attractive to other nations in the world including the Arab world. Western knowledge has increased in demand as the world continues to become global and interconnected economically, politically, and socially, which becomes evident in the continued increase in international students applying for students' visas and enrollment in universities yearly (SEVIS, 2008). International students, including Arab students, who choose to study in a U.S. university, are subjected to the same core curriculum classes as permanent U.S. citizens of various backgrounds, with few exceptions of degrees not offered to non-citizens as in the case of national security knowledge. On the average, most universities do not deliberately tailor their curriculum, or tailor very little, if any, to meet international students' cultural and academic needs, because their major mission is to educate their nations' citizens. Hence, it is left up to each student, citizen or non-citizen to experience college life as each individual sees fit. One obvious exception in the outcome of such experiences is that F1 or J1 visa holders can go back to their perspective countries and cultures; their stay in the

U.S.A is temporary and usually goal oriented, but the effect of their experiences on their lives, in many cases, is permanent. In general, international students, including Arab students, are not considered a part of the U.S. mainstream curriculum; instead, they are viewed as “*add on value*”, economically more so than culturally. In a sense, they are clipped on to the U.S. educational system. A clip on is an attachment to something, but to clip off something is to cut it off from its source. This idea of living and feeling like being clipped resonated in my thoughts since the day I left my home country and arrived to the U.S.A. in search of higher education. I was clipped away from my own culture and language and clipped on to the Western way of life extended by the educational curriculum. I have always wondered whether, other international students in general, and Arab students in particular, felt the effect of the “CLIP” as much as I did.

As I was preparing to write the introduction to this dissertation, I wanted to use technology as a mean of communication by finding a video clip that represented my conceptual framework of my intended dissertation. The wonderful world of the Internet led me to a video clip documenting an unprecedented reality television show to air in the Middle East about four Arab students traveling on the road in America (http://www.sundancechannel.com/series/on_the_road_in_america). The purpose of the reality show was to expose Middle Eastern audiences to diverse cultures of the United States. The participants were set to explore differences and similarities between their worlds and the people and places they visited, from the Hamptons to downtown Los Angeles. (Appendix D). In the process, they recorded their personal experiences as they dealt with issues of culture, religion, norms, beliefs and perceptions.

Behold, the word “CLIP” developed as both an acronym and a concept portraying

my main research question: How do culture, language, identity, and power “CLIP” impact Arab students’ experiences of curriculum in a U.S. university? The effect of the “CLIP” on Arab students’ experiences of curriculum in a U. S. university is the phenomenon in quest. There is no doubt that adjusting to a new culture is a unique experience that differs with each individual, but the stages that form the process of adjusting have been identified in many theories; Lewis & Jungman (1986), Hall (1976), Brislin (1981), Oberg (1960), and others have described the process of adjusting to a new culture in terms of stages or steps that most individual undergo that are basically measured with the passage of time.

It is important to state that curriculum is being used here in its broad definition, as accepted by contemporary theorists (Pinar, Apple, Gay, Green and others) who developed the concept of curriculum, as an umbrella term to cover all aspects of one’s daily living which is not limited to the school curriculum only. Post-modern views of curriculum acknowledge the importance of the course of experiences that form human beings into persons and allows for the personal formation via curricula to be studied at the personal or group level. It is also as important to mention that I have used the word experiences instead of experience to indicate that each of the participants experienced the transitional process differently from one another. Hence, the end result included three different experiences. In this study, I will research three Arab students, from three different nations in the Middle East, to further understand and document their experiences of curriculum in a U.S. university, coupled with issues of culture, language, identity and power. Even though these issues challenge most students, international and domestic, I will focus on Arab students for several reasons:

First, there are strong cultural boundaries between most Arab countries and the U.S. which directly influence the process of adaptation and ease of adjustment. These cultural boundaries are evident in the vast differences (contradictions) in history, language, religion, social, economic, and political ideologies between most Arab countries and the U.S.

Second, most Arab countries, even those that are on a friendly term with the U.S, maintains a strong cultural, religious, and national characteristic (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait), which in turn impact the level of students' participation in the cultural and social dynamics of the host country.

Third, the events of September 11 contributed to the complexity of the process of adjustment by Arab students to the U.S. curriculum, and added issues of profiling and stereotyping to other challenges. Global power is embedded in education practices which directly impact students' experiences of curriculum. Although, power is not addressed separately due to the limitations and focus of this study on the process of cultural transition, power is intertwined in all aspect of curriculum, education, and life in general.

Fourth, adjusting to a new culture is a personal experience that differs from one individual to the other. There are some common characteristics such as culture shock, homesickness, depression, alienation, feeling of internal loss, identity transformation, and language challenge that most individuals experience in various degrees depending on the strength of boundaries between the native and the host cultures.

Fifth, there is a gap in the knowledge, due to lack of academic research, in the area of Arab adaptation process to other cultures, especially Arab students' adaptation. Research has been abundant in the area of acculturation and assimilation from the

mainstream western perspective, but not as prevalent from the perspective of marginalized groups, known as “*Others*”, including, but not limited to, Arab students.

Autobiographical Roots of My Inquiry

I was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, the middle child of a family of five. My father was a policeman and my mother was a seamstress and a homemaker. Neither of my parents had formal education; my father learned to read and write when he joined the army at the age of eighteen; my mother knew how to sign her name and take down measurement for dress making which she learned on her own. My parents were determined to provide us with educational opportunities they never had; they insisted we stayed in school as long as we could and encouraged us to reach for the highest degrees to become professionals; they perceived education as security for our futures. Besides going to school year around, and helping my mother with house chores, most of my childhood memories were filled with war stories and political unrest. I was eighteen years old when the civil war broke out in Lebanon and changed the course of my life. I was the first of my family members to leave Lebanon reaching for college education in the United States of America. The adjustment process was painful and unforgettable, I had to reconcile issues of culture, language, identity and inner and outer power struggle that left me feeling lonely and estranged, trying to live in between two opposing ways of life. I experienced the effect of the “CLIP”; being clipped off my native home land and clipped on to the unknown. Acquiring new knowledge in a very short period of time was vital to my survival and existence. I still remember very vividly the basic cultural

differences that greatly impacted my personal and educational experiences as I attended college back in 1977. I experienced the first four of the five stages of culture shock as listed by Oberg (1973): Honeymoon, Rejection, Regression, and Recovery. I never experienced the Reverse phase of culture shock since I never went back to Lebanon.

Once the Honeymoon phase faded away quickly, I had to reconcile my pre-arrival perception and expectations to the reality of studying in the U.S. Initially, I experienced homesickness and physical stress as I tried to adapt to a new academic regimen that was totally different from the schools I attended in Lebanon. Term (quarter or semester) based educational system was a novelty to me, since most schools in Lebanon used the cohort system. Students in Lebanon had to carry a predetermined number of classes that included math (algebra, geometry, calculus, trigonometry), language (Arabic and foreign), science (biology and natural), geography, history, and religion for a full year, and at the end of each year, students had to pass national exams in those subjects to be admitted to the following grade. This fundamental difference in academic structuring of subject matters resulted in the need to adjust to a faster pace of learning, for a shorter period of time, versus a slower pace for a longer period of time as I did in Lebanon. The structure of the curriculum in Lebanon was somewhat spontaneous and flexible instead of planned and rigid. Actually, one of the national characteristics of Arabic culture, known to all Arabs, is lack of order, planning, preparation, and organization of activities, justified as flexible, adaptable, and vulnerable. The first time I was presented with a syllabus for a class for the full semester, I did not understand the value or the purpose of it. Class assignments were given daily or weekly in Lebanon depending on teachers' discretions. We never followed a pre-planned schedule, because we never knew when

school would be interrupted by political unrest or a civil war.

Second, I had to adjust to the instructional delivery of the educational materials which placed the responsibility of attaining knowledge on the students while professors acted as facilitators, not holders, of knowledge as they did in Lebanon. Testing formats that used True/False or Multiple Choices were detrimental to me, because the concept of such a method of testing was totally foreign to my knowledge base. I was not programmed to think of issues as black or white. All concepts, educational or social, were open for debates in Lebanon due to the diversity of groups which resulted in multiple realities.

In the area of language, I faced serious challenges that began with the need to learn to think in English instead of thinking in Arabic and then translating to English. I knew English words, but I did not know how to think in English. Style was very important to learn because in Arabic, the structure of sentences and words run in an opposite direction than in English. For example: “*A beautiful night*” translates into “*night beautiful*” in Arabic. Although, the meaning is conveyed in both sentences, using “*night beautiful*” in an essay would cause a student to receive an unfavorable grade. Another challenge was to understand the differences in verbal and written communication preferences between Arabic and English. I had to learn that the purpose of a language was not simply to communicate, but to convey the cultural understanding embedded in the use of language. As an Arabic speaking person, I used to rely on symbols instead of accuracy, emotional resonance instead of technical, abstract instead of concrete. I needed to learn the explicit way to convey messages in English, a language used to transmit information, unlike the implicit way of Arabic, a language used to create

social experiences. I had to learn to speak directly, simply, and factually, instead of indirectly and in circular. I had to learn that the responsibility of understanding was placed on the speaker of the English language instead of the listener of the Arabic language. The most difficult task for me was (and still is) to stress organization of a beginning and an end since the Arabic language does not stress such organization.

Issues of identity development presented an upheaval of challenges that started with the need to redefine who I was, and who I was becoming, as a functioning person in a society that had different norms, values, and beliefs than mine. I had to redefine the value of time, space, work, individualism, competition and relationships. I endured feelings of internal loss, alienation, rejection, discrimination, and recently (after 9/11) stereotyping and racial profiling. My identity was transforming slowly but surely. My cultural and personal characteristics that identified me as Lebanese were fading gradually to allow me to adapt to the host culture in an effort to belong to the host society. This transformation process caused me to experience an internal identity struggle between the person I was as a Lebanese, and the person I was becoming as an Arab-American. Some of these issues were irreconcilable such as personal and sexual freedom, or the ability to make decisions independent of one's family. I was unable to conform to various social norms that were prevalent in the host country, but totally prohibited in my native culture, such as dating or casual relationships, simply because I was culturally programmed to be Lebanese, and was taught to follow specific culturally and socially accepted behaviors. Finally, I decided to pick and choose what would fit my own needs to prevent my authentic identity from dissipating, but would still allow me to function in the host culture. The solution in my personal situation was to accept the idea that I am a "CLIP"

to the host society. I will always be clipped instead of fully assimilated. Some of the contradictory issues were severe to resolve, for example, I was raised to believe that women were subordinate to men. It took years of internal struggle, and mental reprogramming, to accept the notion of gender equality in all of its aspects: personally, sexually, economically, socially, and professionally. In order to accomplish this process of transformation, I had to learn to change my thoughts process, not only by evaluating the knowledge I had, but also by acquiring new knowledge, which in turn changed my identity and made me the person I am today. I had to fight back with the only weapon I possessed; that was education. I reached my goals academically and professionally, and struggled through every step of the way to prove myself to people around me and earn enough trust and respect to be accepted in a world I did not grow up in, but grew up on me over time. After years of internal struggle, I realized that I would never totally belong to, or be considered a part of, the main stream culture of the U.S. I am a clip on, and will forever live the effect of that “CLIP”.

Through my current position as the Director of the Bursar’s Office at a known university, I began to meet Arab students (among other students from all walks of life) who would come to the office on Business or sometimes just to meet me because they heard a “Lebanese” woman was in charge of the Business Office. We seemed to connect (Arab students and I) under the concept of “*group identity*” (Berkowitz & Barrington, 1998) After all, “*ethnic groups are networks of individuals sharing some form of common tie – such as language/and or religion/or common geographic origin that they use to define themselves in relation to the surrounding society, and that, in turn, is used in its broad outlines by the rest of that society to define them*” (p.18). I was an Arab; I was one

of them. They saw me as an Arab, I saw myself as an Arab-American.

I found myself re-living the process of adjusting to a new culture vicariously through each one of them, as I got to know them and watch them go through their experiences, as I did go through mine decades ago. Each student was going through a different stage of adjustment, some were dealing with the issues relying on their self confidence and determination; others were discouraged and needed someone to listen to their challenges. I considered myself lucky that they trusted me enough to share their struggles, trials and tribulations, but each time I heard one of their stories, I wondered why things had to be that way?. I started to question whose responsibility it was to help guide these students. They were not a part of the mainstream educational system; they had been clipped on to the educational agenda, and they were feeling the bitter-sweet effect of the “CLIP”.

More questions came to me: Who benefits from their stay in the United States? Who loses? And most importantly, whose knowledge are they trying to acquire, and how do they adjust through this complex, intense, and exhausting process? True, they are here temporarily, four or five years at the max, and most likely will return home after graduation, but how they experience this part of their lives will affect them and their families, countries and nations forever. They were dealing with issues of culture, language, identity, and power struggle in a multicultural environment, but they did not realize what it all meant or who had the answers. They were living each day trying to make sense of their environment not knowing that each step of their stay in the U.S. was engineered by higher discourses such as cultural differences, language challenges, identity transformation, and the ultimate “puppet master,” the political power that shaped

each and every one of their destinies.

These students were living the drama of the “CLIP” as I did years ago; the only difference was the time and place of these experiences. I went through mine in the seventies as the world watched the Middle East go through political turmoil; the West was going through energy crisis, and the U.S was readjusting to a new social order after the civil right movement. Today, under new international conditions, Arab students studying in the U. S. are experiencing the process of adjusting to a new culture, language, and dealing with issues of identity and power as the world around them is watching the war in Iraq and Afghanistan as a counteract of Sept 11, the West has continued to go through energy crisis and the U.S. is recovering from an economic downturn. Given the present political, economic, and social unrest in the U.S. and abroad, Arab students attending U.S. universities are facing an upheaval of challenges that surpass the normal challenges of gaining education. Their educational experiences may vary but might share additional complications embedded in the process of adjustment, and magnified by these new international conditions. Hence, there is a need for additional research to understand the phenomena of their experiences through telling “their stories of adjustment to the U.S. curriculum.”

Justification of the Topic

The United States of America faces challenges as well as opportunities on a global level to regain its position as the world’s leader in mending relationships and building better bridges among nations, especially between East and West. This was evident during Obama’s visit to Saudi Arabia and Egypt in 2009 as he delivered an

invitation to re-open better relations with the Arab world in general and the Muslim world in particular. He delivered a speech at Azhar University in Cairo in which he used Arabic salutation, phrases, and quotes from the Bible, Quran, and Old Testament in an attempt to project some sense of global unity. These challenges and opportunities are poised in the United States' cultural, political, social, religious, economical and educational systems as viewed by other nations. One of the most effective means to transform relationships is the exchange of knowledge and culture through the educational system. Hence, the U.S. American curriculum is a vital vehicle that can be utilized to eliminate misunderstandings and to encourage communication among nations; or it could offer negative experiences which could further complicate those relationships. Hence, researching personal experiences of Arab students seeking education in the United States can help illuminate a history of mistrust based on perceptions offered by the media instead of educational research. The lack of understanding between East and West has bred fears on both sides in the hearts and minds of the people; thus, exploring personal stories of Arab students seeking education in a U.S. university curriculum, facing triumphs and tribulations can help alleviate those fears in leveling the field for all parties involved to interact on a human level. Research of personal stories that stem from cultural, political, social, religious, economic, and educational issues, without the intent to generalize, can and should offer an opportunity for further understanding cultural differences in researching Arab students' experiences of curriculum in the U.S.

Arab students' experiences of curriculum are closely coupled with the political conflicts between the United States and the Arab world. For years, the U.S. American public, informed by its government and the press, has followed the "Middle East

problem” mainly from the perspective of Israel with little justification or empathy toward the Palestinian people’s right to statehood. Israel has always been considered a strong ally of the United States of America. This, by definition, excludes the Arab nations from establishing friendly relationships with the United States. The connection between the West and Israel is based on religious, cultural, political, and economic common understandings and interests, which is lacking between the West and the Arab world in general. From an Arab perspective, the United States of America claims to champion human rights of the world yet allows the unquestionable Israeli domination over the Palestinian people. The general feeling in the Arab world is that, not only the United States of America supports Israel, it supplies it with weapons for self-protection against people whose only weapon till recently has been rocks hardened with tears of human sufferings.

Israel shares religious and cultural commonality with the Western world which is not shared between the East and West. Religion is a big part of this lack of commonality, most of the West and Israel is based on Christianity and Judaism and most of the Middle East is based on Islam. The lack of awareness and misrepresentations on both sides created a great human fear of the unknown in East and West. The West fears Islam and taints it as “terrorist” while the East fears the West and accuses it of corruption, domination, and unjustified invasion of other free nations. This friction between East and West is no longer a political and military issue, but it has spread unjustly among people of the two worlds on a social, cultural, and educational levels. The best solution is for both sides to open their minds and surrender to dialogue to gain knowledge of each other’s ideologies and principles. As Freire (2004) said, “*I engage in dialogue not*

necessarily because I like the other person. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing.” (p. 17) I personally believe that the most qualified representatives of cultures are students; they are not only ambassadors of their own countries, they are the holders of future knowledge and best developers of future curriculum in education and life. The most promising rhetoric is to start by listening, because often times, we start by dictating and judging even when we don't have all the data, stories, information or knowledge necessary to formulate an opinion.

We would not really know till we hear stories from different perspectives from Arab students who have dared to cross borders and spend time on the other side of the ocean. An educational “CLIP” will try to share human perspectives on personal experiences of multicultural mingling and cultural exposure to different ways of life and living. Listening to personal stories of life experiences build a foundation of cultural understanding and establishes the pillars for common trust and to venture beyond fears of the unknown. Silence, a sign of hesitation and mistrust at times, can be a powerful listening device, but lack of response is what causes friction among cultures. Therefore, through dialoguing, people reach commonality and establish possible steps toward justice for all humanity. Such personal interaction is the best way to break down the stereotypes that stand in the way of greater cooperation and understanding between opposite cultures.

Purpose and Context of the Study

The purpose of the study is to construct meaning from personal experiences by

Arab students and to get the insight of the transformational process of adjustments to the U.S. university curriculum. The cross-cultural adaptation outcomes are closely evident in the reconciliation process within one's own culture, language, identity and the challenges created by inner personal power struggle in a global world full of cultural contradictions. A multicultural approach (Banks, 2001; Cummins, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Garcia, 1999; Gay, 2000; and Nieto, 2000) is adopted using the theoretical foundations of structural sociology and anthropology with emphasis on the process of adjustment to a new educational system in a new culture. Using a narrative inquiry approach to explore the cross-cultural phenomenon (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; He, 2002), the following aspects concerning adjustments will be explored: (1) cultural values, (2) language challenges, (3) identity transformation, and (4) the role of power in dealing with inner and outer struggles to reconcile political and religious differences between the two cultures. The intention is not to develop a generalization about the experiences of Arab students with regard to the U.S. university curriculum, rather, the intent is to study the experiences of a few and from that investigation to raise some questions and challenges about the experiences of the many. An educational "CLIP" extends beyond the initial and major notion of looking at Arab students' experiences of curriculum to explore the triumph and tribulation of human lives affected by cultural, language, identity, and power. In doing so, my intent is (1) to challenge the political power structure and U.S. "CLIP" domination that cripples educational equity and justice for Arab students in a similar fashion as other ethnic minorities (McCarthy, West, 1988 ; and Sleeter, 1995); (2) to challenge U.S. universities to become more deliberate in maximizing positive multicultural experiences for their students' guests; and finally (3) to challenge the host

institutions to become more accountable in refining its multiculturalism in education.

The U.S. American educational curriculum was designed to fulfill the needs of its citizens who shared common characteristics. Under such structures, U.S. born American citizens have a better chance to learn in schools than do students who have different cultural characteristics. Arab students, among other minorities, face a multitude of challenges that they have to overcome to be able to participate and succeed in the U.S. American educational system. At times, when different and/or opposing cultures meet, conflict or need for reconciliation becomes expected outcome. The essential basic literacy and numeracy skills become the lesser important part of education, knowledge of norms and values take center stage in enabling groups of diverse backgrounds to live and interact respectfully and meaningfully. One of the major challenges that Arab students have to overcome is associated with the September 11 attack in which nineteen men of Arab heritage, many of whom were students, changed the course of international events and left a tainted legacy for Arab decent in general, and Arab students in particular, to bear.

“On the day of September 11, 2001, nineteen men of Arab heritage with possible links to Al-Qaeda in a series of coordinated suicide attacks, crashed two hijacked planes (United Airline Flight 175, and American Airline Flight 11) into the World Trade Center in New York City, resulting in the collapse of both towers and either partial damage to or complete collapse of the center’s seven other complexes. A third airliner (American Airline Flight 77) was slammed into the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia. A fourth airliner (United Airline Flight 93) crashed into a field near the town of Shanksville in rural Somerset County, Pennsylvania, as the passengers and members of the flight crew attempted to regain control of the airliner. As a consequence of the attacks, 2,976 people, in addition to the 19 hijackers died in New York, Washington, DC., and Pennsylvania” (Asadulla, 2008, p. 1)

Immediately after September 11, 2001, the number of international students in

general, Arab students in particular, diminished greatly in U.S. universities (*Open Doors, 2008*). A good number of Arab male students returned home without finishing their studies in the U.S. Arab students' presence on U.S. soil became feared and tainted by cultural association as the symbol of evil in the Western world. Biased and politicized media coverage, misunderstandings between the two different cultures, and lack of communication between East and West created mistrust on both sides. Lack of information on what constitutes an Arab led many U.S. citizens to adopt incorrect information about the Arab world. Contrary to some people's belief, Arab is not a race; it is a cultural and a linguistic concept. Most Arabs are Muslims, but not all Muslims are Arabs. There are 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, but only 300 million Arab (*The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2001*). According to the United Nations, the Arab world consists of 21 countries, and one Authority, in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. What is known to the West as the Palestinian Authority is still referred to as Palestine by the Arabs. In addition and contrary to popular belief, Iran, Turkey and Israel are not Arab countries and their primary languages are Farsi, Turkish and Hebrew respectively.

Arab countries have a rich diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities. These include Kurds, Armenians, and Berbers. The Organization of Islamic Countries has 56 member states. The largest Muslim populations are in the following ten countries: Indonesia (170.3 million), Pakistan (136 million), Bangladesh (106 million), India (103 million), Turkey (62.4 million), Iran (72 million), Egypt (53.7 million),

Nigeria (47.7 million) and China (37.1 million). Of these countries with the largest Muslim population, only Egypt is an Arab country (<http://www.adc.org/>)

As mentioned earlier, international students are considered as an “add on value’ to the U. S. economy. They are clipped to the U.S. educational system for many benefits of which the economic benefit is the most measurable. According to “*U.S. Department of Homeland Security*”, there were 583,000 international students in 2006 studying in U.S. universities contributing over \$15.5 billion to the U.S. economy through their expenditures on tuition and living expenses; 67% of international students’ primary funding came from sources outside the United States of America (<http://www.ice.gov/>)

International students came from various world regions but mostly from Asia and Europe. (58% Asia, 18% Europe, 7% North America, 6% Africa, 5% South America, 4% Arab, and 2% rest of the world). Total number of international students was reported to be 623,000 by “*Open Doors*”, in 2008 with an increase in most nations, but a decrease in the number of Arab students, except from Saudi Arabia. There were 10,372 Arab students from Saudi Arabia; 1,852 from Lebanon; 1,727 from Morocco; 1,723 from United Arab Emirates; 1,270 from Egypt; 1,059 from Jordan; 412 from Syria; 361 from Qatar; 268 from Oman; 243 from Palestinian Authority; 203 from Iraq; 157 from Libya; and 289 from other Arab regions adding to 19,936 or 3.2% of total international students in the U.S. universities in 2008. (<http://www.opendoors/>)

Some might argue that based on the number of Arab students present on American soil, the study presents limitations, I would argue that the study is justified given the misunderstood assumptions about Arab culture as positioned in the western world. It is an opportunity for me to contribute to knowledge about Arab students by

researching other Arab students' experiences of curriculum in a U.S. university.

Research Questions "CLIP"

The major research question of how culture, language, identity, and power gets involved in the process of Arab students' adaptation to a curriculum in a U.S. university includes the inquiry of the following specific research questions:

1. How does the native culture of three Middle Eastern Arab students from different countries influence their cultural transitional process in a U.S. university curriculum in the rural South?
2. How does the culture of the rural South influence three Middle Eastern Arab students' cultural transitional process in a U.S. university curriculum?
3. How does the transitional process between the two cultures impact the transformation of three Middle Eastern students' identities?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several bodies of literature which are relevant to my potential study: (1) multiculturalism in education; (2) education of Arabs students in the U.S. and (3) cross-cultural narrative and narrative inquiry. To keep up with the “CLIP” concept, I have organized the literature review to inquire into the four areas of culture, language, identity, and power in each body of literature.

Multiculturalism in Education

Historically, the United States of America’s educational system has been characterized to favor the White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant-conformity (WASP) model of assimilation (Gordon, 1964), where all those who desired to join the “melting pot” had to become “Anglicized” instead of “Americanized” (Banks (1981b). In 1924, Kallen introduced the idea of “cultural pluralism” which became an ideology from which the theoretical foundations of multicultural education were derived (Tesconi, 1984). The civil rights movements were instrumental in the continued development of multicultural education theories, concepts, and principles (Gay, 1983). Multiculturalism in education flourished after the civil rights movements of various groups, including African Americans and women, but the trajectory of these movements caused a significant rise in ethnic consciousness, and a more critical analysis of textbooks and other materials, which extended civil and cultural rights to minorities. Community leaders, activists, and parents began to demand curricula that were more supportive and consistent with the cultural and

racial diversity in the United States. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the concepts of multicultural education began to emerge, and by the 1980s, an entire body of scholarship addressing multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism existed as referenced by Banks, Cummins, McCarthy, West, Darling-Hammond. Multiculturalism grew out of the demands of ethnic groups for inclusion in the curricula of schools, colleges, and universities. Besides cultural challenges, language difficulty, identity crisis, and power struggle “CLIP”, Arab students who chose to study in U.S. American universities experienced invisibility and alienation before 9/11, stereotyping, profiling, exclusion, and discrimination afterward, which are in direct conflict with the principles and dimensions of multiculturalism (Banks, 2004).

A. Inquiry into culture and cross-cultural issues:

The success of any inquiry starts with a comprehensive definition of the terms in which the inquiry is being instituted; culture has been defined through history and literature in various ways. Taylor (1871) defined culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense as “*that complex whole which included knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*” (p. 1). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) reported 160 definitions of culture in their comprehensive study. They concluded that most social scientists define culture as: “*patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially attached values*” (p. 161). Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) stated that some social scientists go as far as to exclude material objects such as artifacts from their definition of

culture, but believe that interpretation of these objects and the rules governing their use constitute the essence of culture and not the artifacts themselves. Dimen-Schein stated that “*Intangible symbols, rules, and values that people use to define themselves are considered culture which is not the same as society which constitutes observable interactions among people* (1977, p. 23). The most intriguing definition of culture in my opinion is the one presented in “*Pluralism: Cultural maintenance and evolution*” by Bullivant (1984) who described culture as a strategy of survival:

an interdependent and patterned system of valued traditional and current public knowledge and conceptions, embodied in behaviors and artifacts, and transmitted to present and new members, both symbolically and non-symbolically, which a society has evolved historically and progressively modifies and augments, to give meaning to and cope with its definitions of present and future existential problems (p. 4).

Bullivant viewed cultures as dynamic, complex, changing, whole systems instead of isolated parts which were in total opposition to most curriculum and historical books that perceived culture as static, unchanging and fragmented. The result of the latter view was the perpetuation of stereotypes about different ethnic, cultural, and racial groups. Cultures were also viewed as epistemological communities, cooperative rather than competitive, with a focus on individuals’ experiences of equal status and shared goals (Allport, 1954; Banks, 1995a; Gay, 1995; Garcia 1998; Nieto, 1999).

Cultural issues that dealt with discontinuity between homes, schools, and communities were themes explored by Valdes (1996) in his ethnographic portrait dealing with bridging distances between culturally diverse families and schools. Foster (1955) explored learning styles and cultural incompatibility in “*African American teachers and culturally relevant pedagogy*” whose ideas can easily be translated to cover ethnicities

other than African American. Issues dealing with race, gender and class gained momentum at a rapid rate in the eighties and nineties (Grant and Sleeter, 1986); in their education research, Grant and Sleeter presented a compelling argument for integrative analysis advocating inclusion and citing alienation as the main challenge in schools.

Other cultural theories began to emerge building on the intimate relationship between students' success academically and socially and the level of inclusion of their home culture and cultural values, confirming alienation as the main challenge for students of diversity (Heath, 1983; Ogbu, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Igoa, 1995). Banks (2005) established that the weaker the boundaries are between cultures, the more likely cross-cultural functioning will occur between cultures, and the easier cross-cultural functioning will be for individuals in those cultures. Banks also established a strong link between weak cultural characteristics and participation in the host culture, as well as, a weak link between strong cultural characteristics and lack of participation in the process of adaptation and ease of adjustment. This observation could be critical to my study due to the vast diversity of the Arab world and Arab culture as it relates to the West in general. The validity of the argument depends on the personal, cultural, religious, and political belief of the individual and the country that he or she represents. There is a gap in the knowledge of the above as it relates to Arab students due to lack of research in the area of Arab adaptation to other cultures.

B. Inquiry into language issues:

English language learning, English proficiency and maintenance of native language were dissected in detail to show the constant struggle of students required to “*live in-*

between” and the dilemmas faced by teachers and students alike in dealing with language challenges and their effect on academic and social adjustment. During the era of complete assimilation, students were expected to forgo their native language in favor of learning the language of the dominant class; numerous literature favor assimilation as a method of inclusion in society. Others argue for the need to include heritage languages in the classroom as a method of facilitating the learning process of the dominant language (Cummins, 2000, and Kouritzin, 1999). Cummins also dealt with the length of time needed to reach language proficiency for students whose language was different from the dominant language. From a personal experience, it took me over 18 months to become reasonably comfortable with the English language to be able to communicate socially and academically. I was forbidden to use an Arabic-English dictionary in classes during my college years, and I was strongly advised to forgo and ignore my native Arabic language. This process was extremely agonizing and counter-productive to my emotional development through the process of adjustment.

A full year to 18 month was an estimation provided by Cummins, Ortega, Nieto, and others as the length of time needed for most immigrants to adjust to the language and culture in a new setting. Loomis and Schuler (1984), Moore (1953), Krueger (1955), and Veroff (1963) argued that the length of stay determines immigrant students’ attitudes toward the host culture. Loomis and Schuler studied Italian-American students in the U.S. and concluded that a stay of less than one year was not conducive to the development of favorable attitudes toward the United States. Moore, in his study of immigrant students related the length of their stay to the level of academic success and adjustment. Veroff concluded in his study that national origin is an important factor that

directly influences the process of adjustment. Forster (1951) did a study on the adjustment challenges of international students and found a direct relation between the national origin of the students and the number of problems they experienced. Forster concluded that cultural similarities eased the process of adjustment while wide cultural differences increased the challenges faced by students during their adjustments. In 1966 El-Kholy measured the degrees of assimilation of first generation Arabs in Toledo, Ohio and Detroit, Michigan. He reported that language, religion and food seriously inhibited the assimilation of Arab immigrants into the U.S. American culture.

C. Inquiry into identity issues:

Cultural and language challenges constitute a direct impact on identity issues. He (2003) describes identity as fluid, changing, pliable with a sense of continuity. She uses the metaphor of running water in a river to emulate the sense of fluidity in describing the processes of adjustment to a new culture and *living in-between* going back and forth between China and Canada. This idea of fluidity is valid to a degree; it is closely related to similarities between cultures, or the desire of the individual to adopt the host culture. It is less valid once measured against some of the Arab cultures or against Arab students who come from closed cultures, and who are attempting to adjust to the U.S. American way of life due to lack of connectivity between the two cultures. I challenge the notion of fluidity in identity adjustment in evaluating Arab students' experiences of curriculum on the ground that many aspects of the Arab culture are totally different from the U.S. culture and in many ways, the total opposite. For fluidity to exist, it requires certain elements of continuity or the desire of the individuals to assimilate into the new culture.

These two elements are not strongly present in the Arab culture or Arab desire in general. Hence, the absence of continuity negates the fluid idea of identity transformation. In fact, the opposite is true; identity transformations of students from most Arab cultures tend to undergo a rigid process experiencing a stop and go motion instead of a yielding one.

The major impact on identity transformation of Arab cultures is by far the negative stereotype and stigma of terrorist attached to the word Arab or Moslem in western societies after the 9/11 attack. Most other ethnicities in the U.S. at one time or another experienced stereotyping and racial profiling (Irish, Italian, Jews, Puerto Rican, Japanese after Pearl-Harbor, and others), but the Arab and Arab-American population transitioned from being totally invisible, or portrayed as bearded, oil-rich sheiks in dark glasses, wielding their billions like spiked clubs during the seventies and eighties, to totally infamous, militants, Moslem fanatics, and most hurtful and identity destroying, the stigma of terrorists in the new millennium. In *Affirming Diversity*, Nieto (2004) dedicated eight pages to a case study of a young Lebanese student named James Karam. Nieto described James as “*successful in forging his family, culture, language, hobbies, church, friends, and schoolwork into a unique amalgam, which has resulted in a strong self-image and a way of confronting a society not always comfortable with or tolerant of diversity.*” (p.179) Nieto also commented that James “*learned to hide hurt feelings when his culture is disparaged, and preferred to accept invisibility rather than risk further alienation or rejection.... He learned not to demand that his culture be affirmed.*”(p.179)

D. Inquiry into power issues:

The power for students and teachers in any educational setting to challenge the status

quo and institute change, collectively or individually, has been identified as a crucial ingredient in the application of multiculturalism in education (Dewey, 1966; Freire, 1970, 1985; Giroux, 1992; Cummins, 1994; Nieto, 2002). In *“Language and Power”* Fairclough (1989) argues that power is deeply implicated in notions of culture and language. Nieto (2002) echoed Fairclough in stating that *“cultural and linguistic differences are above all differences in power. Put another way, cultural conflict is sometimes little more than political conflict”* (p. 13). I argue that the reverse is as salient, political conflict is sometimes little more than cultural conflict. Italian political scientist, Antonio Gramsci, developed the concept of *“cultural hegemony”* in the early 20th century by extending political hegemony beyond international relations to the structure of social class. Gramsci argues that cultural hegemony happens when a social class exerts cultural dominance over other classes in maintaining the socio-political status quo. Cultural hegemony maintains power over the subordinate social classes and persuades them to accept and adopt the ruling-class’s beliefs and value systems. Political and cultural hegemony extends among nations as well as within each nation. For example, the English language has dominated the globe especially in business communication among nations. This domination is a clear example of political power fueled by cultural influence. Economic and social advancements are other elements of culture that translate into political power over nations that are less developed economically and socially. In that sense, the Western World exercises a certain limit of its political power justified by cultural supremacy over other cultures. Keeping with the same notion of power and education, Apple (1996) argues that the public schools, colleges, and universities usually perpetuate the dominant ideologies and values that are promoted and embraced by the

powerful groups within society.

Education of Arab Students in the United States

Literature has been known to react to the pulse of major events in society. Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, very little literature was available on Arabs and Arab students in the U.S.A. Most writings on Arabs were contained in book chapters and articles that focused on the Arabs' invisibility in the American society. Very few case studies directed at understanding the Arab/Middle Eastern culture were conducted, and those that did appear were mostly in the form of short articles. The first attempt in 1969, "*Research into contemporary Arab culture*", which aimed at establishing the originality of Arab thoughts, literatures, and arts over the last one hundred years, and their contributions to modern world civilization was conducted by 19 experts who met at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on May 29-June 3, 1969. (Sch Soc, 97, 2319, 376-378, 69 Oct) It was not until 1975, that Otero wrote "*The Arabs: Perception/Misperception: A comparative view, experimental version.*" as a general guide to help high-school students identify and evaluate their own images of the Arabs and begin to develop more accurate perceptions of the Arabs through data analysis. Students compare their pre-course attitudes—based on stereotypes—with facts learned from newspaper articles, journal reports, other readings, and, when possible, conversations with Arabs. This guide allowed U.S. students to analyze points of view expressed, and determine accuracy of the information collected. This study was to benefit high-school students and was not directed at the university level. The same genre, Parker published in 1976 an article entitled "*Cultural clues to the Middle Eastern student*" to discuss characteristics common

to all Middle Eastern students addressed to individuals who work at American colleges and university campuses. Parker described Middle Eastern students as highly adaptable, but sometimes demonstrating a formality of manner, particularity in initial social relationships, and a distrust of foreigners. Salient characteristics include respect for parents and elders, pride in one's heritage, and an attitude of fatalism conditioned by religious beliefs. Personal relationships are important and demand commitment, and the use of particular language forms, especially in formal situations, has significance. Needs particular to Middle Eastern student include respect for his or her culture, close personal relationships or friendships, relaxed social relationships, hospitality accompanied by the offering of food, interaction with fellow Arabs, having a mentor from the same background, and having a satisfactory relationship with faculty and administration advisors. This article touches on the Middle Eastern culture in a general form that undermines the particularity of the personal differences and does not offer an intimate approach to telling the personal experiences. It does not deal with educational perspectives; it only generalizes the Arab culture in a blanket statement about their culture and expected behaviors. In the same year, (1977) I. A. Nasser defended a dissertation in the School of Education at Georgia State University entitled: "*The Assimilation of Arab Students in Atlanta*" arguing that Arab students' assimilation into the U.S. cultural values varies in degrees and depends on the length of residence, academic status, and national origin, but not on age or marital status. Another attempt by Otero, in his cultural studies series introduced in 1977 "*Teaching about perception*" to help U. S. American students better understand what their perceptions of Arabs were, where these perceptions come from, and how these perceptions influence their attitudes

and behavior toward others. These series can be helpful in shedding light on the concept of perception that Americans have of Arab students.

In 1978, Helms published an article on cultural differences between Arabs and Americans, entitled "*Culture in conflict: Arab students in American Universities.*" In her research, Helms planned to write a guidebook for Arab students who were new to American university life, and presented a preliminary analysis of differences in the two cultures. Helms hoped her research would eliminate miscommunication and conflict by clarifying the differences in how the two cultures handle conflict, make apologies, and express anger and sympathy. Helms addressed eight elements of cultural differences: greetings and farewells; hospitality and food customs; speech styles; proxemics and gestures; male/female relationships; concepts of honor, shame, and morality; educational customs; and values of time, work, space, competition, and friendship. This paper seems valuable to help explore how Arab students adjust to the American university curriculum in the U.S.A. because it outlines the themes that cause most cultural misunderstandings between Arab and American ways of life. In 1979, Howell, published a case study titled "*Political attitudes, participation and activism: A White ethnic case study.*" In this publication, Howell explores the history and cultural adaptation of the Middle Eastern ethnic community of Jacksonville, Florida, which derives from three phases of immigration. During Phase I, 1890-1920, the first pioneers made an initial adaptation and began the formation of an ethnic community. During Phase II, 1920-1950, the group grew because of the arrival of a small number of new immigrants as well as through natural increase. These two phases were characterized by great emphasis on acculturation and assimilation in all aspects of life, including patriotism and civic duty, though

pluralism was also expressed through ethnic organizations. After 1950, following the establishment of the state of Israel, a new wave of immigrants from the town of Ramallah came into Jacksonville. These people have been more separatists in outlook than the earlier immigrants. They expressed a greater commitment to the Arab cause in the Middle East through membership in organizations and through financial contributions. In terms of expressed sympathy for the Arab cause, however, the immigrants of Phases I and II and their descendants were just as supportive as the more recent immigrants of Phase III. This case study deals with some basic general issues concerning Arabs' immigration to the United States, but it does not deal specifically with educational adjustment or personal experiences.

In 1985, Youssef and Simpkins conducted research on parent attitudes on Americanization and bilingual education in Dearborn, Detroit and Farmington. They assessed the attitudes of Arab parents living in the United States toward their children's bilingual education programs including parents' role in their children's education. Findings revealed that parents highly valued their children's placement in a bilingual class environment because of its more positive, accepting atmosphere and attention to Arab culture. The image of the Arab culture continued to be portrayed negatively over the years in most media. To combat this negativity, research was conducted and many articles published to reveal misconception and misrepresentations of Arab and Arab Americans in the Western society. In 1988, Michalak published a guide addressing the negative image of Arabs among the U.S. public. While formal education has created some of the misconceptions about Arabs that abound in the west, many of the misconceptions come from the informal education of popular culture. Michalak argued

that the Western image of the Arab is possibly more interesting than the reality of Arab culture, and that American stereotypes of Arabs is important for two reasons: (1) it interferes with the understanding of a vitally important area of the world and its people, and (2) the Arab stereotype, while it teaches us little about the Arabs, teaches us a good deal about ourselves and the mechanisms of prejudice. The book examines in sequence different areas of popular culture about Arabs: jokes, cartoons, popular songs, and especially cinema. A chart based on two reference catalogs produced by the American Film Institute in listing every movie from the 1920s and the 1960s, showing the frequency of themes in movies about Arabs, underscores three main things: (1) the Arab world has changed, but the Arab stereotype has not; (2) Hollywood's Middle East has become a more sinister place; and (3) there has been a change toward more explicitly anti-Arab movie genres. The document asserts that explanations for the negative stereotypes include the prejudice against Arabs that is part of European folk heritage, the lack of knowledge about Arabs in the United States that reinforces the image of Arabs as "other," and the lack of a significant Arab population in the United States to counter the stereotype. In the same genre, Sergent and Others (1989) published research on *"University student attitudes toward Arabs: Implications for programmatic intervention."* Sergent claims that although several different definitions of prejudice, discrimination, and racism have been proposed, there is a general consensus about the essential meaning of these concepts. Previous research has indicated that the attitudes people in the United States have toward Arabs are derived from ignorance of the Arab culture. This study measured current college student attitudes toward Arabs. The Situational Attitudes Scale-Arab (SAS-Arab) version was administered to a random

sample of university freshmen (N=112) at fall orientation. The SAS assesses attitudes and stereotypes directed toward a particular group using items describing various situational contexts. Data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance. The results indicated that students held more negative attitudes in response to situations involving an Arab individual than in response to identical situations involving a neutrally identified person. These negative attitudes and stereotypes toward Arabs have implications for the campus environment. By bringing research and programming that affect the lives of Arab students to the forefront, student affairs professionals can take the leadership that is necessary at many institutions to provide a multicultural and equitable educational environment for all students (Author/ABL.) This study provides a background to the college environment and helps me in my endeavor to expose the triumphs and tribulations that Arab students have to overcome in order to adjust to a relatively hostile educational and social environment caused by stereotypes and miscommunication and misrepresentation of the Arab culture. In his 1989 article, *'Learning styles of Arab students in EFL classrooms.'* Farquharson discusses learning styles and strategies used by Arab students in intensive language programs in the United States. Farquharson reviews current theory on the role of culture in learning and in the development of cognitive style. He examines related aspects of Arab culture, including the roles of oral and written language use, child-rearing, student behavior, and the importance of respect in the classroom. He also describes characteristics of classroom instruction and attitudes toward achievement in the Middle East. Farquharson concludes that English-as-a-Second-Language teachers must recognize and respect the cultural differences of Arab students, and meet these differences in a constructive manner.

After the events of September 11, 2001, research and literature about Arabs shifted from identifying Arabs the invisible disliked minority to identifying them as the hated fundamentalists and terrorists. Articles in education had to deal with Arabs fleeing colleges and universities in the U.S.A and returning home. In 2001, McMurthie published a descriptive report discussing how many Middle Eastern students, pressured by their parents and in the face of growing hostility on U.S. American campuses, were abandoning their studies to return to their home countries. Another article by Seikaly (2001) “*At risk of prejudice: the Arab American community*” discussed the stereotypes associated with Arab Americans. She stated that these stereotypes must be abandoned to stop prejudice against Arab communities. She also discussed the role that educators and counselors had in helping Arab American students deal with prejudice against them. She concluded that schools should be deliberate in providing positive experiences to students from different backgrounds, and in guiding students in dealing with negatives attributes against them.

Following Seikaly, Suleiman (2001) published “*Image making of Arab Americans: implications for teachers in diverse settings*”. He described Arab Americans students as being a very diverse group. He also indicated that misinformation about Arab culture played a significant role in U.S. American perceptions and understandings of Arab American students. He added that whenever major events occurred in the Middle East, Arab Americans became the focus of investigation. However, the Arab American community had remained relatively silent. The media played a large part in perpetuating stereotypes of Arabs as terrorists. This was exemplified by the original assumption that the Oklahoma bombing in 1995 was the act of Arab terrorists. This massive media

campaign has had detrimental consequences on Arab American students, who report being harassed and attacked by peers. Considerable stereotyping and racial profiling occur in contemporary films and literature, where villains often are Arabs or Muslims. People are often erroneously led to assume that these two groups are synonymous. The media also uses the term *fundamentalist* interchangeably with *terrorist*. Erroneously perceived as a unified single ethnic group, the diversity of Arab Americans, and by extension, Arab students, is very much overlooked. Teachers must engage in rectifying stereotypes about Arab Americans. Schools can take action against prejudice, discrimination, and racism, providing professional training for staff and accurate textbooks for students. Even though this descriptive paper is not a case study, it sheds lights on the issues faced by Arab students and the role of education in correcting these misconceptions. Arabs in general and Arab Americans in particular faced an identity crisis after the event of September 11. It has been left up to the educational institutions to restore a positive Arab and Arab American identity in an attempt to promote equity and fairness among all students. This in turn, will help ease the transformation process of Arab students trying to adapt to a new U.S. curriculum.

In 2006, Wingfield wrote, "*Arab Americans: into the multicultural mainstream*". Long-standing anti-Arab racism in the U.S. has worsened in recent decades, fueled by U.S. military involvement in the Middle East and by the September 11 attack on the U.S. Arab American and Muslim children have been the targets of misunderstanding and discrimination. Following a historical introduction, discrimination against Arab American and Muslim communities at the personal and institutional level is analyzed by Wingfield in light of Young's (1990) "*Five Faces of Oppression*." The systematic transformation of

the curriculum to be fully inclusive of Arab Americans would be a major improvement. Banks' (2002) four phases of multicultural infusion is used as a guide for how this might be done. Specific types of problems and ways to address them are discussed. This attempt is valuable in further understanding the complex issues facing Arab students and the necessary adjustment required on their parts to adjust properly to the American university curriculum which is an integral part of life in the American society. In the same genre, Galuzska, wrote: "*Bridging cultural divides*" in 2006. He discovered that colleges and universities across the country are seeing an overwhelming interest among students in learning about the Middle East and Arabic languages fuelled by public curiosity after the events of 9/11. The most popular courses, professors say, are Arabic language, Middle Eastern politics and the dynamics of the Israeli and Arab relationship. Also in demand are courses on comparative religions and gender issues. Courses in Arab film have also enjoyed renewed popularity, reflecting an ongoing renaissance in cinematography in Iran, North Africa and Israel. The surging interest in the Middle East is at least partially tied to post-9/11 national security concerns, so while Middle Eastern studies programs have exploded in popularity in the past six years, whether they will remain in the national spotlight remains to be seen. Interest in the programs appeared to begin to flatten in 2005, but it is still too early to draw any conclusions. The continued fighting in Iraq, the escalating conflict with Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggest that affairs in the Arab world will continue to make national headlines. As a result, many professors have reason to believe that interest in Middle Eastern studies will also continue to grow.

Cross-Cultural Narrative and Narrative Inquiry

The roots of narrative inquiry lie in various disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, and literary criticism (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). It is a methodological approach used to research people's understandings of their experiences and the world around them. Narrative inquiry takes on many forms, autobiographical (Grumet, 1992, cross-cultural narrative (Conle, 2000; He, 2002), narrative multiculturalism (Phillion, 2002), personal narrative and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990). He, Phillion, Chan, and Xu (2008) indicated that there are two forms of inquiry to fully understand culture, language, identity, and power "CLIP" of immigrant students' experiences of curriculum. In their writings about immigrant students' experience of curriculum as a part of "*The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction*", the authors argued that:

to eclectically study immigrant students' experience of curriculum, we need to locate their experience of language, culture, identity, and power in the context of families, schools, and communities. We believe that multicultural and cross-cultural narrative inquiry, as we briefly described above, with a focus on cultural aspects of experience, is an ideal method of inquiry to examine the dynamic relationship between immigrant students' experience in school, at home, and in the community (p.231)

This study constitutes an important body of knowledge that is relevant to my topic with few exceptions: Unlike visiting students on F1 visas, immigrant status implies a long term stay in the U.S. A. which is permanent, not temporary. This major difference in status directs the research to cover short terms issues versus long term discourses. I also argue that the title should have indicated multiple experiences instead of "experience" since each person experiences differently from another with a multiple level

of experiences. I totally agree for the need to locate experiences of language, culture, identity, and power in the context of families, schools, and communities, based on the logic that social interactions are vital in creating relationships in which cultural norms are practiced and exchanged. For these interactions to produce successful relationships, an exchange of cultural knowledge of assets and liabilities has to occur simultaneously with the acquisition of new knowledge. In the case of students' adjustments to a new curriculum, the responsibility of adaptation is totally placed upon the students, instead of being shared with families, schools, and communities.

In 2005, Phillion, He, and Connelly, edited "*Narrative & Experience in Multicultural Education*"; their focus was to "*explore the untapped potential that narrative and experiential approaches provide in understanding multicultural issues in education*" (p.1). They emphasized their work on "*understanding experience and transforming this understanding into significant social and educational implications*" (p. 2). Building on the above logic of using narrative and experiential approaches to provide understanding multicultural issues in education, I plan to explore this untapped potential to further understand the adjustment processes of three Middle Eastern students as they experience the educational curriculum in the U.S.

Other writings that incorporated experiential with narrative inquiries dealt with issues of culture and language (Valdes, 1996; Carger, 1996) and family and community narratives (Soto, 1997) and showed the impact of cultural adaptation on individuals. This is fundamental to understanding the impact on identity transformation for individuals who go through the process of acculturation and enculturation. It is important to note that a successful adaptation does not have to end up in assimilation. The emphasis here is on

the valued personal and educational experiences that impact students' development as they battle issues of culture, language, identity and power trials and tribulations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study draws on multiculturalism as a theoretical framework using a narrative approach as a method of inquiry. It involves exploring three Arab students' experiences of curriculum in a U.S. university located in the rural Southeastern part of the United States of America. Experiences of culture, language, identity, and power "CLIP" are at the center stage of the study to reveal issues that impact the adaptation and identity transformation of these students as they adjust to the U.S. curriculum. Using a narrative approach as a method of inquiry, as suggested by Philion, He, and Connelly (2005) will help me focus explicitly on Arab students' experiences in the midst of a multicultural life.

Multiculturalism as a Theoretical Framework

Multicultural education "*means many things to many people*" (Sleeter and Grant, 1987). Hence, a clear definition of what multicultural education is can be difficult to reach consensus upon. A better approach is to decide what multicultural education does or should do for everyone involved in an educational institution, in terms of "CLIP" (culture, language, identity, and power) to ease the adaptation process on students from different backgrounds, and to help them gain positive experiences while they adjust to a new curriculum in the U.S.

First, multicultural education should transform the entire campus environment - cultural climate to include awareness, appreciation, and respect for cultural differences and similarities. Second, it should expand the multicultural vision beyond "*curriculum diversification*" - the extent to which faculty, staff and students are actually diverse in

culture and language. Third, it should enhance the quality of the campus atmosphere for mainstream and non-mainstream students - identity issues to include understanding of social interaction in culturally diverse settings. Fourth, it should maximize the academic and personal growth of all students – power issues.

It is important to note that implementation of multicultural education in higher education institutions lags behind efforts in primary and secondary schools especially in “*transforming the total school environment*” (Banks, 1979; Grant, 1978) to embrace the multicultural dimensions in education.

Narrative Approach as Method of Inquiry:

This study relies on a narrative approach as a method of inquiry in the process of selecting the site and participants, collecting stories, analyzing recurring themes, and summarizing findings. I have organized this section as follows:

- a. Selecting and analyzing the site - collecting basic demographic information and researching the physical environment for multicultural discourses “CLIP”.
- b. Selecting Participants – criteria and methods.
- c. Collecting narrative stories.
- d. Analyzing recurring themes of “CLIP”.
- e. Summarizing findings.

Selecting and Analyzing the Site:

I conducted the research at a university in the rural Southeast of the U.S. The university attracts international students from approximately 92 countries for a total of

464 international students, which is about 2.6% of total student university enrollment. Out of the 464 international students, 3% were Arab students (Fact Book, 2008-2009). Compared to national averages, there were 623,000 international students in the U.S.A. in 2008 which constituted 3.92% of total enrollment in all U. S. colleges and universities. Out of the 623,000 international students, there were 3.2 % Arab students (Open Doors, 2008). The University under study runs below national averages in total enrollment of international students and slightly above average in enrollment of total Arab students on campus, due to an increase in Saudi Arabian student enrollment. The university would have to add 232 additional international students to be in line with national averages for 2008.

TABLE 1

Analysis of student enrollment

Fall 2008(Open Doors) **National**

Total college students in USA	15900000	100.00%	
Total International students in USA	623000	3.92%	of total college students in USA
Total Arab students in USA	19936	3.20%	of total international student in USA

Fall 2008 (Fact Book) **University under study**

Total students in University under study	17764	100.00%	
Total International students in University under study	464	2.61%	of total students in University under study
Total Arab students in University under Study	16	3.45%	of total international students in University under study

Due to the nature of the intended study, an analysis of enrollment is an important task to determine the approach for participants’ selection, collection of stories and stories analysis to extract meaning from Arab students’ experiences of curriculum in a “CLIP”

(culture, language, identity and power). Mapping the research site is the first step in compiling initial data before switching into qualitative mode to delve into the narrative research inquiry. Arab students in this university come from 9 major nations in the Middle East and North Africa. Below is a distribution of Arab students with their respective countries and college classification.

TABLE 2

Country of Origin	Undergraduate	Graduate
Egypt		1
Iraq		1
Israel	1	
Jordan	1	
Lebanon	1	
Morocco	1	
Saudi Arabia	6	
Somalia	3	
United Arab Emirates		1
Total undergraduates and graduates	13	3

To further understand how the process of transitioning between the two cultures impacts the transformation of the three Middle Eastern students' identities, a study of the geographic, cultural, demographic, and racial mix of the city in which the university is located is crucial. The results of the study are dependent on the cultural characteristics of the host region, simply because it defines the transitional experiences of the participants. The city is a rural area of the Southeastern part of the United States. It has a population of 27,158 that includes 19,000 students. The population is 56% white, 40% African-American, 1% Asian and 3% other races. 22% of the population is between 20-40 years old, mainly because of the university students. In 1803, the city was chartered as a small

farming community providing the basic essentials for surrounding farms. The city's main economic revenue is now derived from agriculture and income generated by the university. The city cultural is a unique one that blends southern heritage with a college town identity. Native residents coexist with university students who bring the creative arts, music, and an intellectual environment to the rural community. The city is religiously and socially conservative. It is known as a "Bible belt" area that has 73 churches of various Christian denominations. The city is located in a dry county; beer and wine can be legally sold in retail stores but not liquor, which is only sold on a per-drink basis in bars and restaurants. All restaurants are non-smoking by city ordinance and state law. It is important to understand the cultural environment in which the research was conducted because it provides valuable information in evaluating the results of the study.

Selecting Participants, Criteria and Methods

Prior to deciding which three students would participate in the study, I developed a list of all potential participants and screened the list down to the stated three students. In the process, I wanted to utilize technology as data and stories collection methods. Facebook offers the most technologically advanced one place location for students to post their thoughts, discuss their issues, post video "CLIP"s, share their heritage through cultural artifacts, songs, different art forms, and tell their stories. I am an active participant of this Facebook community, and I utilized my home page to document and gather observations and make use of its emails components to effectively communicate with Arab students on campus for contacts. The most fascinating part was that all Arab

students have already added each other to their respective home pages. Hence, it was easy for me to connect with all of them through the few I knew. Through chatting online, I found out that most of them were interested in my intention to research Arab students' experiences of curriculum for my dissertation, and many volunteered to participate once my research committee approves my request to proceed with the research. Besides meeting them socially, on campus, and in the community, I have been following their daily news, and chatting with them online whenever possible. I am interested in focusing my research on three students who come from different countries: Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. I have chosen students from these countries for the following reasons:

They represent three different cultures, religions, and educational systems, they have different backgrounds and personal reasons for wanting to study in the U.S, they are experiencing different stages of acclimation and adjustments to the U.S. curriculum, and they are willing to participate in the study.

Participant from Israel

According to the U.S. Library of Congress, education in Israel has been characterized historically by the same social and cultural cleavages separating the Orthodox from the secular and Arabs from Jews. Arab education was separately administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture and was divided by emphases on Muslim, Christian, or Druze subjects. Arab education in Israel followed the same pattern as Jewish education, with students learning about Jewish history, heroes, and the like, but education is in Arabic. Arab education in East Jerusalem and the West Bank followed the Jordanian curriculum and students sat for Jordanian examinations; the textbooks used,

however, had to be approved by Israeli authorities. After the outbreak of the *intifadah* (uprising) in December 1987, frequent school closings occurred so that students attended school only infrequently. (<http://countrystudies.us/israel>)

The first participant in this study is an Arab student from Nazareth, Israel. He is a nineteen year old male who speaks Hebrew and English in addition to his native Arabic. His family is Muslim, but he does not practice. He attended Christian schools, El Razi elementary school and St. Joseph Seminary high school. He has family members in the Southeastern part of the U.S.A, and it has been a dream of his to attend college in the U.S. He is now a freshman planning to major in psychology with a minor in music. I think he will bring depth to the study based on his diverse background and his complex identity of being an Arab culturally, yet a citizen of Israel. His knowledge of Hebrew, Arabic, and English adds diversity to his background and interest to his identity transformation in the process of adaptation to the U.S. curriculum. I plan to refer to him as Nazareth as we delve into the research. He can be characterized as going through the first two stages of adjustment as listed by Oberg (1973) the Honeymoon and the Rejection phases, as is evident in the following essay that he sent me few months ago:

Essay by Nazareth

I'm enjoying myself here in America, so far almost everything has been going in the right direction for me, I didn't even have any problem adjusting to the time change, there's a seven hours difference between here and Israel, but I guess jet lag was no match to me. As I said, I've been having a good time, I've been here in America for a month and two weeks now, and I feel great. I've been in Statesboro, however, only for a couple

of weeks now, It started off great, made lots of friends, got a lot of insight about important things for school, and got a new bike, it is extremely helpful actually.

On the other hand I've also have had some, let's call them "minor set-backs", I have three roommates where I'm living here on campus and we couldn't be more different from each other. I've always been the quiet, peaceful kind of guy, I'm usually not loud and I'm normally shy. But I guess being through so much, I feel like I've loosened up a little bit, and am more open and friendly towards "strangers". even so, I feel as if I've created this huge gap between my roommates and I by always being different, obviously I'll always be different but will it always be to an extent in which I feel completely excluded?. It is pretty easy to say that I'm alright all by myself, but it doesn't always feel that way. I've always liked meeting new people and making lots of friends, but I've never had as many friends as I have here. I also seem to do a really good job when it comes to detaching myself from what surrounds me, or who, if you might. I would tell everyone I'm fine, but I was even thinking about going to see a psychologist for the past few days. So am I fine??... (Nazareth, 2010)

Participant from Jordan

According to the Jordanian Ministry of Education, the Jordanian government has, as a matter of policy, provided every village and community with ten or more school-going children with a school since 1960. As a result, the rapid spread of facilities enabled citizens in poor and remote areas to gain access to education. In 1988, the government launched a ten-year education reform package which cost approximately \$1 billion. The

plan aimed to improve the quality and relevance of education by restructuring the curricula to focus on developing students' problem solving and critical thinking skills, and linking academic knowledge to real life. The Ministry of Education has launched the second reform plan, for 1998-2002. This plan focuses on upgrading teachers' skills, school administration, educational information systems, pre-school education and education for children with special needs. The main problems which the Jordanian educational system is facing now are twofold. First, the country's burgeoning youth population demands the continued expansion of the educational system. Along with this quantitative expansion, Jordan seeks to improve the quality of its teachers, books, curriculum and facilities. In the area of higher education, the country has suffered from an imbalance between the university and community college systems. The Ministry of Higher Education is now actively promoting the development of Jordan's community colleges and encouraging enrollment in them, in order to better match the country's educational system with its labor market, which currently suffers from a shortage of mid-level vocational skills. Jordan's investment in education has paid off handsomely, as is demonstrated by a soaring literacy rate. In 1960, only 33 percent of Jordanians aged fifteen and over could functionally read and write. After 34 years of pro-education governmental policies, however, the 1996 literacy rate had climbed to 85.4 percent. The Kingdom hopes to continue this remarkable rise by reaching 92 percent literacy by the turn of the century. While the overall literacy rate has risen sharply, a substantial gender gap remains: two-thirds of all illiterate Jordanians are women. One of the most significant policy choices that benefited Jordan's educational system has been the decision to favor spending on basic education over higher education. This has facilitated

the country's goal of universal enrollment and has boosted literacy levels throughout the general population. By consistently allocating more than three-fourths of the total education budget to primary and secondary schooling, Jordan has adopted an egalitarian approach to education which has benefited the entire country in the long term. Jordan's education record has proven impressive by international standards, and results from the foresight of the country's leadership, who saw the need to focus on building the country's human capital to meet the challenges of the future. (<http://www.moe.gov.jo/eng.htm>)

The second participant in the study is a 23 year old female from Irbid, Jordan. I will refer to her as Irbid in the course of the study. Her family's religion is Christian – non-denominational, and she attends the same church as her parents. She speaks Arabic, French, and English. She attended Rosary High School for the first two years, and Muscat Private School for the last two before graduating from high school in Oman, Jordan. Her family moved to the Southeastern region of the U.S. in 2006. She lives with her family as she attends college in the same town. She considers herself “*Americanized*” in many ways, but in other ways, she has kept her authentic identity. She is very close with her family members and draws positive energy from them to help her adapt to her new environment. She is experiencing Oberg's (1973) phases three and four of her cultural adjustment: Regression and Recovery. Irbid will add the female perspective of adjusting to the U.S. curriculum. Gender role is emphasized in the Arab culture in general, and female role is explicitly spelled out so that there is no confusion in expectations. Religion is another important issue in Irbid's background. She and her family practice Christianity which will impact the outcome of the research. As a Christian female, she follows a different set of social behaviors and norms than a Muslim

female. For example, Irbid does not have to wear the scarf or “Hijab” that most Muslim females do, and she does not have to follow such a strict set of family rules of behavior.

Essay by Irbid

Going through a transition, in many ways, can be intimidating to anyone, especially a transition that involves interacting with different cultures and meeting new people of different backgrounds. When I first moved to the United States in 2006, I did not know what to expect in terms of studying. I had started my first year of college at Yarmouk University in Jordan. I was studying English Language and Literature. Fortunately, throughout my life I had gained a strong basis of the English Language because my parents always spoke to us in English since they knew that we will be speaking Arabic in school. My brother and I were enrolled in the best private school available in the area where we lived; we were taught both English and French. In my final years of high school, we moved to Muscat/Oman for three years and we went to bilingual private schools. Finally, after high school years were over, I began going to college. Core English courses at Yarmouk University were not hard for me, but many other students from public schools struggled, although they wanted to study English Language and Literature to become teachers. I always was ahead of everyone in class and never had to put in the extra hours of studying as other students did.

Soon after a year and a half, my father had a job opportunity at a university in Southeast United States. So, within a few months we moved to the US and started settling down and finding a home. I enrolled in a mix of upper and lower level classes at

the university, which I thought at first, would not be a great challenge. I was proven wrong after the first few weeks. Initially I was very intimidated by other students thinking that they would know better than me since they have studied all these courses throughout their lives. I was afraid that my GPA would go down. However, soon I found out that not many of the students knew everything, granted there were some that were very smart, but I was one of the smart ones too. My grades were very good in some classes, but I made the mistake of taking upper level classes that I was not ready yet. The upper level classes required very good writing ability in order to do well in the class, since the grading was geared towards long essays and analysis. I neglected to take both English 1101 and 1102, which were both writing classes and were actually a requirement for me to take before the upper level courses, but I had it waived since I took writing classes in Jordan. For two semesters I was trying to better my writing, but it was difficult because I used long and complicated sentences and although I thought I knew English very well, I found myself working very hard to become better. Eventually, I learned how to work on my sentences after taking 1101 and 1102, also after that some journalism classes. Even though, I had a minor struggle in my first and second semester, after that I had very little problems concerning my grades.

As for my social life, I have been always accustomed to moving around from different cities and countries. Meeting new people was never a hard transition in my case; however, I was always asked how I find it different changing from a very conservative culture to a more open society here in the US. There are many misconceptions in how Arabic culture is perceived; many people think that I had to wear a scarf around my head

or even cover up my face. These ideas sometimes show lack of knowledge, but I cannot blame anyone for being curious. It is hard for someone who has not actually lived in an Arabic country to fully understand because they only see what the media has to offer. My answers to those questions are simple, I am a Christian girl and since our religion does not require me to cover my face, I do not have to. Jordan among many other Arab countries has somewhat of an open society and is becoming more open throughout the years, yet keeping its traditions and culture at the same time.

When my family and I first arrived to the States, we decided to go to one of the churches, and there I found my first group of friends. We all went to the same college, and used to meet each other during our break times and sometimes go out after school or on the weekends. After a certain amount of time, I began meeting new people and finding many people that were also Arabic and we became friends. Nowadays, I find myself in between a mixture of cultures; my friends are come from very different cultures and backgrounds. Despite my initial struggle with a few classes, I have found my experience here strengthening in the sense of studies. Furthermore, I have friends that are very different than I am, and that is very intriguing to me because I find people who I can discuss differences in ideas, ideologies, cultures, languages, and many other subjects that we may come across. It is always great to find your place and be comfortable among certain people or cultures, but what I have learned is never to be intimidated from a transition or a change. What I have found, didn't change who I am, my culture, my traditions, instead I found middle ground and improved myself and my education in many ways. (Irbid, 2010)

Participant from Saudi Arabia

According to the KSA Ministry of Education, a primary goal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's government has been to spread Islamic education for all Muslim believers. The purpose of Islamic education was to ensure that the believer would understand God's laws and live his or her life in accordance to the Islamic Law (Shariya). Hence, classes for reading and memorizing the Quran were sponsored in towns and villages throughout the peninsula. Since the 1920s, a small number of private institutions offered limited secular education for boys, but it was not until 1951 that an extensive program of publicly funded secondary schools was initiated. In 1957, Riyadh University, later renamed King Saud University, was established as the first university not dedicated solely to religious subjects.

By 1989, Saudi Arabia had an education system with more than 14,000 education institutions, including seven universities and eleven teacher-training colleges, in addition to schools for vocational and technical training, special needs, and adult literacy. General education consisted of kindergarten, six years of primary school, and three years each of intermediate and secondary (high) school. All instruction, books, and health services to students were provided free by the government. Administratively, two organizations oversaw most education institutions in the kingdom. The Ministry of Education supervised the education of boys, special education programs for the handicapped, adult education, and junior colleges for men. Girls' education was administered by the Directorate General of Girls' Education, an organization that worked in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The Directorate General oversaw the general education

of girls, kindergartens and nurseries for both boys and girls, and women's literacy programs, as well as colleges of education and junior colleges for girls. The Ministry of Higher Education was the authority overseeing the Kingdom's colleges and universities. Public education, at both the university and secondary-school level, has never been fully separated from its Islamic roots. The education policy of Saudi Arabia included among its objectives the promotion of the "belief in the One God, Islam as the way of life, and Muhammad as God's Messenger." At the elementary-school level, an average of nine periods a week was devoted to religious subjects and eight per week at the intermediate-school level. This concentration on religious subjects was substantial when compared with the time devoted to other subjects: nine periods for Arabic language and twelve for geography, history, mathematics, science, art, and physical education combined at the elementary level; six for Arabic language and nineteen for all other subjects at the intermediate level. At the secondary level, the required periods of religious study were reduced, although an option remained for a concentration in religious studies.

Gender inequalities of educational opportunity existed in higher education that stemmed from the religious and social imperative of gender segregation. Gender segregation was required at all levels of public education, but was also demanded in public areas and businesses by religiously conservative groups as well as by social convention. Because the social perception was that men would put the knowledge and skills acquired to productive use, fewer resources were dedicated to women's higher education than to men's. As a result, the new campus of King Saud University in Riyadh, built in the early 1980s, was designed to accommodate 25,000 male students; the original university buildings in central Riyadh were converted into a campus for the women's

branch of the university. King Saud University included colleges of administrative sciences, agriculture, arts, dentistry, education, engineering, medical sciences, medicine, pharmacy, and science. Of these, the only course of study that excluded women was engineering, on the premise that a profession in engineering would be impossible to pursue in the context of sex-segregation practices. In the early 1990s, the university offered postgraduate studies in sixty-one specializations, and doctorates in Arabic, geography, and history. In 1984 there were 479 graduate students, including 151 women. The expansion of the university system in Saudi Arabia has enabled the kingdom to limit financial support for study abroad. Such restrictions had long been the desire of some conservatives, who feared the negative influences on Saudi youth from studying abroad. In 1984, there were approximately 10,000 students studying abroad with half of those studying in the United States. Students selected to receive government funding to study abroad in 1992 received allowances for tuition, lodging, board, and transportation; those intending to study science or technology received an additional stipend. A male student also was encouraged through financial incentives to marry before leaving Saudi Arabia and to take his wife and children with him. The incentives, including an offer of tuition payment that allowed the wife to pursue a course of study as well, addressed concerns about moral temptations and cultural confusions that might arise from living alone abroad. As an additional buffer against such potential problems, an orientation program in Islamic and foreign cultures was offered for students about to go abroad.

<http://countrystudies.us/saudi-arabia/31.htm>

The third participant in the study comes from Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He is a non-traditional student, a 32 year old mature individual who is a sophomore

pursuing a degree in electrical engineering. His friends are mostly Arab students from various Arab countries including his own. I will refer to him as Riyadh in the context of this study. He will definitely add depth to understanding the relationship between the level of engagement in the host culture and the strength of the national characteristics of the student.

Essay by Riyadh

Religious atmosphere in the U.S. was strange to me, because there are many different religions and faiths; I come from an Islamic country and everyone in the community is Muslim. Unlike in Saudi Arabia, in America there are many different religions and beliefs. This is strange to me to be in an atmosphere that has this type of behavior. The first time I came here I had really bad treatment from the U.S. immigration. Because of my nationality they asked me to stay in the airport more than five hours and they did many things to me. For instance, they asked me to wait in the waiting room more than three hours doing nothing, they checked every single piece in my luggage, and they asked many questions about everything in my life. Moreover, they took my finger print. Besides that, they asked me to translate for other people who didn't speak English. It was really bad treatment from the U.S. immigration and made me tired and had a bad idea about the people here. (Riyadh, 2010)

Collecting Narrative Stories

To triangulate my research methods, I used individual meetings with the participants. During the individual meetings, I conducted three long, in depth, open-

ended interviews with the three chosen Arab participants in the study. The meetings focused on the three major research questions to uncover how culture, language, identity and personal power impacted Arab students' experiences of curriculum in the rural Southeast of the United States. Interviews were conducted using three prompts of questions (Appendix A). Each participant was interviewed three times. The second and third times were to build up on the first interview, and to ask questions that may have arisen with other students in subsequent interviews. I was particularly interested in personal stories and experiences, anecdotes, and examples from students' perspectives. Participants were experiencing various adjustment periods due to their duration in the U.S. The participant from Israel is a freshman and he is at the beginning phase of his adjustment. The participant from Jordan has been here for a few years, and she has gone through the first three or four phases of her adjustment, which will bring the female perspective of facing challenges of adaptation to a new culture. The participant from Saudi Arabia has been here for a few years, but his level of involvement in the host culture is restrained due to his strong national and religious characteristics. Participants were asked to contribute written essays from their academic work especially those essays that dealt with personal development and identity transformation as they adapted to the U.S. curriculum. The focus of all interviews and meetings was solely on the students themselves. I have refrained from involving other participants such as their friends, mentors, professors, and others so as to focus solely on students' perspective of their experiences of acclimation and adjustments to the curriculum.

Analyzing emerging and recurring themes of “CLIP”

Once all the information from interviews, essays, observations, note takings and journals was collected and documented, I analyzed the participants’ stories as I searched for recurring themes of “CLIP”. I had developed a guide line that would identify the major areas of the process of adjustment to a new curriculum that included all stages of adaptation based on Howell’s (1982) taxonomy of the cycle of adjustment:

1. Unconscious Incompetence, also called the state of blissful ignorance. At this stage the individual is totally unaware of cultural differences, cultural mistakes, or misinterpretation of unfamiliar behaviors.
2. Conscious Incompetence, the individual realizes that differences exist, though he/she understands very little about what these differences are and how numerous or deep they might be.
3. Conscious Competence, the individual starts to become familiar with the cultural differences, and tries to adjust his or her behavior accordingly. It does not come naturally yet, and the individual has to make a conscious effort to behave in culturally appropriate ways.
4. Unconscious Competence, the individual no longer has to think about what he or she is doing in order to do the right thing. Culturally appropriate behavior is now second nature to the individual.

Most individuals experience challenges in stages two and three, but each individual deals with these challenges depending on his/her character, and the level of cultural barriers between their own and the host nation. In selecting emerging themes from the research, the focus was on each participant’s perspective on his/her adjustment

to the host culture. In doing so, I outlined possible subjects of adjustment issues that would guide the research by focusing on steps of adaptation. (Appendix B). As in any quality research, I delved into the study with an eye on theory and another on the magic of serendipity. I approached the entire study with an open mind and resisted any temptation to inject my subjectivity into the findings. It was very difficult not to compare the three participants to each other, and not to compare their experiences to mine, but I refrained from doing so to give each participant his/her own fair share of contribution.

Limitation of the Study

I recognized that one important limitation was that the study would yield different results depending on which country the participants represented. Some Middle Eastern/Arab countries have different, positive or negative, relationships with the U.S. thus, different attitudes toward the U.S. curriculum which would impact their experiences. Another limitation was the inability to include participants from Arab nations that represented opposing political, religious, and cultural views with the U.S. who refused to participate for various personal or political reasons. A final limitation was that life experience is a personal matter, and it varies depending on characteristic of each individual. Because the study focused only on the participants and their perspectives of their experiences, refraining from interviewing other related individuals such as their friends, professors, was also be an element of limitation of the study.

CHAPTER 4

“CLIPS” BY THREE PARTICIPANTS

This chapter includes three personal stories narrated by Arab students who participated in the study. Because the focus of the study is to unfold the personal aspect of each student’s experiences of curriculum, I used the narrative approach in the first person for several reasons including that writing in the first person (I) instead of the third person (he, she) gives a personal voice to each story and personifies each experience, each participant is unique and deserves to be heard directly instead of indirectly, writing in the first person removes all interpretation in delivering information, each story of each participant deserves to be told separately to strengthen each case and avoid comparison among the participants. To protect the authenticity of each story, I resisted correcting the style, the format, or the content of ideas. I remained neutral on purpose to give them voice. The process of cultural transitioning into a new curriculum is by far more complicated than meets the eye. By allowing each participant to verbalize his/her own story of adjustment brings to the surface many aspects of deep feelings and personal beliefs.

I resisted stating any judgment or criticism on any aspect of the stories out of respect to each individual’s personal experiences, since experiences can be similar but never the same. Most important, there is no right or wrong answer in a personal experience. All that could be hoped for is that the participants become aware of the process they are experiencing in order to strengthen their cultural understanding to make better choices in the future. I included in italics some of my thoughts to identify ideas

that I deemed important to the study. I resisted “writing into contradictions” (Ayers, 2010) because the purpose of the study is to understand the personal experiences and not to challenge the status quo. Making judgments or challenging the participants’ belief systems defeats the intent of this study which focuses on the personal experiences in the acclimation or cultural transitioning process to the U.S. curriculum.

The major research question of how culture, language, identity, and power gets involved in the process of Arab students’ adaptation to a curriculum in a U.S. university includes the inquiry of the following specific research questions:

1. How does the native culture of three Middle Eastern Arab students from different countries influence their cultural transitional process in a U.S. university curriculum in the rural South?
2. How does the culture of the rural South influence three Middle Eastern Arab students’ cultural transitional process in a U.S. university curriculum?
3. How does the transitional process between the two cultures impact the transformation of three Middle Eastern students’ identities?

An Educational “CLIP” from Nazareth, Israel

I am who I am ...your opinion won't change one bit about me ...I'm not cool but will always try to be as cool as I can be in my own skin.

I ain't got no sob story to write, just like everyone else I'm living this life, you don't need to win me over, and there ain't no other side to shelter me from, I'll belong where I decide. (Posted on Facebook, Nazareth, 2009)

Arched above his big beautiful espresso black eyes, two thick eyebrows made him appear very exotic, and different from other students around him. I immediately recognized him to be An Arab student; He had a slender face, large forehead, exaggerated nose, perfectly shaped lips and his black hair was cut extremely short. He was medium tall, weighted no more than 130 pounds; wore a blue striped shirt and dark jeans that made him look thinner than he actually was. He was what Disney portrayed Aladdan to look like except he was born in Nazareth, Israel, instead of Agrabah, Iraq. Hence, I decided to name him Nazareth to conceal his true identity and protect his personal information. I met Nazareth when he first arrived on campus in 2009. He was totally excited to be in the United States in general and in college in particular. I knew immediately that I would want to include his story in my dissertation work. He was culturally an Arab, but held Israeli citizenship which was the utmost contradiction to his Arab identity. He was experiencing the first two stages of culture shock: the honeymoon and rejection phases. (Oberg, 1960)

Over the past year, Nazareth and I spent time getting to know each other. I was interested in collecting stories about his experiences as they related to academic and social curriculum. He agreed to let me tell his story using his own voice; explanation or comments will be added in italics to highlight the narration when necessary:

Narrative by Nazareth:

I was born in 1990 in Nazareth, Israel. So, that makes me 19 years old, I am the middle child of three children, I have a sister and a brother. We all speak Arabic, Hebrew, and English. My mother went to a college or took courses to be licensed pre-school teacher and my father finished 10th grade and then started working. My family is Muslim, but I do not practice. I went to El Razi elementary school. I remember most that we had to wear a uniform. We also had to do the same thing when I went to St. Joseph Seminary high school.

Living in Israel can be challenging because it is complicated to be culturally an Arab, but have to live inside Israel and carry an Israeli passport, since a passport is a “paper proof” or a reflection of a person’s identity, so I feel my identity and my passport do not match. I feel that I do not belong to any particular group. This is why I was excited to come to the States to continue my schooling, and figure out what my future would be. I was happy to come to the USA to continue my higher education. I have family members that live in Georgia, it’s always been a dream of mine to come to the States, my family being here and all it kind of made sense. My aunt Lee Ann she helped me through the whole thing. So, I came to this college on F1 Visa and I want to study Psychology. I took a class in psychology and I liked it, also my first year experience teacher encouraged me. The first week I arrived, I was really REALLY excited; I was filled with joy to finally be here. I like college. It is a lot of fun. It’s a way to find out how strong you are, mentally that is.

But, I do not like having to live with 3 other guys. I live on campus, it is mandatory for freshmen, before I came here, I thought education is strange in the USA, but I find

people friendly, I have 3 Arab friends and I have a lot more than that American friends, maybe 70-100. I like everything here; I am amazed that people are nice and I am surprised by the level of diversity in this college. The first class I took was math. My thoughts were: "I've already learned about all this...Boooooorinnnnnnng". The rest of the students seemed bored too. My teacher was nice, most of the teachers are really nice, but some are sneaky. So far, I am doing well in my classes. Other students are nice and they treat me nicely, I haven't had any trouble with anyone. I learn about things that are not in my major, it's more education than it is studying and learning to pass tests. One thing I dislike in studying in the USA, that some teacher have favorites. I think the core classes are really good, you learn about a lot of things just for the sake of learning about them and you find out so much about everything. The classes in my major are interesting. When I ask questions, my teachers answer it, but my composition teacher says he need more concrete language from me... He's the only one who has a problem with it. The most difficult problem I have faced in college so far is staying focused, except for Math, and FYE, they are the easiest classes. I get as much as I need help from my teachers, but I do not like group projects, when it's early in the course and I don't know any of the people in my group, it's not fair to have to rely on others to get a good grade. I'd like to do more research about things. I'd also like to reach out to people. I think being here on this campus was the best decision I've made; great academics, nice faculty and great campus. It was easy to adjust to the language because I've been speaking fluent English for a couple of years now.

Adjusting to the food is another story. I don't think I'm there yet. American food is FAT but it is GOOOOOOD. I knew a lot about the culture and I wanted to learn more,

so it did not take me too long to adjust to it. Americans are way more open-minded than a lot of Arabs are. Like now, I became friends with a gay guy; something I never thought I would do. A funny thing happened to me the other day, I got soaked wet with rain on my way to my room from a class one day; that was fun and I felt “free”. A lot of the students I meet are really interested in finding out more about my home country, my culture and my language. I feel good being a student here, but I feel kind of watched all the time. I don’t know, I want to stay in the USA after I graduate, I think this is where I’m supposed to be. I was not here before September 11, but I think some students and teachers treat me differently because I am an Arab. So far, I’ve met a lot of great people, hang out with them a lot, it’s really good. But, I don’t give in to peer pressure, I don’t deal with people that would pressure me into doing something I don’t want to do. I think the American culture is great. For some reason the first thing I think of when talking about American culture is pop culture. In some way I think it defines America. Even though I like being here, I still miss my family the most, and talking in Arabic most of the time. I feel I am not the same person when I have to speak in English all the time. I like different core classes and I think the best programs for international students are the international conversation hour, international club, cross-cultural friends. But the image of an Arab these days is the worst out of other nationalities. I feel that I will change it. I can make a difference in helping American students understand that not all Arabs are bad. The few that were terrible set a stereotype for us that were far removed from reality and truth. *Sept 11 has changed how Arab students feel and experience curriculum in the U.S. and Nazareth is no exception. He told me on many occasions that he works hard at changing people’s minds around him about him and his culture.*

He feels treated differently because of his cultural background, but when he tells people that he has Israeli nationality, they seem to accept him more, even though, they don't seem to understand the real meaning of an Arab to be a citizen of Israel. I asked Nazareth one day to send me an essay that he has written in class about his experiences in college so far, so he sent me the following essay:

I'm enjoying myself here in America, so far almost everything has been going in the right direction for me, I didn't even have any problem adjusting to the time change, there's a seven hours difference between here and Israel, but I guess jet lag was no match to me. As I said, I've been having a good time, I've been here in America for a month and two weeks now, and I feel great. I've been in Statesboro, however, only for a couple of weeks now, It started off great, made lots of friends, got a lot of insight about important things for school, and got a new bike, it is extremely helpful actually.

On the other hand I've also have had some, let's call them "minor set-backs", I have three roommates where I'm living here on campus and we couldn't be more different from each other. I've always been the quiet, peaceful kind of guy, I'm usually not loud and I'm normally shy. But I guess being through so much, I feel like I've loosened up a little bit, and am more open and friendly towards "strangers". even so, I feel as if I've created this huge gap between my roommates and I by always being different, obviously I'll always be different but will it always be to an extent in which I feel completely excluded?. It is pretty easy to say that I'm alright all by myself, but it doesn't always feel that way.

I've always liked meeting new people and making lots of friends, but I've never had as many friends as I have here. I also seem to do a really good job when it comes to

detaching myself from what surrounds me, or who, if you might. I would tell everyone I'm fine, but I was even thinking about going to see a psychologist for the past few days. So am I fine??...

I knew immediately that Nazareth is experiencing the effect of the "CLIP" after he began to question if he were fine or not. I wrote him back to get him to talk about his feelings in an attempt to help him understand that what he was experiencing was directly related to the process of adjustment to a new culture. He told me he was having problems with his English class. I tried to assure him that his English language was wonderful and reminded him to challenge anyone who says otherwise to learn to speak three languages like he does, he answered me with the following explanation:

Thank you. I wish my English teacher was as nice as you are. When I wrote this essay, I was feeling lost, I kind of felt out of control, everything was new to me and I felt like I was drowning. It was hard to keep my head in the game and focus on my goal, which is mainly education but I had to do it.... I wanted to go see a psychologist, but I never went. I knew I had to start dealing with things on my own. and ever since I got over those kinds of thing I'm more able to look pass them, not pay that much attention when I face them, it's been liberating and calming, I've been able to enjoy everything a lot more than I use to. I can figure most things out on my own and no matter what, I'm glad and thankful for everything I go through.

Nazareth and I became Facebook friends. I got his permission to use quotes he had posted on his profile to share with his friends. I like to mention here, technology is a great medium for international students in general and Arab students in particular to stay in touch with their cultures, have the chance to speak their native languages, and

maintain connectivity with their heritages. The flip side of that convenience is the deterrent effect it has on the participation level of the students in the host culture. Hence, their experiences of the curriculum are greatly impacted due to avoidance and lack of participation. In addition, my observations have led me to believe that the stronger the boundaries are between two cultures, the stronger is the need to use technology to stay connected with one's heritage. According to Banks (1991), the stronger the boundaries are between two cultures, the less is the level of participation in the host culture. Hence, the use of technology is used to fill in the void of the effect of the "CLIP".

I usually tell people I am from a small country in the Middle East, I am pretty sure you have heard of it, it's been kinds the center of attention for the past 60 years or so. Most American people know about Israel, but not all of them know where Israel is, or what the Middle East problem is. I try to stay out of political debates about the Middle East, because their minds are made up. They will always support Israel, and it is difficult to discuss that with anyone since I am Arab and Israeli at the same time. This is why I direct my energy toward music and songs. I like the pop culture and I really get into the songs. I am always posting lyrics on my Facebook page because I like the songs and I like for my friends to read them too. People tell me I have a sensitive side to my personality. I feel that I have branches but I don't have roots. I live in a constant struggle internally to decide who I am and what I want to be. I do not belong to any one group. I feel like a chameleon; I change colors as I need to. This is good in one way but really bad when I put my head on the pillow at night, I can't tell who I am anymore.

As the semester went by, things got easier for Nazareth; he became more involved on

campus and took two jobs to help pay his tuition and to keep him engaged. His level of engagement in many phases of activities on campus is easing his adjustment process. Hence, his approach to adjusting to the new culture by submerging himself in it is his way of dealing with any internal struggle of reconciliation between his own culture and the host culture. I expect Nazareth to become “Americanized” in time; he will slowly adjust his ideas, values, and beliefs to concur with those of the host culture.

I occupy myself with songs in every occasion, when I am sad, I sing, when I am happy, I sing, when I have no homework, I sing and when I have too much studying, I sing. My favorite way to deal with my problems is to sing a song. My favorite singer in Arabic is “Fairouz” especially when she sings “Ya Tair” which mean oh bird...she’s asking and practically begging this bird that’s flying all over the world to tell her loved one, who is far away from her, how she’s doing. I feel that I am that bird. I come from one of the most complicated countries in history, I have a lot of background, I will not take any lie that is told to try and manipulate the truth, I will listen to those who have a problem with what I say, I will not agree on a lot of things, I am from holy Nazareth, I have an Israeli passport, and my country is Palestine...this is why it is so difficult when my English teacher asks me to write about my beliefs, I believe in not having to write my beliefs because I don’t feel like I am free to share my beliefs, but I also believe in passing my English class, so I’m going to write it anyway.

Some days I wake up expecting to hear people to talk in Arabic or Hebrew and I find them speaking English instead, then I remember where I am.

Nazareth has a rich personality and a diverse identity. He speaks three languages, and is exposed to three different religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. His family is

Muslim, but he attended Christian schools. He feels that this diverse background has impacted his identity and in turn influenced his experiences of adjusting to a new culture. His knowledge base of different languages, religions, and cultures has a direct impact on his ability to handle the process of adjustment. In some cases, too much diversity causes internal conflict and confusion in a person's life and identity. This could lead to emotional and psychological struggle especially in trying to satisfy the human need for belonging (Maslow, 1954)

Nazareth's choice of words reflects excitement and the enjoyment of tackling a new challenge to expand his mental capacity with new knowledge. He has family ties in the United States which greatly helps alleviate the feeling of being alone and in turn helps the adjustment process. Nazareth's affirmation of his own decision to study in the U.S. reflects his need for validation. Even though he thinks of his language as fluent and sufficient to study in the U.S., his English teacher has a problem with it. The teacher asks for more concrete language not understanding the cultural difference in using language between Arabic and English speaking individuals. A basic linguistic difference between these two cultures is that English relies on concrete information for communication, while Arabic relies on symbolism.

An interesting aspect of Nazareth's personality is his poetic and artistic personality. He loves music and songs, especially Country music. His favorite singer is Carrie Underwood. He not only loves her voice, but he also loves the words in her songs. Nazareth is attracted to the personal stories in Country Music. He also sings in English and has a pretty good voice. I got to hear him sing on several occasions and the most interesting thing about that, his accent totally disappears when he sings which

made me wonder how that even could be possible? A fascinating topic for another dissertation by someone someday!

An Educational “CLIP” from Irbid, Jordan

You were meant to sit in the shade of your rippling hair; I was made to look further, into a blacker tangle/ All my self-possession is self-delusion; what violent effort, to maintain this nonchalance!

Pumba: It's like my buddy Timon always says: you got to put your behind in your past.
Timon: No, no no. Amateur. Sit down before you hurt yourself. It's "You got to put your past behind you." (Posted on Facebook, Irbid, 2008)

One day, I was sitting at my desk in the office totally engrossed in my work when I heard a soft voice saying “Sabah elkheir” (Good Morning in Arabic). I looked up feeling a bit disoriented and surprised to see a beautiful young girl waiting to be invited in. At first glance, I immediately noticed her beautiful big eyes and wavy long black hair. She radiated energy and smiles that reflected a friendly personality which covered a touch of shyness and insecurity. She was tiny, no more than 5 feet tall and weighted no more than 100 pounds. I could not decide if she were a college student or a high school girl inquiring into college. “Ahlan, wasahlan tafadaly” (welcome, please come in) I invited her in. She introduced herself to me as a Jordanian girl from Irbid who just moved to campus with her family because her father just got a teaching job with the university. She was concerned about her student status and her tuition. “I don’t know why I was being charged out of state tuition if my father was a professor of statistics in the college?” She asked. I explained to her that she needed to complete an application for a waiver given to faculty who hold a work visa, and I helped her get her status in check. As time passed by, she visited me a few times at the office and invited me for dinner to meet her family. Later, I asked her how she knew to greet me in Arabic when she visited me the first time; she smiled and replied with shyness: “Hay bada soual? Esmek Daad”

(your name gives you away). But the name alone is not enough I replied, despite my daughter's pure Arabic name the Arabs can only claim her beautiful eyes but nothing else as Arabic. "Her blood is Arabic, and that is enough to make her an Arab" Irbid replied proudly. I knew at that moment that I wanted to include Irbid in my dissertation work to inquire further into questions about the formation of identity in the process of adjustment to the university curriculum. Irbid allowed me to tell her story using her voice.

Narrative by Irbid

I was born in Irbid, Jordan in 1986 and I have one younger brother who thinks of me as his little sister. We both speak Arabic, French and English. My father has a Ph.D. in Biostatistics and Preventive Medicine and my mother has a Bachelor degree in Biology. My family is Christian-Non denominational now because they could not find a Methodist Church that they liked, so we attend Mass on a regular basis at a non-denominational church. Neither of my parents is involved in politics, but I tend to favor the Democratic Party, and I think they are more humane than the republican one. Even though I was born in Jordan, I attended Kirkwood elementary school in Iowa City, in the U.S. My brother was born here in the States. But we all had to go back to Jordan where I attended middle school and most of high school in Rosary High School. I changed school many times. I spent Grade 10-12 in Oman Egyptian bilingual school and the last two years at Muscat Private Schools. Finally, I graduated in 2004 and had gained a lot of friends during the last two years. I remember having lots of fun at school especially with extra-curricular activities and various theatrical and musical events. Because my brother

was born in the States, my family decided to come back to the U.S in 2006. My father is now working on getting our status changed to Alien Resident especially that he is now working for the university as a professor of statistics. I am attending the same university and I live with my family at home. I know the American mentality when they find out that I am still living at home, they give me this strange look, but you and I understand the Arab culture and you know that I cannot just move out, or do whatever I want without my family approval. Anyhow, I live with my parents and that is that! When I first arrived to campus, I was very happy and I felt very welcomed. Few weeks into the semester, I began to experience some difficulties, classes seemed easy at the surface, but I really had to work very hard to keep my grades up. Some professors have no compassion that I was not from this country and they used to lower my grades for the smallest mistake or errors. So to keep up, I stopped socializing as much with my friends and dedicated more time to my studies. In the beginning, I was preoccupied seeking out other Arab students. I would search for them and introduce myself to them. I felt it necessary to have Arab friends who spoke the same language and shared similar experiences and expressions. I also felt welcome by church members that I attended with my family, they are mostly Americans. Except for few, I consider most of them acquaintances because we do not share the same culture and it is difficult to find things in common with them. I think I adjusted quickly to my classes and I did not feel the culture shock that other Arab students feel when they come to the States. I think because I have my family here and my brother was born here, I do not feel as alone or lonely as other international students feel. I consider myself “Americanized” in many ways except when it comes to family ties. I am very close to my family and I would never speak to my parents like some of my

American friends speak to theirs. I would be in deep trouble if I did that. As for school work, the first class I took was an English class with a very tough professor. I love English literature and I had plenty of it in Jordan which made it a lot easier on me in general. I love languages, I speak fluent French, English and of course Arabic. I did not feel any difficulty in the English language because I was already pretty fluent and did not have to start from scratch. I remember one of my Arab friends took intermediate Arabic class because he was tired of studying in English and also he wanted an easy A (grade). I was shocked the school would let him take the class since he was a Saudi Arabian student and he spoke the classical Arabic; the most difficult Arabic dialect of all the dialects in the region. When I confronted him with his class choice, his defense was that American students are allowed to take English composition, why can't we take our language classes? I thought that was very funny that the administration does not care what we take and what is best for us as long as we take classes and pay our tuition. Sometimes, I feel we are not considered "REAL" students. We are caught in the system and it is up to us to make all the decisions. I consider myself very lucky to have my family here, especially in having to adjust to weird things like the food. My mom is a great cook and we eat authentic Arabic food at home. This makes it very easy on me not to have to subject myself to undesirable food choices. Also, I don't feel like I had to work hard to adjust to the culture because I am already in the American state of mind when it comes to music, art, and English literature. On the other hand, I live at home and our house is authentically Arabic and our beliefs and social norms are still conservative compared to the daily life of American students. Importantly, I feel that we do not have anything in common between their culture and our culture. We co-exist with them but we are not

like them, if that makes any sense. Students ask me all the time about our culture and how does it feel to be Jordanian especially after September 11. Some people used to generalize and probably be prejudice towards all Arabs, but I think that this is changing a little now with education. I tell them that I don't feel any different. I am just a student like everyone else trying to finish my degree and hope to go to graduate school. I tell them that I feel normal, except that I miss Jordan and I miss my relatives and the pace of life in the Middle East. Life goes by slower than here or it seems like it does. Time seems to take on a different definition here. It moves fast, and it is very precious and expensive. It has a price attached to it. At home, in Jordan, time is slow and has no monetary value. I could even go as far as to say, time is worthless in Jordan, it is abundant with not as many things to do as it is here that are usually work related activities. We used to spend so much time socializing with our extended family members. We would all meet, sing, dance, and of course eat great healthy food till late hours in the morning for the sole purpose of having a good time. You don't really see that here. Parties are usually age appropriate, young people meet alone and older people meet alone. And each group parties in a different way than the other. Young people drink alcohol and smoke pot as they sing to loud music and eat junk food. And older people usually meet to conduct business over dinner meetings. I find it interesting that relationships are defined differently in our culture than they are here. In any case, I have learned not to judge what they do because that is their culture. All I can do is live according to my culture and accept the fact that I live in theirs without adopting their ways. I have learned to accept that some things are just there and we have to do them even though we might not like it. Take for example the core classes that we all have to

take, but no one seems to enjoy especially international students. Every Arab student I meet says the same thing: “Why do we have to study American history? We know their British ancestors killed the native American Indians and took their land in the same way they helped Israel take the Palestinian land and turn it into a Zionist country in the midst of Arab countries”. Jordan is in a very difficult position politically in the region, because half of the Jordanian citizens are mixed with Palestinians and at the same time we share borders with Israel. The Jordanian government tries to keep order and peace inside the country, and it has strong ties with Britain, but it is difficult to do that especially that the rest of the Arab countries do not like the West. The region is always in a political flux over the Middle Eastern problem. I do not think we will ever know peace in that region as long as the United States supports Israel and ignores the Arab countries. It is very interesting that some of our professors teach classes on the Middle East but in reality they don’t know anything about the daily life in that region. They do not know what the Palestinian people have to endure every single day. They speak in theories and they have their own justification as to the sources of the problem, but they never ask us our opinion in class. Some of them try to convince us of their point of view but they seem disconnected from caring to hear ours. Many teachers act surprised when they find out I am not American. And they act more surprised when they find out I am Jordanian.

I think classes are easy here and most of them do not teach much. I was totally shocked to know the university was on the Quarter System. I don’t think students learn much on the Semester System, can you imagine how little they learn on the Quarter one? It takes an entire Semester for international students, Arabs in particular, to translate the material so they can make sense out of it. What teachers do not understand is the

difficulty of the English language for Arab students, because the language itself is used differently. In Arabic we do not communicate directly, we use plenty of analogies, and we use description to convey ideas. English is dry, direct, business oriented, lacks emotions and description of ideas is culturally grounded and usually wrapped around football or military aggression and political power. I normally do not speak much in class, I try to read the books or do the research on my own so I don't have to ask questions. I get in trouble with group projects, because I end up having to do the entire thing. The group is usually disinterested in the subject and the students do not care as long as they end up with a good grade. A grade of C is good enough for them (C's gets degrees) they say all the time. But I go home with a C grade, my parents would tear me limb to limb and ground me for the rest of my life. I really want to believe that the University I attend cares about education and about providing the nation with well rounded individuals, but reality is that schools in general are now focused on economics and business. As long as students pay their tuition, they could stay 5 or 6 years without having to learn anything. Most American students come to college to party. But, I as an Arab, I am forbidden by my family and my culture to do that. So, I accept things as they are and do my best to finish my education and to make my family proud of me. My family keeps me motivated to study and I do not feel as lost as other students because I have my family to go back to anytime I need to. I feel secure and less threatened by the experience. I compare myself to students who finish High School and leave home to go to college. At first, they are excited by the novelty, then the responsibility of daily commitments start to creep in slowly but surely. In a short time, they begin to feel overwhelmed and the weight of expectations from professors and friends become

unbearable. This is the defining moment between winners and losers. This moment decides the rest of your life as a student. Those who can survive the first 6 months to a year usually graduate and go on with their lives, but those who break under the pressure and do not gain the family support drop out and make bad choices in life. I learned that from a class I took in “First Year Experience” which was one of the best classes I took as a freshman. Teachers sometimes forget that they are teaching us “Life”, they get engrossed with theories and traditional curriculum that they miss the point of real education. I like to relate what I study to my life and if it does not fit, I usually pass the class and forget all the material. This is my argument with Core Classes. Some of them are great and others like American History are a waste of our time, money and effort. I am amazed that the college places emphasis on American History classes but not as much on World Geography. Some students in my class might be able to find Europe on the World Map, but they cannot find Sumatra or Indonesia. Most students I know use Israel as a point of reference to locate other countries in the Middle East. When students ask me where I was from and I say Irbid, Jordan, they know it was a country in the Middle East but they do not know it has borders with Israel. They seem shocked when I tell them that. I like to attend the International Conversation Hour on campus; it is a good place to mingle with other international students. I still prefer to be friends with Arab students because we share a culture, norms and beliefs. I find it easier to talk to Arab students over other international students because of our commonality of perspective toward the United States of America. We all believe it is a great country but not a fair one. It builds good relationships based on business and political interests for as long as it benefits from such relationships. An example of such ridiculous friendship is the one

between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The two countries are on the opposite spectrum of each other socially, politically, culturally and religiously. Their friendship is based solely on business interests. The US was willing to invade Iraq so that to protect its interest in the Saudi Oil. This knowledge makes it very difficult on me to adjust to the American culture because I feel if I do adjust, I would be betraying my own culture. I struggle a lot because I feel I am supposed to live, study and work in this culture, but my own ideas conflict with my surrounding. In a sense, I resist adjusting to the American ways of living, and I resent changes of adjustment that happen to me slowly but surely, because at the end of the day, I am still an Arab and my identity should never change. It is number one Arab rule of conduct. This is the reason why I do not mingle too much with American students. I do not attend any of the workshops on campus except the Writing Center to help with my English classes. On the other hand, I feel that I have taken a lot of the American culture without trying because I lived here when I was very young before we went back to Jordan after my brother was born in the States. I took that culture with me back to Jordan and I felt proud of having travelled and lived in the States and that I spoke English better than the other Arab students. Now, I think that I carry my Arabic identity proudly and feel that I am privileged to know Arabic language and have a different outlook on different subjects. Even though I never get any positive feedback from American students about my being an Arab, deep down, I know I am an Arab and I am very proud to be one. I tend to ignore all the negative remarks that the media set for us and that the people here believe blindly. I love being an Arab! I think that when Arabic people know how to show others such as Americans how successful we can be, that brings a good image upon us. Arab culture has a lot to offer to other cultures. For

example, we know how to manage our money and live well within our means; you rarely find an Arab in financial debt, but you always find an American in debt. We adopt a better diet that relies on consuming more vegetables, grains and fruits. We tend to help each other and our family members instead of living the individual life as American people do. I like that I am different from many people on campus. I walk on campus proudly and I do not let anything else affect me. I am resilient to changes and I deal with adjustments at my own pace. A little dose can go for a very long time. Something I would never dare to do is disrespect my elders, especially my professors. I see American students going to class in their pyjamas and I do not understand how that could be acceptable in any culture. The professors do not say anything. They pretend the Emperor has his clothes on. This would never happen in our Arab classroom. Parents would not allow it, so professors do not have to deal with such issues.

I personally like the South, but sometimes it could be difficult to live in the South, especially the rural areas, because there are many racist people around, but in general, I hear people in the South are nicer or friendlier than people in the North. I really would not know till I travel in the States and find out for myself. But, I think living among friendly people helps me adjust quicker and easier because of the level of acceptance I experience. It is not that simple, but I try to simplify things so I can accept them.

Essay by Irbid

Going through a transition, in many ways, can be intimidating to anyone, especially a transition that involves interacting with different cultures and meeting new people of different backgrounds. When I first moved to the United States in 2006, I did

not know what to expect in terms of studying. I had started my first year of college at Yarmouk University in Jordan. I was studying English Language and Literature. Fortunately, throughout my life I had gained a strong basis of the English Language because I lived in Iowa City for about five years when I was a child when my father was working on his PhD. Further, when I was living in Jordan, my parents always spoke to us in English since they knew that we will be speaking Arabic in school. My brother and I were enrolled in the best private school available in the area where we lived; we were taught both English and French. In my final years of high school, we moved to Muscat/Oman for three years and we went to bilingual private schools. Finally, after high school years were over, I began going to college. Core English courses at Yarmouk University were not hard for me, but many other students from public schools struggled, although they wanted to study English Language and Literature to become teachers. I always was ahead of everyone in class and never had to put in the extra hours of studying as other students did.

Soon after a year and a half, my father had a job opportunity at this university and so within a few months we moved to the US and started settling down and finding a home. I enrolled in a mix of upper and lower level classes at Georgia Southern, which I thought at first, would not be a great challenge. I was proven wrong after the first few weeks. Initially I was very intimidated by other students thinking that they would know better than me since they have studied all these courses throughout their lives. I was afraid that my GPA would go down. However, soon I found out that not many of the students knew everything, granted there were some that were very smart, but I was one of the smart ones too. My grades were very good in some classes, but I made the mistake of

taking upper level classes that I was not ready yet. The upper level classes required very good writing ability in order to do well in the class, since the grading was geared towards long essays and analysis. I neglected to take both English 1101 and 1102, which were both writing classes and were actually a requirement for me to take before the upper level courses, but I had it waived since I took writing classes in Jordan. For two semesters I was trying to better my writing, but it was difficult because I used long and complicated sentences and although I thought I knew English very well, I found myself working very hard to become better. Eventually, I learned how to work on my sentences after taking 1101 and 1102, also after that some journalism classes. Even though, I had a minor struggle in my first and second semester, after that I had very little problems concerning my grades.

As for my social life, I have been always accustomed to moving around from different cities and countries. Meeting new people was never a hard transition in my case; however, I was always asked how I find it different changing from a very conservative culture to a more open society here in the US. There are many misconceptions in how Arabic culture is perceived; many people think that I had to wear a scarf around my head or even cover up my face. These ideas sometimes show lack of knowledge, but I cannot blame anyone for being curious. It is hard for someone who has not actually lived in an Arabic country to fully understand because they only see what the media has to offer. My answers to those questions are simple, I am a Christian girl and since our religion does not require me to cover my face, I do not have to. Jordan among many other Arab countries has somewhat of an open society and is becoming more open throughout the years, yet keeping its traditions and culture at the same time.

When my family and I first arrived to the States, we decided to go to one of the churches, and there I found my first group of friends. We all went to Georgia Southern and used to meet each other during our break times and sometimes go out after school or on the weekends. After a certain amount of time, I began meeting new people and finding many people that were also Arabic and we became friends.

Nowadays, I find myself in between a mixture of cultures; my friends come from very different cultures and backgrounds. Despite my initial struggle with a few classes, I have found my experience here strengthening in the sense of studies. Furthermore, I have friends that are very different than I am, and that is very intriguing to me because I find people who I can discuss differences in ideas, ideologies, cultures, languages, and many other subjects that we may come across. It is always great to find your place and be comfortable among certain people or cultures, but what I have learned is never to be intimidated from a transition or a change. What I have found, didn't change who I am, my culture, my traditions, instead I found middle ground and improved myself and my education in many ways.

Irbid has adjusted to the American Curriculum at her own pace. She is a proud Jordanian girl who lives with her family and chooses not to break the Arabic tradition of family influence over the individual. Irbid lives with her parents which has made it easier on her to absorb changes in little doses. Keeping up with the "CLIP" theme of this dissertation, I summarize Irbid's narrative as she described the process of transitioning between the two cultures to include many steps such as: Do some research to understand the host's culture. Find out social customs that might be at play and what their perceptions of outsiders are. Mentally prepare yourself for surprises and changes. Keep

an open mind and do not get overwhelmed if things seem different from your ways. Once you accept that the world is made of different cultures, it would be easier for you to accept your surroundings. Prepare yourself for language differences and laugh as you make language mistakes. Do not take yourself too serious, because if you do, you would feel embarrassed each time you make such mistakes and that embarrassment could set you behind in your learning process. It is not enough to know the English vocabulary words. You need to understand the meanings attached to them and their use in the colloquium language. Immerse yourself in the community without losing your own identity. The fastest and easiest way to adjust to a new culture is to interact and learn from local people. Most important of all, learn to respect differences and accept them as they are. Do not read too much into things, you go crazy if you do. You need to take your time and keep your cool as you discover those differences. Irbid does not challenge her status quo; she simply accepts it as is and does not try to reach for change. Changes can be overwhelming to most individuals and tends to cause disturbances in one's life.

An Educational “CLIP” from Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

You don't even know this shit cuz I haven't told you yet!!
“Give me a lever long enough...and single-handed I can move the world”
"You son of a *****! You shot me in the @\$#!" - Denzel Washington
(Posted on Facebook, Riyadh, 2009)

The third participant in the study comes from Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He is a non-traditional student, a 32 year old mature individual who is a sophomore pursuing a degree in electrical engineering. His friends are mostly Arab students from various Arab countries, mostly from Saudi Arabia. I will refer to him as Riyadh in the context of this study. He will definitely add depth to understanding the relationship between the level of engagement in the host culture and the strength of the national characteristics of the student.

I met Riyadh last year (2009) when he came to my office to settle his account with the university. His tuition and fees were supposed to be paid in full by the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission Office located in Washington, D.C. Students from Saudi Arabia are normally fully sponsored by their government's Ministry of Education. But in the case of Riyadh, his government was refusing to pay Riyadh's financial obligation to the university because he had transferred from another university in the Northwestern part of the U.S. to the Southeast without gaining proper authorization from the Cultural Mission Office to do so. With one stroke of his pen, he paid his dues in full and with much ease. He proceeded to inform me that he would be traveling to Washington, D.C. to take care of this misunderstanding in person. Riyadh's first passion is soccer, his second passion is traveling anywhere he can go at any time. Riyadh and I kept in touch

and we became friends on Facebook and in person around campus and in the community. He was very helpful in providing me with information to include in my dissertation work, as long I referred to his country as the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, not just Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is extremely proud of his home land, his culture, and of his Kingdom. He is fully in control of his personal decisions. He gets engaged with the host society on a need basis only; otherwise, he feels his mission in life is to see the world and enjoy life. He agreed to let me tell his story of adjustment to the U.S. curriculum using his voice.

Narrative by Riyadh

I was born in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I am 32 years of age which automatically qualifies me to be a non-traditional student. I have five brothers and five sisters which is considered a big family in the States, but not in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I don't remember much about the schools I attended at home, except that all classes were held in one classroom and one teacher taught all subjects. I graduated from High school in 1995 after attending three different schools. I attended College of Technology in Riyadh in 1998, and Institute of Science for Telecom & Technology in 2003 where I studied Office Management. In the mean time, I worked for AT&T in the Wireless Installation Group of Lucent Technologies at GSM as a shelter installer /BTS tester.

It was a dream of mine to come to the United States of America because I love to travel and visit new places, and the best way to do that is to enter the country on a

student Visa. Also, education in the States has a good reputation abroad, and it is supposed to be the best in the world. It is easy to transfer, and to change your major, because the educational system is more flexible. Some countries you have to be of a specific age, but because I am a non-traditional student, I can go to school here easier than in another place in the world. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia there are many restrictions on which school you can attend and what you can study. School is accessible here to anyone who wants it. You can go to any college as long as you can pay the tuition. Education is simple here. I am not sure I could say the same thing about the culture. It is very crazy. I felt a culture shock when I first arrived to the States few years ago. I gained admissions to a college in the Northeast part of the States through the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, and I came on F1 visa to study Electrical Engineering. The first thing that struck me very odd is that the schools and everywhere you go, girls and boys are mixed together. You never see that in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I had to sit beside girls in classes, which was very weird and unnatural to me. I felt very strange. I did not know what to do. I kept looking down on the ground so I don't lock eyes with any of them. Also, I was away from my family, my friends, my country and my normal life. It was very difficult to look around and see unfamiliar faces. At first, I could hear voices, but did not understand anything they were saying. It took me over one and half year to start understanding the words. It took a long time for noises to become clear as words. It was terrible to have to go to classes. I felt lost all the time. I missed my family a lot. I missed them taking care of me. At home, I did not have to do anything for myself. Here, I have to do everything. I really did not understand how many differences there are between the States and my country before I came here.

But when I arrived I found out religious atmosphere in the U.S. was strange to me, because there are many different religions and faiths; I come from an Islamic country and everyone in the community is Muslim. Unlike the Kingdom in Saudi Arabia, in America there are many different religions and beliefs. This is strange to me to be in an atmosphere that has this type of behavior. The first time I came here I had really bad treatment from the U.S. immigration. Because of my nationality they asked me to stay in the airport more than five hours and they did many things to me. For instance, they asked me to wait in the waiting room more than three hours doing nothing, they checked every single piece in my luggage, and they asked many questions about everything in my life. Moreover, they took my finger print. Besides that, they asked me to translate for other people who didn't speak English. It was really bad treatment from the U.S. immigration and made me tired and had a bad idea about the people here. The first year was very difficult to adjust to everything. The food was terrible so I learned to cook for myself. I also learned to wash my clothes, clean my room and things like that. The college I attended in the beginning was great. People, teachers, and students were all helpful. But, the college did not have Electrical Engineering degree. It had a pre-engineering degree only. So, I had to transfer to another college in the Southeastern part of the U.S. this is how I ended up in this university. This school is not the best in the U.S. other colleges have better classes, teachers and grading process. Testing using true/false or multiple choices do not help you learn anything. Best testing is essay format. I think it is difficult but it measures your understanding. Schedules are crazy, because I can never find all the classes I want to take due to time conflict. I normally check "Rate your professor website" before I sign up for the classes to find out what

kind of rating the professor has before I take the class with them. I try to search for nice teachers who help their students, sometimes I find easy professors when I need a good grade for a class that I have to take but have no interest in it like American history class. Why would I care about American history and why do I have to take such classes? Universities should be more deliberate in teaching international students instead of lumping them with all the others. But if the class is in my degree, I search for a professor you can learn from and who is nice. Most important, I search for male teachers because I refuse to take classes with female teachers.

Riyadh uses avoidance as aid to adjustment to the curriculum. He only chooses what he considers appropriate to his needs and fits his beliefs and his culture. According to Banks (2009), the level of involvement depends on the strength or weakness of the national character of the individual in trying to adjust to the host culture. Riyadh has an extremely strong national character. He believes his culture is the "Best in the world". He told me on several occasions that he was 100% Saudi even though he enjoys seeing the world, he would return to the Kingdom by the end and live the rest of his life in his own country and among his own people.

Language has been the most challenging, every day I learn new words. I am taking Chemistry class which I had taken in Arabic, but here I have to look the words up to understand. I have a friend who speaks French; he says I am good in Chemistry in French but not in English. *He laughed and I laughed out of politeness in reciprocation, which made me think of the cultural differences in humor among nations. What is considered funny in one culture could be totally dry in another.* Sometimes there are so many cultural barriers, like when a teacher asks a question about some serious issues

like: “What are you going to do if you get arrested and you are drunk and you are under age?” these situations will NEVER happen in the Kingdom because alcohol is (Moharam) forbidden. In situations like that, I cannot contribute to the conversation because this will never happen to me. I drink privately in Saudi Arabia but here I drink with my friends. But, for the sake of a class discussion, such scenarios are irrelevant to me and my culture and they are a waste of my time and my money. I understand they are relevant to other students, but I feel, international students in general and Muslim students in particular are not considered in the overall teaching process. The curriculum is tailored to answer the American students’ needs, but teachers do not understand our needs. So, we are expected to learn their ways, but they don’t give a crap about our ways of life.

American people think differently than Arabs. Americans are business oriented and because they are responsible for themselves they don’t care about others. They are very competitive and individualistic. Arabs are family oriented and they think about people around them before they make decisions about themselves. We live as a society and not one person alone. We are connected and we worry about each other and we help each other. Here no one helps another at all. They treat us based on who we are not what we know. What I mean by that, I feel I am always a foreigner, a visitor, but never a student living and studying in this university.

I do not like to talk to other people about my problems. I like to solve my own problems, because no one can help me in anything. I like to find out who had similar problems with my friends and if I trust them I will talk to them if not, I keep to myself and try to figure out my solutions for my own problems. If I had a problem with a class

or a question, I ask the professor first and if I don't get any help I seek help from a tutor. I find tutors in the department or private tutors that I pay from \$9 to \$15 per hour for academic help. There are major differences between Arabic and US classroom, first gender is separated, girls go to one school and boys go to one school. I was in disbelief to find girls and boys in the same class. Sometimes I used to think boys are smarter than girls and if you mix them in the same class, they will not be able to keep up like in an engineering class; there are no girls in Saudi Arabia in those classes. Students do not get involved in the discussion in classes in the US, I am not sure why, maybe they are lazy or shy. They come to class in their pajamas, and in so many classes, students come in late and leave early. In a way, academic material is easier than Saudi Arabia only the language is what makes it more difficult for me. Professors are flexible if you are late turning in your assignment, in Saudi Arabia they don't accept your work if you are late.

The worst thing is that they have women teachers, they are mean and they give heavy work load. I do not like having women teachers at all. I try not to take the class if I find out a woman is teaching it. Women teach different from men, they are stricter and put demands more than male professors. I avoid them at all cost and only chose what fits my needs. After all, it is my decision, my education and my life, and "Alhamod Lillah" (thanks God) I have the financial security to be able to do what I want. I am not getting education because I need to go back and get a job, but because I want to see the world.

Everything is different, the houses, the life styles are different. In Saudi Arabia children stay with their families till they get married, it does not matter how old they are. Society will not accept children to live apart from their families. All decisions are made

by the family, usually the father. Even marriages are arranged and wedding are planned by the mothers. Your entire life is a family affair. Here in the States each person lives alone and children do not respect their parents. They don't listen to them or follow their advice. Our society, children take care of their family members when they get old, but here, they don't. Usually, at home, I get house help from the maid or my mother taking care of my personal needs, but here I have to do everything myself. Here, I have to cook my meals and wash my clothes, I even have to shave. At home, I used to go to a barber every day. Time management is a big problem here. There is not enough time to do everything you need. The first few weeks of the semester are very hard because you have to do everything you need in a short time, I feel like I live on the run, no time to do anything right. I am not used to move this fast. I take my time and try to understand what is happening instead of only catching headlines. I am surprised, American students understand anything in detail because they all talk in headlines only. They pretend to live quality lives, but in reality, they chase their tails all day long.

Religious atmosphere is another problem. I cannot pray five times a day. So I pray when I can, but this is not enough for a good Muslim. Also in Saudi Arabia, we are all Muslims and we practice our faith, here they have a million religions Christians, Jews, atheists, agnostics, etc., so many religions. There is a small Mosque in town that I go to every Friday to pray the Friday prayer, but the people in the Mosque were trying to find a room in the University to turn it into a Mosque, but that caused so many problems with the community and we could never get a room to pray when we need to. That makes it very hard on students like me to keep my faith if I can't find a place or time to practice my religion. They have no respect for our religion, they even mock our holy

places, they don't understand that Mecca is the holiest place in the world, they use that holy name and translate it wrong to refer to places of shopping and most visited places. Why Mecca? Why not Jerusalem? The hardest time is Ramadan when we have to fast all day, but we have to go to classes. Last semester, I had evening classes three times a week and they happen in the middle of "Foutour" (Dinner time) which we call breakfast, as in breaking the fast, but they call dinner, this is another difference we break out fast in the evenings so that would be breakfast time for us, not dinner time. Imagine the confusion if someone invites you to breakfast and you show up at dinner time!

The language is the main problem with my ability to learn accurately because when I don't understand the words, I get lost in the chapter then I cannot follow the professor's explanation. Here some professors you have to take notes to pass their classes, some you only follow the book. Sometimes at the beginning of the semester I go to my professor to get their attention that I am an International student, so one time I had to take an American history class, (do not know why, and what will I use it for?) anyway, I had to take it for my major, it had a lot of reading and it was very difficult because we had to know all the years. They don't understand that we use a different Calendar called the Islamic Calendar. Islamic Calendar is 579 years less than the Christian Calendar. For example, 2010 is 1431 in our Islamic Calendar. So you can see how confusing this can be for me to learn their years of civil war. I took one class online, I like having a website where you can find all the information on it. Like I am taking a chemistry class this term, the teacher puts everything on the Blackboard (GeorgiaView) which is great.

It is easier for international students to read English than to listen to the professor lecturing. They can refer to the written material when they need to, but hearing and understanding is difficult because if they don't get what the teacher is saying the first time, they would not get a second chance to understand. Technology has made it easier for students to learn, and I think with time, professors will not be as important to the learning process as they are right now. Hence, adjusting to the curriculum in the future would require different skills than the present need of reading, listening and speaking a foreign language.

I think my age has a lot to do with my identity, I am a mature student so not many things will change who I am. I smoke cigarettes but I don't smoke pot. I had a girl friend and that was a great challenge for me. This is totally forbidden in my culture. We do not have relationships before marriage. I had to deal with that in a very difficult way. It did not work out with that girl, it was too much drama. She would fight me on everything, she would get drunk and do stupid things, so I broke the relationship off and got out of it. I moved out of state to get away from her. I would have NEVER married her at all. I do not believe in marrying outside my culture for the future and for the children sake. I would not be able to take her back with me to the Kingdom, and I do not want to stay here in the States. I want to marry a Saudi woman and live in Saudi Arabia.

Riyadh told me about his private relationships with other women, but I could sense a level of discomfort in verbalizing his feelings toward dating and having sexual experiences before marriage. It is a very sensitive subject for an Arab person in general and for a Saudi in particular. Culture in the Kingdom is very conservative socially and

subjects such as sex or sexual relations are avoided at all cost. The only reason he shared his feelings with me was because I was an Arab women and he referred to me as his cousin.

I wear different costumes here, in Saudi Arabia I wear the national outfit of white robe called (Thoub) and we cover our heads. So do our women, except they wear black robes (Abaya) to cover everything. It is a minor change but significant to your identity as a Saudi. Women and men live separately in society and they only mix in the immediate family gathering. The honor of the women is the family honor and the men are responsible for keeping this honor intact and pure. This subject has no importance in the States and they do not care what their women or daughters do socially. Here, everything goes, but definitely not in the Kingdom.

The oil keeps the relationship good between the Kingdom and U.S. and without that business interest the two nations would have nothing in common. Getting a visa to come to the States used to be very difficult, but now it is easier because they have common interest between the two countries. Still, they give me hard time at the airports when I travel. American like our money though, we pay full tuition, and they know we are not here to stay in the country. I will definitely go back to Saudi Arabia when I am done with my studies, and travel. It is so sad that we are here in the Southeast which is the most prejudice area in the U.S. people here are very racist and they don't like foreigners. The white people are red necks, and they do not accept people from other cultures. They look down at them and treat them fine to their faces, but behind their backs, they don't accept them at all. And the black people are mostly poor and pushed away from the centre of life by the white people. International students including us are

caught in between, we are neither white nor black; we are simply accepted here because we add money to the financial system.

Riyadh verbalized the concepts of “hegemony”, “white supremacy”, and “marginalized groups” in his simple words. He feels the “CLIP” concept that I am trying to convey in my analysis. The economic “Add-on” value is evident in students who come from rich countries and pay their educational expenses in full. Unlike other countries, Saudi Arabia is very responsible in providing their citizens with an economic advantage to help them feel in control of their adjustment to the curriculum.

There is a good thing in this university that they allow non-traditional students to register before other students. There is the Academic Success Center located on campus that offers tutoring facilities to all students, not necessarily for Arab students, but I take advantage of the services and I reach for help in my classes. Many students do not know of the services because they don't read the emails they get about it. Because I have been here for few years, I understand what is available and I go get it. Other students do not know what schools offer to them because of lack of experience. These are mostly the freshmen students who have not adjusted to the curriculum yet. I feel I am now expert about studying in the U.S. The prior college I attended was on the quarter system and this university is on the semester system. I liked the prior college better but they do not offer engineering degree. That is the reason why I came to the Southeast. I would not advice any new student to come here. It is tough for those who are not used to the system especially the English language. The biggest problem for international students is that they cannot find host families to help them adjust to the language and the culture, so they have to do it all on their own. That can be very difficult for students who do not

have families or relatives in this area. I would not suggest for any Saudi Arabian to come here straight, they will be better off going to any State but not in the South.

I asked Riyadh if his personality had changed with time since he came to the States. He was very quick to explain to me that his changes were temporary with a focus and a purpose to fit into the American culture and the curriculum, but as soon as he was to return to his home country, those changes will surely dissipate. From a personal experience, I think that those changes will cause him to struggle in his attempt to gain the reverse adjustment. It would not be as easy as he thinks to revert to being Saudi. Human identity evolves over time and subtle changes could create a personal identity crisis depending on the strength of the national character of each individual. In Riyadh's own words:

I changed a little bit. I have to act like an American, while in Rome do what the Romans do kind of thing. But when I go back I will revert to being Saudi in every meaning of the word. I do not forget who I am and why I am here. I am here to finish my studies. I am thinking of transferring to another State to finish my degree. So to answer your question, NO, I am not Americanized. I am 100% Saudi Arabian. I plan to go back to live in my country and never think of this place after I leave. If I have to do this again I will not do it the same way. I will pick a school North West and stay in it till I finish. Because the schools are better in the Northwest and the West in general, people are nicer and more accepting of foreigners. Also the weather is very humid in the South. (The Kingdom's weather is hot, dry and cold in winter). I like the quarter system and I like big cities because people in big cities are more cultured and accepting of foreigners. If I could change things, I will reject everything and only keep my major of studies and

go to another school. This school does not care about international students, they do not work with the student or worry about what happens to them. The international office only does processing for paperwork but they don't take a personal interest in them or help them adjust to a new culture or to the school. They are only interested in keeping you legal in the States.

I asked Riyadh to submit a few essays he had written for class assignments to increase my understanding of his process of adjustment to the curriculum. He was kind enough to send me the following essays.

May 15, 2007

Final Draft

Moving to USA

Lifestyle is diverse for many peoples and in many countries. Cultures are also different between many countries. There is a difference between American lifestyle and other countries' lifestyle. Especially Saudi's lifestyle, many things are totally different from my life in Saudi Arabia, and my life now, since I moved here to the U.S. When I came to U.S., I got culture shock because everything seemed different to me; the people, faces, colors, clothes, treatment, food, religion and lifestyle; none of these things are the same if we compare them with the things in Saudi Arabia.

People in the U.S. are entirely unlike the people in Saudi, everyone here is busy and they act serious with each other. They don't often joke; however, they seemed serious most of the time. Americans are more "cliquey," they don't ever try to find new friends.

Most Americans that I meet will go to a gathering with one group of people and instead of trying to meet other people they stay with the same group of people the whole time.

Also the American way of dressing is different from our way of dressing, we have our traditional dress which covered the whole body and it's all one piece. Americans wear pants and t-shirts instead of just one whole garment. Women also dress more provocatively in America than in Saudi Arabia. In America women wear low cut shirts with really tight pants. Or they will wear really short skirts, showing a great deal of skin. In Saudi Arabia the women cover their entire body including their faces. No part of their body shows except their hands and their eyes.

Religious atmosphere in the U.S. was strange to me, because there are many different religions and faiths; I come from an Islamic country and everyone in the community is Muslim. Unlike in Saudi Arabia, in America there are many different religions and beliefs. This is strange to me to be in an atmosphere that has this type of behavior.

The food in U.S. is unlike our food in Saudi, we have many kinds of traditional foods and I really miss them. The problem is that it is difficult to find the ingredients for our food here in Statesboro, where I live. For example, the spices we use. We have different kind of spices, but the one what we usually use call "seven spices" is so difficult to find it. It's not easy to find Arabic restaurants in this town. Most of the restaurants around here are focused toward college students; therefore, there are not many culture based restaurants. Most of the restaurants are American or Mexican and the focal points of these restaurants is speed so the quality of food decreases.

The lifestyle in the U.S. is completely different from the lifestyle in Saudi Arabia; the life here is too fast and everybody is busy most of the time. In Saudi we have quite a bit of free time to do whatever we want. In America it seems that everyone is always going and that they don't even have time to enjoy the things they are doing. All of these

differences has made my experience coming to the USA very shocking because the culture in general is completely different. The people and what they wear, how they act, the religions they follow and even what they eat is really strange to me and not at all what I am used to.

May 22, 2007

Essay#2, Final Draft

When I Came to America

Discrimination is everywhere, and the way people treat each other is different. Pat Mora in her article "Why I am a Writer" mentioned that there is discrimination in her life, but she doesn't care about it. She is proud about her ethnic group. I had a similar feeling once I came here to the U.S., but a little bit different than Mora's experience. When I arrived to the U.S. airport I had bad treatment with U.S. immigration, also I thought that there is discrimination in Eugene; furthermore, I think the influence of discrimination on me would be different if I came to the U.S. at a younger age.

First of all, the first time I came here I had really bad treatment from the U.S. immigration. Because of my nationality they asked me to stay in the airport more than five hours and they did many things to me. For instance, they asked me to wait in the waiting room more than two hours, they checked every single piece in my luggage, and they asked many questions about every thing in my life. Moreover, they took my finger print. Besides that, they asked me to translate for other people who didn't speak English. It was really bad treatment from the U.S. immigration and made me tired and had a bad idea about the people here.

Before I came here, I thought that there would be discrimination in Eugene. However, there is no discrimination in Eugene; it is small white town not like what I expected. The people here in Eugene are so friendly; they like to talk with the other people from other countries like me. They enjoy learning anything from other cultures; they ask me about the things they want to know and I explain to them everything about my culture. Most of the people here are surprised when I tell them about my culture, but they like my culture even though there are a big differences between the two cultures. Pat Mora mentioned that in her article "Why I am A Writer," "I write because I believe that Hispanics need to take their rightful place in American literature." So she writes because she wants to help her culture take place in American literature. I do the same thing when I have a conversation with different people about different topics such as politics, wars around the world, sports, and life in general. Most of my conversations are great and that has helped me to make new friends. Additionally, those conversations I had with the people here made me proud of my nationality and my culture, and tell everybody where I am from; because the people here they understand that the people in my country are not same and they don't judge the whole community because of some bad people.

Lastly, I think the influence of discrimination on me would have been different if I had come to the U.S. at younger age. I am old enough, and I have a good experience traveling anywhere in the world, because I travel a lot around the world and I met different people from different culture, that made my treatment skills good enough to deal with any matters. However, if I come to the U.S. at younger age I might be in trouble with the life here and how to deal with the people here. I might be afraid all the

time and stay at the house most of the time. For example, many students who are from my country are teenagers here in Eugene and they had difficulty when they came here the first time because they don't have any experience with how to deal and live with new culture and atmosphere. I helped most of them with different cases, like how to make new friends, how to understand the American culture, how to treat with others, and the way to talk with others, especially they are teenagers and they don't know how to talk with the people from different culture.

Summing up, discrimination is a problem and we should find a way to stop it. I had many different cases with discrimination, but the important one was in the airport when I came to the U.S. The U.S. immigration treated me bad and I felt the discrimination at that time. The people in Eugene surprised me, in the past I thought I would be in trouble to treat with them but, they are so nice and friendly people. If I moved to the U.S. at a younger age I might be in trouble to live like normal people. I wish every things in the future will be change to the better, with no discrimination, no wars with peaceful.

It is obvious from the essay above compared to the rest of the narrative that Riyadh's English language has improved with time. I restrained myself from correcting his English in this narrative and used his own words and style in the writing to relay his thoughts and ideas as he relayed them to me.

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS ON INQUIRY

Students who attend college full-time and live on campus tend to experience the most dramatic adjustment. Younger commuter students who are still living at home and maintaining high school friendships will experience slightly less change, and adult students who are attending part-time and are balancing school, work, and family may require the least adjustment (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). Pursuing a college education requires adjustment on the part of all students, though the type and degree of adjustment experienced by each student will vary depending on background, experience and prior schooling. Adjustment to college will also vary depending on the size, mission, affiliation, and control of the institution in question. It is extremely important to state that each of the participants in the study experienced the transitional process differently from one another. In spite of those differences, the study revealed few common elements and characteristics that are identified as findings or reflections on the inquiry.

De-socialization and socialization

The first finding is the level of de-socialization and socialization. Based on the insight gained from the three participants in my study in regard to the transitional process of the effect of the “CLIP”, I am inclined to conclude that adjusting to college by Arab students entails and augments the complementary processes of de-socialization and socialization. De-socialization is the changing or discarding of selected values, beliefs, and traits one brings to college in response to the college experience. Socialization is the process of being exposed to and taking in some of the new values, attitudes, beliefs, and

perspectives to which one is exposed at college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). It is also the process of learning and internalizing the character, culture and behavioral norms of the institution one is attending. Without a proper transition and a successful adjustment to college, students may drop out and very few return to graduate. Nearly 30-40% of college students drop out without obtaining a college degree, and many of these students never return to college to complete degrees (Consolvo, 2002). Individuals who are able to succeed at handling their independence and newfound freedoms are able to make new relationships while maintaining old relationships (Holmbeck & Leake, 1999). Developmental processes for male and female college students may differ, in that women tend to rely on relationships and socialization experiences to aid in adjusting to college more than their male counterparts (Kenny & Rice, 1995).

Level of involvement in the host culture

The second finding is the level of involvement in the host culture. Students who get involved in the host culture tend to experience an easier effect of the “CLIP”. The process of adjusting to college is augmented by most international students in general and Arab students in particular due to the most important theory that adjustment is greatly dependent on the level of involvement in the host culture. Other studies might reveal different data, but in the case of these three participants, they seem to range between the Conscious Incompetence and the Conscious Competence stages of adjustment (Howell, 1982). They realize that differences exist, they are familiar with these differences, and they are trying to adjust their behavior accordingly. It does not come naturally yet, and the individual has to make a conscious effort to behave in culturally appropriate ways.

Most individuals experience challenges in stages 2 and 3, but each individual deals with these challenges depending on his/her character, and the level of cultural barriers between their own and the host nation. In addition, Banks (2005) established that the weaker the boundaries are between cultures, the more likely cross-cultural functioning will occur between cultures, and the easier cross-cultural functioning will be for individuals in those cultures. Banks also established a strong link between weak cultural characteristics and participation in the host culture, as well as, a weak link between strong cultural characteristics and lack of participation in the process of adaptation and ease of adjustment.

Culture of the institution in question

The third finding identified that the location and the culture of the institution in which the research was conducted contributed greatly to shaping the transitional process of adaptation. Research in a different location or a different university could lead to different outcome. But, regardless of the location, the “CLIP” effect on most students adjusting to college reveals common symptoms such as homesickness and physical stress, struggle with defining freedom and responsibilities, accommodation adjustment in living spaces, insecurity in dealing with relationships and friendships and adapting to new academic and social regimens. Specific types of collegiate adjustment involve changes in roles, relationships, academic demands, and social demands. In addition, some subpopulations of students will face specific adjustment issues depending on the institution in question. It is also important to note the adaptation process is closely affected by the level of the universities deliberate involvement in recruiting and providing

enriched programs to ease the adaptation process faced by the “CLIPPED” students. In order to further understand the effect of the “*CLIP*”, it is crucial to examine the above findings in many of the challenges that face students as they experience the transitional process.

Challenges in Roles: Numerous studies have suggested that relationships and making meaningful connections are important for students to adjust to the college environment. Students who have been able to establish bonds in their new environment adjusted better than students who were isolated and not as successful in establishing new friendships and relationships. The theory of attachment has been used to explain the importance of emotional bonds and healthy adjustment. Healthy individuals tend to have secure attachments to parents, guardians, and significant others in their lives. Individuals with secure attachments tend to have an easier time transitioning to college than individuals who do not have secure attachments (Rice, FitzGerald, Whaley, & Gibbs, 1995). Relationships with parents may change when students go to college, which can be a difficult transition for all involved, and cause additional stress and pressure on the students as they move through the developmental process and become adults (Mudore, 1999). The process of adjustment can be frustrating and overwhelming for many students, leading to emotional maladjustment and depression (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000), which may, in turn, negatively affect college performance. An emerging student role brings new challenges and forces adjustment in existing roles. In the case of the Arab students research participants, the role of child/parent is expected to remain constant. Neither parents nor students would find it acceptable to negotiate changes in roles. Hence, Arab

students are not permitted to disengage from old roles that no longer exist for the student in the collegiate environment to nurture the new role as students. The process of de-socialization is not acceptable in most Arab cultures which greatly impact the development process of socialization. The three participants are hanging on to their old roles with their parents and family ties while they are developing their new roles as students. Irbid still lives at home with her family. She obeys house rules and strives to please her parents so they will be proud of her grades and social behavior in the community. She keeps friends from her culture and avoids contact with the host nation's culture so that she can protect her own identity from becoming hybrid. Irbid's role is defined as a daughter and a member of the family first, and a college student second. She is engaged in the American culture except when it comes to family ties. She picks what is safe to acquire such as music, art, language, but refrains from engaging socially. Nazareth on the other hand is experiencing many struggles, but he chose to adopt the student role in full. He participates in most activities and seeks friendships on campus. His national character is not as strong as that of Irbid or Riyadh. That is mainly due to the fact that he is an Arab Israeli Citizen which causes the utmost internal conflict for an Arab. His national character is diluted and he is in need to adopt a nation he can call his own. Riyadh's national character is extremely strong. He is Saudi Arabian with all its strength and weaknesses. His role with his family as a loyal son and a citizen of the Kingdom is non-negotiable. He is in the States temporarily with one goal in mind: "*to travel and see the world*". He holds a student visa in order to facilitate his more important mission in life, which is to fully enjoy himself and fulfill his life with experiences that take priority over academic accomplishment. Irbid's national character

is semi-strong and in line with her parents' characters.

Challenges in Relationships: a new college student needs to adjust to changes in his/her relationships. Students make new friends and develop new peer groups in college in order to ease the burden of adjustment to the new collegiate environment. The process of de-socialization from past relationships in order to socialize with new groups from college is expected to ease the transition and help with the process of adjustment. In the case of the participants, Irbid and Riyadh, they both are still hanging on to friends from their own culture and avoiding developing new friends from the host nation. On the other hand, Nazareth is searching for a group he can fit in with and will help him to develop his personality and identity. He is forced to deal with conflicts but he is working on adjusting to the host environment at a faster speed than Irbid and Riyadh. Nazareth still keeps in touch with his family via technology (video chat, phone calls, emails, etc.) but he does not keep himself preoccupied with relationships from home as do Irbid and Riyadh; that helps him adjust quicker to the host nation via de-socialization and socialization processes. Students often need to renegotiate existing relationships especially with their parents and family (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). However, while remaining preoccupied with friends from home detracts from adjustment, students who maintain compatible relationships with their families are more likely to experience success in college. College is often a place where one is more likely to meet people who are different from oneself in terms of ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status. For many students, maintaining their ties with home while exploring new relationships that challenge their perceptions of other peoples and cultures, actually helps them to remain

stable and successful.

Challenges in Norms: Students who do not fit the institution's norms, such as international students, students with disabilities, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and non-traditional students struggle in establishing relationships. A feeling of marginalization and isolation usually results for students in these situations. The process of de-socialization is difficult on students who find themselves living on the margins away from the core or center of the group. The student/faculty relationship takes on a different dimension in college than students were used to in high schools. Students in college are expected to be independent learners, yet there exists the possibility of developing intellectual, collaborative, and social relationships with faculty. In the case of Riyadh, he avoids female professors at all costs and searches for male professors with whom he can be at ease so that he does not have to struggle in adjusting through the process of adapting to an unfamiliar social mixing of sexes in schools and societies. Unless he undergoes the process of de-socialization and enters the process of socialization, he will find himself reacting to female professors with extreme unease and discomfort. Irbid does not date without her family's approval. Any dating has to be supervised by her parents. The concept of dating is not present in most Arab cultures. Marriages are normally arranged as a family affair. Hence, relationships are limited to comradely friendships and usually of the same sex, not between the sexes. The degree to which a woman is able to adjust may be directly linked to her level of confidence and general self-esteem. Women who perceive themselves as "having a high sense of "Personal Authority" would also fare better in perceived college adjustment" (Protinsky & Gilkey,

1996, p.292). The social aspect of entering college and becoming involved in campus life may be more valued by female students than male students. Women have been thought to be more social and require a social connection than males in late adolescence (Gilligan, 1987), which is the profile of the traditional age college freshman. Although friendship and social activity for both males and females is important during the developmental process of late adolescence to early adulthood, women may tend to express feelings more openly, and be affected more emotionally by social situations that occur through any transition period, such as entering college (Rice & Whaley, 1994). In a recent study of college students, Lee, Keough and Sexton (2002) found that college men and women appraised the college experience differently, and had different perceptions of stress relative to social connectedness. According to Lee, Keough and Sexton, women who experienced feelings of low connectedness on campus negatively appraised the collegiate experience or campus climate. Self-esteem, assertiveness and confidence may also be impacted by the perception of acceptance into the new college community, academic achievement and personal safety (Protinsky & Gilkey, 1996).

Challenges in Academic Demands: The transition to the college classroom requires an adjustment of academic habits and expectations. Students have to study harder, and develop new study habits to match the seriousness of college academic requirements. Classrooms are usually larger in size and number of students. Instructors have different teaching styles, the pace is faster, reading material is abundant, assignments are time consuming and research oriented. Students have to learn to set priorities and balance activities. In the case of the participants and in the Arab world in

general, time moves slowly and rushing through any activity including learning and education carries negative connotation to the experience. This in turn, makes adapting to college life an experience of internal struggle and breeds the need for serious reconciliation between familiar and new values. The process of de-socialization and socialization is more critical in the face of this adjustment to a new academic regimen. Irbid enjoys English literature, but immediately after the first class, she discovered that she needed to strengthen her English language in order to get good grades. Nazareth was totally shocked to be told by his professor that his English was not good enough. He had to learn to use the language as intended in the host nation and not as intended in the Arab world. Riyadh in a nutshell, “*does not give a crab*” of what anyone thinks of his English since academic success is secondary on his list of priorities. The three participants viewed Core classes as necessary to produce well rounded personalities, but all three agreed that learning American History is a waste of their time. In the case of Riyadh, he brought to light an important distinction in the use of years between Christian and Muslim worlds. The Islamic Calendar runs 579 years behind A.C. In other words, Christianity was 579 years old when Islam was born. This can be as confusing as it is for a culture that uses the decimalized system of measurement (Metric System) to suddenly switch to an imperial system. I remember failing a math test during my first year in college in the U.S., because I was not familiar with a measurement system that uses inches, feet and miles. Based on that test, I was placed in beginning Math class after I had had Trigonometry and Calculus in my country.

Challenges in Social Demands: Social events are numerous in college life and

making the right choices for each individual is a complicated process, especially for students who like to balance social choices with academic responsibilities. Since developing new relationships represents an important element of social adjustment, Irbid, Riyadh and to some extent Nazareth, shy away from developing new relationships and tend to favor familiar backgrounds and cultures. The process of de-socialization and socialization becomes most important to this aspect of adjustment. Without de-socialization, students can't begin the process of socialization which causes internal struggle in personal perceived power. Using Irbid's words: "*We co-exist with them but we are not like them*". Other social issues that require adjustment include negotiating dating which is an unacceptable behavior due to cultural and family restrictions on the participants. Riyadh shared his experience in dating an American girl as he attended a college in the North West. He could not deal with the relationship and he had no intention of working toward a long range relationship. He ended the relationship and left town to get away from the experience. Irbid was interested in a guy on campus, but once she found out he was of a different religion, she lost hope of any development in the relationship since she knew her parents would not approve of it. Nazareth was very shy in sharing any personal experience and did not discuss the subject at all. In one interesting observation, Nazareth commented that he met a gay friend on campus and he was very proud that he was able to accept the friendship without any judgment, something he would have not been able to do back home. Nazareth has used an open mind toward accepting the host culture with all of its components, a clear sign of his intentional de-socialization and socialization into the host culture.

Challenges of the collegiate environment: American colleges and universities have taken on the responsibility of assisting students with their adjustment to college in multiple ways and to different degrees. Some colleges are more deliberate in their programs than others. But, most offer academic support programs, counseling services, academic and career advising, living-learning centers, residence halls, campus activities, health and wellness programs. These programs are geared and focused on the main stream students and tend to marginalize other groups such as international students, disabled students, gays, lesbians, and so on. This feeling was evident in the three participants in this study. All three participants alluded to the fact that services were not convenient to international students in general and to Arab students in particular. An example is the need for physical facilities for students to pray on campus or be able to observe their holiday festivities and rituals. The university the three participants attend is not deliberate in promoting programs to help international students adjust to the curriculum according to the participants. The university caters to citizens of the host nation and does not provide special attention to marginalized groups in general or to Arab students in particular. Campus activities, except for a few, are normally directed toward the host nation's interests, activities and culture. The few events dedicated to international students or marginalized groups are basic and deal only with simple issues such as gastronomy, or the art and music of other cultures. The geographic location of the university and the hegemony of its population explain the lack of interest in promoting multicultural programs and activities. Harking back to the supply/demand theory in economics, we are reminded that international students' recruitment programs are "CLIPPED" to the overall educational mission of the host nation. The demand is low.

In many ways the demand is undesirable for the sole focus of protecting or not threatening hegemony. The supply is at a minimum. This in turn reduces if not eliminates the need for support programs to deal with the “CLIP” students.

Challenges in new student orientation programs: The three participants seemed to enjoy the first year experience in different degrees. The First Year Experience Program is designed by the university to help freshmen adjust and transition successfully to college life. Nazareth found himself very involved and focused on the experience, especially that it was geared toward each individual’s needs and it did help him make serious decisions in his college work and direction. Nazareth has the desire to assimilate fully into the American culture and wishes to remain in the country in the future. Any and all adjustment he experiences is meant for a long term planning. His desire of adopting the U.S. as his own country helps him adjust quicker and more successfully. Any reconciliation between his perception and reality will eventually be resolved as he immerses himself in programs on campus. The primary purpose of new student orientation programs is to help students successfully adjust to college, and Nazareth is taking advantage of all services to meet his goals. These programs tend to connect students to the institution to help them set and reach goals, and to make them successful in the classroom. These programs vary in length, scope, purpose, timing and content; most aid students to learn information about services, facilities and help students make connections with faculty, staff, and other students. On the other hand, Irbid is entirely connected to her family in any future planning to remain in the States or go back to Jordan. She had lived in the States prior to college and does not feel that the first year experience is needed to help her adjust. Riyadh is a non-traditional student. He deals

with adjustment by avoiding issues at all costs. His lack of involvement on campus is convenient for him and in line with his personal goals as a student/visitor. His intentional resistance to de-socialization prolongs and might prevent the process of socialization during his stay in the host culture.

Challenges in other daily activities: Many activities that crown daily living can be taken for granted in a person's cultural environment, but it can represent complexity and inconvenience once a person is removed from his/her culture and placed in a new or a different one. Consuming food is a very different experience in the Arab world compared to the United States. For an Arab, the act of sharing food with someone is a festivity in itself. The Arabic cuisine has its own distinct flavors, spices, sauces, and ingredients. Arab women can be very proud of their domestic talents to clean and cook. Arab men can be very proud of their women's domestic talents to serve delicious dishes to their families and guests. Irbid likes to cook and enjoys Arabic food. She also relies on her mother to provide daily nutritious dishes so that she does not have to eat the host nation's food. Riyadh had a better arrangement back home because his mother, sisters and house helpers took care of most of his needs. In the States, Riyadh has to rely on himself to see to most of his daily needs. He is forced to assimilate into the culture by need not by choice. Even though he is very resistant to the de-socialization process, he has to socialize as needed for his survival. He is forced to adjust temporarily to his environment, but has all intentions to forgo this learned behavior as soon as he returns to his own culture. Nazareth, on the other hand, lives on campus and uses campus facilities to satisfy his daily needs. His involvement in the host nation's daily routine helps him to

adjust easier and quicker to the daily curriculum. Music, art, movies, sports and recreational activities are an important part of the overall curriculum. Combined, these activities reflect a culture or a way of living. Nazareth and Irbid enjoy the host nation's music and movies while Riyadh is a sports addict. He travels all over the States just to watch a soccer game or enjoy a day playing soccer with other Arab students.

In conclusion, each of the three participants brought a new light to the study. Since this is a qualitative research piece, it does not in any way generalize any findings or establish any new theories. This study offers contributions to multicultural writings such as it attests to old theories on adjustment to college research done on students from the same culture. It affirms the need for additional research on the cultural transition to college by students from different background and different cultures. It proves that studies on marginalized groups including Arab students are very rare and in need of further exploration and development. It establishes the "CLIP" concept as a new approach that can be applied to many different aspects of other disciplines. It affirms personal and group identities in bringing to light experiences lived by marginalized students including Arab students as vital members to global education. It provides a new dimension in using the "CLIP" approach for continued research development in multicultural education. It reconciles differences of culture, language, identity and power between guest and host nations by strengthening cultural understanding. It affirms the continued need to demolish the "*Cultural Deficit Model*", and to encourage cultural contribution of marginalized groups to global society by making curriculum relevant to marginalized students, drawing on and validating their experiences and intelligences. It

helps marginalized groups including Arab students realize that they could contribute to the main stream culture in sharing their values such as family ties, money management, knowledge of foreign languages and math, and clearing cultural misunderstandings and misconceptions. As for future direction, I wish for research of diversity to dive beyond race issues to surpass the nation-state mentality and reach for global commitment to education. The “CLIP” effect can have a positive impact on understanding other ethnic groups in other educational or societal settings as it contributes to a peaceful living among cultures through communication and understanding. Last but not least, An Educational “CLIP” gave me the satisfaction of contributing to the research literature a dissertation rich of personal experiences that could set the tone for future work not only in education, but in other disciplines as well. At one point or another, each one of us was, is, or will be “CLIPPED” from one situation and “CLIPPED” to another. Understanding the process of cultural transitioning is the first step of a one million miles journey.

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APPENDIX A
RESEARCH QUESTIONS “CLIP”

The major research question of how culture, language, identity, and power gets involved in the process of Arab students’ adaptation to a curriculum in a U.S. university includes the inquiry of the following specific research questions:

1. How does the native culture of three Middle Eastern Arab students from different countries influence their cultural transitional process in a U.S. university curriculum in the rural South?
2. How does the culture of the rural South influence three Middle Eastern Arab students’ cultural transitional process in a U.S. university curriculum?
3. How does the transitional process between the two cultures impact the transformation of three Middle Eastern students’ identities?

Questions aimed at inquiring research question #1.

1. Tell me about yourself, your family, and your cultural background. What do you understand by the word “culture”?
2. How would you describe the educational system in your country?
3. What part of your culture do you miss the most about being away from home? What do you miss the least?
4. Tell me about your educational experiences in your country. Describe your classes, students, teachers, class schedule, and mode of instruction, test taking, and grading process in your country?
5. How does your schooling in your country affect your adjustment in a U.S. university?
6. How does your Arabic language influence your adjustment in a U.S. university?
7. How would you describe your identity before you arrived to the U.S.?
8. How would you describe your personal power as a student in your country?

Questions aimed at inquiring research question #2.

1. What are the major general challenges you faced so far in studying in the U.S.?
2. How would you describe the culture in the Southeastern part of the United States in general, and the campus culture at the university you attend in particular?
3. What part of U.S. culture was the most difficult for you to adjust to? What part was the easiest to adjust to?
4. What are the specific educational differences and/or similarities between the Arabic classroom culture and the U.S classroom culture?
5. What are the specific differences and/or similarities between life in the US and life in your home country?
6. How does the English language affect your learning process?
7. Are professors culturally responsive to your linguistic needs?
8. How does technology affect your learning process?
9. Do you feel a change in your identity as a result of the classes you have taken so far? How would you describe the changes in your identity you experienced so far?
10. What is your opinion about the political relationship between the U.S, and your country? Has this relationship impacted your educational experience one way or the other?
11. Does this University provide opportunities for Arab learners to help them adapt to the educational system, such as studies centers, internationals clubs, forums, etc.,

Questions aimed at inquiring research question #3.

1. How would you describe the transitional transformation between your native culture and the host culture on your identity?
2. How did your native culture influence your adjustment to the U.S. curriculum in the Southeastern part of the United States?
3. How did the host culture influence your adjustment to the curriculum in the Southeastern part of the United States?
4. Do you feel your identity changed? If yes, how did you deal with these changes? If not, why not?
5. Would you describe yourself as “*Americanized*”, if yes, in what way, if not, why not?
6. How would you summarize your overall educational experience in the U.S?
7. How would you summarize the transition of your adjustment to the U.S. curriculum?
8. What internal conflict did you experience in your adjustment to U.S. culture?
9. Do you feel more powerful as a student and a person at the host nation or in your culture? Describe your feelings.
10. If you knew before you came what you know now, would you still have made the same choice for your education? Why and why not?

11. How satisfied are you in your overall educational experience in this region?
12. What would you change in your educational experiences if you could? What would you keep the same?
13. Did you experience internal conflict in your adjustment to U.S. culture? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?

APPENDIX B SPECIFIC CHALLENGES

- 1 Making the decision to study in the U.S.A
 - a. Pre-arrival perception
 - b. Expectations
 - c. Level of preparedness
 - d. Psychological and emotional attributions
 - e. Level of academic awareness
 - f. Academic and personal goal

- 2 Definitions and assumptions: “What Constitutes an Arab”? What is meant by “Adjusting”? How do you define American University Curriculum?

- 3 Common challenges all students face in adjusting to the American University Curriculum
 - a. Homesickness and physical stress
 - b. Defining freedom and responsibility
 - c. Accommodations adjustment in living spaces
 - d. Relationships and friendships
 - e. Adapting to new academic regimen

- 4 Unique challenges Arab students face in starting the process of adjusting to the American University Curriculum
 - a. Reconciling perception with reality
 - b. Initial culture shock
 - c. Language difficulties
 - d. Non-verbal communication
 - e. Racial discrimination and stereotyping
 - f. Identity confusion; acculturation versus maintaining cultural authenticity
 - g. Accommodations difficulties in religious practices
 - h. Cultural and custom misunderstandings
 - i. Unexpected and difficult to understand behaviors
 - j. Socialization and belonging
 - k. Cultural transformation force within society, family and self
 - l. Value orientations
 - m. Dietary restrictions
 - n. Separation from family support system
 - o. Financial stress
 - p. Adapting to different academic demands
 - q. Performance anxiety and depression

- 5 Communication preferences: Cultural variations of message
 - a. Need for accuracy versus reliance on symbols
 - b. Emotional resonance versus technical
 - c. Concrete versus abstract

- d. Language used to transmit information versus language used to create social experience
 - e. Meaning in message versus meaning in context (Hall 1976)
 - f. Explicit versus implicit
 - g. Include details in message versus details in context not message
 - h. Speaker responsible for message versus listener responsible for understanding
 - i. Direct to the point versus indirect, circular (Levine 1985) Direct/univocal indirect/ambiguous
 - j. Clear versus ambiguous
 - k. Simplicity valued versus embellishments valued
 - l. Objective versus subjective
 - m. Strive for no emotion versus deliberately use emotion
 - n. Emphasize action versus emphasis relationship (Kluckhohn and activity/doing, being & becoming, 1961)
 - o. Measurable action in social context tie between word versus words for social benefit and deed
 - p. One theme versus may have more than one theme (Dodd, 1982, linear configuration/Non-linear
 - q. Organized with beginning and end versus organization not stressed
 - r. Object oriented versus people and event oriented
 - s. Literate society versus oral society
 - t. Written word valued versus oral experience valued
 - u. Singular experience versus group experience
 - v. Factual accuracy stressed versus imagery and sounds stressed
 - w. Logic and coherence versus emotional resonance
 - x. Speaker detached from audience versus speaker and audience linked
 - y. Analytical reasoning versus intuitive reasoning
 - z. Simplicity versus repetition
 - aa. Accuracy versus imagery
 - bb. Understatement versus exaggeration
 - cc. Actions versus symbols
 - dd. Greetings and farewells
 - ee. Hospitality and food customs
 - ff. Speech styles
 - gg. Proxemics and gestures
 - hh. Male/female relationships' concepts of honor, shame and morality
 - ii. Educational customs
 - jj. Values of time, work, space, competition, and friendship
- 6 Unique challenges Arab students face in going through the process of adjusting to the American University Curriculum
- a. Understanding individualism
 - b. Understanding competition
 - c. Understanding democracy
 - d. Adapting to an interactive academic system

- e. Searching for a support system
 - f. Dealing with rejection and isolation
 - g. Dealing with discrimination and stereotyping
 - h. Reconciling differences in the teaching and learning processes and styles.
- 7 Triumphs and tribulations Arab student face in finishing the transition of adjustment to the American University Curriculum
- a. Fear of reverse adjustment upon returning to home land
 - b. Apprehension and anxiety toward their future
 - c. Uncertainty and confusion
 - d. Outcome/conclusion

APPENDIX C

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Arab Americans: Americans of Arab descent; mostly from Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, Egypt, Yemen and Iraq. The first major waves of Arab immigrants to the U.S.A arrived in late 19th century, and after World War II. The largest communities of Arab Americans are in Detroit-Dearborn area, Anaheim, Ca, and New York.
- Arabs: Refers to those whose first language is Arabic. Arab is a cultural, historical and linguistic concept (not a race). There are Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs and Jews Arabs.
- Classical Arabic: Written Arabic, also spoken in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.
- Curriculum: Derived from the Latin word for “race-course.” Contemporary views of curriculum explore the personal formation via curricula, or course of experiences that form human beings into persons. This formation is studied at that personal or the group level.
- Druze: A sect of Islam originated in the eleventh century in Egypt.
- Koran or Qur’an: The holy book of Islam.
- Levant: A Greek term means “where the sun rises” used to include area of eastern Mediterranean from Egypt to Greece including Turkey, Syria and Lebanon.
- Levantine Arabic: Arabic dialect spoken in Levant.
- Maronites: A Christian sect originated in Syria in the fifth century and moved to Lebanon in the seventh century.
- Middle East: A term used loosely to include Arab countries and other countries in the regions, such as Israel, Iran and sometimes Turkey (part of Europe).
- Muslim: A Muslim is a follower of Islam (religion). Muslims are estimated at 1.2 billion in the world. The largest Muslim population is in Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Nigeria and China. Of these Muslim countries, only Egypt is an Arab Country. Most Arabs are Muslims, but most Muslims are not Arabs.
- Ramadan: Holy month of fasting celebrated by Muslims.
- Semitic: In ancient times, Semites were Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites, and Phoenicians. Semites are now represented by the Arabs and the Jews.

- Shii: A branch of Islam (after A.D. 632). Shiites believe that Ali (cousin of Prophet Muhammad) and his descendants are the true successors to Islam.
- Sunni: Main sect of Islam based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (A.D. 570-632).
- Famous Arab Americans include:

Paula Abdul -- Singer/dancer
 Spencer Abraham -- U.S. Secretary of Energy
 Elias Corey -- 1960 Nobel Prize Winner
 Shannon Elizabeth -- Actress in "American Pie"
 Doug Flutie -- 1984 Heisman Trophy Winner
 Jeff George -- Football player
 Dr. Michael De Bakey -- Pioneer heart surgeon
 George Mitchell -- Former Senate Majority Leader
 Danny & Marlo Thomas -- Actors
 John Sununu -- Former White House Chief of Staff
 Helen Thomas -- Former Dean of White House Press Corps
 Bobby Rahal -- Indy 500 Race Car Champion
 Current Congressmen -- Darrell Issa and Nick Rahall
 Casey Kasem -- Radio personality
 Lucie Salhany -- First woman to head a TV Network (FOX)
 Jaime Farr -- Actor from M*A*S*H
 Kathy Najimy -- Award winning actress
 Ralph Nader -- Consumer advocate
 Christa McAuliffe -- Teacher & space shuttle astronaut
 Joseph Abboud -- Designer
 F. Murray Abraham -- Oscar Winning Actor
 Michael Nouri -- Actor in Flashdance