

A QUALITATIVE GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SAUDI
FEMALE STUDENTS: REENTRY, RE-ADAPTATION, AND
CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Wejdan Alamri

A Thesis

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication Studies,
Indiana University

January 2017

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Master's Thesis Committee

Elizabeth Goering, Ph.D., Chair

Jennifer J. Bute, Ph.D.

John Parrish-Sprowl, Ph.D.

© 2017
Wejdan Alamri

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all the Saudi women who are asking for their rights and want to improve their country to the better. May your education and journey abroad be the step toward change.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Goering. I'm grateful for your continuous guidance, encouragement, patient, and kindness. Your expertise and feedback were an inspiration. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of my committee: Jennifer Bute and John Parish-Sprowl. I have gained invaluable lessons from each of you.

Further, I would like to thank my husband, Hani Almasouri for his endless love and support during my journey and for all the commute he did for me thank you for believing in me. I couldn't do it without you.

I would also like to thank my father, Saud Alamri, and mother, Majda Hilal, for their love, support and encouraging me to seek a higher education and grow the importance of knowledge in me. You are my role models. I also want to thank my aunt, Alya Hilal for her support and encouragement during my time writing this thesis and playing a big role in helping me reach my participants.

Finally, I thank all my participants for sharing their narratives. Their time and contribution created this paper.

Wejdan Alamri

A QUALITATIVE GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF SAUDI FEMALE
STUDENTS: REENTRY, RE-ADAPTATION, AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Since the King Abdullah Scholarship Program was initiated in 2006, more than 50,000 Saudi women are studying abroad. Each year hundreds of Saudi female students are returning every year from a study abroad experience from a western country. However, there is a lack of research examining their reentry experience and its effect on their re-adaptation and cultural integration. This study analyzes how the participants adapted the learned skills and communication style from the host culture to their home culture. Qualitative methods were used to explore the re-adaptation and cultural integration experience of the reentry experience. In-depth interviews were conducted with twelve returned Saudi female students. Grounded theory methodology was used to analyze the interviews, with Kim's (2001) integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation (ITCCA) providing the theoretical framework for the analysis. This research provided an insight into the Saudi women experience, by examining their pre-entry characteristics, intercultural transformation, communication competence, and the formation of their intercultural personhood. Further, to help minimize the returners' challenges and maximize their benefits. The reentry consolation program and reentry-training program that I proposed would help the returners understand the faced challenges to better adjust and grow in their home culture. Also, it will help the returners reflect in

their professional lives and better understand their work environment to help enhance and integrate their skills to maximize their productivity.

Keywords: Saudi female students, reentry, re-adaptation, communication, intercultural personhood, cultural integration, grounded theory, qualitative research, integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation.

Elizabeth Goering, Ph.D., Chair

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review and Research Questions	3
Reentry experience	4
Re-adaptation	6
Cultural integration	9
The integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation	11
Methodology	15
Study participants	15
Data collection	16
Data analysis	18
Results	22
Participants background	22
Hadel.....	22
Asma.....	23
Raja.....	23
Noura.....	23
Nasma.....	24
Sara.....	24
Rehab.....	24
Najwa.....	25
Sulafa.....	25
Fatin.....	25
Dania.....	25
Maram.....	26
Findings of major themes	26
Pre-entry characteristics	27
Self-blossoming.....	28
Self-awareness.....	30
Intercultural transformation	31
Functional fitness.....	32
Settling issues	33
Restricted freedom.....	35
Missing independence	36
Acceptance	38
Psychological health.....	39
Cultural shock.....	40
Cultural disappointment.....	42
Accept the new reality	44
Environment	45
Sociocultural system.....	46
Cultural conformity.....	50
Time	53

Communication competence	54
Cognitive complexity	55
Communication privacy management.....	57
Relevance.....	59
Operational components.....	62
Intercultural personhood	65
Bicultural identity	65
Individualization	67
Universalization.....	69
Change agent.....	71
Discussion	75
Pre-entry characteristics	75
Intercultural transformation	77
Communication competence	80
Intercultural personhood	82
Practical Implications	85
Reentry consolation program	85
Reentry-training program.....	85
Strengths and Limitations	86
Reference	89
Appendices	95
Appendix A: Participants Recruitment Message	95
Appendix B: Information Sheet	96
Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire	99
Appendix D: Interview Guide	100
Curriculum Vitae	

Introduction

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) was initiated in 2006. Two hundred thousand Saudi students have had the opportunity to study overseas, and about 50,000 were female students (Ahmed, December 2015). The program's aim is for students to learn new skills and extend their knowledge. Those recently acquired skills are expected to be applied and adapted from the host country to their home country's development (Harrell, 1994) to enhance professionalism and promote gender equity in Saudi Arabia (Hilal, Scott, & Maadad, 2015). Before this program, women had limited access to overseas education. KASP gave the first chance for many women to seek a degree from abroad without a directly related Saudi male as the independent student (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). This opportunity provided the Saudi women who studied abroad an independent nature that helped them develop and be able to make their own decisions. This independence occurred when women in the host country didn't depend on their male as guardians to do everyday tasks and make decisions for them, which is happening in their home country.

The overseas education gave the students the opportunity to experience the two cultures. They experience the host culture during their education and in a different way experience the home culture when they reenter. The two cultures merged in the individual, as students learned and lived in both environments, ultimately resulting in an integration of cultures within the individual. According to Capella (2015), the individual's re-adaptation and integration experience is a unique experience that needs to be analyzed to understand the individual's new personal development. One aspect of this reentry process that has been examined in the literature is the effect of reentry on the

individual's psychological health and the ability to function in their professional and personal lives (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Other research showed that the returned students predominantly experienced reverse cultural shock when returning to their home country due to changes in their communication and behavioral styles (Le, 2014).

The need to examine the reentry experience of different countries is important to recognize the unique perspective of the returners (Martin & Harrell, 2004). Although there are many scholars who have examined the adaptation experience in the host country (Kim & Gudykunst, 2005; Li, 2015; Pitts, 2009) and others who have considered the initial reentry experience of sojourners (Cohen, 2003; Le, 2014; Martin, 1986; Martin & Harrell, 2004) there is a lack of research examining the sojourners returning to their country and how this transition is affecting them in many aspects. Specifically, examining the experience of Saudi female students is of particular importance considering the dramatic differences between the women's lifestyle in the western host countries and Saudi Arabia, the home country. Thus, this research will examine the participants' integration of skills and knowledge from the host culture into the home culture, the occurring changes, and the self-development within the participants, also focusing on the role of communication and intercultural transformation. The study's purpose is to examine the participants' perspectives on how they applied the skills and communication style learned in the host culture to their re-adaptation in their home culture. The study utilizes a constructivist grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and Kim (2001) Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-cultural Adaptation (ITCCA) to examine and interpret the Saudi women's reentry experiences.

Literature Review and Research Questions

The perception of culture has changed with globalization due to its dynamic nature that encourages the individual's openness to new ideas and experiences (Saint-Jacques, 2014). This openness is occurring through the individual's interaction with a diversity of cultures, as we are not limited to one cultural exposure in our globalized world. Sojourners have a unique opportunity to be introduced to and interact with other cultures in their study abroad experiences (Kostohryz, Wells, Wathen, & Wilson, 2014). This educational chance provides a unique experience for Saudi female students to encounter diverse cultural backgrounds in the host country (Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). The cultural diversity encourages the students to build cultural and social bridges that help students understand cultural differences and learn to accept and respect other cultures. This dynamic transitional experience expands their social, cultural, and professional identities that shape their perspectives (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). The new changes that are occurring from exposure to the host culture affect the students' awareness and openness to other cultural behaviors and communication styles.

Saudi female students studying abroad experience a unique challenge that will have a significant effect on how their perspectives towards their home culture are shaped. Saudi women face the cultural challenge of shifting from a segregated environment in the home country to a mixed-gender environment in the host country (Sandekian, Weddington, Birnbaum, & Keen, 2015). In their research, Sandekian et al. studied the effect of the transitioning from the home country's segregated environment to the host country's mixed-gender environment on the learning process and the cultural adjustment that the Saudi women made in the host environment. Similarly, Lefdahl-Davis and

Perrone-McGovern (2015) examined the cultural adjustment experience of Saudi female students in the United States and the changes that occurred in their personalities and relationships. This study's findings showed an increase of intellectual growth and independence from the Saudi women in the host country context. According to the Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern's (2015) study, there is a need to understand this growth's effect on the self-development of the women's re-adaptation experience. Also, it is important to fully comprehend how the cultural adjustment is occurring with the reentry experience. However, there is a lack of research that addresses the Saudi students' transition back to their home country and the effects on the communication style applied in their re-adaptation period. Also, there is a lack of research that is examining the Saudi students and women in particular and what challenges they encounter from this cultural transformation. In order to understand the Saudi female student's experience, we should first examine this dynamic transitional experience and the challenges that affect this process in three ways: reentry experience, re-adaptation, and cultural integration.

Reentry experience

The reentry process is defined by Martin (1984) and Adler (1981) as the readjustment of sojourners into the home culture after experiencing a different culture for a period of time. The home country reentry process was found to be more challenging than moving to the host country in the first place (Adler, 1981). Students may experience profound changes in reentering and this is influenced by their lack of awareness of the change that occurred while they were in the host country. This lack of change awareness may result in students facing a risk of "reverse culture shock" (Arthur, 2003). There are many studies on international students' intercultural reentry experience that include the

role of communication in the reentry experience on the sojourner's relationships with family and friends and their perception of the occurred changes (Martin, 1986). Other research discussed the psychological and social problems that the returners are encountering (Gaw, 2000; Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010).

Most literature focused on the transition process to the host environment and the elements that are associated with students' adaptation like the expectations gap (e.g. cultural and social expectations) (Martin & Harrell, 2004; Pitts, 2009); changed values (e.g. educational practices) (Robinson - Pant, 2009); and the quality of experience (e.g. the purpose of travel and the host environment) (Martin & Harrell, 2004).

In the transitional reentry process, many studies, like Arthur (2003), Gaw (2000), and Sussman (2002), addressed the students' cross-cultural transitions and the need to counsel the international students about the reentry transition to help minimize the adjustment stress. Moreover, Martin and Harrell (2004) developed the idea to help the students' value and maximize their experience to fully develop themselves by using the integration training model to set a training program for students.

Further, some research noted that the gender factor could affect the students' readapting experience. These studies indicated that the females face more difficulties in adapting and communicating in the returning home experience than males. The problems were found associated with family and their daily life, especially when the host country is less restrictive toward gender roles than their home country (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990; Harrell, 1994; Martin & Harrell, 2004). Another area of study addressed the reentry process from individualist and collectivist perspectives and examined how the value differences between the cultures will affect the reentry experience adjustment (Le,

2014; Sasagawa, Toyoda, & Sakano, 2006). The findings of these studies indicated that returners were presenting collectivist behaviors, due to a limited space that encourages self and professional development, to better fit their home environment.

This existing literature explored many aspects of the reentry experience that describe the complexity of the adjustment difficulties. However, the Saudi international students were left unexplored, and examining their experience can be important to understand the effect of the host culture on the Saudi students. According to Taylor & Albasri (2014), the Saudi students' reentry experience may have significant cultural changes in the country that would result in an open society that can accommodate the thinking of other cultures and differences. This study can contribute to extend our understanding of the cultural changes occurring for the Saudi women in their country and what their attributions to this change are.

Re-adaptation

According to Berry (1997), adaptation is the changes that occur to the person based on the environment needs with reaching a great sensibility of cultural identity and cultural context. The studying abroad experience provides the students with the opportunity to gain new perceptions and identities that extend their understanding of other cultures (Capella, 2015). The cultural differences between the host and home culture have a vital role in the re-adaptation process (Harrell, 1994). Some studies indicate that the re-adaptation process is a more challenging experience than adapting to the host culture in the first place, and that is linked to the individuals not expecting these challenges (Callahan, 2010; Martin & Harrell, 1996).

A key variable in the cultural re-adaptation is the students' identities. Saint-Jacques (2014, p. 21) argued that identity in this globalization world is becoming an evolving reality that is always going to be negotiated to determine its belonging. Sasagawa et al's. (2006) study suggested that the returning students are shaping a new unique identity that is affecting how they belong in both the host and home culture. Some studies address the shift in cultural identity and how this newly transformed identity is shaped. According to Gu and Schweisfurth (2015), studying abroad was perceived as an insightful identity transforming experience that enabled the participants to find a new sense of self and function effectively in their home culture. Pitts (2009) found that sojourners showed a shift in their identity to a more complex understanding of a global identity. Kim (2014c, p. 413) argues that identity transformation can creatively integrate from two incompatible cultural traditions that reform the home cultural identity boundaries to accommodate the host culture that can translate to a compatible identity. Further, Capella (2015) concluded that new identities and independence are shaped during the student's host culture experience, and the challenges occur in the reentry process. The cultural identity changes if it was associated with a negative home cultural identity which was found to have an effect on the returner's distress in their transition (Sussman, 2002).

Another variable that was discussed in the literature is that the difficulties of the re-adaptation experience will increase with the more dissimilarities between the host and home culture, as the students will require more effort to readapt to the changed values and assimilate their behavior to the home culture (Arthur, 2003; Harrell, 1994; Martin & Harrell, 2004; Pedersen, 1991). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) findings indicated that

the returned individuals experience significantly different perspectives and attitudes toward some of the cultural system's practices. This difference in perspective was found to be associated with negative feelings even though they accepted this behavior before their overseas studying experience. The new changed values have resulted from their exposure and adjustment to the host culture. One can argue that these changes can make the transition experience for the Saudi female students more challenging than for other international students due to the extreme differences between the two cultures.

The communication process had a valuable role in the adaptation process as scholars examined how the students use their interactions with others to understand themselves and their relationships (Koester, 1983; Martin, 1986). The students' interaction increased their understanding of the changes and facilitated their adaptation in the environment. Pitts (2009) found that the communication process had a positive effect on the students' adaptation in the host culture that helped minimize the adjustment stress and create new expectations to accommodate the new culture. Kim (2014b) proposed the stress adaptation growth dynamic process model that examines the role of stress levels in affecting the adaptation process and the effect of cultural acculturation and deculturation on the transformation. This model addresses the function of time in reducing the stress that is correlated with entering a new environment and in helping to smooth their adaptation process (Kim, 2001). On the other hand, Capella (2015) sees that the time factor is irrelevant to the re-adaptation process as this process depends on how the individual develops and adjusts to the conflicting feelings. Also, Kim (2014b) focused on the role the communication process had to help the individual balance and adapt to the new host environment. However, there is a lack of research that examines the role of

communication and personal growth in understanding the re-adaptation process and how to face the cultural challenges.

Cultural integration

“Cultural integration is individual showing equilibrium behaviors to compromise between their personal preferences and coordinating choices with others in the culture this involves behavioral adjustments to improve their interpersonal communication,” (Kuran & Sandholm, 2008). Cultural integration is a complex mixture that needs to be shaped by the students and that requires a comprehensive understanding of both cultures in order to readapt in their home culture (Martin & Harrell, 2004). The students with high levels of integration in the host culture are found to be no longer comfortable in their home culture (Harrell, 1994). For example, Li (2015) discovered in a study that was focused on international students in China that the participants differed in their cultural integration, and this was influenced by the participants’ willingness to integrate. Other scholars like Adler (1981) emphasized the importance of the individual’s awareness of their cross-cultural skills to integrate their skills and new learning in a way that fit their home environment.

Sasagawa et al. (2006) compared the differences in cultural values between the students who studied abroad and those who studied in their home country and how the sojourners integrated these cultural values in their lives. The study’s findings indicated that the students who studied abroad were aware of their cross-cultural background, but showed adaptive behavior that fits the culture’s standard image. The studied cultural integration was limited to identify specific behaviors toward situations that mainly focused on individualistic and collectivist behaviors. Other studies, like Harrell (1994),

were limited by focusing on examining the professional integration in the work environment and how they adapt their learned skills and knowledge from the host country.

In a review of the cultural integration literature on international students, most of the existing research on integration and cross-cultural adaptation examined the individual moving to a new unfamiliar culture or subculture (Kim, 2001, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015; Kim & Gudykunst, 2005; Li, 2015). There is a lack of literature that examines the cultural integration dimension and effect on the returned students. Understating the cultural integration of the returned students is important due to their integral role they play in shaping the identity and new changes to the culture and workforce in their country (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Also, there is a lack of research that addresses the cultural integration influence on the returners' lives and if it is associated with changes in cultural behavior.

However, the integration process was discussed insightfully by Kim (2001, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015). Her theory, the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation (ITCCA), addresses how the individual employs the communication activities to find the balance of the internal conditions from their home culture and the conditions of the new environment to maximize their adaptation process. The dynamic of the cross-cultural adaptation and intercultural identity can help the individual develop and exceed the cultural boundaries by embracing and integrating cultural elements into something new and unique (Kim, 2014b). Kim and Gudykunst (2005) explained that the role of the culture is to organize and integrate through communicating with features of the cultural environment. They argue that through

communication, the individual's internal system experiences a development of changes that integrates and becomes acceptable to the host culture's concepts, actions, and behaviors. Thus, I further explain the domains proposed in Kim (2001) ITCCA.

The integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation

According to Kim's theory (2001), there are five dimensions for the nature of the process of cross-cultural adaptation. The dimensions are personal communication, host social communication, environment, predisposition, and intercultural transformation. The personal communication dimension discussed the host communication competence in the host country. The host communication competence addressed that the communication competence is not limited to the individual ability to communicate but is related to other contributing aspects. These factors are conceptualized in the cognitive, affective, and operational knowledge of the host communication system and complexity to facilitate cultural understanding and adaptation. These three components are interrelated to achieve cultural integration over time. Also, personal communication happens with the sojourner's own internal capability and motivation to adapt and endure cultural difference with flexibility. Ethnic social communication dimension explained two constructs: ethnic interpersonal communication and ethnic mass communication. The ethnic interpersonal communication is the sojourner's competence to participate in the host culture's social activities to build relationships and strong personal network. The mass communication is the sojourner's using ethnic news and social host media outlets to get their information about the culture and use it learn about the culture values and behavior.

The third dimension in Kim's model, the environment dimension, includes the host's receptivity by presenting positive behaviors towards the sojourners and requiring

the sojourner to assimilate to the host conformity by pressuring the sojourner to meet the host environment's ideologies and policies. The predisposition dimension includes the individual personal characteristics and background influences and connections on the cross-cultural adaptation experience in the host environment. The preparedness for change comes with the sojourner's prior information and cross-cultural experience of the host country. Predisposition can facilitate adaptation to the host environment with ethnic similarity and compatibility with the host's ethnicity by showing an adaptive personality that includes openness, strength, and positivity towards the host country. Also, a high level of predisposition is associated with a high level of acculturation learning from the new culture (Kim, 2014b). The integration can occur if the sojourners were prepared to enter the new host environment like if they had similarities with the ethnic background and had an open, positive personality to help ease the adaptation process (Kim, 2014a).

In Kim's theory, the intercultural transformation is the sojourner's ability to participate and increase their levels of functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity to achieve cross-cultural adaptation. Functional fitness is the sojourner's ability to face challenges and carry out daily activities with overall satisfaction with the host environment. The individuals experience psychological problems with the influence of the acculturation and deculturation processes that are triggered by external behaviors like choices of dress or internal changes in social role behaviors or limited freedom (Kim, 2014b). The integrative theory explains that interactions with the new environment can lead to increased levels of intercultural transformation in the sojourners. This transformation can result in developing an emerging identity that is complex in nature. The identity is constructed with an enormous

sense of self (individualization) and a great sense of others (universalization) that overlooks cultural parochialism.

The cross-cultural adaptation is understood in terms of a dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment (Kim & Gudykunst, 2005). The communication process is an essential key to the process of change and adaptation that happens through interactions to facilitate the understanding of cultural learning with the host environment. Still, it is rare for sojourners to adapt completely to the host culture even with a high extensive interaction with the culture (Kim, 2014a). However, level of adaptation the sojourners achieve in the host country affects how they are going to readapt into their home country. The adaptive changes that occur to the sojourner in their time abroad happen with their continuing interaction with the sociocultural environment of the host country (Kim, 2014b).

The previously examined literature provides an understanding of how the students' reentry experience, re-adaptation, and cultural integration are constructed and perceived. The research is limited to students adapting and integrating into the host culture. Also, the existing research is primarily focusing on particular populations such as American and Asian students' reentry experience. The readapting experience of Saudi women international students was left uninvestigated. Furthermore, the literature of the existing research did not match the framework I want to form to understand the challenges the reentry experience presents for the Saudi female students and how their re-adaptation experience is influencing their cultural integration to change their lives. Therefore, this study offers the following research questions to examine the Saudi women's reentry, re-adaptation, and cultural integration experience:

RQ1: What effect did the study abroad experience have on the Saudi women and how they perceived themselves?

RQ2: What factors affected the Saudi women's re-adaptation experience?

RQ3: How did the Saudi women re-accommodate their communication to communicate effectively in their personal and work environment?

RQ4: How has the reentry experience influenced the Saudi women's personal growth?

Methodology

In this study, to obtain the necessary data to answer the research questions, I conducted in-depth interviews with twelve Saudi women who had studied in a western country and then returned to Saudi Arabia. The purpose of using a qualitative research method is to allow the Saudi women to express their perspective on the reentry experience, their challenges in re-adaptation, and the results of their cultural integration. The in-depth interviews provided a rich interpretation of the challenges the Saudi female students faced in re-adapting to their home culture (Tracy, 2012). The qualitative method is significant in how it is essentially used to preserve and analyze the content and the experience of the students' re-adaptation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Study participants

Study participants were Saudi female students who returned to Saudi Arabia with a finished degree from a study abroad experience in a western country. The participants were purposefully selected based on three criteria: a) above the age of 18, b) graduated from a western university, and c) had returned to Saudi Arabia to live after their graduation. I recruited the participant using two strategies: the convenience sample and the snowball sample. The convenience sample was accessed through using my personal network for the research sample that aligns with the study goals (Tracy, 2012). Through using my personal network, I found prospective participants, gathered their personal contacts and contacted them about the study. It was the most appropriate tool to start the recruitment in Saudi Arabia because there are no available specialized organizations that can help me reach my sample. The snowball sample was used to recruit the difficult-to-access participants to further expand the participant's sample (Tracy, 2012). In snowball

sampling, I asked study participants I interviewed to recommend other participants who fit my study criteria who are willing to share their experience.

A total of twelve female participants participated in this study. Saturation sampling was used where I interviewed the participants until the collection of data had no further information to discover (Mason, 2010). All of the participants obtained graduate degrees from abroad and worked after reentering Saudi Arabia. Also, two of the participants had had previous experience living abroad with their families specifically in the USA and reentering to the country at a young age, and then returned to study abroad in a western country when they were older. Regarding the time spent in both the host and home country, the least period of time the participants spent in the host country was two years and the longest was nine years. The amount of time the participants had lived in Saudi Arabia since reentry after degree completion ranged from two months to four years. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 1 Participant Demographics Information

Age	Education	Country of Degree
26-29	2 MA	8 USA 4
30-34	7 MA/ Ph.D.	4 UK 4
35-40	2 Worked prior traveling	USA/UK 1
≥41	1 Yes	8 Canada 1
Total	12 No	4 Australia 2

Data collection

After gathering the participant's contact information, a recruitment message was sent to the participants that included an invitation to participate (Appendix A). Upon receiving confirmation from the participants, a follow-up email was sent explaining the

study's nature and the interview process and welcoming any questions from the participants (Appendix B). Once the participant's questions were addressed, a time and location that was convenient for the participant was decided.

The interviews were conducted in Saudi Arabia as I traveled for a period of time to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants. The interview questions were semi-structured and included a set of open-ended questions and follow-up questions designed to stimulate discussion based on the answers provided (Appendix D). This type of interview question allows for exploring the meaning, expanding our understanding, and getting in-depth information from the participant experience (DiCicco- Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The in-depth interviews gave the participants the opportunity to explicitly articulate their own experience and challenges while providing narratives from their lives. Another factor that I believe improved the interview results was that the participant thought of me, a Saudi female international student, as a person who shares the same experiences, opinions, and perspectives with them. The advantage of being a member of the participant nationality provided me with a level of trust and openness with my participants that would likely not have been present otherwise (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Also, the interview can be a valuable tool in giving a distinctive lens in observing the participant's verbal and non-verbal language and in making the interpretation beyond the participant's speech (Tracy, 2012).

The interviews lasted an average of 45-minute and were audio recorded for accuracy. Before the interviews started, I explained to the participants the study purpose and answered any further clarification questions. Also, the interviews were conducted in English, as all the participants are comfortable speaking in English due to their time

abroad. However, the participants were informed that they were welcome to express themselves in Arabic if they wanted. That the choice to conduct the interviews in English was appropriate was evident in how my first interviewee expressed her preference to speak English. She shared with me at the beginning of our interview, “Even though my first language is Arabic after I came back from Australia, expressing myself in Arabic become harder and I feel more comfortable speaking English.” However, the participants incorporated some Arabic words in their interviews that were translated during the transcribing process.

Before the interviews began, the participants were asked to answer the demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). Then, the participants’ verbal permission was obtained to record the interviews for transcribing purposes. After each interview, a few field notes of the participant’s noteworthy nonverbal communication and reactions to questions were recorded to improve the transcribing process (Tracy, 2012). After finishing each interview, the participants were thanked verbally for their participation.

Data analysis

The interview transcribing was done after collecting all of my interviews. The transcription was written in a Word document. After I completed the transcribing, a fact-checking was conducted by reading through the interviews carefully while listening to double-check the data to assure good data (Tracy, 2012). Then, a Microsoft Excel codebook was created to track the themes and categories emerging in the first-level coding process. The first-level codes identify recurring patterns and themes that are applicable to the current research questions to figure the data meaning (Tracy, 2012). In this process, I focused on reoccurring themes from the participants’ interviews. The

initial codes were: changes in the host country, reentry experience, changed perspective, discretion, adaptation challenges, learned skills, communication style, relevance, work culture, personality transformation, relationships, finding balance and making changes. The themes I inserted were a general description of the participants' challenges and experience. Throughout the coding process, a written analytic memo was kept to interpret the researcher's assumptions about the data and the relationship between codes (Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Tracy, 2012). This analytic memo was written in a Word document, and it was useful in identifying significant codes.

Further, grouping the primary codes helped create a framework to understand the Saudi females' experiences that generated the second-level codes. Then, for the next coding process, I examined my data through reading the first level codes multiple times. In the interpreting phase, a hierarchical coding was used to group and link similar codes interpretation under one category to make a theoretical sense of the data (Tracy, 2012). The constant comparative method was used to review and compare the data to fit the codes. The constant comparative method explains and develops the codes to find the best direction for the analysis (Tracy, 2012). The data analysis was done using a grounded theory approach. This approach is valuable in seeking to understand the complexity of the social phenomena and providing an insight into the participant's experience (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In ground theory analysis, its significance comes from the theoretical framework that is developed from the data and the integration of the emerging themes. The second-level code critically examines and categorizes the primary codes into interpretive concepts (Tracy, 2012, p. 194). After reading my data multiple times, Kim's ITCCA theory (2001) was found to best match my data. To start creating my second-

level codes, I used a Word document to insert all the themes that fit my data and categorize them to fit major themes from the theory with including all the participant's examples and my notes about the relationship to the themes and my observation during the interviews.

Four major themes emerged from this systematic data collection and analysis process. These unique thematic categories were derived from ITCCA (Kim, 2001) that was used as a point of start for the analysis. The ITCCA theory framework focuses on investigating the cross-cultural adaptation of sojourner in a host environment and their experience overcoming cultural predicaments (Kim, 2001). However, to provide a holistic understanding of this study data, ITCCA theory was modified by developing this theory framework to accommodate the reentry re-adaptation experience of the sojourner in their home environment. The results emerged based on using ITCCA theory facets as a framework to interpret and represent the data, but the categories were modified and adapted to fit the participants' narratives. Most of the major themes were derived from the theory, but the sub-themes were designed with a flexible approach where most of them were from the theory, and the others were based upon the data interpretation. For example, in the second-level coding, I created "pre-entry characteristics," a theme that was added to Kim's theory that focused on the cross-cultural adaptation process of sojourners in new environments. This theme grew out of the approach my study and its focus on the distinctiveness of the experience of re-entering the home environment. In this theme, the sub-themes emerged based on the participants' narratives.

Moreover, in the second major theme, I created "intercultural transformation." This theme was stated in Kim's theory where it included the original sub-themes

functional fitness, psychological health, and environment. The “environment” theme is a dependent principle in Kim’s theory that I integrated into the intercultural transformation major theme because it is best answers my research question combined together. I also created the “time” theme that in Kim’s theory was perceived, as time will have an irregular changing effect on the adaptation process growth model. However, in my findings the time factor have the same effect as Kim’s theory stated, but because of its strong effect on the participants re-adaptation and still ongoing effect I chose to place it as a theme in my results. Also, in this theme, most of the sub-themes were originated from the data.

Further, for the third theme, I created “communication competence” this theme was derived from the theory. However, Kim divided the communication in her theory principles into three dimensions personal, host, and ethnic social communication. Because of the framework of this study and to answer my research question I included it in one theme that is “communication competence” and the sub-theme was based on the data interpretation. Lastly, the fourth theme focused on the “intercultural personhood” that included two of Kim’s constructs “individualization and universalization.” In this theme, I categorized these sub-themes under intercultural personhood that wasn’t a principle in Kim’s theory but was proposed by her (Kim, 2001, 2014c). In addition, the other two sub-themes “bicultural identity and change agent” were created based on the participants’ narratives. Finally, I re-read the transcribed documents to ensure all the themes were identified.

Results

The study results present the transformative experience of the Saudi women's reentry process. Studying abroad and re-entering their home culture was a pivotal point of all the faced challenges. The significance of their experience captured their thoughts, mindsets, views, and dreams through shared narratives. In the following section, I describe each participant's uniqueness using demographic data collected through the questionnaire and interview notes. Each participant's unique background and personal characteristics differentiate their experience from each other. Even though the participants shared similar concerns and aspirations, the essence of their experience varied. It is essential to understand each participant's background and the effect it had on their re-adaptation. For example, the participants with prior work experience provided different perspectives from others who hadn't worked. Also, their marital status affected the level of dependence they had before traveling abroad and in their reentry. These different background characteristics of the participants that are listed in the following section provide a portrait of each participant's uniqueness. Further, it is important to remark that all the participants' names were replaced with arbitrary pseudonyms to protect their privacy. The added brackets in the excerpts contain information that clarifies the meaning of my participant's answers.

Participants background

Hadel. Hadel is in her early thirties. She traveled to the US with her husband and two kids to gain her master's degree and spent four years there. Growing up, she spent fourteen years living in the USA with her parents which gave her a prior experience of life in the US. Before her study abroad, she worked in the private sector and after

returning to the country she joined a public university to work as an adjunct professor. She has been back living in Saudi Arabia for the past two years and a half.

Asma. Asma is in her early thirties. She spent five years in the USA with her sister studying to gain her master degree. Also, some of her friends from Saudi joined because of the availability of the scholarship program, which she described as having made her feel like home. It was her first time traveling to a western country when she went to the US. She didn't have any prior work experience before traveling. She has been back living in Saudi for the past one-year and a half. When she returned, she worked in a private hospital for a period of time and then went to work for a pharmaceutical company.

Raja. Raja is in her early thirties. She spent three years and ten months in Canada with her husband and kids. She told me that when she first arrived her youngest son was six months and it was a challenge for her to immediately start her master's program after two days of arriving. It wasn't her first time traveling to a western country. She was fortunate to work at public university before traveling to Canada that sponsored her study, and she returned to her job after coming back as an adjunct professor. She had been returned to Saudi Arabia for two months when I met with here; she spent the least period of time comparing to my participants.

Noura. Noura is in her early thirties. She spent four years in the US. In her first year, her father accommodates her to help her settle, because he gained a degree from the US. She was entirely dependent on her father at that time, and according to her she was very attached to her family. When her father returned to the country, she started to depend on herself and adapt to living alone. She has been returned to Saudi Arabia for a

year and a half from our time of the interview. She was fortunate to work at public university before traveling to the US that sponsored her study, and she returned to her job after coming back to Saudi Arabia as an adjunct professor. It wasn't her first time traveling to the US, but the purpose was different.

Nasma. Nasma is in her late thirties. She spent four years in Australia studying her master degree with her husband and two kids. She has been living in Saudi Arabia for four years from our time of the interview. It wasn't her first time traveling to a western country, and she fully adapted to the Australian culture and minimized her interaction with the Saudi community. She worked at a public university before traveling that sponsored her study abroad and returned to work as an adjunct professor at the university in Saudi Arabia. She is planning to go back to Australia to gain her Ph.D. degree.

Sara. Sara is in her forties. She spent eight years in the United Kingdom to obtain her master and Ph.D. degrees. She spent almost two years working as a research visitor in the UK. She spent years living and studying in the USA with her parents as a child. She used to work for a period of time before her study abroad experience. She has been living in Saudi for four years now. In her reentering, she had trouble finding a job where she spent a year and eight months unemployed. Then, she found a job in a recent established public university in a small village as an assistant professor. Even with this position, she is not satisfied because she is not working in her graduate degree specialty.

Rehab. Rehab is in her late thirties. She spent seven years in the USA doing her master and the UK doing her Ph.D. She had her parents and siblings with her in the beginning and then continued her study alone. A public university that she returned to work too as an assistant professor sponsored her study and worked at it before traveling.

She is unsatisfied with her work position, as she is not working with her Ph.D. degree specialty. She was used to traveling to western countries before she traveled.

Najwa. Najwa is in her early thirties. She worked at a public university who sponsored her study abroad; she gained both masters and Ph.D. degrees from the UK. She spent five years living abroad with her husband and son and returned to the country to continue her work at the university as an assistant professor. It wasn't her first time visiting a western country, and she has been living in Saudi for two years now from our time of the interview.

Sulafa. Sulafa is in her late twenties. It was her first time visiting a western country when she traveled to the UK to gain her master degree. Similar to many participants, she worked before traveling at a public university that sponsored her study and returned to work at it as an adjunct professor.

Fatin. Fatin is in her early thirties. She spent nine years in Australia with her husband and children to obtain her master and Ph.D. degrees. She was used to traveling to European countries before studying abroad. She worked before studying abroad, and after her reentry she joined a private university as an assistant professor. She has been living in Saudi for a year at the time I met her.

Dania. Dania is in her early thirties. She spent five years in the UK with her husband and daughter gaining her master degree. It was her first time traveling outside the country when she went to continue her study. She didn't have any previous experience working before traveling. After she had reentered to Saudi Arabia, she joined a private university as an adjunct professor. However, she shared with me her disappointment with her position, as she is teaching with the major of her bachelor

degree, not her master's. She has been living in Saudi Arabia for the past two years, and she is planning to go back to obtain her Ph.D. degree from the UK.

Maram. Maram is in her late twenties. She traveled with her parents and siblings to the US to gain her master's degree. It wasn't her first time visiting a western country. Because she traveled immediately after gaining her bachelor degree she didn't have the time to work before studying abroad. She has been returned to the country for a year and six months, and she was working at a private university as an administrator.

Findings of major themes

The results of my study data revolved around four major themes. The themes illustrate the phases the Saudi women experienced in their reentry and re-adaptation. Also, the themes demonstrate the effect of the study abroad experience on my participants and how it helped them grow. It shows that the challenges they encountered shaped the individuals they became after their reentry and re-adaptation process. The results of this study generated 23 themes that were clustered into four major thematic categories. Each of the major thematic categories answered a research question. The first research question, "What effect did the study abroad experience have on the Saudi women and how they perceived themselves?" is answered in my first theme, the participants' pre-entry characteristics. The second research question, "What factors affected the Saudi women's re-adaptation experience?" is answered by my second theme, intercultural transformation, that presented the participant's narratives on their struggles. The third research question, "How did the Saudi women re-accommodate their communication to communicate effectively in their personal and work environment?" is answered by my third theme, communication competence. The fourth research question,

“How has the reentry experience influenced the Saudi women’s personal growth?” is answered by my fourth theme, intercultural personhood. Lastly, in the following results section, the thematic categories are presented within a broader domain that will reveal the Saudi women’s own unique narratives on their reentry, re-adaptation, and cultural integration experience.

Pre-entry characteristics

As previously described, Kim’s (2001) original theory focus on investigating the sojourner moving to a new unfamiliar culture. Though, this study modified the context by moving this theory from its original context to examining the individual after reentering their home culture after spending a period of time in a foreign country. However, it is essential to understand the participants’ changes that occurred in their host environment and how it influenced their reentering experience in their home environment. The pre-entry characteristics of the Saudi women explained the effect of the cross-cultural adaptation and the changes that occurred to their sense of self. The Saudi women lived all their lives in a culture that valued family where family and their male guardians took care of them and had a primary role in their decisions. The collectivist structure of the Saudi society affected how the women behaved and depended on their families. Entering a new western culture where individualism is more valued and appreciated made the women observe a different approach to life and embrace it as a result. The participants’ narratives showed that it didn’t take them a long time to notice changes in their personality that life and education in their host country helped shaped. Examining these characteristics may help broaden our understanding of the impact these changes had on the Saudi women’s experience. My participants indicated that the cultural exposure they encountered in their

study abroad experiences changed their personalities and attitudes towards different aspects of life. All of the participants shared how their study abroad experience had a positive effect on them and their family and being part of a new culture made them appreciate things differently. In this theme, two sub-themes emerged to explain the effect the study abroad experience had on the Saudi women and how they perceived themselves. The first sub-theme is “self-blossoming” that explains the women’s perception on the changes that occurred to their personalities and behavior. The second sub-theme is “self-awareness” that indicated the level of awareness the Saudi women had on their personal changes and their anticipation of the degree of challenges that would likely affect them negatively in reentering their home country.

Self-blossoming. The narratives the women shared suggest that the study and cultural experience changed and developed their personalities positively. These changes encouraged them to take more responsibilities in their lives and to make their own choices. All the women shared with me how their families spoiled them, and they always have been dependent on their parents and husbands. Fatin shared here experience when she first traveled to Australia and how this experience had continuously noticeable growth on her:

It was my dream to go there. I thought that I would have a cultural shock, but I was fine. I think it's because the western culture was familiar to me because I used to travel a lot to Europe with my family. My family spoiled me a lot, but once I arrived to Australia, I noticed the changes in myself I started to work harder and look after myself. By the end of my study, I noticed how confident I become.

The women’s experience was a transformational experience for them as they learned to take full responsibilities, learned a lot about other cultures, and developed a new perspective. Hadel shared her personal experience, explaining how she was always

dependent on her husband for making important decisions in their household and taking care of the family welfare. This changed a lot for her when she started studying abroad as she started sharing responsibilities with her husband which had a positive effect on herself and made her proud of who she had become.

I felt more independent, and I felt much wiser. I think the lack of responsibility that I had before I went to the US really changed my personality abroad because apparently there you don't have anyone to help you and you don't have support in any way. Basically, it reformed my personality and all the perspective and not only me, but even my husband and children too.

Their self-blossoming is reflected in how contributing more in their household made them feel proud of themselves. As Raja explained:

My husband is a doctor and I was used to my parents helping me with my kids and house. So my husband working hours is very long and in our time in Canada I had to do everything by myself... because he didn't have the time to help me with our kids and house and I was very proud of myself to be able to do all this by myself without the help of my parents.

Similar to Raja, Hadel shared her narrative of how she reformed her life and became an independent.

I learned to conquer my fear because I never drove before, so it was a kind of challenge to drive for the first time when you are 27 years old in the cold winter and snowy days. Because I had a goal up ahead and in order for me to reach my goal I had to go through these obstacles and it wasn't only the education part, but also taking care of my children and my household. All these skills formed in one big bubble under the call of being dependent.

The participants shared with me how this experience made them stronger, confident, more independent, and more focused on whom they are and their goals. These changes inspired Dania who struggled a lot with her husband who tried to limit her ambition by not allowing her to study when they were abroad, but with her strong will she convinced him to continue her study after spending four years trying to achieve this:

I spent 5 years in the UK in those 4 years I was having problems with my husband because I wanted to study and he refused to allow me, and in the last year I finally was able to convince him to allow me and I got my MA degree. I learned many things from observing the British people lives and realized why I need to change and whom to become.

Other participants shared their shifted communication style; Maram explained how her communication style changed and how she embraced the individualism of the US society:

Living in the USA, gave me the encouragement to express myself, speak out my mind, to say and do whatever I want and to refuse what I don't like, basically be who I'm. Before I went to the states, I was never like this, and now I can say what I want and seek the better for my education and myself.

The narrative included in this theme demonstrate how self-blossoming was related to personality, growth, and independence. The significance of this theme is the participants' realization of the degree of change that happened to them during their study abroad experience. This realization leads to the next sub-theme where I examine the participants' self-awareness towards their upcoming reentry.

Self-awareness. This sub-theme revolved around the participants' self-awareness about their reentry. The participants' self-awareness is noted by the participants' personality changes abroad that occurred with their self-blossoming. All of my participants indicated that they were self-aware of their personality changes, gained skills, and changed perspective before they reentered to Saudi Arabia. They perceived their changes as a part of the study abroad experience and cultural exposure that was a big part of their self-blossoming abroad. Before reentering, they anticipated encountering challenges with the nature of the Saudi culture and the traditions the Saudi society values. The stories shared in this study suggest that the women were aware of the differences

between the cultures, which one might assume would make the transition process easier.

Sulafa explained how she anticipated her reentry:

I understood the changes that occurred to me while I was abroad. I liked the experience, and I loved the changes in myself. Trying different things and being in a different culture was part of my life, my journey. I knew when I had to come back to my country after my graduation and it is completely different from the UK and I had to rearrange my life and work to fit my new self better.

All of my participants agreed that the changes that happened to them during their study abroad experience had a positive effect on them as the more responsibility they had, the more confident, proud, and happy they became with themselves. Dania recognized the changes in herself and who she had become and for the first time she was able to control her life and decisions. Here she shares her own struggle and development:

My experiences in the UK, allowed me to feel like I'm a human begin. Before I traveled, people used to control me. I used to do anything my mom asked or my sister or my husband. I was without any personality. My personality started to change in the UK, and I'm still growing.

In Dania's narrative, she explained that this change made her more aware of whom she became and realize the previous effect her home culture had on her. This indicated that the participant's growth during their study abroad experiences made them aware of their personal development. This awareness of personal growth helped the participants understand their sense of self and the upcoming challenges in their reentry. Eventually, the pre-entry characteristics had an influence on how the participants were reflecting on their intercultural transformation in their reentry.

Intercultural transformation

Intercultural transformation is described as the ongoing process of cross-cultural adaptation that occurs when the individual interacts with a new environment (Kim, 2001).

The transformation is related to the degree of communication the participants had with the host environment. The participants' experiences abroad can affect the degree of challenge in the participants' re-adaptation. This theme demonstrated the intercultural transformation the participants faced throughout their re-adaptation experience. The participants discussed many challenges that affected their re-adaptation including having difficulties with the lack of functional fitness and psychological health. However, the intercultural transformation occurred when the participants grew to accept their culture and developed a new cultural understanding of the uniqueness of their home culture. In this theme, four sub-themes emerged to explain the intercultural transformation of the participants reentering their home culture and the challenges that occurred in their re-adaptation. The first sub-theme "functional fitness" discussed the participants' challenges in rejoining their home culture. The second sub-theme "psychological health" examined the participants' difficulties to accept and adapt to their realities. The third sub-theme "environment" demonstrates the participants' faced cultural challenges in their existing environment. The fourth sub-theme "time" discussed the effect time had on the participants' entire re-adaptation experience and growth.

Functional fitness. According to Kim (2001), functional fitness is when the individual is well adapted to an environment by living comfortably and satisfied. It is mainly related to having a good level of the capability to perform effectively in the society. The participants in this study were part of their home culture and satisfied with it. However, living in a new host culture changed their perception and behavior. As all of the participants explained how difficult it was for them to get used to many things abroad and be happy with it and then return to their home culture that was very conservative.

These challenges that affected their re-adaptation are here explored to understand the effect of the participants functionally fitting in their home culture. However, in this study, the participant's experience is drastically different than others from other countries as their challenges are not only associated with their unwillingness to adapt or being overwhelmed emotionally. This study's participants' functional fitness is affected by the culture's conservative structures in which they had to find their path to achieving a level of increased functional fitness. In this theme, four sub-themes emerged to explain the phases my participants experienced to achieve a high level of functional fitness. These phases' starts with the challenges that affected the participants that led to decrease in their functional fitness to an increase in their overall acceptance to their lives. These four sub-themes are "settling issues," "restricted freedom," "missing independence," and "acceptance."

Settling issues. The first issue the participants faced in their reentry challenges was settling issues. Settling issues are defined as the participants' difficulties with relocating, financial problems, finding housing and employment opportunities. This sub-theme was associated with many aspects that affected their adaptation like money problems, not having houses, and the most difficult for them is having trouble finding jobs. Many of the participants explained how having settling issues at the beginning of their reentering had a vast effect on them. Here Sara shared her experience:

We [she refers to her husband and son] came back to the country without having anything. We had to stay with my parents for 8 months until we prepared our flat and found jobs. I had three jobs offers in the UK that I rejected because I was homesick and I wanted to come back. After coming back, I applied to many research facilities, and all of them rejected me because they preferred employing other nationalities even though my degree is from the UK. Eventually, I had to apply for a university position even though I wanted to work as a researcher, not as a lecturer.

Similar to Sara's experience, other participants shared that having trouble to find a job affected their adjustment, especially the financial aspect that affects their functioning normally in the society. Fatin shared that having this problem worried her and made her doubt her decision to come back, but after joining her work and reorganizing her new life her feelings changed and she felt much better.

The participant's stories are different from the stories shared by the participants who had jobs and houses waiting for them. They expressed how this smoothed their feeling settled in their home country. Nasma explained how having a house and job made her adjusting easier with these aspects:

The most important thing was that my husband and I had our jobs and we had our own house, even our car that we left, these things helped us a lot in adapting to the country. We didn't have to worry about these things. But we struggled with money because we were used to living in a particular standard and when we came back to Saudi we need it to live at the same standard as our family and friends. It was a struggle for us for a while.

Resolving these issues led them to face other adjustment issues. These issues were the participants missing their lives in the host country and the facilities they used to have. They shared how it affected them and their kids. Like many participants, Nasma explained that she used to have a perfect life and coming back to Saudi was a struggle. Hadel stated her struggle with this and she had to overcome it fast because of her children:

My kids had a very hard time to adapt here, and they kept comparing everything with the US. It was very tough at the beginning for my kids, and I and I didn't want them to feel the burden of what I was feeling, and I had to keep calming them down and give them a high spirit.

The settling issue was the first challenge the participants encountered during their reentry. Still, it differentiated based on the participant's situation. The participants who came back without having jobs waiting for them shared that it was the most stressful challenge faced, and they expressed their disappointment, frustration, and sadness when they remembered that period of time. However, this functional challenge had an effect that extended to the next sub-theme the participants shared.

Restricted freedom. This sub-theme emerged from the participants sharing the effect of the freedom factor on their lives as it made them feel restricted in their actions and opinions. This restriction is still considered to be an ongoing struggle for them even after a period of time. At the beginning of their reentry, many participants compared the freedom in the host country and home country. The participants described this space in their host country as a sphere that let them enjoy their lives and be independent. The restricted freedom in their home country translated for the participants as the law that bans them from driving in Saudi and the lack of public transportation. Here Sara shared her own struggle with this matter:

I didn't have a personal driver at the time I first came back. Every time I wanted to go out or meet anybody I wanted to cry because I don't like to use a taxi so I would wait for an Uber [a private taxi company] to pick me and they always take forever. Now I have my personal driver, and I'm not happy with him or even feel safe.

Further, this led to a conversation with the participants on the effect of limited mobility. Many of my participants indicated that the limitation influenced their functional fitness at the beginning of their reentry. Here are some of the participants' interpretations:

In the UK, I used to have more freedom, and I did all that I needed for my family and me by myself. But here I feel restricted; sometimes it takes me two months to do a simple errand for myself. – Dania

I was okay with coming back, but there are things that I used to do and I can't do it anymore like the simplest things. Life in America was easier and I used to drive, and anytime I needed to bring something for me I went and I brought it. But here to do anything I need to check with the family driver and arrange with my family who is going out and when and where and wait for them. – Noura

In Sara's case, she explained how not being able to drive was frustrating for her, particularly because she felt that for women of other nationalities less restriction is applied on them in the people's view point. Here is Sara's struggle:

I lost many of my freedom when I came back, like I used to go anywhere because I used to drive their or I can use the bus and this what most affected me because if you don't have a personal driver in Saudi you can't go anywhere and if I'm going to use the taxi people will be staring at me because I'm a Saudi women, but for a foreign women is totally fine.

Gaining freedom abroad and enjoying this freedom had a negative effect on the participants functioning in their home culture upon their reentry. Part of the loss of a level of freedom was related to the next theme that emerged from the participants' narratives.

Missing independence. This sub-theme demonstrated the participants' challenges of losing part of their independence in their reentry experience. After gaining a great amount of dependence in their study abroad experience, coming back to their country affected their mobility and ability to participate equally in their lives. This independence they gained abroad reformed their character and was perceived positively with how it developed their personalities and behaviors. Here Maram explained her feelings when she was abroad. comparing it to her life after reentering.

You can do everything in the US. I felt like finally, I have my own life, I'm an independent. But when I came back to Saudi I had to rely again on my parents and the driver for everything even for a cup of coffee, the driver will go and buy it.

In Rehab's narrative, she shared how getting used to her lifestyle living alone abroad affected her independence, but understanding the cultural traditions and the family based society where she doesn't live alone like she used to and lives with her parents made her adjust her behavior for their comfort. Here she explained:

I used to take permission to go out before I traveled, but now I just tell my parents. Still, I have to remind myself that don't forget to tell your parents where you are going and you don't live alone anymore.

Similar to Rehab, Noura shared missing her privacy by distending herself from family arrangements to create her own comfort in her family house. Here Noura explained her struggle:

As a single women I didn't have any independence before traveling, and when I traveled I didn't like it in the beginning, but then I got use to it and when I came back living with my parents in a not big house and we are a big family, and we always have gatherings in our house, and it becomes very noise (LAUGHTER) I love this, but I feel I need to withdrawal myself and set by myself I feel I changed and I want to spend time in quiet. I used to live by myself for a long time abroad and I didn't have to think about anyone else, for example, I can have my lunch or sleep whenever I want, but now I'm attached to the family schedule.

A few participants perceived losing some of their independence in a positive way. They noted that sharing responsibilities with family members and receiving their support helped lighten the burden of being completely responsible for themselves or their children. In the following are some of the participants' comments:

I was very dependent on myself, and I took care of the whole family, but here [in Saudi] I'm not independent anymore (LAUGHTER) here I'm dependent on my parents to take care of my kids and me. – Raja

It's different here I got to live with my parents again and not worry about paying my bills and don't have to consider lots of things. – Asma

Although the participants lost a degree of their independence, some of them perceived some aspects in a positive way. The participants found their way to deal with

these challenges by accepting the some of the limitation the culture put on their mobility. This is presented in the last sub-theme that explains how the participant increased their functional fitness in Saudi Arabia.

Acceptance. This sub-theme explained the phase the participants reach to reconcile with the challenges they faced with their functional fitness. The decrease of functional fitness that occurred because of the participants' settling issues, restricted freedom and missing independence affected their mobility and ability to adapt. However, after spending a period of time back home, participants found their unique way to accept their new lifestyle. This acceptance is shown to be associated with their understanding that it is part of the cultural structure of their home country. Here Rehab explains reaching her acceptance phase "It was hard in the beginning, and it took time and now I'm fine with it. You live in a different culture so you have to respect it and I already came from this culture and I have to remind myself what I used to do before I traveled abroad." Rehab shares the difficulty of reaching the acceptance point, but her awareness of being part of this culture helped her adapt. Also, the participants' acceptance was also linked to finding their balance to feel comfortable with their families and the society's rules. In Maram's experience, she shared her own balance in life and appreciation of having her family in her home culture: "Sometimes I miss being independent and going out. Here I feel I'm more relaxed because I have less responsibility and I live for free with my parents and I have my nieces here. I realized that it is not where you live it is who you are." Sulafa shared the choice she made regarding accepting her home culture "I had to accept that I'm not going to do everything by myself. There I could go anytime and do what I ever I need to do, but here you have to wait to for a car to take you." Sulafa

compared in her narrative the two cultures regarding the degree of freedom and independence she had abroad and though in her reentry she lost part of her independence, she reached a level of acceptance to her level of functioning in the culture.

Moreover, support had an important role in how participants reached acceptance of dealing with their functional fitness challenges by having friends and family who can provide a support system for them. The participants explained that their families and friends noticed the changes, and they encouraged their development, which affected the participants positively. Here is Asma's comment:

My family was happy with the changes, and they expected it to happen. They gave me their full support and listened to me and gave me the independence to make my own decision.

Acceptance is the last sub-theme that explains the phase the participants reached in their increased functional fitness. The participants found their way to be content with their lives and see the positive part in being back to their families and friends. This acceptance led them to adapt to the degree of limitation their home culture presents in the participants' mobility. However, this led to discuss another aspect that affected their re-adaptation and that is the participant's psychological health.

Psychological health. Kim (2001) discusses that the decrease in the psychological health is related to encountering emotional problems that affect the individual's ability to communicate and function effectively in any new entering culture. In this study, the participants are reentering their home culture that is familiar, and they used to have a high level of satisfaction with it. However, reentering caused several emotional problems that emerged from the participants' interviews. The cultural changes that faced the participants affected their dynamics to perform sufficiently. These

psychosocial upsets were related to the participants experiencing frustration and disappointment towards their culture in the beginning. Once the participants settled and were able to differentiate clearly between the two cultures their path to acceptance started. In this theme, three sub-themes emerged to explain the phases my participants experienced to achieve a healthier psychological mode. These phases start with the negative feelings that affected the participants and led to a decrease in their psychological health and with time an increase in their overall acceptance of their new reality emerged. The first sub-theme is “cultural shock” that includes the participants’ reentry shock and their new views in identifying the people’s behaviors. The second sub-theme is “cultural disappointment” that discusses the participants’ high expectations towards their role in the culture and work environment. The third sub-theme is “accept the new reality” that examined the participants’ reaching the life normality and accepting differences.

Cultural shock. One of the psychological challenges the participants faced was the negative feeling that overwhelmed them in their reentry. The participants’ cultural shock had a bigger effect on the participants who spent the longest time abroad. Fatin explained the relationship between her time abroad and the effect it had upon her reentry. She stated, “It was a little bit of a cultural shock when I came back (LAUGHTER) especially for me, I spent nine years in Australia.”

In Nasma’s case, she shared that her cultural shock was so severe that she spent one year being unwilling to adapt to the home country. Interestingly, she shared that she also suffered from an extreme cultural shock when she first arrived in Australia and then made her decision to blend into the host culture. She stated, “We decided to fully adapt to the Australian culture and forget about the Saudi culture, and we decided to stay away

from the Saudi community in Australia.” She further explained that she did that because she didn’t want to be affected by Australians stereotyping her based on other Saudis.

Here she shared her reentry:

When I came back to Saudi I had the cultural shock again, and we suffered from it for almost one year and I didn’t socialize a lot. I was really isolated in my home with my kids and husband trying not to adapt.

She further explained that this approach didn’t work for her and she had to socialize and accept their new reality. On the other hand, Raja’s cultural shock seemed to be associated with the different perspective she gained abroad, and this created her cultural shock.

I feel like I traveled by time and I came back to another place. I noticed around me different things like my cousins are more focused on social media and what they dress I don’t like this because we have more important things than that.

Other participant’s cultural shock appears to be related to the work cultural shock. In Fatin’s experience, she expressed how different mentalities and work methods were part of her shock. She shared, “I found that people who I work with have a different way of thinking and it is totally different from the people in Australia.” When I asked Hadel about her reentry experience, she shared her feelings and what affected her.

I could just generalize it into two words cultural shock. I was expecting that I will have a cultural shock because I experienced it before when I lived with my parents for 14 years prior in the US, and it was a huge cultural shock the first time. The second time when I went with my husband and kids to continue my graduate study, it was a pretty different cultural shock when I came back to Saudi Arabia. It was from another side I think because I’m older it comes to me from the working side.

The participants’ shared reentry cultural shock came from different aspects of the environment that affected their psychological competence in their home culture context.

Their cultural shock was related to negative feelings and dysfunction to participate fully

in their home culture. Such symptoms, in turn, resulted in the participants sharing the next emerged theme that reflects their disappointment with some cultural aspects in Saudi Arabia.

Cultural disappointment. Through the participants' interviews, all of the participants shared that they had high cultural and work expectations. The participants had negative feelings and frustration that emerged from their readjustment process. The participants' cultural disappointment is derived from the society and work culture. The disappointment with society the participants encountered was from the people's mentality and behavior. Also, the difference in the ideology, cultural structure, and traditions of the host country affected them psychologically. This disappointment happened due to their comparison of people and cultures between their home and the host country. Here are some of the participants sharing their feelings:

I appreciated the simplest thing in the US like their system, how everything is clean, and the people manners. I loved all these manners, and when I see how people behave in Saudi, I would wish we had the things they have in the US. I always think when we are going to develop and have more awareness. – Noura

When you see a lot of nice things abroad and then you come back it makes your life very difficult. Because you want this country to be like the other countries that you saw and you want everything you saw to be there in Saudi Arabia. This is the most difficult feeling you experience when you come back. – Najwa

It seems that cultural values of the participant's host country were so fully absorbed that in the participant's reentry the differences in the culture affected their re-adaptation. Raja shared that “there are behaviors that I never noticed till I came back” she explained that like she never second thought some of the behaviors Saudis do and now she found herself disappointed and angry by certain behaviors. She shared an

example she noticed, "I was out at night around 12 am with my brother after a few weeks when I came back, and I noticed how children are hanging around with their families. I was surprised and frankly, I think this a child abuse to let your children be up this late." This kind of behavior that is acceptable for the Saudi culture and unacceptable for western culture is part of their cultural disappointment.

Corresponding with the participants' narratives, a shared cultural disappointment was the people's attitudes that were observed by the participants. Here Maram explained her frustration when any social issue is discussed through social media and how she feels that many issues are just being discussed over a long period of time without taking any meaningful actions towards fixing it.

In Saudi, we talk a lot we talk more than we do action speaks don't just talk talk talk when something happens they just go to social media and talk, and this is not going to lead anywhere.

Moreover, the people's mentality was a theme that appeared several times in the participants' interviews. They shared that a big difference was noticed in terms how people are interacting and behaving with them. Nasma shared how in her study abroad she shifted to be a non-materialism person and how coming back and observing how so many people are valuing materialism displeased her.

Another aspect that came up from the participants' interviews is work-related cultural disappointment. The participants explain how the mentality was a disappointment for them. In Fatin's case, she explained, "When I joined my job I found differences in the mentality of the people and commitment level. It was totally different from Australia." She then provides an example of the differences "In Australia, I used to deal with my boss as a friend, but here the concept of being a manager is totally

different.” Similar to Fatin, Najwa shared her observation regarding people’s behavior in the work environment:

I feel very sad of what we have now in Saudi and what we can gain to be better, but I think the people don’t think about it. Like I believe if people started working harder they would do much better. I think the culture here encourages people to focus on the money more than the outcome.

Some of the participants struggled to find a job and eventually took jobs that didn’t meet their dreams, or they felt they are overqualified for it. In the following, some narratives shared by the participants:

It was very hard for me to find a job; either the salary was very low, or the job is not in my specialty. It was kind of a downside for me. I felt like after all these studies and all this hard work I’m not getting the perfect job I thought I would get. I guess not everything you wish for in life happens.
– Hadel

I had to accept a job that wasn’t in my specific specialty in a not so good work environment. When I started working I thought with a new university I will be working from the zero, but I realized that we are working from below the zero. – Sara

The participants in the interviews highlighted many cultural disappointments, but the job and work culture disappointment had the most difficult effect on them psychosocially. These disappointments are encountered daily by the participants; however, for the participants to reach a healthy psychological state they had to accept the cultural difference of their new reality that is discussed in the next sub-theme.

Accept the new reality. This sub-theme demonstrated the phase the participants reached to increase their psychological health level. Once the participants recognized that they couldn’t change their home culture, accepting the culture made the adjustment easier for them, and they found their way through dealing with the culture. Accepting their new reality happened when they were able to set a new balance and normality for their lives

by tolerating the cultural differences. In the following are the participants' narratives of how they reached their acceptance:

I had to set and rearrange my life and work and understand the changes that happened when I was abroad to be able to deal with it. – Sulafa

I'm trying to look at the big picture when I face a situation against what I think is right and appropriate. Doing this is helping me accept others and the society. – Nasma

When I came back, I felt more stable like psychologically stable when you have your job you can start building your life. There I felt that I want to go out and have fun and focus on my study and I knew that I'm coming back. – Asma

Maram shared her own narrative of how she decided to adapt herself by focusing on the positive thing in her life and participate in things that make her feel better.

I sat with myself and said it is not the end of the world I have to get a job and get into a new community to do something new and I looked for a job, and I sat with myself and asked what I like to do the most, I like to listen to music so I'm going to listen to music more and I like to read I will do that more and I'm going to reconnect with my old friends so I can feel home again and I followed the pages in social media that make me feel happy and avoided the news and the talk shows that is full of screaming, you just have to build your society where you can find yourself and be happy.

In sum, the participants had a prior knowledge of their home culture, but their dysfunction and frustration with the culture affected their competence. The lack of competence was related to the psychological issues they encountered in their reentry. However, reaching the phase of accepting their new reality and achieve a level of satisfaction with their lives helped the participants to create a normal life for them that increased their psychological health.

Environment. Kim (2001) asserted on the importance to understand the environmental conditions to comprehend the individual communication and adaptation

experience in the new culture. In this theme, the participants are facing difficult challenges in readapting especially considering the complexity of the Saudi environment. The following theme explained the environmental effect on the participants. This can help us understand the complexity of the Saudi culture and the influence it has on the participants' interactions and development. Thus, the participants had to find their own unique way to deal, balance, and adapt to their home environment and the cultural challenges that are facing them. In the environment theme, two sub-themes emerged to explain the challenges the cultural environmental conditions composed of the re-adaptation experience of the participants. The first sub-theme is "sociocultural system" that examined the participants' challenges with their culture system and their comparison with their host culture system. The second sub-theme is "cultural conformity" that discussed the participants faced pressure to accommodate their home culture expectations.

Sociocultural system. This sub-theme demonstrated the participants facing challenges with dealing with the existed society cultural system and ideologies. These challenges are reflected on how their behavior and beliefs are restricted due to many factors like policies that require their male guardians to do almost everything in their daily life. According to Hadel, in a male dominant country, her husband or father does all her legal issues, and this made her never knew how the system works in her country. She noted, "The system in a lot of ways is not clear here in Saudi especially being a female it is very tough to do a lot of things without a male guardian." She further explained the effect of reentering challenges of taking the guardian permission to travel and their

permission on the official paperwork. Hadel shared the negative effect this dependency had on her and her husband.

This is the problem when you are used to a certain lifestyle for a period of time and you feel happy with it and with the personality that you have right now. It is very hard to go back to point zero again and you feel like you have to take the guardian permission after in the US I would take my car keys and go where ever I want, but now I call my driver to go out and take my male guardian permission if I want to travel it is pretty tough. My spouse, in the beginning when we were in the US, had a hard time adjusting to the environment because he was used to be the leader of the family, but all of a sudden when we were in the US because he didn't have a good English proficiency in language and I did so basically I had to do everything and he felt laid back and it was kind of personal for him in the beginning, but then afterward he was okay and easy with it, but then we had to go back to Saudi we had to go back to point zero where I had to take his permission to do everything and it was also hard for him because he was already adjusted to the idea that I would take responsibility with him.

Also, some participants shared their difficulties in adapting to the existing work culture and found trouble accepting some of the organization methods. Nasma shared her difficulties with her work environment, “I work in a bureaucratic organization where they will allow you to express yourself, but in the end it is their decision whether you like it or not.” Here she explained how disappointed she is of not being part of the decision-making process in her organization.

Other participants shared how the existing system is limiting their ability to influence and impact their organizations. Here are few of the participants’ comments:

In work, we are [the women section] an executive branch and the men section are the ones who control the decision making so there is nothing we can do to make a small change. – Raja

Sometimes you can’t apply every single idea because we have policies and culture, but sometimes we can. – Fatin

Raja shared how the complexion of the work system is discouraging here to participate and fill her role in the organization fully.

In work, the procedures here to do anything is really hard because there is a lot of paperwork that needs to be done to just ask for your rights. In my situation, I'm asking my department to accept my request to start my Ph.D. and even though it's in my contract and something that I'm required to do it's taking a lot of effort and time. This makes me feel uncomfortable to ask for anything.

Noura shared the same concerns as Raja and most of the participants where they feel the system is more complicated than it needs to be. The sociocultural challenge is perceived in a negative way from the participants that is affecting their productivity and comfort in their work environment. Here is Noura's opinion:

I don't like the system here and the way people behave. Like in work, the procedural things here takes a long time unlike their [in the US] like here if you are asking for your right it will take you forever to get it.

Moreover, the participants' expressed their work difficulties through many aspects like supervisors challenging them by not listening to their ideas and not giving them the avenue or not being able to work in their area or develop their work. The participants shared that their biggest adjustment was regarding adapting and facing their work difficulties. These challenges made them feel under-appreciated in their work and that the work culture is suppressing their work development because the participants thought that they would have a big avenue in their work to be creative and implement the methods and knowledge they gained abroad. However, the organizations, as they explained, didn't take full advantage of their skills. The participants shared how not listening to their ideas and views are affecting their encouragement to implement. Nasma shared how she was very excited to be heard to share everything she learned and not being heard frustrated her. She said, "I was outspoken in the beginning, and then I stopped because there is no

change.” Raja shared the same frustration in her work and how her colleagues are discouraging her. She explains, “Whenever I try to improve a working feature everyone would say forget about Canada, no matter how often do you ask to apply something no one will listen to you.”

When I asked Sara about her struggles she shared her opinion on identifying the main problem where she believes the problem is with the inflexible system of her organization.

The problem is the university system where they do not allow you to change something and your boss don't let you do anything, or maybe he will let you do some things like just 10 or 15% of the things you learned or you want to do to improve the work. Like my boss is trying as much as he can to help me, but the system of the university doesn't allow us to do any changes.

Rehab shared a similar opinion where she feels that many existing rules in the university system do not make sense to her and affect her research progress. She shared her frustration on how slow she feels her research is moving.

The most difficulty I'm facing is with the research area. Like over there I would order anything and it comes in 24 hours. Most of my work was in the lab and we used to do a lot of experiment and the lab was running 24 hours, but here you have limited time to access the lab, for example, it is from 8 am to 2 pm, and you can't access the lab after that and if you order something you need to wait two to three months.

Unlike Sara and Rehab, Najwa felt that the problem is with managers and the age gap between them and the subordinate. She shared her experience “People in higher positions can't accept change and new ideas especially if this idea came from the younger generation. It is a problem because they are the one with the influence.”

However, Sulafa explained that the work difficulties existed because of the people culture. She shared, “Here we deal with the culture and as a professor, my biggest

problem is the educational culture and how it is different from the UK. Like my students need a constant supervising because that's what they are used too. This has a big effect on how productive my class can be." Najwa noted that the problem in her opinion is that "People are focusing on the money, not the work outcome and this makes me feel very sad, we need to start thinking of what we can gain."

The participants were mostly unsatisfied with the existing sociocultural system and perceived these challenge with criticism. They identified the faced problems that are affecting their re-adaptation clearly and the difference between the host and home culture systems. This sub-theme extends our understanding of the environment conditions that is evoking the participants' effective interactions in their home environment. The next sub-theme demonstrated another aspect of the environment pressure the participants faced.

Cultural conformity. This sub-theme examined the participants' challenges with facing cultural ideology and normative pressure. This theme focalizes the participants' challenges to be perceived in an acceptable manner by the society standards. The cultural conformity had an enormous effect on the participants' re-adaptation experience. This challenge presented a lot of criticism of the participants' behavior and views from their family, friends, and society. Nasma struggled with cultural pressure from her family. She shared, "My mother and my mother-in-law they don't like the changes especially in my kids." When I asked her what kind of behavior that is perceived as criticism, she further explained, "They will criticize me for my kids' behavior and say they don't greet well, they don't eat like us, they are different, they speak another language, and they want them to speak our language [Arabic] all the time and behave like they want them to." This family disapproval seemed to be a continuous attitude that Nasma explained that after

being in the country for five years “ until now our family can’t accept a lot of things” this criticism is focused on their personal changes of her and her family.

Noura further explained the cultural limits the society allows and how she could adapt in these lines.

There are things that are ruled by the society traditions that I can't go against and there are things where you can make your own choice to do what you prefer, and my family is supportive of my choices.

The participants shared that limiting themselves to the cultural limits had its benefits as it helped them preserve a certain image to what is acceptable to the society and this made their re-adaptation experience easier. Sulafa noted the importance for her to maintain her image for the society. She shares, “You have to keep your image you now... you are from this country and this culture; you have to keep it as long as you can.”

The pressure of cultural conformity led Hadel to compare between the two cultures limits and gave an example of the effect of customs on her image and re-adaptation.

In the US, you deal with your professor or your gardener the same way, but here it is very different you cannot talk to your professor the same way you talk to your gardener this was a huge challenge for me. I had to learn that they're some gestures to say for people with a higher position and there is a simple gesture to say for others. I'm not okay with it on a broader level, but here you have to go along with it.

Even though Hadel shared her disapproval, upholding her image was perceived as a necessity for her to melt down into the culture. Similar to Hadel, Rehab explained her views towards the faced cultural challenge “Freedom their [she means in the UK and the US as she studied in both countries] means you do whatever you want and no one looks at you, but here [in Saudi] whatever you do people will talk and judge you. So here you have to be very careful with your behavior and what to say.”

Also, some of the participants explained that part of the challenge is being ruled by the society traditions and not being able to go against what appropriate in their eyes. Noura explained how it's very difficult for her to have an opposite opinion from her family and society. She shared, "Lacking the right to express my opinion openly is the hardest on me." Hadel explained that it's not the different opinions that irritate her, but the way people perceive her. She comments, "I don't want to sound like I'm the person who just changed their mentality because I went abroad."

However, the participants shared their own unique ways to deal with the pressure of cultural conformity. Some participants are using avoidance as a technique to deal with the society. Najwa said that her unwillingness to present a particular behavior to be accepted led her to use avoidance. She shared, "I avoid people who want me to be like them, and I try not to deal with them because I can't accept that and I think they have problems in how to accept others."

The participants shared their efforts to adapt to the society by observing the receptivity of the people and attempting to change their views or at the least to be heard. Asma shared that her understanding of cultural conformity changed by not following the normative expectations that affect her negatively.

I have a strong personality now I used to be shy. Like now, if I don't like something I don't like it and I don't even pretend that I like it anymore. I remember before studying abroad I used to force myself to do what people want and I stopped doing that. Life is short why we are spending it on someone who I don't care about.

Others want to change the dominant cultural patterns by presenting their thoughts and views with individuals who has a higher level of acceptance towards cultural difference. Here Raja explained her willingness to share her view, but her fears of

participating in any intense conversation that may lead to misjudging restrict her. She said, “There is nothing I can do most of the time, but I always try to deliver my message if I got a response, okay I will continue if not I'm going to stop because I don't want to get into a disagreement with anyone.” On the other hand, when I asked Nasma how she deals with the cultural pressure she demonstrates how criticism from people is differentiated by her relationship with the person. She said, "If someone I really respect I will explain the difference and I will listen to them and try to change their opinion. If somebody I don't care about I just listen and let them express themselves, and I will not answer them.” Also, Fatin shared her technique with receptive people, “Some people don't like changes and they say this is the system, but others are more agreeable to change. With those people, I take a step by step till they are convinced to change.”

The participants shared that their faced cultural pressure is an ongoing challenge for them. The participants faced this challenges differently as some of them tried to maintain their image for the society and others detected the receptivity of the people and acted upon that. Meeting the society expectation can place a great amount of pressure on the participants because failing can affect their relationships negatively. However, with the participant's previous knowledge of the culture and cultural understanding they developed their ability to perform their daily life activities normally. Through the re-adaptation process, time has sufficient effect on the participants' acculturation. In the next theme, I discuss the effect of time on the transition process.

Time. In this transformative experience, time had a significant role in the participants' re-adaptation and cultural integration experience. The function of time facilitated the participants' struggles by being able to find their way to adapt to the

reentry experience challenges after spending a period of time. Thus, time factor can be observed through the participants' narratives throughout the intercultural transformation theme. It indicated that time helped the participants reach to accept the cultural differences and balance between their home and host culture. In the participants' narratives, with time they rearranged their lives and mixed the cultures to create a new life for themselves in their home culture. Also, the participants showed that self-learning occurred with time to help them grow and develop and increase their proficiency in the home culture. This had a notable effect on the participant's entire experience and growth during their re-adaptation. The participants faced re-adaptation challenges helped them grow to learn how to re-accommodate their communication style in their home culture. Thus, the participant's shared communication competence is examined in the following theme.

Communication competence

According to Kim (2001), through communication competence individuals are able to engage themselves in an effective communication according to the culture. The communication competence requires a high level of understanding the communication style and codes of the culture to achieve effective communication. This competence contains operational competence in work where it is the individual's ability to interact and transfer their skills and knowledge from their host culture accordingly to the needs of the home culture. This competence includes presenting the appropriate behavior for different social settings (Kim, 2001). Thus, the participants of this study have the knowledge of the culture communication context nonetheless their challenge is with integrating the reality of the culture and the reality of themselves into their

communication (Kim, 2001). In this theme, I examined the communication competence process that reflects the participants' ability to participate in the society effectively. The participants' understanding of the culture's complexity helped facilitate how they present themselves in an appropriate manner and to communicate effectively. Also, their communication competence is reflected in how they are integrating their identities and skills into the culture. However, their developed identities led them to face challenges and develop an awareness to adapt their communication based on the person who they are interacting with and use privacy management to maintain their personal space. The participants' developed communication style showed to be shifted to direct style like the individualistic society they studied in.

In this theme, four sub-themes emerged to explain the challenges the participants faced to communicate in their home culture and the integration of their host culture into their home culture and work environment. The first sub-theme, "cognitive complexity," discussed the participants' understanding of their home culture and ability to adjust their communication style based on it. The second sub-theme, "communication privacy management," examines the participants' choice to be selective towards recipients and share what they think is suitable in the cultural communication framework. The third sub-theme, "relevance," discussed the participants' experience to have an effective communication with people who share a similar experience with them. The fourth sub-theme, "operational competence," explained the participant's experience in integrating their skills and knowledge to better function in their work environment.

Cognitive complexity. This sub-theme explained the participants' challenges with the communication style of their home culture. It indicated the participants' gained

host communication competence affected their cognitive ability in their reentry even with their understanding of their home country's mainstream cultural communication.

However, this challenge was adjusted by the participant's use of the gained communication skill from their host country and by their cultural understanding of their home culture. Nasma shared her experience in using her knowledge from the host country to better communicate in her home milieu.

I learned my communication skills from abroad I learned how to communicate with different people and minds and understand people. This helped me a lot when I came here in term of dealing with people mentality that I don't agree with.

Rehab explained how her interaction abroad helped her reach people differently. She stated, "To be honest my communication skill was not that good before I studied abroad. I learned a lot there because I was exposed to different cultures. When I came back, I tried to use different techniques based on the person I'm dealing with." However, she further discussed how often she felt that the communication system is limiting her interactions. She shared, "Some people mentality affect the conversation where they will think you're young and you cannot discuss that with me. It is not a fair discussion."

Sara shared a similar experience; she explained her anxiety with the communication system where she feels it a challenge for her to maintain her cognitive ability to present herself in a respectful manner to the society. She explained, "I'm not a rude person which makes me under stress because when I noticed something a wrong behavior or a speech or whatever I try to be polite and try to say what I want in a nice way without making anyone angry." According to her, this anxiety is related to the social customs where you can't advice or go against an older family member "I think we were adapted to see the wrong things and not say anything because we have manners and you

can't say something to your uncle or anyone, but living abroad showed me how I must try to say something and express myself and this makes me under stress most of the time.”

Further, the participants shared their process of regaining their ability to communicate effectively and identify the right information to share in various social interactions and considering the customs in interactions. This included the participants' awareness to present the right behavior in their cultural context. Maram explained her rules to communicate, “You have to learn what to speak and what to say and to whom. Older people will never accept a new idea, and for younger people it depends on the person. If the person I know is not going to accept my ideas I will not speak.” Also, Hadel shared her approach when a conflict in views appear, “It depends on the person, the age, and the knowledge. If it is someone from my age group I'm fine debating them, but if the criticism is coming from someone older I will just swipe it away.”

Thus, the participants shared their ability to integrate their communication skills from their host countries into their home culture to better present themselves. This integration helped them construct their relationships differently and better understand others communication. Because the cognitive complexity led the participants to face negative feelings in their interactions, a discreet in their communication emerged to avoid others criticism to their changes. This discretion is discussed in the next sub-theme.

Communication privacy management. This sub-theme demonstrated the participants created boundaries to avoid negative comment or criticism about their changed personalities and perspectives (Petronio, 2012). The participants showed the tendency to disconnect themselves from conversations with people who will not listen and respect their opinions. This communication privacy management is happening with

their family members and in the society to manage their privacy and to feel more comfortable by providing minimum information about themselves. According to Maram, communicating with people is a process you have to relearn when you come back to be better perceived. Here she expressed her thoughts:

To be honest, after I came back I don't speak a lot, and most of the time I keep my opinion to myself. Because if you want to live peacefully just leave it and don't care about it.

This led Maram to have a higher level of privacy to feel comfortable in her life. She shared her family viewpoint on her life, "My family says that I live in my own world. Maybe you can say I have a system so I can feel good."

Further, Noura explained the effect of sharing a different perspective openly and how the communication style of Saudis can affect you negatively. She stated, "The culture of respecting each other's opinion doesn't exist in Saudi." This in her opinion is the major issue of why she keeps her opinion to herself most of the time. Noura explained her struggle on this issue.

Like with my family when they agree on something like stereotyping some group or something that is against my beliefs and then I will say something that is completely opposite to them they will look at me, and it shows that they feel why is she is thinking like this and what changed with her and this sometimes makes me afraid because I don't want to discuss a lot on the subject and push for my ideas because I don't want them to think what changed in her opinions and why is she thinking like that especially when it is not with my parents, but with relatives members I feel I can't discuss anything with them.

This fear in Noura's struggle comes from the communication intolerance of the Saudi culture. Sara shared her similar experience on how she had to consider the receptivity of the people to reduce misunderstanding her views. She stated, "I avoid sensitive discussion because Saudis don't like you when you are against them or have a

different idea because you suddenly become their enemy.” Sara further explained how this made her feel that people cannot relate to her. According to Fatin, she noted this issue is associated with an observed gap in their mentality. She explained, “It is obvious that there is a huge gap between people who never traveled and studied abroad and those who did.” This in her opinion makes the difference on whom to interact with openly or be careful to what you say in front of them. When I asked Noura about her experience, she shared, “I usually don’t respond when people say something I don’t agree with because when you try to talk to them you will end up in a conversation that is not leading you anywhere and they can’t understand your idea, and you can’t understand where they want to lead the conversation.”

The communication privacy management is used by the participants to be discreet with their opinions to avoid others criticism and judging. The participant’s cultural learning of the communication competence brings them to be sufficient in their interactions by avoiding unwanted outcomes. Further, this discretion is guided by the receptivity of the person as the participants shared their openness to communicate with people who had relevant experience to them. This is discussed in the following sub-theme.

Relevance. This sub-theme explained the participants’ preference to communicate and surround themselves with people who share similar experience and perspectives. Relevance is a theme that emerged over and over from all the participant's interviews as they agreed that this relevance is making their interpersonal communication effective as they feel more comfortable with talking to people who can better understand and relate to them. Sara shared that surrounding herself with people who are going

through a similar experience to her makes her feel supported and not lonely. She explains, "Just talking with friends and knowing they have the same problems make me feel that I'm not an alien... I feel that I'm okay (LAUGHTER)." Nasma also shared that the important role relevance played in her readjusting process.

The positive thing that we have many family and friends who came back from studying abroad and they used to tease us like they would say because you just came back you feel like that and you do this, but after one year you will adapt to this thing don't worry. They helped us in some way to deal with the challenges.

Further, Noura shared her interpretation on how relevance had a crucial role in her interactions. "The biggest adjustment for me was the society way of thinking and lacking the right to express my opinion openly, but with friends who have the same experience as me can understand me better and I can talk freely and openly about anything with them." She described that having this space with friends made her feel it was a breather for her and be relieved from her re-adaptation and communication style struggles.

Moreover, Asma shared that sharing daily struggles of life with friends made her overcome them. She stated, "I regularly discuss my issues with my sister and friends, and together we give solutions to each other and advice that I believe it help us." Similar to Asma, Fatin expressed that "Sharing my experience with my friends the good and the bad make me feel supported by them."

This is even evident in the work context where the participants prefer working with supervisors and colleagues who share their same experience. This helped them to deal better with work struggles through communication. According to Hadel, having colleagues who studied abroad made the work environment much better for her. She explained, "It helps a lot when talking to a colleague who went through this and shares

the same experience and mentality they can give you the advice to help ease up the challenges and focus on the work.”

Also, the participants indicated that people who are sharing the same experience as them could give them the avenue to reflect and integrate their skills in their work positively. Dania here compared between her two different supervisors in her work. She described their difference " when I first started working I was having troubles with my supervisor who was against me and he didn't let me change anything. But after my supervisor was replaced with another who she also gained a degree from abroad she supported my work and methods, and I'm happy working with her.” Rehab shared a similar comparison between her work colleagues and boss.

In the department, we are five young staff, and we respect each other and have the same experience. Working with them makes some difficulties easier like when the head of the department asked us to teach anything without any guidelines which we don't agree on working with this method. My group and I decided to divide it in a way that everyone will teach the most related subject to her specialty that eventually was good for everyone.

In other cases, the participants shared how having their support system helped them regain their focus and adjust. Here is Fatin experience:

I remember a problem happened to me once I arrived with my previous boss, and he was Egyptian, and he tried to depress me and add negative impact on my job performance and my friends advised me to stay confident and stay strong, and I have done it.

Relevance had an important role in the participant's re-adaptation as it helped them accept and share their struggles with people who went through a similar experience. This relevance also affected the degree of their sufficient communication by raising the effectiveness of their relationships in their personal and work lives. In the next theme,

operational competence is examined to see the participant's ability to present behavioral competence in their work environment.

Operational components. In the operational components sub-theme, I discussed the participants' shared experience on how they are integrating their knowledge and skills they gained from their study abroad experience. Although the participants shared their struggles with work difficulties in the sociocultural sub-theme, they were able to apply their skills to perform effectively to achieve work competence. These operational components show the ability the participants developed to overcome the work difficulties and focus on functioning effectively. These are shown in Dania shared a narrative.

I applied the educational methods I learned in my classroom, and I saw how my students are satisfied with it. Even sometimes I would get negative feedback from my supervisor because I'm not following his methods, I would ignore it. Usually, this feedback doesn't go anywhere because I'm doing the right thing.

Other participants who worked before traveling discussed the difference they noticed in themselves in term of dealing with colleagues and assignment after coming back to the work environment. Noura shared how she noticed the changes in her interaction at work.

In work meetings, I changed now I can discuss much better and express my opinion and accept others opinion and work better with a team than before I studied abroad. I applied a lot of the educational methods with my students. I felt some resisting with the students when applying new things with them and it is always difficult especially in the beginning.

Rehab shared how the skills of accepting others and identifying strengths and weakness of team members improved the work competence. She stated, "At work now I accept other people even if they are wrong. The thing that helped me is having my team and working as a group to deal and understand each other difference and noticing what is

wrong and work around it.” Also, Sulafa listed the skills that she felt had the most influence on how she is operating in her work differently than she used to. She noted, “Time management, self-dependent, and educational skills those skills changed how I deal with work challenges and life in general. I came back having a new perspective and skills to handle difficulties much better than I used to do before traveling.”

When I asked the participants regarding applying their learned knowledge and skills into their work, they shared their application that resulted in active components in their work environment. Rehab shared that “I had a great teaching experience with my students and I applied what I was taught in the US in my classes.” Najwa explained how her experiences made her gain more responsibilities in her work faster than others.

I learned that you need to depend on yourself a lot and you should work hard and be qualified. In the first three months, I got to be responsible of the laboratories and this for me proved that I applied the hard work skill I learned from the UK.

In Raja’s case, her experience made her think that her qualification fits a different position than the one she had before studying abroad. She explained, “The research skills I learned abroad made me think of changing my position in work, and for this, I’m trying to be patient to reach my goal at work.”

Nasma shared that after a period of being unsatisfied with her work environment (“When I first came back to my work I was always complaining and saying things like why are you doing this and the latest evidence doesn’t support doing this?”) she then decided to take the initiative to change her style to accomplish her goals (“One day I decided to go and present a paper on projects day. On that day the dean asked me to come to her office and asked me more about my paper and why do I feel this gap. It took them three to four years to change, but now it is changed, and the gap decreased in work.”).

She shared even though it took a long period of time enhancing the work quality it made her proud of her accomplishment.

Other participants who worked in a mixed-gender environment discussed their influence they made. Fatin said that in the beginning when she was asked to teach male students she faced a level of resistance from the students “it was obvious that some of them were shocked.” She further explained that this was due to “those who were shocked came from an environment where they never were exposed to talking to females other than relatives.” Then she shared that after a while of teaching them and setting the right boundaries with them, “All the student’s now love and respect me and very happy that I’m a female professor.” Asma also shared how her new personality and confidence changed the work dynamic between men and women in her organization.

In my work, I have to be outspoken on the things that I don't accept, and I always make sure that I'm heard. This helped me make the job environment better for everyone. When I first came there the women section didn't interact with the men section and everyone was working like machines, but this changed here now the work has more spirit in it, and even the men section are telling us jokes all the time. People, there are telling me that I changed the environment to be more friendly and fun.

The participants shared the influence they made in their work environment with pride. They felt their integration of information and skills increased their satisfaction and efficiency in their work. Reaching this point was not easy for them, but when they did their daily activity become more gratifying. Therefore, the degree of integration and growing the participants reached helped shape their intercultural personhood that is discussed in the following theme.

Intercultural personhood

The intercultural personhood identified the individual's ability to transcend their original cultural context and go beyond cultural boundaries (Kim, 2001, 2014c). This transformation of identity reformed the participants' perspectives and behaviors to approach life dynamic with a broader perspective. In the interviews, the participants stated that they created their own culture that is influenced by their own personal evolution by integrating different cultural elements from both cultures into their own personal culture (Kim, 2014c). The participants' new changed identities and personality development allowed them to have a broader perspective towards their culture. In this theme, four sub-themes emerged to explain the intercultural personhood development in the participant character. The first sub-theme, "bicultural identity," examines the forming of a new unique identity with a high level of integration. The second sub-theme, "individualization, discusses the growth of the participants' personality to gain more dependence and focus on oneself and prosperity. The third sub-theme, "universalization" includes the results of cultural learning and encountered diversity on their perspective. The fourth sub-theme, "change agent," shares the effect of the participants' reentry experience to seek better for their society and this led them to become vehicles for change.

Bicultural identity. The bicultural identity of the participants emerged from the interviews as the participants created a new unique identity by combining both cultures. This identity gave them a new perspective that helped them overcome the challenges that thwart them. The new identity is encouraging them to value their independence by focusing on their dreams and goals. Also, the evolving of the bicultural identity helped

them differentiate the differences between the two cultures and perceive issues with a broader perspective.

Fatin expressed her use of the host culture and applied it to her home culture to create a new combined environment for her and her family. She shared, “I transferred my skills to my kids and husband. I started to influence my confidence on my kids and support my husband studies. My life changed according to what I learned abroad.” Raja also shared she is balancing between cultures to create her own unique culture, “I’m taking the good in the two cultures and I’m mixing those cultures to improve my kids and myself personalities and lives.” Moreover, Sulafa expressed how this integrated cultural identity is part of her, “I liked the experience of studying abroad and being different from others, it is part of me and my life.”

The participants discussed that their identity is shown in how they are interacting with people differently. Nasma explained, “I learned from Australia to go out of the picture and to look at it and go back in it and to voice out what I believe to people around me.” Dania shared how this identity not only changed her, but change the way her family looks at her, “After I had come back, my family started to include me in their big discussion and ask for my opinion it wasn’t like that before, but now they think of me as a mature woman with a job and MA degree from abroad.”

This bicultural identity made the women recognize the difference between the women’s role in both cultures and recognized their ability to participate and take more responsibility in the society. Here Hadel shared her opinion of how she grew abroad and how her society perceives it. She explained, “Unfortunately a lot of people when you come back from the US and you have a different perspective whenever you say anything

they will just look at you and they will say oh you just came from the US and you all different and you all modernize, but it is not.” She shared how the experience of living in a different culture can help shape a new perspective, “It is basically because you never thought of this idea, but when you went abroad and actually saw it, and you felt it is something reasonable you changed your thoughts and it’s not something wrong.” She continued explaining that releasing your self from the ideas of what a woman can do and not can help emancipation the women limited role. She shared, “You find out that you are capable of doing something you didn’t think you can do it, but we always had this burden to ourselves that we can't do this and it is not wrong to try doing something new and have a new perspective.”

Similar to Hadel, Asma discussed the women role in her home country and how her experience made her more confident and stronger.

You know women here in Saudi Arabia don’t know their rights. The first thing that I learned in the united states is you must know your rights when you know your rights you know what to do and what not to do, but here in Saudi, we don't know our rights especially in work. For example when I worked in the hospital the first question I asked what is my right here and what the hospital is giving me and what I should give them. When you know your rights, you know what to do.

The development of the participant’s bicultural identity helped the participants to become more proficient in their host and home culture. This led them to integrate the two cultures into their lives and grow into having more awareness to others cultures.

Developing this identity made the participants aware of their individualization that is discussed in the next sub-theme.

Individualization. The participants were able to have a clear self-definition of themselves to find their uniqueness. Also, they were self-aware of their skills and ability

to perform better in their life and jobs. The participants are proving that they can share more responsibility than they used too. This individualization led them to be more confident to be able to gain more freedom and dependence. Their experience abroad made them stronger and empowered them to seek better things and truly recognize their abilities. Dania stated, "I'm self-aware now, and I could set goals in front of me, and I could manage between my study and my household. I learned to say no and to respect my limits and myself. This I learned from people in the UK." Dania continues sharing her struggle to establish her individualization with a resistance husband. She shared, "I struggled with my husband a lot he has limited views towards the women role. I tried a lot to change him and convinced him to allow me to study and work. Until now every problem we have he place it on my work, but I ignore it and focus on my work and goals. This all I care about is to focus on my future." Further, Asma shared her developed self-acceptance towards her personality and her adaptation to the culture. She stated, "I decided to be happy, and happiness is a decision, and my self-esteem became higher when I lived alone abroad, and this made me knew myself better, and this is the most important thing for me is to recognize myself."

Other participants like Raja discussed their ability to adjust by integrating their personality into successfully dealing with daily challenges and having the capability to make a better decision. Raja explained, "In my work and personal life, I learned to observe, think, and then decide. Then, I prioritize what I want and demand it." Fatin shared that the increasing level of her integration is what set the path for her adjustment. She stated, "I'm a positive thinker, and usually I like to apply what I learned from Australia. It is my way to adjust and to prove to myself that I can do it and with this, I

started to get a bit satisfy with my life. This positivity I got from my four-year supervisor in my Ph.D. program.” Also, Maram shared her narrative of being positive and dealing with life struggles:

For me now I have to read about everything before deciding and analyze everything I hear and think about it. I think about every decision in my life critically and research about it before taking the decision in my personal and professional life. I also learned to see the beauty in everything.

The clear sense of self the participants gained with their experience made them values their uniqueness. This self-definition helped them go beyond the restriction of the mainstream social culture and truly focus on their goals. The individualization is reflected on their ability to view positivity in differences. This led the participants to show a universalization self that is examined in the next theme.

Universalization. The study abroad experience gave the participants an awareness of others differences and backgrounds. This helped them develop a broader view of things and people that made them connect with other people with regard to their cultural background. As Asma shared who she was before studying abroad and the changes of views that occurred to her.

I view people differently now because I knew different people in the US. Like I used to judge girls who didn't cover their hair, and this changed there because I knew how great their ethics are unlike others who covered and showed me the worst ethics. My perspective towards religion became broaden, and it made my faith stronger. Before I travel, I never imagined to have friends from another religion or atheist, but I changed now I see people differently I look at them based on who they are and who is the person with me. I only care about how they are with me. I stopped judging people and if there are people who want to discriminate anyone I have to say something I can't be quiet and show agreement.

Also, the participants shared how encountering many cultures helped them shape a broader perspective. Here are some of the participants' comments on how their experience influenced their universalization:

Because I graduated from Saudi and continued my study in the US and the UK I feel working with different cultures added a lot in term off knowing people. We usually hear about foreign people and don't live with them, and when we go abroad especially to USA or UK, you find different people from different countries and you learn more about them. It was a good experience to learn how to deal with them and even affected my research I think I learned a lot in term of dealing with people and communication and understand others beliefs and values. - Rehab

The multicultural and multi-religion society that I mixed within the US made me accept any person who ever they are and never judge people, and this was the most change that happened to me. I learned to be curious towards knowledge and learning, and I truly felt the meaning of the word be an open-minded person because I became one. I learned to be patient there and be responsible for everything. – Noura

Diversity in the culture was an excellent experience for me on how to deal with the people and how to accept and respect other cultures. – Fatin

Studying and living abroad helped me a lot to explore areas I never explored and to understand behaviors and what is acceptable and what is not from the perspective of the culture. I have some rejection to some of the behaviors around me and because I'm a mother I have a lot of concerns about how to raise my children around my family, friends, and my neighbors and how they are raising their children and this maybe my focus. I critique people you shouldn't do this, and you should do this and read about this before you do it. – Nasma

The diversity in the host environment the participants lived in made them have a great compassion for others and look beyond the appearance, which was reflected in their identity and their developed broader perspective. The universal awareness the participants shared evolved in the participants that made them want to develop their culture to be better. With the participant's narratives of the changes that they implemented in their home culture, the final sub-theme "change agent" was created.

Change agent. The participants reentered their home country with dreams to make a change and with the hope it would exceed the host countries they studied in. Even though it is more of a challenge to make this change especially with what they encountered from disappointment and challenges, the participants found their own way to make small changes with their new gained intercultural personhood. They are starting with their families and work environment. Some of the participants are doing voluntary work to raise awareness in the society. Here Sara stated, “Before I traveled I noticed many things I don’t approve, but I didn’t want to make a change, and now I want to change.” She shared her story of volunteering to influence the younger generation.

I noticed the new generation especially in the elementary school in my son’s school that they have bad skills like they are not respectful and they discriminate each other. I decided to start to do lectures in three schools in Jeddah and one school in the village, where I work, on how to behave with other people and how to deal with others and how to respect yourself and others. These are very important skills for them, and they don’t have it. When I told the schools that I want to volunteer to do that, the schools were very happy, and they said we need it and they were very welcoming even though it is not my area of specialty, but I feel I need to that and the kids need to listen to this.

Also, Sara shared her voluntary work in her organization with something that is related to her field.

Because my studies are in the immunity area, I gave five lectures at my university about several diseases because the students there don’t have any clue about this kind of information. When Corona disease epidemic happened two people passed away in the village, and I decided to do a lecture where I even personally paid for the masks and equipment on how to clean yourself and I give it to all the students and staff.

Nasma too was interested in voluntary work where she shared her experience of wanting to raise awareness to a particular subject that she as a mother felt strongly about and also had the knowledge to discuss it.

I'm interested in child abuse cases, and I studied this in Australia. Here (in Saudi) I'm doing a voluntary work where I do workshops to teach children from the age of four to six on how to protect themselves. I go to schools, and I even gather kids at my home or in the hospital where I work we do this for the kids. Sometimes I do it for the parents to help them detect any sign of child abuse in their children.

Other participants especially who are working in the private sector were able to implement changes in the system, unlike the participants who worked in the public sector due to strict procedures. For example, Fatin who is working in a private university shared her implementation in her organization.

I insisted on my boss to change the student orientation by planning and giving a proposal and then giving an action plan. I was able to change the one-day student's brief orientation to one week, and it was amazing, and everyone was talking about it. I did it similar to the way we used to do it back in my university in Australia.

However, even though it is harder to implement changes in the public organizations, the participants found their way to make their mark there as well. Hadel explained how proud she feels when making a change.

We [her colleagues who also studied abroad] tried to deliberate change the teaching methodology into e-learning and online quiz, and we succeed in some courses, but not all. When something you worked so hard to improve and the results were good, reasonable and then you see the feedback from your colleagues and dean is positive you get the urge or the need to improve more, and you really want the results to appear and you really want the hard work to reveal itself as an academic profession it gives you the opportunity to do this nicely.

Also, Noura shared here cooperation between two departments to help design a program for challenged children.

I want my students to design a program for children development, and the students of computer department to develop it, and I found encouragement from the head of the development department, but still it will take the time to apply it, and I'm waiting for it.

Moreover, the implementation of the change the participants are working towards is taking a longer time than if it was implemented in the private sector. Rehab discussed her attempt to make a change and how they need to be supported in their attempts.

When I came back to work the internship program was not organized so I decided to apply the American one and they told me it is okay and it was time-consuming for me, but eventually, it turned to be okay the students liked it, and the hospital staff was fine with it, but then the big boss here said why we did it is a lot of work and we should stop this program even though everyone liked it.

Rehab shared her frustration with the effort she spent to change, and how the top management terminated her project. She still shared her unwillingness to stop trying by gathering support from her colleagues and initiates a communication with the top management to implement changes.

We talked to the dean about our work environment about the communication and ethics of work, but we are still waiting for his feedback. We can't do this change ourselves we need the help.

The strong sense of change the participants had was associated with their experience abroad and the cultural integration that occurred in their reentry process. The participants encountered a lot of challenges in their cross-cultural re-adaptation that helped shape their new self-blossoming capacity to overcome the difficulties. This made them relearn and grow in the re-adaptation and reflect on their self-integration. Finally, I asked the participants for their recommendation on enhancing the future Saudi women reentry experience; they shared the following advice to help the students adjust easier. Most of the participants recommended the women to be patient with the cultural difference and to be optimistic as their adaptation will happen with time. The participants highlighted the family role in the adaptation process as they advise families to listen and understand the women reentry experience and give full support to them. Regarding the

work environment, the participants noted that they should lower their expectations regarding their influence in the organization and recognize that they will be resistance from others. However, they continued to share that applying all the skills and knowledge from the host country is essential for their personal development and satisfaction. The participants' recommendation for the organizations is to identify the skills they're bringing from abroad and employ it in the right direction to fully benefit the organization.

Discussion

As has been discussed in the literature review, several scholars investigated the phenomena of entering a new culture, but fewer scholars examined the process of reentry from a various theoretical framework. However, those who investigated the reentry process identified it as a challenge without further discussing the effect it may have on the cultural integration in the participants' re-adaptation. Thus, this study investigated the reentry, re-adaptation and cultural integration of Saudi female students. The purpose of this research was to analyze the Saudi female student's narratives to provide a comprehensive understanding of their reentry and re-adaptation experience and to shed light on the communication role and cultural integration that occurred in their experience. Unique themes emerged from the participant's narratives and the grounded theory approach allowed the researcher to extend the theoretical framework of the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001) to include reentering the familiar home culture context. The results of this analysis revealed that all the participants shared challenges in readapting and integrating both cultures. They also shared their narratives on how they readapted and their personal and professional growth during their experience. Therefore, in this chapter, the unique themes related to reentry, re-adaptation and cultural integration emerging in this study will be discussed within the framework of the existing cultural adaptation literature, using Kim's (2001) ITCCA as a theoretical framework.

Pre-entry characteristics

Martin (1984) identified three variables that highlight the significance of the reentry process and how it can be more intense than the initial adjustment experience.

The three variables are: the sojourners not anticipating the reentry difficulties, both the sojourner and the home environment experienced some changes, and lastly the sojourners likely become aware of the extent of personal change and changes in the home environment in their reentry experience. My study findings revealed that the study abroad experience had a significant influence on the participants' personalities. All the participants indicated experiencing positive changes that were considered as a mature sign of how their personalities had been shaped in their time abroad. Understanding the effect the experience had on the Saudi women led to recognize the influence it had on their reentry process and the challenges they faced in their re-adaptation. Thus, in this theme, all the participants indicated great changes in personalities where they self-blossomed in their study abroad. They shared how taking control of their lives and the ability to make decisions and hold the responsibility for their study, themselves, and family was a big part of their transformational experience that was considered by them a privilege that they appreciated. In their experience, they learned to develop their identity as an individual and to live independently that made them share how proud they became of themselves. This change was noticed and embraced by the participants early in their time abroad. The adaptive changes in sojourners happens with engaging in continuous interaction in a given sociocultural environment activity (Kim, 2014b). Through analyzing my data, the self-blossoming the participants experienced seems to be correlated with their self-awareness of the cultural difference between their host and home country in contrast to other existing research where the returned students were not self-aware of their changes. However, my data indicated that the participants were self-aware of their changes and characteristics and were aware of the upcoming difficulties in

their re-adaptation. Unlike Pitts (2016) research findings, she found that the reentered sojourners were unaware of their changes, which influenced their reentry process with negative emotions that included grief and stress. However, the participants' self-awareness might be a unique situation considering the nature of the high level of the conservative cultural structure of Saudi Arabia that influenced this finding. Due to the big differences between the cultures it had an effect on the participant's different lifestyle in the host and home culture, which allowed them to experience many things in the host country that weren't available in their home country. Also, this self-awareness may have influenced the participant's reentry experience and how they dealt with it in the next theme. As according to Adler (1981), individuals who have a level of awareness of the cross-cultural skills they gained abroad used it to integrate their skills and learn to adjust in their home environment. Thus, these data indicate that the degree of self-blossoming and self-awareness made the participants prepare for their reentry with a different perspective than the one they possessed before their time abroad, and it made their reentry and re-adaptation experience differ from others.

Intercultural transformation

Kim (2001) asserted that the adaptation process is a continuous process for individuals as long as they're facing environmental challenges in their milieu. The participants in my findings discussed many challenges in their re-adaptation and how they found their path to deal with it. The uniqueness of the participants' narratives comes in how it is still an ongoing challenge for them but they are handling it differently than in the beginning of their reentry. Kim (2014a, 2014b) provides insight into the acculturation and deculturation experience where sojourners go through the process of learning and

unlearning new methods of thinking and acting to adapt. This process is associated with stress that results from the difficulties of adapting to the culture but would lead to internal growth and increase their function. This is consistent with my findings where the participants faced many challenges from the decrease in their functional fitness and psychological health in their transformation process. Those challenges addressed many unique aspects my participants shared (e.g., missing independence and cultural disappointment) that captured the essence of their experience. In Pitts (2016) research reports that returned sojourners faced psychological health problems (e.g., negative feelings) and a decrease in their functional fitness (e.g., feeling overwhelmed) from a different perspective than the struggles my participants revealed. Also, my participants shared that negative feelings emerged from their stress and frustration towards their re-adaptation challenges. Their struggle is related to the extreme cultural structures between the host and home culture. It showed in how the participants missed small differences like going out without waiting for a driver and big ones like their freedom and independence in their home country. This is consistent with Pitts (2016) suggestion that it is important to analyze the environmental domains of both the host and home culture to comprehend the level of change and the individual preparedness for re-adaptation.

Moreover, my study's findings indicated a significant effect of the environmental challenges on the participants' re-adaptation. My analysis revealed the enormous effect the sociocultural system had on the participants' functioning in their personal and work lives. The sociocultural system challenges extended to the participants feeling restricted and uncomfortable in their lives, and they were associated with negative feelings. Martin and Harrell (2004) highlighted the influence of the nature of the environment on the

sojourner's return with the equality of their experience in both cultures. Thus, analyzing the effect of the sociocultural system in the environment framework can help comprehend the returners' challenges on both their personal and work lives, also on how they are reflecting their learned skills and knowledge. Further, as found in my data the participants were able in their re-adaption to predisposition themselves to self-organize to better interact with and adapt to the changing cultural environment (Kim, 2014b). This process includes balancing and accepting their reality. Also, it requires presenting themselves with regard to cultural conformity. Finally, my study results indicate that the participants perceive themselves as being different from others and that's why they will not fully adjust back to their culture. They are taking it as part of their journey and who they have become.

In highlighting the role of time in this transition, time had a role as being part of the process that affected the overall participants' transition experience. The participants' narratives showed that time played a significant role in helping them accept, rearrange, and grow in the re-adaptation experience. These re-adaptation challenges were not simple for the participants, but as time passed, each of them found their way to accept their reality and adapt according to their unique characteristics. Conversely, Capella (2015) addressed in her Acculturation Model that the time factor should not be considered as having a significant role in analyzing the returners' transitional process as she discussed that the readjustment process depends on the individual's willingness to adapt. According to Gama and Pedersen (1978) the readjusting issues come from the conflict of the returners' new perspectives with the existing traditions in their home culture. Ultimately, the participant's ability to adapt during the intercultural transformation is when the

returners integrate elements from both the host and home cultures to achieve personal satisfaction. Martin and Harrell (2004) address that this can happen by understanding one's own "cultural relativism" and "cultural dissonance" in regard to the host culture (p. 310).

Communication competence

According to Kim (2001, 2014a), the communication process is the essential key to adaptation. The process of change and adaptation happen through communication activity when interactions facilitate the understanding of cultural learning with the environment. Kim and Gudykunst (2005) highlight the role of communication activities to set the path for the adaptation process. My study findings revealed that the communication competence the participants are applying influenced their re-adaptation and raised their satisfaction in their daily life and culture. It is also reflected on their cultural integration where they integrated two cultures to enhance their communication and thus it reflects on their daily interaction in their personal and professional life. Adler (1981) study supported the effective role communicating with others had in assisting the reentry process. Moreover, the participants reentered their home culture with new personalities and were perceived by their families and the society as strangers with different ideas, behavior, and perspective. They faced pressure to accommodate the culture's ideologies and norms because the participants shared their un-acceptance to some of their home culture ideologies. This led the participants to shift towards communication privacy where they felt uncomfortable to share their perspectives due to fear of being considered as an outsider or open-minded which is not a welcome way of thinking in a conservative society. This resulted in a change in their relationship patterns

and the style they interact with. Changes in family relationships, which were found in many studies to be a negative effect influenced by the reentry process, were found to be connected to changes in personalities from both the sojourners and the family (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1986). However, the analysis of the data in this study found that the participants could accommodate their communication style by presenting themselves in a manner that was appropriate from the society's viewpoint. The participants achieved this by possessing knowledge of their culture, understanding the complexity of their culture, and enhancing their experience by applying their learned communication patterns from their host culture. This created a unique developed understanding of communication competence and the cognitive ability that was limited in ITCCA (Kim, 2001) to the host culture.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the developed personality led to different perspective from others that caused them to be private about their personal lives and seek to be friends with others who shared the same experience. This relevance and feeling of not being understood by others correlates with other existing research. For example, Pitts (2016) addressed how returners are "unable to relate to others" because they felt they belong in their host country. Additionally, my data analysis indicated that the participants' experiences allowed them to have an advanced communication style where the difference between the cultures led them to learn how to communicate effectively and understand others and reflect this communication on their personal and work lives to achieve a competent communication. This study's participants lived in a collectivist culture all their lives and studied in cultures that value individualism and in their reentry, the experience of the two cultures helped create a sophisticated understanding of the

communication process. In the reentry process, the students adapt through communication by understanding themselves, others, and the environment through their interactions. As the participants used this approach, many scholars discussed that the communication is used as a mean by the returners to interpret and understand the changes and adapt through their interactions (Altweck & Marshall, 2015; Koester, 1983; Martin, 1986). Thus, it resulted in the participants applying this communication to enhance their work experience by reflecting positively in their jobs and incorporates their skills and knowledge to develop their work goals (Kim & Gudykunst, 2005). This emerged from the operational competent sub-theme which the ITCCA explained that it include competent working congruence with the internal self and external culture (Kim, 2001). This presented a deeper understanding of the effect the communication activities can have on the re-adaptation process.

Intercultural personhood

Kim describes “the intercultural personhood as a personal journey or way of life that requires the individual to go through extensive and cumulative experiences of acculturation and deculturation, and of stress, adaptation, and growth for this sense of self to emerge” (p. 196). Sussman (2000) explored the effect of the cultural transition on the relationship of self and cultural identity, and she found in her study that the reentry experience causes shifts in the cultural identity. My data analysis aligned with her research in that my participants indicated forming a bicultural identity in their reentry. The participant’s emerged bicultural identity had a positive effect on them that led them to recognize their full potential and seek the best for themselves. Moreover, Pitts (2009) study emphasized the expectations for a global identity shift from the sojourners. This

new identity correlates with other studies and its essential to understand the process the participants faced to be able to integrate the two cultures (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Pitts, 2016). This integration the participants applied had a positive effect on them where they saw their integration as a sign that their journey abroad was a success. Studies (Adler, 1981; Martin, 1984) recognized the important role of the individual to understand their cross-cultural skills and changes of behavior in their re-adaptation process to help them grow and enhance their skills. The participants embracing this developed identity shaped how they perceive themselves and value their growth. However, Capella (2015) explained that her model is about the personal experience of returners by focusing on integrating host and home culture with experienced cultural shock to form their new identity. My analysis supports her model in how the integration happens; however, not all of my participants shared experiencing a cultural shock in their reentry. This might be because of their awareness of their culture or it might be related to their time spent abroad as my analysis indicated that the participants with the longest time spent abroad experienced the greatest cultural shock. I may argue that the cultural shock effect on her model doesn't have as much of an influence as the role the environmental challenge have on my study returners.

Further, the participants emerged identity developed their individualization and universalization where their sense of self and others were developed in their cross-cultural experience abroad and their developed bicultural identity shaped how they are reflecting this sense in their integration in their home culture. In contemplating the data findings, all the participants indicated a great growth and development that started in their time abroad and continued after their reentry. The cultural integration they applied helped

their development and helped them to deal with their faced challenges. Returners found independence and created new identities in their time abroad that in their reentry led them to become more individualized and universalized. That happened because of their broader perspective and sense of self and others around them. Also, this integration might be the participant's way to prove their worth as this data showed, unlike other studies. The participant's personhood created a change agent in them where they wanted to implement the positive things they encountered abroad and the knowledge they gained and translated into something productive that could enhance their cultural development. This happened by reflecting their willingness to make a change to their home culture's habits and to incorporate newly learned habits to accomplish their goals. On the other hand, the change agent is inconsistent with other existing research in that the participants in this research indicated a shift towards becoming a vehicle to influence others around them and implement what they perceived needed change in their community. Conclusively, the ITCCA theoretical framework presented some domains that were applied to returners' experiences and captured their transitional process. However, the findings of this study identified other domains that extend our understanding of this phenomenon that need to be expanded to further investigate this process and broaden the theoretical contribution in this area.

Practical Implications

Overall, these findings have important implications for preparing Saudi women for their reentry. This study suggests two practical implications that can be applied to minimize the encountered difficulties in their reentering process and allow the reentering women to have a positive interaction and overall fruitful experience in the country. The implications are developing a reentry consolation program and a reentry-training program.

Reentry consolation program. The reentry consolation program can be initiated as a grassroots organization where it can be established by the returners in the community to help empower the returned women. This program can focus on the returners' personal changes and identity and help them understand themselves and how to successfully integrate their developed identity into their home culture. Also, this program can encourage the returners to seek support from their families and friends. Because the participants mentioned that they mostly relied on their peer support who shared the same experience I would recommend starting support groups. This support group model could create an environment in which the returners could discuss their struggles openly and safely and offer advice to each other to overcome challenges. The support group can be organized in two ways either face-to-face meetings or via social media. The online platform can provide a practical place for the women to receive support probably is suitable with having limited time because of their jobs and family.

Reentry-training program. Thousands of Saudi students are graduating every year from around the world and the need for a training program is a necessity to benefit from their education abroad. The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) can

implement the reentry-training program where they sponsor thousands of Saudi students education around the world. SACM support the student's financially to help achieve their academic goals and care for them culturally during their time abroad. Also, SACM center of career development assist the students to seek professional experience abroad and this can be developed to help the students' professional experience after they reenter Saudi Arabia. The reoccurring challenge for the participants was that most of them were unfamiliar with the work environment and the others who worked before traveling came back with different goals and way of thinking that made their experience in their work negative. These issues can be addressed by this program and also reach to the organizations to help them understand the returners' expectations and hopes to better benefit from their skills. This program can help the returner's prepare for the existing work structure and how to adapt to it. Also, this program can encourage an open communication in the organization where expectations and roles can be negotiated from both sides to help increase the satisfaction and enhance the productivity of the returners.

Another essential aspect that this program can focus on is to connect the returners with organizations to facilitate finding jobs for them. This program can work as a mediator between the returners and the organizations to help place the right person in the right position. They can focus on finding positions that most fit the returner's skills to fully benefit from their experience abroad and help maximize their proficiency by encouraging their integration in their work environment.

Strengths and Limitations

This study presented an overall strength that is the qualitative approach of this research. The key strength is I, being an insider to the studied population, was viewed as

an individual with a relevant experience while doing the interviews. This was theme in nearly all of the interviews, with the participants sharing that they were more comfortable sharing their struggles and perspective with me because I was an insider. Being a member of the group and using in-depths interviews resulted in having a genuine conversation with the participants. In collecting my data, I was able to understand the in-depth challenges my participants faced and explore the participants' narratives with follow-up questions.

Another strength of this study is using the grounded theory method approach in analyzing the data. This allowed me to have a rich data where several themes emerged based on the evolved analysis. Using this method was an advantage as I examined the existing literature review, which guided me to build a framework that best fit my data. The grounded theory method gave me the space to reflect on and comprehend my results till I found the most applicable framework for my data analysis. A qualitative research approach would appear to be the most effective approach to achieve this research purpose.

Nonetheless, this study presented some limitations that should be addressed. First, the sample size was small due to the difficulty reaching a larger number of participants because of the lack of an official organization to help reach the returners. Second, the study's findings cannot be generalized because there are limited to the applicability of these findings to other cultural contexts and other nationalities. Third, my participants were limited to Saudi female students, although, focusing on only the Saudi women presented the unique experience Saudi Arabia culture provides. Fourth, the interviews can present the possibility that the participants might have modified their shared stories.

This might have been more likely to have happened in this study because of the internal inconsistency and resulting cognitive dissonance that the complexity of the Saudi culture's communication structure and the pressure the re-adaptation challenges can place on the individual that can create (Atkinson, Delamont, & Coffey, 2004). Moreover, Regardless of these limitations, the study findings have important implications for preparing women for re-entry, facilitating their readjustment, and allowing them to fully benefit from their integration. A follow-up study is needed in order to discover the Saudi male students as many of my participants shared with me that even their husbands or brothers are struggling with the cultural difference and feeling restricted, which is an interesting aspect of revealing in a male-dominant country. Also, there is a need to extend to other international students in order to investigate each nationality's unique experience. Furthermore, a need to contribute to the existing literature is required by focusing more on extending our understanding of the environmental aspect of the culture and examining the effect the sociocultural system may have on the returners. Finally, although my study had an inevitable limitation, these limitations lend insight into further steps that can extend our understanding of the reentry, re-adaptation, and cultural integration experience.

Reference

- Adler, N. J. (1981). Re-entry: Managing cross-cultural transitions. *Group & Organization Management, 6*(3), 341-356.
- Ahmed, M. A. (December 2015). Saudi students abroad. *University World News*.
- Altweck, L., & Marshall, T. C. (2015). When You have Lived in a Different Culture, Does Returning 'Home' not Feel like Home? Predictors of Psychological Readjustment to the Heritage Culture.
- Arthur, N. (2003). Preparing International Students for the Re-Entry Transition. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 37*(3), 173-185.
- Atkinson, P., Delamont, S., & Coffey, A. (2004). *Key themes in qualitative research: Continuities and changes*: Rowman Altamira.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied psychology, 46*(1), 5-34.
- Brabant, S., Palmer, C. E., & Gramling, R. (1990). Returning home: An empirical investigation of cross-cultural reentry. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 14*(4), 387-404.
- Callahan, C. (2010). Going home: Deculturation experiences in cultural reentry. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*(22).
- Capella, E. C. (2015). *Happily Ever Aftershock? A Journey from Reverse Culture Shock to New Identity*. (Doctoral dissertation), Oregon State University. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1957/55988>.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Constructivist and objectivist grounded theory. *Handbook of qualitative research, 2*, 509-535.

- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative research*. Sage Publications Ltd, London.
- Cohen, D. N. (2003). *Re-entry Culture Shock in French Students Returning from Great Britain*. Master's thesis). Retrieved from http://www.dialogin.com/fileadmin/Files/User_uploads/re-entry_culture-shock.pdf.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (2015). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*: Sage.
- DiCicco - Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical education*, 40(4), 314-321.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Gama, E. M., & Pedersen, P. (1978). Readjustment problems of Brazilian returnees from graduate studies in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 1(4), 46-59.
- Gaw, K. F. (2000). Reverse culture shock in students returning from overseas. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24(1), 83-104.
- Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2015). Transnational connections, competences and identities: experiences of Chinese international students after their return 'home'. *British Educational Research Journal*, n/a-n/a. doi:10.1002/berj.3175
- Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M., & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context: Intercultural experiences of international students. *Compare*, 40(1), 7-23.

Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An Extension of the U - Curve Hypothesis 1.

Journal of Social Issues, 19(3), 33-47.

Harrell, T. (1994). *Professional integration of Indonesian graduate degree holders from United States colleges and universities in the fields of business administration, education, and engineering*. Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, United States--Minnesota. Retrieved March 20, 2009 from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database.(Publication No. AAT 9428921).

Hilal, K. T., Scott, S. R., & Maadad, N. (2015). The Political, Socio-economic and Sociocultural Impacts of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) on Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Higher Education, 4(1), p254.*

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*: Sage Publications.

Kim, Y. Y. (2014a). Adapting to a new culture. In L. Samovar, R. Porter, E. McDaniel, & C. Roy (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14 ed., pp. 385-396). Boston: Cengage Learning.

Kim, Y. Y. (2014b). From Culture to Intercultural: Communication, adaptation, and identity transformation in the globalizing world. In L. Samovar, R. Porter, E. McDaniel, & C. Roy (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14 ed., pp. 430-437). Boston: Cengage Learning.

Kim, Y. Y. (2014c). Intercultural Personhood: An integration of Eastern and Western perspectives. In L. Samovar, R. Porter, E. McDaniel, & C. Roy (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader* (14 ed., pp. 405-416). Boston: Cengage Learning.

- Kim, Y. Y. (2015). Finding a “home” beyond culture: The emergence of intercultural personhood in the globalizing world. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 46*, 3-12.
- Kim, Y. Y., & Gudykunst, W. (2005). Adapting to a new culture. *Theorizing about intercultural communication, 375-400*.
- Koester, J. (1983). Intercultural reentry from the viewpoint of communication. *International Communication Association (1983, May) Dallas, TX*.
- Kostohryz, K., Wells, P., Wathen, C., & Wilson, D. (2014). More Than a Vacation: Exploring the Impact of Reentry for International Sojourners. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 36(4)*, 315-327.
- Kuran, T., & Sandholm, W. H. (2008). Cultural integration and its discontents. *The Review of Economic Studies, 75(1)*, 201-228.
- Le, A. (2014). *Vietnamese international student repatriates: An exploratory study*. (PhD dissertation), University of Nebraska.
- Lefdahl-Davis, E. M., & Perrone-McGovern, K. M. (2015). The Cultural Adjustment of Saudi Women International Students: A Qualitative Examination. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 46(3)*, 406-434. doi:10.1177/0022022114566680
- Li, X. (2015). International Students in China: Cross-Cultural Interaction, Integration, and Identity Construction. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*(just-accepted).
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). Qualitative communication research methods.
- Martin, J. N. (1984). The intercultural reentry: Conceptualization and directions for future research. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 8(2)*, 115-134.

- Martin, J. N. (1986). Communication in the intercultural reentry: Student sojourners' perceptions of change in reentry relationship. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(1), 1-22.
- Martin, J. N., & Harrell, T. (1996). Reentry training for intercultural sojourners. *Handbook of intercultural training*, 2, 307-326.
- Martin, J. N., & Harrell, T. (2004). Intercultural reentry of students and professionals. *Handbook of intercultural training*, 3, 309-336.
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews. *2010*, 11(3).
- Pedersen, P. B. (1991). Counseling international students. *The counseling psychologist*, 19(1), 10-58.
- Petronio, S. (2012). *Boundaries of privacy: Dialectics of disclosure*: Suny Press.
- Pitts, M. J. (2009). Identity and the role of expectations, stress, and talk in short-term student sojourner adjustment: An application of the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(6), 450-462.
- Pitts, M. J. (2016). Sojourner reentry: a grounded elaboration of the integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. *Communication Monographs*, 1-27.
- Robinson - Pant, A. (2009). Changing academies: exploring international PhD students' perspectives on 'host' and 'home' universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(4), 417-429.

- Saint-Jacques, B. (2014). Intercultural communication in a globalized world. In L. Samovar, R. Porter, E. McDaniel, & C. Roy (Eds.), *Intercultural communication: A reader*. (14 ed., pp. 16-26). Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Sandekian, R. E., Weddington, M., Birnbaum, M., & Keen, J. K. (2015). A Narrative Inquiry Into Academic Experiences of Female Saudi Graduate Students at a Comprehensive Doctoral University. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(4), 360-378. doi:10.1177/1028315315574100
- Sasagawa, S., Toyoda, H., & Sakano, Y. (2006). The acquisition of cultural values in Japanese returnee students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(3), 333-343.
- Sussman, N. M. (2000). The dynamic nature of cultural identity throughout cultural transitions: Why home is not so sweet. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4(4), 355-373.
- Sussman, N. M. (2002). Testing the cultural identity model of the cultural transition cycle: Sojourners return home. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(4), 391-408.
- Tracy, S. J. (2012). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*: John Wiley & Sons.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participants Recruitment Message

Dear [insert a name],

My name is Wejdan Alamri and I am a graduate student in the department of Communications Studies, School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. I am writing to explain why I would like you to participate in my research study. Many of Saudi international students are returning to their home country after finishing their degree overseas, this study will provide an understanding in focusing on the Saudi women reentry, re-adaptation, and cultural integration experience.

You are eligible to be in the study because you are a Saudi female student who returned from a finished degree from a study abroad experience from a western country. I obtained your contact information from [describe referral]. If you decide to participate in the study and with your permission, the research study will include a one-minute demographic questionnaire and 60-minutes interview. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not affect you or your rights in any way. You may quit this study at any time, by simply asking to withdrawal. You have the option to set the date, time, and location that are convenient for you for the interview. The risks of participating will be minimum, a risk of feeling discomfort discussing some topics associated with the reentry experience may occur. However, you have the right to opt from answering any questions that causes you discomfort. There are no compensations for this study. This study will be used for education purposed only, as I seek to gain better understand the Saudi women experience and perspectives.

Reading the consent form before the interview starts is to protect your confidentiality, and I will make every effort to ensure that your confidentiality is protected and your name will not appear on the interview and the transcribing process. This interview will not be shared with anyone other than myself, Wejdan Alamri and my Professor Dr. Elizabeth Goering, at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. If you have any questions or if you would like to receive a final copy of this research study after completion, please feel free to contact me at USA number: xxxxxxxx or Saudi Arabian number: +xxxxxxxx. If you have any further questions about this research, please call Dr. Elizabeth Goering, my research supervisor for this project at xxxxxxxx or email her at xxxxxxx@iupui.edu

Thank you very much. Hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Wejdan Alamri

Appendix B: Information Sheet

INDIANA UNIVERSITY STUDY INFORMATION SHEET FOR [Saudi Female Students: Reentry Process, Re-adaptation, and Cultural integration]

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the Saudi female students' reentry experience and the effect on their re-adaptation and cultural integration. You were selected as a possible subject because you are a Saudi female who is living in Saudi Arabia after studying abroad for an extended period of time to gain a degree from a western country. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The primary investigator who is conducting this study is Prof, Elizabeth Goering and the co-investigator Wejdan Alamri. We are affiliated with the department of Communications Studies, School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and Wejdan Alamri is conducting this study for her Master's program.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of the returned Saudi female students and the factors that influence their reentering process.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:

You will first sign the consent form that indicates that you agree to participate in this study. Before the interview, you will fill out a demographic questionnaire that will take one minute of your time. Then, the interview will take about 60 minutes about your experience upon returning to Saudi Arabia after your time studying abroad and you can ask for a break at any time. Also, I'm going to audio record the interview for the transcription purpose.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

The risks of participating will be minimum, a risk of feeling discomfort discussing some topics associated with the reentry experience may occur. However, you have the right to opt from answering any questions that causes you discomfort. Also, a great effort will be made to ensure your confidentiality by using pseudonyms to remove all

your identified information from the transcribing process and the study findings. However, a risk of loss of confidentiality may occur. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, however we hope that a personal benefit may be gained from your participation in that discussing and sharing your reentry experience may broaden your perspective towards it and help you understand how your personal development may be developed. Another possible benefit for your participating is that it may add value to the research to understand the Saudi women experience and perspective.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. The interview will be audio recorded and this recording is only for transcribing purpose, and will be destroyed after transcribing the data. The co-investigator will be the only person who will have access to your information and you will not be identified in the study by using a fake name and not revealing any information that can identify you.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Indiana University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), who may need to access your research records.

PAYMENT

You will not receive any kind of payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

For questions about the study, contact the co-researcher Wejdan Alamri at xxxxxx@iupui.edu or the primary researcher Prof, Elizabeth Goering at xxxxxx@iupui.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input, contact the IU Human Subjects Office at (317) 278-3458.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age

- 18-21 30- 34
 22- 25 34- 40
 26- 29 41 and Above

2. Education

- Undergraduate Degree
 Graduate Degree

3. How long have you lived overseas? And what was your country of study?

4. How long have you been in Saudi Arabia since you returned from studying abroad?

5. Have you ever travelled to western countries before studying abroad?

- Yes
 No

6. Have you worked before studying abroad?

- Yes
 No

7. Have you worked after coming back to the country?

- Yes
 No

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Thank you for your participation. My research is on how returned Saudi female students who studied in a western country perceive their re-adaptation and cultural integration experience. My interest is to learn about your experiences and perspectives. I encourage you to share your story and views openly. There is no specific answer you are obligated to answer, and if there are questions in the interview that you prefer not to answer, please inform me. Also, please feel free to ask any question any time.

To begin, please describe your experience with studying abroad.

1. Describe your experience when you started studying abroad.
2. What changes occurred to you while you were studying abroad?
 - How did your family and friends perceive those changes?

Reentry process

3. Please describe your reentry experience to Saudi Arabia.
 - What factors influenced your reentry process?
4. Was your perspective towards your home country changed (i.e., you used to accept a behavior from others and now you are rejecting it)? Please explain how.
 - How are you dealing with it?
 - If not, why do you think your perspective hasn't changed?

Re-adaptation

5. Saudi women in western countries face more challenges than others due to the big cultural differences with their home country.

- From your experience, identify the main cultural difference that you faced when you studied abroad.
 - How did these cultural differences affect your readjustment in your home country?
6. What kind of adjustments, if any, have you made after you returned to the country?
- Describe the biggest adjustment you had to make.
 - How did you overcome adjustment issues? Please provide an example.
7. Have you experienced any difficulty in communicating with others since you returned home? Please describe your experience.
- How did sharing classes with men and socializing with them in the host country affect your communication style with men in this country?
 - How your perception towards talking to men changed?
 - How do you handle people who expect you to be limited to the society standards (i.e., let men in your family speak to other men without your interfere)?
 - Did you discuss your adjustment issues with anyone?
 - If so, who?
 - Please describe a recent or memorable conversation.
 - What conversations were most helpful? What made these helpful?
 - What conversations were least helpful? What made these unhelpful?
 - How did these conversations help you adjust?

- If you did not discuss your readjustment challenges, what kept you from discussing them?

Cultural integration

8. Please describe the skills that you learned in your studying abroad experience.
 - How those skills shaped you?
9. After reentering the country, many students find difficulties in transferring and applying the learned skills and knowledge from studying abroad into their life.
 - Describe your experience regarding transferring these skills.
 - Please describe the challenges that you faced in applying these skills.
10. How did you apply these learned skills into your personal life?
 - Please describe the challenges that you faced in your life for applying these skills and how you handle them. Please provide an example.
11. How are you applying these learned skills into your professional life?
 - Please describe the challenges that you faced in the work environment for applying these skills and how you handle them. Please provide an example.
12. How do you think this integration of the two cultures influenced your personal development?

Recommendation

13. What do you think should returned Saudi women expect upon reentry?
14. What do you recommend returned Saudi women do to fully use their learned skills and knowledge from the host country?

15. What do you recommend to the family and friends to help the returned students adjust and fully benefit from their study abroad experience?

16. What do you recommend organizations in Saudi to do to enhance the returned students experience to integrate their skills and knowledge in the work environment?

17. Before we end this interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation. I appreciate your time and contribution.

Curriculum Vitae

Wejdan Alamri

Education

- **Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)**
Indianapolis, Indiana
Master in Applied Communication, the Department of Communication Studies
Thesis: A qualitative grounded theory study of Saudi female students: reentry, re-adaptation, and cultural integration.
January 2017
- **Umma Al-Qura University, College of Social Science**
Makkah, Saudi Arabia
Bachelor of Mass Communication - Public Relation with an honor degree
May 2011

Awards

- Outstanding Graduate Paper Award by the IUPUI Department of Communication Studies for "*Linking Mentoring Behaviors, Leadership styles, and Employee satisfaction at a Nonprofit Organization*"
April 2015

Professional and Personal Development

- Graphology analysis training, Makkah, Saudi Arabia
May 2010
- Advanced strategies of public relations, communication and protocol course training, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
May 2010
- How to be successful in media training, Makkah, Saudi Arabia
March 2010
- The functions of public relations officer training, Makkah, Saudi Arabia
February 2010
- Creative thinking course training, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
January 2009
- Certificate in English language, Cape town, South Africa
30Jun–22Aug 2008

Training Experience

Summer internship at the Saudi British Bank, Makkah, Saudi Arabia
2010