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Acculturation Experiences and Identity Negotiations in Saudi Arabian International Students in the UK: From An Acculturation Perspective to A Dialogical Self Perspective

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Adil Al Ghamdi

Supervisors:

Professor Guida de Abreu

Dr. Mark Burgess

Dr. Clare Rathbone

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Abstract

This thesis is based on empirical fieldwork that consisted of two Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) studies investigating the acculturation experiences of Saudi international students in the UK. It further explored the identity negotiation process and perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities by combining the original acculturation framework from Berry (1997, 2011) with the Dialogical Self Theory of Hermans (2001).

The aim of Study One was to examine transitions when moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian students focusing on the experiences that students reported as challenges. A sample of 8 Saudi international students studying at a university in South East England was used to collect data. Using IPA method, the analysis identified 14 primary themes relating to the Saudi Arabian students' experiences of the UK. Drawing on Berry's model (1997; 2011), the themes were organized around two stages of transition: 1) pre- moving to the UK and 2) arriving and living in the UK; and a third major theme emerged in the data, which was the impact of change on self-development. The findings reinforced experiences that are common to all international students, but in particular, they highlight experiences that were very specific to the sample of Saudi students studied. The findings showed that Saudi students experienced various challenges and difficulties. However, Study One also reported self-development as the outcome of students' acculturation. Further, the participants addressed the dialogue in identity positions linked to their home culture (Saudi) and being in the UK.

The novel findings were used to guide the development of Study Two. The aim of this study was to understand how Saudi students negotiated the demands of different identity positions. This study involved a sample of 11 Saudi international students studying at universities in South East England. This involved an expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the original acculturation framework from Berry (1997, 2011) with Dialogical Self Theory from Hermans (2001) to obtain a more in-depth understanding of how Saudi students gave meaning to the idea of being Saudi students in the UK. Using IPA (Smith et al., 2009) and DST (Hermans, 2001), combining both phenomenology and interpretation, the analysis identified three distinct I-positions: I-as a Saudi in the UK, I-as a Saudi Arabian national identity, and Identity negotiation processes among these positions. The findings illustrated key areas of dialogical self experience of Saudi students. In this study, the dialogical self of the participants was engaged in negotiating I-positions and repositioning processes, which were dependent on and prompted by the participants' goals of studying abroad and their preferred future.

The original and important findings generated by this research have distinct implications for the acculturation of Saudi international students and identity negotiations and contribute to the literature on cross-cultural experiences and international students' issues. This research contributes to helping prospective and current Saudi students to become more informed regarding the experiences they may encounter when studying in the UK.

Chapter 1: An Introduction: Why Study Saudi International Students?

1.1 Statement of the problem

Saudi Arabian students have constituted a growing population in UK's higher education in the past decade. They are one of the largest groups of international students in the UK (HESA, 2018/19). The presence of Saudi Arabian students in the UK is a remarkable phenomenon, with increasing numbers that have changed the ranking of Saudi Arabia as a country of origin of international students from 16th in 2004/5 to 7th in 2017/18 (HESA, 2004/5; HESA, 2017/18).

These students may experience acculturation challenges of adapting to a new culture and an unfamiliar educational system which is generally different from that of their home country (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). In addition, studying abroad may expose students to a new foreign culture's norms and cultural values, impacting on their sense of self and identity. This acculturation experience and these challenges can, in some instances, be overwhelming and lead international students to experience stress and, in some cases, mental health problems (Brown & Aktas, 2012; Rajab, Rahman, Panatik, & Mansor, 2014).

Although some research has focused on international students' experiences, such as Asian students (Dentakos et al., 2017; Eustace, 2007; Evivie, 2009; Palmer, 2015; Rahman, & Rollock, 2004; Yamashita, 2009; Yang, 2010; Yue, Lê, & Terry., 2014), only a limited amount has looked at Saudi students. The latter studies on Saudi international students have been done in the US (Shaw, 2009; Abdel Razek, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013).

Although one might expect international students from Saudi Arabia to experience similar acculturation experiences process to other international students, in particular religion issues, gender issues, and an unfamiliar educational system, there is a paucity of literature on acculturation theory and Saudi students' acculturation process in terms of religion issues and gender issues particularly. That said, the few existing papers did indicate some aspects of acculturation experiences that seem to be specific to Saudi Arabian students due to their particular cultural background (Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Ahmed, 2016; Shaw, 2009; Abdel Razek, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Lefdahl-Davi, & Perrone-McGovern 2015; Melius, 2017; Orth, 2015; Sandekian et al., 2015), including the unique roles of religion, family and economics in Saudi Arabia (Heyn, 2013).

Acculturation dimensions matter and research should systematically address issues such as religion and gender issues to know how such dimensions impact on the acculturation process. More focus on acculturation dimensions and cultural contexts will increase our understanding of acculturation processes and outcomes.

In general, various aspects of acculturation process dimensions remain under investigation as previous research has not addressed the powerful issues of gender and religion in seeking to understand the process of acculturation among Saudi students. It is imperative to conduct this research in order to advance our understanding of acculturation and its consequences, and these issues warrant further theorizing and research. This research was carried out in response to this state of affairs, aiming to investigate and better understand the acculturation experiences of these students. The aim of this research was to examine transitions when moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian students. It investigated the experiences that Saudi students reported as challenges. In addition, the study explored the identity negotiation processes and the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities by combining the original acculturation framework from Berry (1997, 2011) with the dialogical self theory of Hermans, (2001). This research used a qualitative interview research design to investigate Saudi Arabian international students' acculturation experiences and identity negotiation processes.

1.2 Research aims

This research project is based on empirical fieldwork that consisted of two Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) studies. Study One was important to investigate and better understand the acculturation experiences of Saudi international students in the UK. The aim of this study was to examine transitions when moving to and studying in the UK. It investigated the experiences that Saudi students reported as challenges. In addition, the study explored the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identity. The Psychological Acculturation theory framework from Berry (1997, 2011) was used as the theoretical foundation.

The findings of Study One offer a novel contribution to knowledge. The findings reinforce experiences that are common to all international students, but in particular, they highlight experiences that are very specific to the sample of Saudi students studied. The novel findings were used to guide the development of Study Two. The purpose of Study Two was to obtain a more in-depth understanding of how Saudi students negotiate the demands of different identity positions. It also examined various patterns of dialogue that may be established among divergent identity positions. The aim of Study Two was to investigate the negotiation between being a Saudi student in the UK and being affiliated to one's country of origin.

It was evident from Study One that a more dynamic approach was essential in order to understand the complex experiences of Saudi students' transition to the UK. In Study Two, acculturation was considered as a dialogical process that involved dialogue between different identity positions. It was proposed that the theory of the dialogical self could be an appropriate theoretical tool for a study of acculturation. This point of view is dynamic and considers acculturation as a process, not an outcome (Andreouli, 2013). The development of the study was based on IPA principles and dialogical self theory, involving

expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the original acculturation framework from Berry (1997, 2011) with the dialogical self theory of Hermans, (2001).

1.3 Significance of the research

The literature review indicates that acculturation dimensions, such as religion and gender, can be key to understanding the acculturation process in Saudi students. Although we know that acculturation dimensions are generally linked to adaptation outcomes (Berry, 2006), relatively little is known about how acculturation dimensions are understood and experienced by this group; thus, the aim of this study is to address questions about the dimensions, process and context of acculturation.

Further, this research is important, given the significant growth of the Saudi student population in the last decade in the UK. Exploring Saudi students' acculturation experiences in the UK is significant due to the limited amount of previous research and literature on Saudi Arabian international students. There has been an abundance of research on Asian international students, such as Chinese and Japanese students, which has not been matched for Saudi students (Dentakos, et al., 2017; Eustace, 2007; Evivie, 2009; Palmer, 2015; Rahman, & Rollock, 2004; Yamashita, 2009; Yang, 2010; Yue, et al., 2014). However, a few recent studies on the challenges and barriers faced by Saudi students have been conducted in the United States (Shaw, 2009; Abdel Razek, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013).

Despite the increasing numbers of Saudi students in the UK in recent years, a review of the literature indicated that although classified as one type of sojourner, Saudi students have not been studied as often as other acculturating groups. This study is the first study to fill this gap in the literature, thus contributing to a better understanding of Saudi students' acculturation experiences in the UK.

This research's originality lies in linking the acculturation experience of study abroad and the identity negotiation process, and making a theoretical contribution in the process. It combines Berry's (1997, 2011) psychological acculturation framework with Hermans's (2001) Dialogical Self Theory, involving an expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the original acculturation framework with the dialogical self. To understand in depth the complexity of acculturation and address its dynamic nature, it is argued that acculturation is a meaning-making process whereby individuals reconstruct their identities within a new context (Chrysochoou, 2004). It was evident from Study One that this more dynamic approach was fundamental to understanding the complex experiences of Saudi students' transition to the UK.

In addition to its theoretical contribution, the research may help prospective and current Saudi students to become better informed regarding the challenges they may encounter when studying in the UK. This will help to better prepare future students, and help current students as well in their effort to attain the goals associated with their study abroad

experience. This research may also help the Saudi government to better inform students' decisions to study abroad by understanding the challenges faced by Saudi students in an overseas educational institution. It may help the Saudi government to design courses and pre-departure programmes to better support students during the adaptation phase of their study abroad experience. In the UK, this research provides an in-depth description of the needs, expectations and challenges encountered by Saudi students. With this information, the government can initiate constructive changes and generate specific policies and programmes that better address students' challenges, and that better meet their unique needs and expectations.

In short, this research project contributes significantly to understanding the experience of individuals' transition across cultures, a phenomenon that seems to be increasing rapidly, particularly in a multicultural dimensionally interconnected world.

1.4 Key Terms

The following terms are mentioned very often in this thesis and thus are defined to ensure clarity of meaning.

Acculturation “comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936; p.149, as cited in Berry, 1997).

Cultural identity is one's individual image of the behaviors, beliefs, values and norms – in short, the cultural features – that are thought to characterize one's group(s), together with one's feelings about those features and one's understanding of how they are (or are not) reflected in oneself (Ferdman, 2000; p.20).

Dialogical self is the central concept in dialogical self theory (DST), as created and developed by Hubert Hermans since the 1990s. DST offers a detailed and comprehensive theoretical model for understanding identity and notions of self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

International students are individuals who temporarily reside in a country other than their own country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to participate in international education exchange as students, teachers and researchers. They are also distinguishable by virtue of being culturally different from their hosts (Paige, 1990; p.162).

Saudi Arabian International Students are individuals who have come to the UK from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for the purpose of obtaining a higher education degree. English is a second language for these Saudi Arabian international students.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis starts with an introduction chapter and is then divided into two main parts. **Part I** explores Saudi students' experiences from an acculturation perspective. This part comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 2 presents the literature review: (a) conceptualisation of acculturation and international students; (b) context of international students; acculturation of international students; (c) Saudi Arabian students' acculturation; and an overview of research on the acculturation experiences of Saudi international students abroad. Chapter 2 also explains the theoretical approach. It reviews the Psychological Acculturation perspective, acculturation concepts and Berry's (1997, 2011) Psychological Acculturation Theory, which was the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach, study design and techniques used for the purposes of the study. The study made use of semi-structured interviews to address the research questions.

The findings on the acculturation experiences of Saudi students are presented in Chapter 4, including Before moving to the UK, Arrival and living in the UK, and Changes and self-development. This chapter also discusses the empirical findings with the intention of offering a more in depth understanding of the acculturation experiences of Saudi students prior to coming and after living and studying in the UK, and changes and self-development that students reported.

Part II developed from the analysis conducted in Study One and explored Saudi Arabian students' experiences in the UK from a Dialogical Self perspective. It comprises the following chapters:

The research background to Study Two is presented in Chapter 5. It begins by presenting the key findings emerging from Study One and then illustrating the expansion from an acculturation perspective on the dialogical self. It also proposes a mechanism in the theoretical framework for linking an acculturation perspective to Herman's Dialogical Self Theory. This chapter also explains the methods and study design used to address the research questions for Study Two.

Chapter 6 presents the findings on the acculturation experiences and identity negotiations of Saudi students using dialogical self-theory. This includes being a Saudi citizen in the UK and identity negotiation processes. This chapter also discusses the findings of this study in terms of the theoretical perspective of the dialogical self and the practical acculturation experiences of Saudi students.

Finally, the last chapter draws a general conclusion. Chapter 7 summarises the key findings. It also discusses the implications of these findings and articulates their

contribution to the literature. It highlights the limitations of the study and presents areas for future academic research.

Part I: Saudi students' experiences in the UK from an Acculturation perspective

Part I presents the Saudi students' experiences from an acculturation perspective. This part comprises the following chapters; Chapter 2 presents a literature review and provides a theoretical approach for this study. Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach and study design. The findings on the acculturation experiences of Saudi students are presented in Chapter 4. This chapter also discusses the empirical findings of the acculturation experiences of Saudi students.

Chapter 2:

2.1 Literature review

This chapter presents the literature review carried out to understand the acculturation experiences of international Saudi Arabian students living and studying in the UK. This is based on the conceptualisation of acculturation, international students and the context of international students to provide a theoretical background to the acculturation of international students.

2.1.1 Conceptualisation of Acculturation, and International Students

Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) report: international students (2018) defines international students as individuals coming from other countries to pursue a full course of study in the UK, for either short or longer courses, at any level of education. While defining these students as people who are temporary residents and who have come to the UK to pursue a study appears straightforward, "it is more complicated in practice to provide an operational definition and different sources define international students in different ways" (MAC, 2018; p 18)

It is necessary for international students studying for a university degree in the UK to have a general Tier 4 Visa and maintain a residence abroad according to the UK Visas and Immigration Service (Study in the UK – GOV.UK. (2019). This requirement means that international students are not allowed to settle in the UK, so they can be defined as 'sojourners' who temporarily leave their home cultures (Noyongoyo, 2011).

Acculturation can be defined as the modification of the culture of an individual or group by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture (Sorrells, 2013), and multicultural merging as an outcome of prolonged contact (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Yet, 'sojourners' may not have the duration of residence needed and the long-term intention to settle so that the home culture and the host culture may merge effectively.

2.1.2 Acculturation of International Students

In the literature, there is limited research on understanding the acculturation of international students (Anderson & Guan, 2017). Nevertheless, international students' acculturation has been the focus of some research (e.g. Bertram, Poulakis, Elsasser, & Kumar, 2014; Dentakos, et al., 2017; Gbadamosi, 2018; Hansen, Shneyderman, McNamara, & Grace, 2018; Katsara, 2015; Li, Marbley, Bradley, & Lan, 2016; Nasirudeen, & Josephine, 2019; Ritter, & Roth, 2014; Smith, & Khawaja, 2014).

Studies regarding the motivation of international students (Chirkov, et al., 2008; Le, 2011; Jianvittayakit, 2012; Liao, Ferdenzi, & Edlin, 2012; Zhou, 2015) have addressed international students' motivation to study abroad in relation to their academic performance and achievement (Jianvittayakit, 2012; Liao, et al., 2012; Zhou, 2015). Other

studies have addressed the relation between international students' motivation and their acculturation, cultural differences, adjustment and adaptation outcomes (Chirkov et al., 2007; Tran, 2011). Studies have reported that self-development, including development in knowledge and skills, stimulation, materialism and future career development, was an important source of motivation for international students (Dentakos, et al., 2017; Chirkov et al., 2007; Tran, 2011). For example, Tran (2011) found that self-development, education and wealth were the key motivations that Vietnamese students in Australia were mostly driven by.

In addition, studies have revealed that international students' decisions to study abroad were often influenced by sociocultural factors, such as parental guidance, or social trends regarding study abroad (Chirkov et al., 2007; Holmes, & Cooper, 2004; Tran, 2011). Chirkov et al. (2007) investigated the role of two factors of Chinese international students' decisions to study overseas: (i) the level of self-determined motivation and (ii) the substantive nature of their goals. The former included the motivation to avoid disadvantageous conditions in their home countries, and a stark desire to engage in self-development; the self-development motivation behind studying overseas tended to be more orientated around personal goals and desires than those relating to disadvantageous conditions, which were more often socially framed as there being a need for broad improvements in the home country.

In addition to students' motivation to study abroad, studies have indicated that different groups of international students may encounter different problems related to adjusting to a new academic environment, adopting a new identity in an unfamiliar culture, communicating in a foreign language, personal difficulties, health problems and losing a familiar social support system (Dentakos, et al., 2017; Eustace, 2007; Yue, et al., 2014; Evvie, 2009; Heyn, 2013; Palmer, 2015; Rahman, & Rollock, 2004; Yamashita, 2009; Yang, 2010; Yue, et al., 2014). For example, Heyn (2013) reported that in the previous 13 years, four main categories of challenges were identified in international students, which were academic difficulties, personal issues, health outcomes and cultural differences.

Among the most commonly investigated problems was the basic issue of academic difficulties. These difficulties included communicating in English, performing in class, failing to meet academic advisors' expectations, lacking access to support services, and understanding the UK educational system (Yue, et al., 2014; Lee 2008; Yang, 2010; Womujuni, 2009). Lee (2008) conducted a qualitative study drawing on grounded theory to investigate the experiences of international students encountering language barriers in the US, 12 students were interviewed about their perceptions, emotions and behaviours during the process, covering stress, coping and adaptation. The main result of the study was a theoretical model that presented three steps in a linear order to explain the students' stress and coping experiences in conjunction with changes in the meanings of language barriers. The first step occurs as students perceive stressors. The second step is when students acknowledge stressors and start adopting coping strategies. Adaptation happens in the third step, when they reach self-acceptance.

Yang (2010) conducted a study to explore the relationships of stress and psychological well-being in US graduate students and Asian international graduate students from China, Taiwan and Korea. 131 American graduate students and 180 Asian international graduate students from 90 universities in the US participated in this study. The findings showed that perceived English language skills appeared to be a significant predictor for stress, coping and psychological well-being, particularly among students from China and Korea.

Womujuni (2009) investigated the challenges international graduate students experience in adjusting to their new status. Data were collected by interviewing and surveying 43 international graduate students at Portland State University. The findings revealed the following adjustment challenges: unfamiliarity with the different educational system; lack of sufficient English language proficiency; unsatisfactory accommodation; insufficient financial resources; lack of culturally specific programmes that are intentional, flexible and accessible; inadequate health services information; and unavailability of international student mentoring programmes.

Challenges for international students did not end there, as the challenges could be more complicated with many of them also facing personal challenges. These challenges were relevant to concerns such as social networks, basic living conditions, loneliness, racial discrimination, relationships, immigration rules and financial problems (Yue, et al., 2014; Evivie, 2009).

Yue, et al. (2014) investigated international students' satisfaction with their basic living conditions and evaluated their healthy behaviours in Australia. Twenty international students were interviewed and the study discovered that finances, accommodation, transport and food and diet were the four main considerations involved in international students' basic living satisfaction. Evivie (2009) examined the challenges faced by African international students in Western Sub-Saharan Africa. Six students were interviewed. The results indicated that financial challenges were the greatest for these students, closely by cultural challenges. According to Evivie (2009). "The financial challenges were responsible for their feelings of homesickness, psychological stress, alienation and isolation, reduced time for study and social activities given the need to work; and cultural differences were responsible for their perceptions of a lack of social support." However, stereotypes and racial discrimination were not considered a challenge.

There are health problems that can affect international students. These health problems include psychological and mental problems, anxiety, depression, stress, insomnia and sleep problems, sicknesses, physical well-being, discrimination and psychological distress that are more likely to harm their acculturation progress and academic success (Hahn, 2010; Rahman & Rollock, 2004).

Hahn (2010) examined international students' depression prevalence rate to explore the relationships among stress, coping, cultural orientation and depression. A total of 648

international students from 74 countries and areas responded to a survey at an elite northeastern university, US. The study found that 22.6% of the participants were clinically depressed. International students also reported high levels of acculturative stresses, such as language difficulties, academic burden, financial barriers, racial discrimination, cultural shocks and concerns over the future. Rahman and Rollock (2004) investigated acculturation, competence and mental health among 199 international students, from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, in the United States. The findings indicated that higher levels of depressive symptoms were predicted by higher perceived prejudice and lower self-reported competence in work, personal/social efficacy and intercultural behaviours (Rahman & Rollock, 2004).

In addition to health problems, other studies have found that international students face challenges of cultural differences (Eustace, 2007; Yamashita, 2009). A study by Eustace (2007) investigated how acculturative stress and social support were related and examined significant sociocultural and demographic predictors of acculturative stress. In sum, 606 international students responded to a survey across 11 American universities. The results reported that students who were experiencing high levels of difficulty with acculturative stressors were more likely to experience higher levels of stress. Additionally, international students who reported high levels of social support were more likely to display less impact of acculturative stressors on acculturative stress. The results also reported the essential role of the international student's social context and its influence on their acculturation process and outcomes.

Yamashita (2009) conducted a qualitative study to understand the challenges that face Japanese graduate students due to cultural differences, pedagogical differences and language problems. Five Japanese graduate-level students at Portland State University were interviewed. Findings reported that students experienced challenges due to cultural differences, learning style differences and lack of language skills. These findings highlighted that individual-level factors that impact on intercultural transition challenges included: "(a) Cultural differences caused by chilly climate factors in the classroom, such as feelings of being isolated from the group of domestic students and faculty because of superficial relationships with classmates, strong individualism, competitiveness in the classroom, learning style differences, and international students' lack of self-confidence; (b) Cultural and language barriers, such as different communication styles and a lack of knowledge about American historical and cultural references, which are used frequently as examples in class discussion" Yamashita (2009).

As the above review indicates, the literature on the acculturation of international students addresses the motivations to study abroad and challenges that international students may face. Self-development is the most important motivation of international students to study abroad. Also, students' decisions to study abroad are often influenced by motivations within the context of their parents, families and countries of origin. Further, studies indicate that different groups of international students may face different challenges, such as academic difficulties, personal difficulties, personal and cultural differences.

2.1.3 Saudi Arabian Students' Acculturation

Although there has been increasing interest in research on international students, there is a limited amount of literature regarding Saudi Arabian international students (Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Ahmed, 2016; Lefdahl-Davi, & Perrone-McGovern 2015; Melius, 2017; Orth, 2015; Sandekian et al., 2015). Given that this research programme addresses Saudi international students' experiences in the UK and that limited amount research has been conducted in this field, the experiences of international students, in general, were reviewed first in order to discuss this research as it may be relevant to the experiences of Saudi students studying in the UK.

Although some research has focused on international students' acculturation, such as Asian students (Dentakos, et al., 2017; Eustace, 2007; Evivie, 2009; Palmer, 2015; Rahman, & Rollock, 2004; Yamashita, 2009; Yang, 2010; Yue, et al., 2014), a limited amount has looked at Saudi students' acculturation. The latter studies on Saudi international students have been done in the US (Abdel Razek, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Lefdahl, et al., 2015; Melius, 2017; Shaw, 2009).

Although one might expect international students from Saudi Arabia to experience similar acculturation experiences process to other international students, in particular religion issues, gender issues, and an unfamiliar educational system, there is a paucity of literature on acculturation theory and Saudi students' acculturation process in terms of religion issues and gender issues particularly. That said, the few existing papers did indicate some aspects of acculturation experiences that seem to be specific to Saudi Arabian students due to their particular cultural background (Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Ahmed, 2016; Shaw, 2009; Abdel Razek, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Lefdahl-Davi, & Perrone-McGovern 2015; Melius, 2017; Orth, 2015; Sandekian et al., 2015), including the unique roles of religion, family and economics in Saudi Arabia (Heyn, 2013). A number of studies in Muslim immigrants indicate that religious identities are at least as important as ethnic ones in acculturation and the prediction of its outcomes. (Ward, 2013). The review of the literature indicates to the need to involve multiple facets of cultural identity in acculturation research and to distinguish its acculturation dimensions, particularly when examining the links between religion, gender issues, and acculturation process (Ward, 2013)

Acculturation dimensions matter and research should systematically address issues such as religion and gender issues to know how such dimensions impact on the acculturation process. More focus on acculturation dimensions and cultural contexts will increase our understanding of acculturation processes and outcomes.

All in all, the aspects of acculturation process dimensions remain under investigation as previous research did not address the powerful factors of gender issues and religion in understanding the process of acculturation in Saudi students. It is imperative to conduct this research in order to advance our understanding of acculturation and its consequences and these issues warrant further theorizing and research. (ward, 2013).

Further, Saudi students cannot necessarily be treated as a homogenous group and so there are significant gender differences to explore further. As Alqahtani (2015) reported, Saudi students are not a homogeneous group, they have different identifications and cannot be put in a fixed category.

The literature regarding the motivation of international Saudi students as an independent ethnic group is sparse, with a few exceptions that include studies conducted in the US by Alfawzan (2012), Almotery, (2009), Alkaabi, (2016) and Yakaboski, Perez-Velez, and Almutairi, (2016). These few studies addressed Saudi students' motivation to study in relation to their acculturation experiences and academic achievements in US institutions (Alkaabi, 2016; Yakaboski, et al., 2016).

Almotery (2009), in a qualitative study with four females and nine males, explored Saudi students' motivations and experiences at the University of Wisconsin. The study examined students' academic/social expectations before arrival at the university and examined students' motivations on arrival at university. It examined students' experiences at the university, including their interactions with faculty, colleagues and male/female students. Students' motivations to go to a university abroad were often influenced by motivations within the context of their parents, families and countries of origin. Students' academic and social experiences were, in general, positive, with few exceptions. The students considered the potential challenges that they might face, and they expected to encounter difficulties in navigating the new culture, especially when communicating in an academic environment or in public settings. Saudi students were also concerned that they would have difficulty in adjusting because of inadequate English proficiency.

Yakaboski, et al. (2016), in a qualitative study with 15 males and four females, examined Saudi students' motivations to study in the US. They illustrated that Saudi students did not always have a choice in their selection or decision. These students were aiming for postgraduate degrees overseas for external people, organizations and their country, not only for themselves as individuals. Saudi cultural requirements affected the decisions of the participants and influenced where individuals studied and who chose to study there because of them. The participants studied abroad in order to better serve their country when they re-entered Saudi Arabia.

Alkaabi (2016) conducted a mix-methods study with 181 students at different educational institutions in the US. Students completed a questionnaire, and seven of them were selected to take part in follow-up interviews. The study aimed to examine Saudi students' types of motivation for learning English for academic performance, and attitudes towards US people. Also, she examined the motivation of Saudi students in relation to some factors that are likely to impact on their motivation, such as gender, and found that length of stay in the US English learning environment was highly valued among the participants as a means for academic achievement. Saudi students showed a relatively positive attitude towards the US and its community. Also, there was a relationship between

participants' gender and their type of motivation. Female students were more highly motivated to learn English and favourable towards the US community compared to male students.

In addition to studies on the motivation of international Saudi students, studies have pointed to different problems associated with an unfamiliar education system and new academic environment, identity demands in a new culture, communicating in a foreign language, personal difficulties, health problems and losing social support (Alamri, 2017; Heyn, 2013; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern 2015; Melius, 2017; Orth, 2015; Sandekian et al., 2015; Shaw, 2010). Orth (2015) conducted a qualitative study with 14 Saudi students (12 male, 2 female) using a case-study method. The study targeted Saudi Arabian students in their first year in Australia, aiming to explore their expectations before coming to Australia and the influence of intercultural experience on students' experiences. The study found that there were a number of challenges faced by students, such as communicating in English and cultural differences. Also, Saudi students often formed anticipatory attitudes based on information they obtained from trusted peers who had already engaged in education abroad. Orth (2015) found that Saudi students had little if any knowledge about Australians and their community values and standards, nor about what university there would be like (Orth, 2015).

Melius (2017) used a mixed-methods approach involving an online survey followed by follow-up interviews to explore the adjustment problems of Saudi students and how they relate to students' ability to gain academic achievement in Southeastern universities in the US. He found that Saudi students voiced initial worries about the challenges they might face prior to moving to study in the US. Students often worried about how they would be perceived in the host country, and they faced a challenge due to local students' lack of understanding of their culture, which led to cultural misconceptions. Findings associated with academic challenges showed that students found the amount of academic reading required was a challenge, as was limited English, and a lack of critical thinking skills prior to arrival in the United States. Significant levels of depression and homesickness were identified by students (Melius, 2017).

Heyn (2013), in a qualitative study aiming to examine the experiences of nine male Saudi international students studying in the US for at least two years, identified the main areas that were associated with the students' experiences as international students: a) students' perceptions of the US before and after studying in the U.S; b) students' experiences living and studying in the US; c) the potential influence that the study experiences of male Saudi international students in the US had on the students' values and beliefs. The Saudi students sampled in Heyn's (2013) study were worried about the negative perceptions they might encounter from people in the US and about not being welcomed by US citizens.

Shaw (2010) used a qualitative case study and photo-elicitation research methods to explore the educational experiences of Saudi Arabian students in the US. He conducted multiple interviews with 25 students to examine students' perceptions of the US

educational system, how it differed from that of Saudi Arabia, and the strategies they used to achieve their academic ambitions. The students pointed out that classroom practices and cultures were different. Other dissimilarities pointed out were the gender differences between instructors and classmates. Shaw found that successful strategies that Saudi students used included goal setting, time management, study groups, taking advantage of campus resources, hard work and persistence. Resilience and intercultural competence were crucial in enabling the students to bridge the gap between the home country and the US, navigate in the new culture, adjust to changes and challenges, and develop successful strategies to achieve their academic ambitions.

Alamri, (2017) used a qualitative study to highlight the experiences of undergraduate Saudi international students. He interviewed four students to examine the personal and academic challenges that students faced during their studies in Canada, including cultural, religious and academic differences. The findings showed that the students encountered various challenges in these areas; a) personal challenges of living in Canada, students reported feelings of homesickness and isolation due to being away from family and friends, and differences in lifestyle. They faced challenges in making new friends because of cultural differences. Also, they expressed facing prejudice and stereotyping; b) The influence of cross-cultural experience on students, This challenge was regarding the impact of the students' cultural identity and cross-culture in Canada; c) Academic challenges, students reported that the English barrier impacted on them at both academic and personal levels, as they had difficulties in understanding some terms, reading and writing, engaging in class discussions, participating in activities with their local peers.

Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015), in a qualitative study using grounded theory to explore the cultural adjustment of 25 female international Saudi students studying in the US, found that most of them experienced the most difficult period of adjustment in the first three months, while other participants mostly struggled after three to six months. The adjustment of these students was influenced by their proficiency in English, their relationships and social support, and their navigation of the cultural differences they faced in the US, including public gender integration, mobility, acceptance of diversity, and freedom and decision-making opportunities. The findings also showed that several Saudi women reported self-development in the US, including of confidence, independence, intellectual growth and acceptance of others.

Sandekian et al. (2015) interviewed 23 female Saudi postgraduate students to investigate their academic experiences at a university in the western US. The study found that Saudi females showed a strong desire to succeed when studying abroad, both in terms of personal advantage and anticipated contribution to their home country. Students wanted to make the most of their educational opportunities in the US for personal fulfilment, possible future employment, and as a means to give back to their communities and government. The findings also showed four areas of challenge that appeared within their stories, related to students' insufficient English language skills, interactions with American

and Saudi men, positive interactions with both males and females, and positive feelings about their academic and lived experiences at their university.

In the UK, only two studies, to the best of my knowledge, have addressed the experiences of Saudi students, these being conducted by Alqahtani (2015) and Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017). Alqahtani (2015) interviewed 15 Saudi male and female students who were studying in the UK to explore the friendship experiences that Saudi students had with home and international students, how Saudi international students experienced interactions with individuals from the opposite gender, and the changes that the students had made to their mindsets as a result of their intercultural experiences in the UK. He found that, in contrast to studies that suggest that Saudi international students are a homogeneous group who belong to a collectivistic culture, the students had different identifications and could not be put in a fixed category. The findings also showed that although there is segregation between males and females in Saudi Arabia, students do not necessarily find interactions with individuals from the opposite gender challenging. Intercultural experiences in the UK had impacted on the students' identifications, as several of them had made significant changes to their identifications, others accepted changes that did not contradict their sense of religion, while others resisted any changes.

Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study on the experiences of 25 female Saudi PhD students in the UK. The study investigated academic challenges and parenting experiences during their adaptation to UK culture, acculturation experience, and related coping strategies. In academic adaptation, students felt that the requirements of the UK educational system represented a great challenge, they noted a lack of skills that they needed to perform successfully in academia. Female Saudi students faced several academic challenges, such as English and communication, differences in educational systems. In the parenting area, both negative and positive points emerged around social and cultural identities. Students were concerned about the instability of their children's national, religious and linguistic identities. They also illustrated coping strategies that they used to manage academic and parenting challenges.

In terms of contend that religious believes, gender issues, and socio-political context affect the acculturation process Ward (2013) has pointed to the significance of religious identity for Muslims and its impact on acculturation. It demonstrates that the religious component of cultural identity is salient in Muslim immigrants and that different facets of cultural identity act in distinctly different ways to predict their social and psychological adaptation. Thus, indicates that religious dimensions of cultural identity and behaviors should be included in research with Muslim immigrants.

Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007) have also examined national identification among Turkish-Dutch Muslim focusing on ethnic identity and ethnic and religious identity. It has pointed out that the ethnic and religious orientations of Dutch Turks and their Muslim identity and behaviors operate in different ways to predict national identification and disidentification during the acculturation process.

Ward (2013) in another study on public markers of Muslim identity or visibility illustrated that there is a type of practice that distinguishes Muslim females beyond the boundaries of their religious community and has an impact on them within the broader society which is wearing Hijab. The finding revealed that each of these aspects of identity impacted on adaptation in Muslim females.

In the review of the literature on Saudi international student groups, very few studies have addressed few aspects of the acculturation of Saudi students who study in the US and Australia. According to the literature reviewed above, the acculturation experiences of international Saudi students involved different problems associated with an unfamiliar education system and a new academic environment, identity demands in a new culture, communicating in a foreign language, personal difficulties, gender issues, health problems and losing social support. Also, international Saudi students experienced negative perceptions about Saudi Arabian culture in general, and because many differences exist between the culture of Saudi Arabia and other cultures abroad.

As for the UK, only two studies (Alqahtani, 2015; & Alqahtani and Pfeffer, 2017) mention Saudi international students as participants or as a potential population in the UK. The absence of Saudi students as research participants in the literature is understandable due to the unavailability of this student population in the UK in significant numbers before 2007/8. However, Saudi Arabia is now ranked number seven in the world for the total number of non-EU international students in the UK, surpassed only by China, India, US Hong Kong, Malaysia and Nigeria for total numbers of students (HASS 2019).

Motivation, language barriers, academic difficulties, and personal issues have been previously discussed in the acculturation literature; however, the current study aims to provide some unique insights. The current study with Saudi students will explore the differentiation of acculturation domains in-depth way, demonstrating how different aspects of acculturation can shape acculturation process.

2.1.4 Conclusion

This section has reviewed the literature relevant to the acculturation experiences of international Saudi Arabian students studying in the UK higher education sector. The review was organized in four areas: a) conceptualization of acculturation, and international students, b) context of international students, c) acculturation of international students and d) Saudi Arabian students' acculturation.

While this study can offer insights into acculturation processes and outcomes, it is presented together as illustrations of how and why factors such as religion, gender, and different educational system deserve more systematic attention in acculturation research. As religion and gender issues are always at the core of acculturation process research. This study aims to be very clear about how dimensions of acculturation are assessed and

the implications. This will assist in achieving a more nuanced understanding of how acculturation domains and dominant aspects of culture operate in the process of acculturation.

There is a need for research related to the acculturation experiences and needs of Saudi Arabian students in the UK. This additional research may help prospective and current Saudi students to become more informed regarding the challenges they might encounter when studying in the UK. This research could help the Saudi government to design courses and pre-departure programmes that can better support students during the adaptation phase in overseas educational institutions. In the UK, this research could help to provide an in-depth description of the needs, expectations and challenges encountered by Saudi students. With this information, the government could initiate constructive changes and generate specific policies and programmes that better address students' challenges, and that better meet their needs and expectations.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Psychological Acculturation Perspective

The Psychological Acculturation perspective comprises of several key concepts that are Acculturation, Enculturation, Cultural diversity, Acculturation strategies, Acculturation stress, and adaptation. Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (2002) stated that the notion of acculturation has emerged from anthropology. Up until now, acculturation has been extensively applied in cross-cultural psychology.

According to Berry (2011); and Nwadiore and McAdoo (1996) Acculturation denotes alterations in people's cultural attitudes, values and behaviours which are a consequence of their constant, immediate and interaction and involvement with two separate cultures. Acculturation is directly affected by physical and psychological changes that take place owing to adjustment needed in diet, climate, accommodation, communication styles, norms, values related with a new society. The adaptation process is influenced by behavioral skills, personality and organizational variables, previous experience abroad, cultural identity and cultural knowledge, and variations amongst expectations and experience abroad (Church, 1982; Ditchburn, 1996; Black, 1998; Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou, 1987; Ward & Searle, 1991; Weissman & Furnham, 1987).

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits argued that "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936, p.149 as cited in Berry, 1997). This definition is probably the most frequently used by acculturation scholars today (Sam, 2006).

Even though, the above mentioned definitions are considered to have played a significant role in acculturation research, yet they have been criticized as they have not focused on individual acculturation (Andreouli, 2013; Graves, 1967). These definitions have considered acculturation as a group phenomenon and have stressed upon the groups' cultural change. Consequently, new definitions of acculturation have materialized, particularly in the field of psychology.

In the psychological acculturation school, Berry (1997, 2005, 2011) framework has garnered a high level of interest and attention (Sam, 2006). According to Berry (1997, 2005, 2011) the process of acculturation progresses in accordance with the extent to which the individual simultaneously participates in the cultural life of the host society and maintains their own native cultural identity.

Psychology research classified acculturation into two dimensions (Berry, 2011; Ward and Kennedy, 1994). One dimension is associated with values, ideologies, attitudes and beliefs which describe a culture. The second dimension is associated with the behavioural elements that describe the way an individual adapts to external characteristics of the dominant culture. External characteristics such as social and language skills, negotiation skills, socio-cultural elements in an individual's environment are significant in the acculturation process. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC, 1954) and Berry (1990) reached the conclusion that three distinctions are required to gain maximum value from the acculturation process: a) an ongoing and direct interaction, involvement and engagement between cultures which will exclude short-term, accidental interaction and single cultural practices which are dispersed over a long distance; b) Amid the individuals that are interacting with one another, the outcome needs to be cultural or psychological. It typically but not essentially carries on for generations; c) in view of the first two factors, a difference between process and state of acculturation needs to be considered. Berry (1990) referred to the acculturation process as a dynamic activity all through the period of and after contact whereas the state of acculturation is the relative stability of the real consequences of the process of acculturation.

Even though much effort has been made to define acculturation, researchers have still not agreed on one universal definition of acculturation (Mehta, 1998). However, it can be said that the concept of acculturation is significant in comprehending the way different acculturating groups, such as immigrants, sojourners and international students adjust to a new cultural context (Berry et al., 2002; Berry, 2011 & Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011). A significant concept that lays at the centre of acculturation research is linked with the manifestation of acculturation (or acculturation outcomes), that is acculturative stress. According to Berry (2011), during times when an individual experiences high levels of conflict and these experiences are believed to be problematic yet controllable, then the acculturative stress paradigm is a suitable conceptualization.

2.2.1.1 Acculturation concepts

2.2.1.1.1 Acculturation

For acculturation to occur, it is vital that first hand and constant interaction and engagement takes place between different cultures. This does not include short term, brief or accidental interactions. Furthermore, it also does not include the diffusion of cultural practices over long distances (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Acculturation can lead to a number of cultural and psychological changes, but it is not necessary that acculturation leads to cultural shock or cultural adjustment. Acculturation can lead to destruction via eradication reaction (when people re-affirm and re-establish their distinctive cultures or creative when a new culture materializes from cultural interactions taking place during a span of time (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Berry et al. (2002, 2011) stated that acculturation takes place at two levels. The first level is acculturation at the population level. The second level is acculturation at the individual level. Acculturation at the population level involved macro-changes (changes to take place in social structures, economic and political environment). Research has explored the population level in the fields of anthropology, international development, economics, rural sociology and political science. Whilst psychological acculturation at the individual level causes changes to take place in self-identification, values and attitudes (Berry, 2005). The concept of acculturation has mostly been studied in the field of cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 2011).

2.2.1.1.2 Enculturation, socialization and cultural distance

Enculturation included all the learning that takes place in human life without any conscious effort made by someone to convey this learning. According to Berry et al. (2002, 2011) enculturation is a process that connects the developing individuals to their primary culture (Berry et al, 2002, 2011).

Berry et al. (2002, 2011) believed that people are born with and are surrounded by their native culture. As people grow and develop themselves, they acquire and integrated through learning what their culture deems as essential and suitable into their repertoires (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Enculturation is a process that includes parents, peers and others who together create a web of influences and who have the power of shaping, limiting or promoting the development of a person. The result of effective enculturation is an individual that is competent and has knowledge about their culture such as their understanding about his/her native culture's language, values, norms, custom or rituals (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Moreover, enculturation shapes a person's mind in order to programme it into the one's group psyche (Kim, 2001).

Bugental and Goodnow (1998) believed that the concept of socialization is similar to enculturation as socialization and enculturation processes lead to the development of behavioural likeness and differences between cultures. Both socialization and enculturation are believed to be significant cultural mechanisms which produce the

distribution of behavioural similarities and incongruities (Berry et al, 2002; Berry et al, 2011).

Berry et al. (2002, 2011) stated that socialization and enculturation occur in a wider social and cultural context. People are influenced by the prevailing sociocultural ideologies of society of which they are a part of. Paige (1990) stated that as ideologies differ across cultures, concepts such as acculturative stress, cultural distance and adaptation are used to describe and provide explanations for culture-related differences. Cultural distance is the extent to which two cultures are different from one another in a range of cultural characteristics such as values and language. Cultural distance is evident in the background of the acculturating persons and in the differences that exist when people from different cultures interact and communicate with one another (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Research has shown that the larger the cultural difference between two cultures, the greater are the efforts that need to be for behavioural changes to occur and for acculturating individuals to be in cordial terms with the new culture.

2.2.1.1.3 Cultural diversity

Berry (2011) stated that owing to large scale international immigration, several societies have become culturally diverse. This signifies that people from different cultural groups are now living near one another and share the same social and political framework (Atkinson, Skelton, & Allen, 1999).

There are two different perspectives in relation to culturally diverse societies. The first perspective is the mainstream-minority “melting pot” which lays emphasis on the fact that power differences exist between different cultures in culturally diverse societies (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2011 & Berry et al, 2011). In every society there is one dominant society (mainstream society) and on the outskirts are a number of other minority groups. These groups can slowly absorb themselves into the dominant society to the degree that their ethnic distinctiveness can fade away. Consequently, the society becomes one culture and one identity. The second perspective is multicultural perspective which believed that culturally diverse societies allow different ethno-cultural groups to live together, keep their original cultural identity and simultaneously take part in shared social and political life (Berry et al, 2002, 2011).

Currently, there are nearly no uni-cultural societies or societies with only one people, one culture and one identity (Berry et al., 2002, 2011). Even though the majority of societies today are culturally plural, this does not signify that they are equal with regards to the extent of cultural plurality. Some societies are highly culturally plural with respect to the number of different cultures that are living together, languages and socio-moral norms (Berry et al., 2002, 2011).

There are usually different cultural groups that live together in culturally diverse societies. These groups can be categorized on the basis of the factors that made them live in a shared socio-political environment. This included the extent of voluntariness (voluntary-involuntary), movement (sedentary-migrant), and permanence of contact (permanent-temporary). On the basis of this, five cultural groups can be identified which are immigrants, native people, sojourners, refugees, and ethnic groups (see Figure 2.1) (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Figure 2.1 Acculturating Groups Berry et al., (1987)

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The classification of “Acculturating Groups” cultural groups is important for acculturation research, as different groups can have different attributes such as group size and resources, and hence, can exhibit different attitudes towards intercultural contact (Berry, 2005).

This study was based on international students which was a type of sojourners. Berry et al. (2002, 2011) referred to sojourners as individuals living a host society momentarily for a specific purpose and in different roles such as international students, guest workers, or diplomats. The engagement of sojourners in the host society is influenced by their level of awareness of a final departure from the host country. Hence, they may not aim at fully involving themselves, building close relationships or identity with the host country (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Furthermore, sojourners usually suffer from more mental health issues due to their lack of immediate support (Berry, 2005).

2.2.1.1.4 Acculturation strategies

Acculturation strategies form a vital part of acculturation theories. They comprise of two interrelated parts, which are acculturation attitudes and acculturation behaviours (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). **Acculturation attitudes** are the attitudes that are held by individuals towards the manner in which they are keen on engaging with other individuals they meet

in their acculturation sphere (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989). It is believed that what acculturating people desire to do (acculturation attitudes) and what they in fact do (behaviours) are hardly a one to one match given a number of social constraints (e.g. social norms) on their behaviours (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). However, there is usually a positive connection between them in that acculturation attitudes can affect behaviours (Berry et al., 1989; Berry, 2009).

Berry et al. (2002, 2011) have found out that different people tend to have different acculturation attitudes and use different acculturation strategies. In culturally diverse societies, people usually have to deal with two key questions: a) if it is of value to preserve and build on one's cultural identity and heritage culture (cultural maintenance) and; b) if it is of value to look for interethnic contacts and involvement in the host society together with other cultural groups (contact and participation) (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). These questions relate to values and ideologies and need to be replied to on a continuum of attitudes, from negative to positive. Conceptually, however, dichotomous responses (i.e. 'yes' or 'no') are generally required. This has led to the development of a model which highlights four acculturation strategies (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Acculturation Strategies Model in ethnocultural groups, and in the larger society Berry (2009)

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It can be seen from figure 2.2 that acculturation strategies tend to differ between individuals and rely upon their responses to the key questions (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2009; Berry et al, 2011). On the basis of the responses given by each group (the non-dominant group or the host society) is being taken into account, acculturation strategies need be conceptualized differently (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2009; Berry et al, 2011). When the responses of the non-dominant group are taken into account, four acculturation strategies emerge which are integration, separation assimilation, and marginalization (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2009; Berry et al, 2011).

Integration is a method of acculturation that involves people to aim at upholding and maintaining their cultural identity and simultaneously become a vital part of the host society (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Assimilation takes place when acculturating people do not desire to uphold their ethnic identity but wish to adopt a new identity (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2009; Berry et al, 2011). Separation occurs when acculturating people keep away from acculturation and decide not to associate themselves with other cultural groups and wish to maintain their own cultural identity (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; Berry, 2009; Berry et al, 2011). Marginalisation takes place when acculturating people have less interest in both cultural maintenance, usually owing to enforced cultural loss, and in involvement with the wider society, usually owing to discrimination or exclusion. Marginalisation usually results in alienation and anxiety since the acculturating people are placed on the boundaries of two cultures, not getting support from either of them (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2009; Berry et al, 2011).

Berry et al. (2002, 2011) believed that the non-dominant groups do not always have the authority to determine how they wish to acculturate (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). This can be seen as deculturation which means people can lose or are forced to lose their own culture and its indigenous traits in favour of dominant culture (Tsui, 2007); or can be seen as ethnocide that deliberate destruction of a specific ethnic culture.

Integration can only be practiced when the host society is clearly multicultural, has very low levels of prejudice such as racism, and has positive interethnic relations and when acculturating group have a feeling of connection to the host culture that it requires mutual accommodation (Berry, 2011).

This means that non-dominant groups adapt to the basic values and practices of the host society and the host society adjusts its national institutions such as its education system, to better meet the requirements of every cultural groups that is living in society. Regarding separation, when it is enforced by the host society, the term, (segregation) is used (Berry et al, 1989). Likewise, when assimilation is freely practiced by the non-dominant groups, “melting pot” is believed to be the suitable term to explain the host society, or else, “pressure cooker” is adopted (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). In the case of marginalization, it is unusual for acculturating people to make the choice of being of in such circumstances. Instead, they are compelled to be marginalized. In extreme instances, marginalization becomes 'ethnocide' (Berry et al, 2002, 2011), or 'deculturation' (Berry, 1990, 2005).

Integration and separation can only be achieved when there is a desire to keep the group's cultural identity and share it between an adequate number of its members (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Likewise, choice of other acculturation methods such as assimilation can be limited by a number of factors. For example, physical look of the acculturating people can make them cautious in assimilating to keep away from rejection, or racial discrimination (Berry et al, 2002, 2011).

2.2.1.1.5 Acculturation stress

Malzberg (1968) believed that acculturation leads to negative outcomes. Whilst Berry and Kim (1988) assert that this is not true and is an overgeneralised view of acculturation. Berry et al. (2002, 2011) believed that acculturation can lead to different outcomes for different people which can include behavioral changes (behavioral shifts) and acculturative stress.

Berry (1992, 1997, 2005) believed that behavioral changes (behavioral shifts) comprise of culture shedding, culture learning and cultural conflict. The former entails accidental or intentional loss of a person's behavioural practices during the process of acculturation. The latter however, signifies the accidental or intentional learning of new methods of living in a new cultural context (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2005). It can hence be said that the complete range of a person's existing behavioural repertoire is not subject to culture shedding or learning (Berry et al, 2002; Berry, 2005; Berry et al, 2011). Culture learning is maximised during assimilation, remains moderate in integration, and is negligible both in separation (under free will), and marginalisation (owing to denied access to the host society). Furthermore, the higher the cultural distance, the more difficult it is for the person to undergo behavioural changes (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Moreover, the attainment of new behaviours can cause major challenges to people owing to the amount and extent of change needed. When these challenges intimidate the well-being of the acculturating people, 'acculturative stress' can take place (Berry, 2011).

Acculturative Stress is the psychological response made by acculturating people to life events (stimulated by intercultural interactions) when these events are believed to go beyond a person's capacity to manage. Acculturative stress can involve the person to feel higher levels of anxiety, or depression (Berry & Ataca, 2000).

Even though Acculturative Stress has a close association with culture shock (Oberg, 1960), it is given a higher level of importance. The first reason for this is that culture shock has a pathological overtone, signifying that people can only have negative experiences (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). The theoretical basis of acculturative stress lies in a stress framework (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) which stated that individuals usually have the ability to cope with their life stressors and they may have different outcomes which can range from very negative to very positive (Berry et al, 2002, 2011). Furthermore, Acculturative Stress signifies that the reason for the stress is related to the interaction between the two cultures that are in contact with one another, not only in one culture as culture shock may suggest (Berry et al, 2002, 2011).

2.2.1.1.6 Adaptation

Adaptation is the relatively stable changes that take place in an individual or group in response to external demands' (Berry et al., 2002). The result of adaptation can vary from being very negative to very positive, from well adapted to poorly adapted (Berry et al,

2002, 2011). Adaptation to acculturation has two components; psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation (Ward, 1996). Psychological adaptation indicated to an individual's personal sense of well-being. Sociocultural adaptation indicated to how well a person is able to function in their daily lives in work or school, and in general in the society (Berry 2010).

Adaptation and acculturation strategies are related with one another (Ward, 1996). Integration usually results in the best adaptive outcomes. Separation and assimilation usually result in intermediate outcomes, and marginalization is strongly related with poor adaptation (Berry et al, 2002, 2011).

2.2.1.2 The Psychological Acculturation Theory

The Psychological Acculturation framework was developed and proposed in the literature by Berry and his associates between 1997 and 2011 (Berry, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2006; 2008, Berry et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2011).

Berry's model represented the process of acculturation which takes place when two cultures come in direct and constant contact. The model framework is illustrated in figure 2.3. It contains several variables such as situational and personal variables. Berry (1997, 2002, 2005, 2011) stated that the outcomes of an individuals' psychological acculturation relies upon the nature of these variables. Berry (1997, 2002, 2005, 2011) stated that any research which does not take into consideration these variables will be incomplete and will not be able to understand the way people go through acculturation.

Figure 2.3 Psychological Acculturation Theory Berry 1997:

Figure 2.3 has been removed from
this version of the thesis due to
copyright restrictions

Source: Berry (1997)

The subsequent sections provide detailed explanation about the situational and personal variables and the important phenomena that frequently takes place in the psychological acculturation process.

Situational variables

Berry (1997, 2002, 2005, 2011) stated that for the successful completion of acculturation studies, there was a need to start with a detailed examination of situational variables such as society of origin and society of settlement. Berry et al (2002) stated that society of origin included factors such as culture, politics and economy. This assisted in comprehending the extent of voluntariness in the motivation to go abroad of acculturating people. Furthermore, it assisted in understanding the cultural features which go together with people into the acculturation process and to approximate the cultural distance between the society of origin and society of settlement (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

Berry (1997, 2002, 2005, 2011) believed that the society of settlement needs to be comprehended in terms of its orientations towards multiculturalism and ethnic societies. The reason being that in a few societies, there exists a history of immigration which has been prevalent for hundreds of years. This process can carry on in the future, as directed by open and purposeful policies related with immigration and multiculturalism (Sabatier & Berry, 1994). This multicultural ideology is consistent with the integration strategy of acculturating people (Berry & Kalin, 1995). Simultaneously, other societies can strive to lower cultural diversity by implementing policies of assimilation or even by marginalizing particular groups (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). Berry and Kalin (1995) stated that societies that accept multiculturalism can exhibit varying degrees of acceptance towards different ethnocultural groups. Such societies favour some groups over others. Consequently, less favoured groups tend to frequently face rejection, unfriendly attitudes and discrimination (Beiser, Barwick, & Berry, 1988).

The population-level acculturation process

A consequence of living with two cultures is that acculturating groups usually experience considerable changes which entail physical, economic, social and cultural changes (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). Changes and development are the main focus of acculturation research. These can range from very superficial, such as daily habits, to major changes, such as identity (Berry, 2002, 2005, 2011).

The psychological acculturation process

In Figure 2.3 the central part explains the most important phenomena of the psychological acculturation process, commencing with group-level acculturation to individual-level

acculturation, and finishing in adaptation. The first event is the experience of interacting with two cultures and simultaneously participating in both of them at different levels (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

The second phenomenon is related to acculturating people taking into account the meaning of these experiences to evaluate them as benign, new opportunities or challenges (Berry et al, 2002). This can lead to different outcomes. When these experiences are believed to cause no significant issues to acculturating people, behavioural changes will occur effortlessly. If these experiences are believed to cause issues, yet can be controlled, then acculturative stress will frequently be experienced. Efforts to implement different acculturation strategies can be carried out to effectively deal with the situations (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). In the case of acculturation experiences overwhelming acculturating people, they usually prefer to withdraw from further entrance into the acculturation, opting to separate or marginalize (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

The third dimension entails the acculturating people use of coping strategies to efficiently manage the challenges they are facing (Berry et al, 2002). These coping strategies can be problem-focused (people trying to solve or adjust the problems), emotion-focused (people attempting to control the emotions linked with the problems) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), or avoidance-oriented (people trying to refrain from dealing with their problems) (Endler and Parker, 1990). The effectiveness of these strategies relies partly on the ideologies and attitudes of the host cultures towards multiculturalism and the acculturating individuals (Berry et al, 2002).

The fourth dimension entails a complex set of instantaneous effects and is linked with the concept of stress (Berry et al, 2002). The stress levels experienced at this stage are associated with the way acculturating entities evaluate and deal with their challenges. The last dimension refers to the long term adaptive consequences that can be attained sometimes and independently (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). Adaptation has many sides, and can be economic, psychological, and socio-cultural (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

Personal variables 1: Factors that exist prior to acculturation

Each acculturating entity comes into the acculturation process with a wide range of personal attributes which can be demographic, social and psychological in nature (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). These factors serve a significant role in establishing the outcomes of the acculturation process.

Age has a significant association with the way acculturation progresses (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). Usually, acculturation process is effortless for young children (prior to beginning elementary school) (Beiser et al, 1988; Birman & Trickett, 2001; Tran, 2011) and adults tend to acculturate more slowly (Marsiglia, Kulis, FitzHarris, & Becerra, 2009;

Phinney & Vedder, 2006). Increased risk is frequently faced by entities who go through the acculturation process in the latter part of their lives (Beiser et al, 1988). The key reasons for this occurrence are length of acculturation, personal flexibility and level of adjustment made by the acculturating individuals (Berry et al, 2002).

According to Carballo, (1994); Tran, (2011); and Van De Vijver (2007) the impact of **gender** on acculturation has shown mixed results. Females were frequently shown to experience more difficulties than men, particularly those entering into a culture which is considerably different from their original cultures with respect to gender equity.

Marital Status is an important factor in people's adaption (Chen, Liu, & Mao, 2019; Chirkov, Safdar, de Guzman, & Playford, 2008). A single individual can experience stress which can lead to loneliness and isolation. If a person decides to get married in a new culture, then s/he can face less stress as s/he can get support from her/his spouse (Tran, 2011). The same is applicable with people who have been married before acculturating and/or are living with family. Nevertheless, for some people, being married or living with family can come with a price when faced with changes relating to acculturation. The differences between married and single people in terms of adaptation in the host culture are varied. A few studies reveal that married people face less adaptation difficulties in comparison with singles (Ng, 2001; Msengi, 2003), whilst other studies stated that there are no major differences between marrieds and singles. Poyrazali and Kavanaugh (2006) research showed that marital status and students' level of social adaptation are considerably linked. Married students face less problems of social adjustment strain in comparison with single students.

Family status. Oropeza, Fitgibbon, and Baron's (1991) research has explored the role of family status on students' adaptation outcomes and has found that adaptation difficulties are quite complex with people who acculturate with spouse and children. The conclusions of their research are that the number of adaptation difficulties experienced by a sojourner is multiplied by the number of family members that a person is responsible for. These difficulties can be explained somewhat by the shortage of social skills of the student and are linked with less time spent with members of the host society (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). Regardless of this possible negative outcome about acculturation with family, there exists sufficient evidence in the literature which showed that family social support plays a noteworthy role in the adjustment process of students (Pedersen, 1991; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Hovey & King, 1996; Amer, 2005).

Level of education. The association between level of education and acculturation is in agreement with a higher level of education, forecasting a smoother acculturation process (Besier et al, 1988; Nekby, & Rodin, 2007). Individuals with a higher level of pre-acculturation education have a higher propensity to effectively analyse, solve complex problems and have superior personal resources such as income, and social network. A higher level of education can offer people with knowledge regarding the new culture and its fundamental values (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). However, individuals with higher

education can face loss of status owing to differences between qualifications acquired in two different systems, or because of unawareness and/or prejudice of the host culture (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

Cultural distance affects the way acculturating entities/groups adjust to a new culture (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). Cultural distance refers to the level of dissimilarities between two different cultures. These differences can be due to a person's language, climate, religion, food choices, values, and ideologies like individualism or collectivism. The bigger the differences between the host country and the country of origin cultures, the higher is the level of stress (Berry et al 1987; Leavell, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Knowles, 2003).

Religion. The present political conditions, particularly the declaration to battle with terrorist groups have considerably increased the susceptibility of some people to face immense difficulties in the majority culture (Marvasti & McKinney, 2004). Research by Horan (1995) analysed the relationship between religion and the extent of acculturation/assimilation between Muslim Arabs and Christian Arabs. The findings showed that there existed considerable differences in the acculturation strategy between the two groups. The Christians preferred to select the integration acculturation strategy which allowed them to move nearer to the religion, language and culture of the majority U.S. culture. Whilst the Muslim Arabs had a preference for adopting a separation strategy and retained their culture of origin. Research by Amer and Hovey (2007) analysed the social and demographic differences in acculturation strategies in immigrant and second-generation. The findings showed that female participants and married participants' responses revealed higher levels of Arab ethnic identity and religiosity. Amer and Hovey (2007) stated that Muslim and Christian subgroups adopted different acculturation strategies. Amer (2005) research reveals that Muslim participants showed poor social and mental health profiles.

Reasons for transition are believed to be a strong forecaster of acculturation (Berry et al, 2002). Conventionally, the reasons for migration have been examined by adopting a push-pull framework. The push-factors pressurize people to depart from their country of origin whereas the pull factors draw people towards a new country (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). There are no considerable differences in acculturation challenges faced by people having a push motivation and pull motives (Berry & Kim, 1988). People with pull motive tend to have very high and idealistic expectations about starting a new life in the host society, which after some time are usually not achieved, resulting in them going through the same level of stress as people who are pushed to migrate to a new country (Berry et al, 2002).

Personal variables 2: Factors arising during acculturation

There are factors that occur during the acculturation process in addition to the factors which are prevalent before acculturation.

Phase of acculturation is the duration of time that people spend in the host culture, experiencing acculturation (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). The phase of acculturation is believed to establish the nature and the degree of challenges acculturating people can face during their acculturation process (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

Socio-economic status is a frequently used multidimensional determinant of adjustment with acculturating people. The most widespread categorization of socio-economic status is education, occupation, income and social class. Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli, (1982) research showed that people who are from a low socio-economic status background tend to face higher levels of stress in comparison with those from a middle-class and upper socio-economic status. With respect to a person's education, Berry (1997, 2002, 2005, 2011) explains it as a protective factor against negative adjustment and associates it with other resources like occupation, status, income, and support networks in acculturation. Boer (1983) research showed even though the majority of students did not expect a lower status before going to the U.S, they believed that their status was much less than those in their home country in the sojourn period. It is imperative to extend this to establish the way peoples' socio-economic status can affect their acculturation outcomes.

There is conflicting information regarding the function of **social support** toward acculturation (Furham & Shiekh, 1993; Jayasuriya, Sang, & Fielding, 1992). Some studies reveal that it is beneficial for the acculturating people to get support from their co-nationals (Vega, Kolody, Valle, & Weir, 1991; Ward & Kennedy, 1993), whereas others deem that positive acculturative results can only be attained when people get support from other non-co-nationals (Berry & Kostovcik, 1990). The majority of studies, however, promote for the links with both cultures (Berry et al., 1987; Kealey, 1989).

2.2.1.3 Review of the Psychological Acculturation Theory

The Psychological Acculturation framework has been used widely in research, in a variety context over time (Handelsman, Gottlieb, & Knapp, 2005; Navas, García, Sánchez, Rojas, Pumares, & Fernández, 2005; Kang, 2006). There exists sufficient evidence which shows its cross-cultural validity and practicality. The Psychological Acculturation framework was an effective and ground-breaking framework on the basis of which acculturation research can flourish (Ward, 1997).

According to Berry et al (2002), Pick (1997) and Ward (1997), the strengths of the Psychological Acculturation framework were that it included a broad range of phenomena and processes which require conceptualization and measurement in acculturation studies. The scope of the Psychological Acculturation framework exceeded all of the existing frameworks on acculturation. Hence this framework was highly respected (Lazarus, 1997). The application of the Psychological Acculturation framework has generated consistent findings (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999). For instance, several studies have found that preferences for acculturation strategies are not random. Rather, they were

established by the situational and personal variables of the acculturating entities (Moise & Bourhis, 1997; Segall et al., 1999).

Furthermore, the Psychological Acculturation framework consisted of several important concepts that have today become necessary and indispensable for acculturation research. By suggesting the term 'acculturation' the framework signifies a process entailing more than one culture and highlights the interactions between the two cultures that come in contact with one another (Segall et al, 1999). This implied that acculturation studies need to be more incorporative and comparative to adequately describe the different acculturation outcomes which may be produced when two cultural groups connect (Segall et al, 1999). For instance, cultural distance was an important concept which showed the distance in cultural attributes of the cultural groups that come in contact with one another. This assisted in clarifying why individuals from a hierarchical and collectivist culture can find it difficult to adapt to a culture which is egalitarian and individualistic (Triandis, 1997).

Moreover, the acculturation framework was built flexibly. Even though, the framework was comprehensive, it is merely a skeleton and is based on the different acculturation studies that can fit in. The Psychological Acculturation framework is a composited, assembling concepts and findings from several smaller scale studies (Berry, 1997).

Additionally, Berry has constructed the framework by considering the stress and coping paradigm proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (Ward, 1997) that stated that any life change events (positive or negative) can cause a state of stress and entail coping strategies. Evidently, cross-cultural transition involved different life change events (Ward, 1997). However, effective coping strategies result in positive adaptive outcomes. Maladaptive effects can take place when coping strategies are inefficacious (Ward, 1997). The inclusion of the concept of acculturative stress has made the Psychological Acculturation framework highly favoured as it does not have the pathological overtone which cultural shock has borne for a long time.

However, the Psychological Acculturation framework has brought up several debates in cross-cultural psychology. This framework has been criticized due to its limitations that Berry has dealt with by providing counter arguments. Triandis (1997) stated that the complexity of the Psychological Acculturation framework made it not testable in any manner. The wide and abstract nature of the framework made it necessary to have a large number of additional details to attain the framework's full theoretical potential (Lazarus, 1997). Berry (1997) counter argued that the Psychological Acculturation framework needs to be studied as a framework and not as a model as a few researchers are claiming. Berry (1997) argued that models are theoretically integrated, empirically testable, and refutable whereas frameworks are tools used to organize concepts and findings. Frameworks help in designing and executing further research in the development of a field of research. Furthermore, as acculturation is a huge and swiftly changing field, no text regardless of how generous the word allocation is, or figure regardless of its complication, can clearly

showed every element of the realities of the process of acculturation. Hence, acculturation researchers need to examine the acculturation framework only as a skeleton on which several 'bits of flesh' need to be added instead of looking at as a particular stepwise guide for acculturation research. (Berry, 1997).

Horenczyk (1997) criticized the Psychological Acculturation framework by stating that the framework made assumptions regarding the existence of a single monolithic majority society in which immigrants can adapt themselves and about which they can develop their acculturation strategies or attitudes. This assumption weakens the Psychological Acculturation framework as it did not consider the social sophistication of several modern societies. In these societies, there were many variations in the major society in relation to content, direction and intensity in the attitudes towards immigrants. Additionally, there were different ethnocultural groups in contemporary societies whose members' attitudes can affect the adaptation of the acculturating entities (Horenczyk, 1997). Berry replied by admitting that the assumption was problematic and difficult for the framework itself. It was true that analyses of matrices of mutual attitudes between several groups demonstrates both extensive ethnocentrism and reciprocity. Both dominant and non-dominant group were fond of their group. However, after this ingroup preference, intergroup attitudes have the tendency to be reciprocal (balanced). But they also demonstrated a consensual hierarchy (Berry, 1997).

According to Lazarus (1997) the Psychological Acculturation framework consisted of acculturative stress only and does not consider several other sources of stress which can be produced during the process of acculturation. This has led to the framework being structural and static instead of process-centred. He stated that stresses can arise owing to cultural changes in the same society or from generational conflicts in immigrant families. The reason being that children have a tendency of acculturating in the new culture more completely and swiftly than their parents (Lazarus, 1997). Berry (1997) counter argued that the stresses which Lazarus found were not present can be found in empirical research which are referenced. These were not included due to space reasons.

Berry (1997) emphasized that acculturation is an interactive and dynamic process that includes a range of interrelated phenomenon. This is not shown in the figure he gives to explain his framework (figure 2.3). The Psychological Acculturation framework used one-way arrows to show relationships between the key aspects. This shows that a causal relationship existed between these variables instead of a reciprocal one. The Psychological Acculturation framework hence looks static and only shows acculturation as a linear, one directional phenomenon.

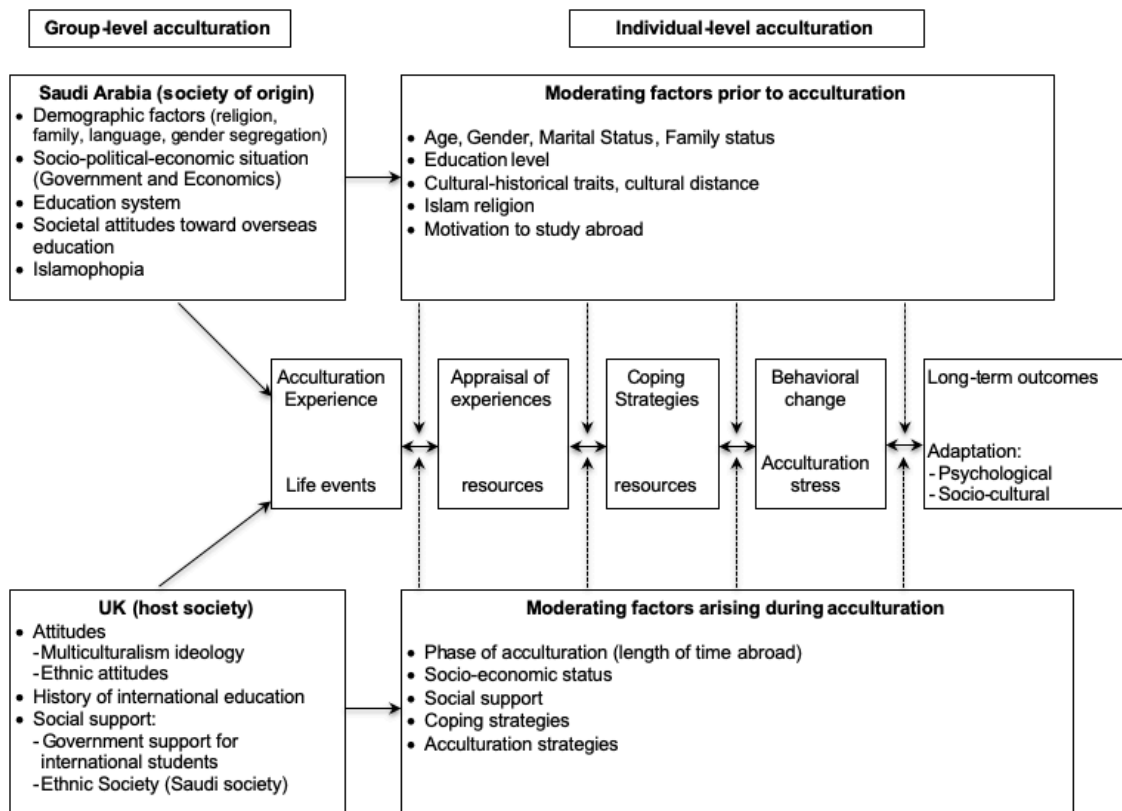
2.2.2 The present study's theoretical framework

This study adopted the psychological acculturation framework that has been developed by Berry's (1997, 2006, 2009, 2011) Psychological Acculturation theory. Berry (1997, 2006) stated that his framework does not provide a precise step by step guide for

acculturation research. It merely offered a 'skeleton' on which several 'pieces of flesh' can be added. The added matter in the current study psychological acculturation framework included the 'bits of flesh' that assisted Berry's framework and developed its application in an area of research that has been overlooked.

Figure 2.4 shows that the current study psychological acculturation framework was composed of several key components that have been taken from Berry's framework. These components comprised of Saudi Arabia as the society of origin, the UK as the host society, the moderating factors before acculturation, the moderating factors emerging during acculturation, the process of psychological acculturation and Long-term outcomes and adaptation. The succeeding sections explain the way these components were adopted and which components were emphasized to a greater extent in this study.

Figure 2.4 The current study acculturation framework



2.2.2.1 The societal contexts

2.2.2.1.1 Saudi Arabia as the society of origin

Berry (1997, 2006) argued that exploring the political context, economic conditions, and demographic factors can assist in developing a better understanding of the society of origin. The educational context in Saudi Arabia and Saudi's societal attitudes toward international education were included as the acculturating individuals are the international Saudi students. Awareness of these factors can assist in understanding the degree to which studying abroad was valued and endorsed in Saudi Arabia.

During the last century, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a clash between tradition and modernization to a large extent. Saudi Arabia has been able to keep a balance between traditional Islamic values, cultural norms and swift modern developments (Long and Maisel, 2010). Even though an understanding of Saudi Arabia's contrasts is important, the role played by religion, family, language, gender segregation, education, government, and economics is investigated in the next section to give a background for comprehending the experiences of Saudi Arabian international students in the UK institutions of higher education.

Religion. Long (2005) stated that the religion of Islam has a vital impact on the culture of Saudi Arabia. It has a collectivist culture which cannot be comprehended without a sufficient understanding of Islam. Denman and Hilal (2011) believed that Islam was an essential element of the Saudi Arabian identity. Saudi people viewed religion as an essential part of their personal identities and of the overall Saudi identity (Caldwell, 2013). El Banyan (1975) believed that Islam has diffused into every part of social life in Saudi Arabia. It was the most important unifying force that binds Saudi Arabians as a religion, culture and way of life. In addition, Rashid and Shahan (1995) believed that Islam was the cornerstone of Saudi society.

The origin of Islam took place in Saudi Arabia in the early seventh century (Long, 2005). The word Islam signifies submission or peace in the Arabic language and was believed to be a divine law laid down by God through Prophet Mohammad (Long, 2005). There were many different branches in Islam. However, Saudi Arabians mainly followed a strict form known as Wahhabism (Callaway, 2010). Wahhabism affected the current Islamic lifestyle of Saudi Arabians.

Family. Long and Maisel (2010) stated that the most significant social institution in Saudi Arabia was the extended family. Families in Saudi Arabia were characteristically traditional, religious, strong and uphold male authority in the social hierarchical structures (Carty, Moss, Al-zayyer, Kowitlawakul, & Arietti, 2007; Hozik & Wright, 1996). In Saudi Arabia, the needs, attitudes and objectives of the family were given more significance than those of the individual (Heyn, 2013), and every family member was expected to take care for one another's wellbeing (Al Banyan, 1980; Haneef, 1999; King Irani, 2004; Nydell,

2006).

The people of Saudi Arabia considered the family unit as the central unit in every social and economic dealing (Al Banyan, 1980; Haneef, 1999; King Irani, 2004; Nydell, 2006). The people of Saudi Arabia believed that family was the most significant authority in a person's life. Parents and the extended family were responsible for the up-bringing of children, making sure that they get the proper teachings of Islam, get the best education and are exposed to positive influences (Shaw, 2009). The fundamental values of a Saudi Arabian family were honor, respect, loyalty, generosity, honesty, modesty, male gallantry, and sexual purity. (McDermott Levy, 2011).

Nydell (2006) believed that in Saudi Arabia a loyalty towards family took preference over loyalty towards friends and obligations towards a person's job. Lipsky (1959) stated that in Saudi Arabia, a person's loyalty and responsibility towards family were much greater than all of their social commitments. In Saudi Arabia, the family played a vital role in conforming their members to societal norms. According to Carty, Moss, Al-zayyer, Kowitlawakul, and Arietti (2007) married students laid much higher emphasis on spending time with family. They frequently struggled to achieve a satisfactory balance between spending time with family and studying.

Dwairy (1997) stated that family was an important source of support in Saudi culture. In Saudi Arabia, family support starts when a student begins his education and continues until education is complete. Moreover, Hofer (2009) also revealed that in Saudi Arabia, university students were often submissive and dependent. They heavily depended on the assistance of their close family members when they run into problems.

Haneef (1999) believed that family played an important role in making young people attain their ambitions. Family assistance, support, affection and bond cannot be underestimated. Not having family with them when Saudi students study abroad can have a major impact on their learning experience (Shaw, 2009).

Language. The official language of Saudi Arabia is Arabic and acts as a model for Arabic literature (Ali, Liu, & Humedian, 2004; Long, 2005; Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission SACM, 1993). Arabic is very different from the English language. This signifies that Saudi Arabian international students were required to learn a completely different system of language if they wish to study overseas (SACM, 1993). Students may find it difficult to discern between Arabic linguistic rules and English linguistic rules (SACM, 1993).

Studies noted that Saudi Arabian students have particular concerns regarding learning English as the Arabic language has a very different system of letters, sentence structure, verbs and objects (Al Shehry, 1989). Hence, English was a much bigger challenge for Saudi Arabian students than to other international students. This resulted in a range of secondary challenges too. Saudi Arabian students were required to read and write in academic English for their assignments. They also needed to understand colloquialisms,

humour, slang, dialects, and jokes to communicate in day to day life overseas (Al Shehry, 1989).

Gender Segregation. Gender segregation was prevalent in nearly every public or private organization in Saudi Arabia. Education system, such as schools and universities, and in many places of entertainment, do not permit the mixing of the genders (Al Munajjed, 1997; Mayer, 2000). For instance, Saudi Arabia has only single-sex schools. All private, public, general and religious schools, colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia are single-sex.

The majority of restaurants have two sections: one for males and the other for families (where each family is seated in a separate, partitioned area). Men and women have different ordering lines in the majority of fast food restaurants (Yackley-Franken, 2007). Gender segregation was fundamental to many Saudis social, educational, and political activities.

Pious Islamic women wore veils in public to abide by the dictates of Islam in public. Islam made it obligatory for women to fully cover themselves in the presence of male members that are from outside their family (Yackley-Franken, 2007). Hence, when Muslim women leave their homes, they wear flowing robes (the Abaya) over their clothing to protect themselves from attracting the attention of men who are from outside their family (Harper, 2007).

Clerics Wahhabi in Saudi Arabia believed that gender segregation was a part of Islamic teachings as Islam promotes chastity and virtue (Al Munajjed, 1997; Baki, 2004; Fanjar, 1987; Patai, 1983; Zant, 2002). Hence, the majority of Saudi citizens considered gender segregation as a religious order from God (Allah).

Studying abroad was a completely new experience for Saudi Arabian students as they have to study in mixed education environments, receive teaching from a different gender, and interact in several other activities with a different gender. Furthermore, as women in Saudi Arabia were not permitted to study or travel overseas without a male guard who has to be an immediate family member, it was very hard for them to study overseas (Harper, 2007). A comprehension of this problem was important in understanding the circumstances of Saudi students of both genders when they study in countries like the US, the UK in which there was no gender segregation (Heyn, 2013).

Education. Since large numbers of students go abroad to acquire education, one of the challenges which new Saudi students had to face is an extremely different system of education. Oliver (1987) explained the existing attributes of the country educational system that can influence students studying overseas: stress on religion, gender segregation and financial support. According to Al Banyan (1980) Saudis had basic attributes in common which influence their lives and educational experiences: religion, language, cultural characteristics and centrality of the family. According to Berkey (2004) religion had an effect on the educational system in Saudi Arabia as education was

emphasized in a virtuous Muslim life. Consequently, the perceptions of Saudi Arabian international students was strongly influenced by their earlier education which they had acquired in Saudi Arabia (Akhtarkhavari, 1994).

Students in Saudi Arabia began their start learning about Islam from a very young age. Students in Saudi Arabia were imparted the teachings of Islam in their classrooms (Ramady & Al-Sahlawi, 2005; SACM, 2015). Furthermore, males and females went to separate classes and are taught by teachers of the same gender (Yackley-Franken, 2007; SACM, 2015).

According to SACM (2015) in Saudi Arabia, teachers were held in high esteem and students were required to raise their hands to inquire or respond to questions. Heyn (2013) believed that students in Saudi Arabia can find the rather loose discussion-style format in overseas classrooms a bit shocking as they were used to Islam-based and teacher-centered classrooms.

A rise in domestic demand in Saudi Arabia for university education resulted in the Saudi Arabian government to expend large amount of money to send students overseas to get degrees, particularly to the US (Bowen, 2008). Over the past ten years, the Saudi Arabian government has given over 217600 scholarships to Saudi Arabian students to enrol in universities in the US, UK, Australia and in other countries (Ministry of Education, 2017).

The conservatives' power and emphasis on religious education increased some of the differences Saudi Arabian students went through whilst studying overseas. Hence, students' identities and levels of academia were the direct consequences of the mixture of aforesaid ethnographic behavior and the experiences in the educational system in Saudi Arabia (Al-Farsy, 2001). Shaw (2009) stated that studying overseas was the first time that Saudi Arabian students were taught by a tutor of the opposite sex and in classrooms with students of the opposite sex since they were children.

Government and Economics. Prior to September 23rd, 1932, Saudi Arabia was fundamentally a tribal society (Blanchard, 2009; Long & Maisel, 2010). It was only after the creation of the Kingdom that Saudi Arabia became a highly modern technological society with sophisticated infrastructure (Bowen, 2008). The Basic Law of Saudi Arabia Government stated that the King has to abide by Islamic Shari'a law which was the country's legal system, and the Qur'an (Bowen, 2008). Shari'a literally denoted "the pathway to the source" and was valued by all Muslims (Long & Maisel, 2010). Saudi Arabian people did not vote, and political parties and elections were not allowed (SACM, 2015). To formulate legal decisions, the King, with support from religious scholars, checks with the Qur'an and Shari'a (Bowen, 2008). The opinions of a big system of traditional, religious, and government leaders were mirrored in royal decisions.

Saudi Arabia has attained economic growth and development at a very fast pace since its establishment in the year 1932 (Keating, 2004). This has mainly been due to its discovery

of oil immediately after it was founded in 1938 (Al Khateeb, 1998; Yackley-Franken, 2007). At present, oil constituted about 90% of Saudi Arabia's exports (Yackley-Franken, 2007). According to Al Khateeb with regards to the role of oil in Saudi Arabia's current history, "[Oil] laid the foundation for the transformation of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia from a poor isolated country to a cash economy based on the oil industry" (p 170).

During the oil boom time, several expatriate workers from close by countries came to Saudi Arabia for employment (Long & Maisel, 2010). At present, about ten million individuals from different countries are working mainly in oil and service sectors in the Saudi Arabian economy (Saudi Ministry of Labour and Social Development, 2019). This fact, together with the high unemployment rates in Saudi Arabia, has resulted in the Saudi Arabian government to give greater emphasis on the "Saudization" of the country's workforce as the means of replacing imported laborers with Saudi Arabian workers (Blanchard, 2009; Ménoret, & Pascal, 2005; Shatkin & Atiyeh, 2002). Whilst Saudi Arabia has a young populace many youngsters that were of working age were finding it difficult to get employment (Bosbait & Wilson, 2005; Bowen, 2008).

2.2.2.1.2 UK as the host society

Berry (1997, 2006) suggests exploring the overall orientation in host societies with respect to ethnic and multiculturalism. Within the Saudi psychological acculturation framework, the UK's history of international education is a key element of the host context and requires exploration (in the context of international students as sojourners). In this study, the researcher believes that, as in immigrant studies in which the history of immigration/multiculturalism of the host society is valued (i.e. to comprehend the extent of societal inclusion and relative acknowledgment of immigrants/ refugees), an awareness of the host society's history of international education is equally significant in this instance.

Understanding how international education has developed over the years in the UK can assist in explaining the degree of support that exists to nurture international students. There is a need to investigate the UK government's support for international education in the context of Saudi Arabian international students. This can cast light on the extent to which the UK has a favourable attitude towards welcoming international students and offer a comprehensive overview of the acculturation context encountered by Saudi Arabian international students.

The UK Policy context and early involvement in international education

According to a Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) report (2018):

- International students provide a significant economic advantage to the UK economy via not only their payments of tuition fees, but also substantial amounts paid for living expenses;

- They benefit the institutions where they study, cross-subsidising the education of domestic students and also research.
- They benefit the local areas where they study through their impact on local employment, in the education sector;
- International students boost the public finances through their contribution to the Exchequer and their relative lack of utilisation of public resources, e.g. health services.

Therefore, the UK has developed national plans to engage with international students. These plans structure higher education institutions, and hence the country and its institutions, to share in the world education market (Lomer, 2018).

The UK's plans for international students went through three stages. The first stage known, as the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI), started in 1999 and lasted until 2004. The purpose was to attract 50,000 more international students within six years (Geddie 2015). The second stage started in 2006 and lasted until 2011, this was the Initiative for International Education PMI-2, in response to increasing competition (Geddie 2015). It aimed to promote the international student experience, creating partnerships and promoting transnational education (Lomer, 2018). The third stage started in 2013 and is ongoing, it is known as the Coalition International Education Strategy IES. This strategy began as an industrial strategy for international education building on the UK's strengths to take advantage of global opportunities (Lomer, 2018).

International education trends

Although studying abroad involves a variety of challenges, the number of students who study abroad has been increasing every year (Brown, & Aktas, 2012). Globally, the number of international students in higher education increased between 1998 and 2016, from 2 million to 4.8 million. The UK is one of the most popular countries, being the second most popular destination for study abroad after the US, with a marketing share of between 9% and 11% during that period (MAC, 2018). The UK has several considerable advantages, such as the high quality of education provided, the international recognition of UK qualifications and the English language, the welcome it extends to international students and the post-study work regime (MAC, 2018). Statistics show that the total number of international students in the UK reached 458,520 in 2017/18, a rise of 3.43% compared to 442,750 in 2016/17 and 7.25% compared to 2012/14 (HESA, 2017/18).

Based on these statistics (HESA, 2017/18), 30 per cent of international students come from the European Union (EU) (excluding the UK) and 70 per cent from non-EU countries (see Table 2.1). As for non-EU students, of the top ten countries, five are located in Asia (China, India, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia), two are located in North America (US and Canada) and one is located in Africa (Nigeria).

Table 2.1 Top non-EU countries in UK Higher Education 2017/18

Rank Order	Country of Origin	Number of Students
1	China	106,530
2	India	19,750
3	US	18,885
4	Hong Kong	16,350
5	Malaysia	14,970
6	Nigeria	10,540
7	Saudi Arabia	7,950
8	Singapore	7,020
9	Thailand	6,270
10	Canada	6,180

Note. Data adapted from HESA (2019).

Saudi international students in the UK.

Since the 1960s, Saudi Arabia has been sponsoring Saudi international students to study abroad, including in Europe and the US, aiming to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to be future leaders. By 1975 there were thousands of Saudi students studying abroad (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission SACM, 2015).

The present opportunities for Saudi students to study abroad date back to 2004–2005 when the Saudi government launched the King Abdullah Scholarship Programmed (KASP). In the beginning, it was intended to be just a 5-year programme, but when it came to the end in 2010, it was later extended for five more years (Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in London, 2014). This programme was then extended for a third period and a fourth, which started after the end of the 2014 fiscal year (Ministry of Education, 2017). Saudi Arabian students have constituted a growing population in UK's higher education in the past decade. International students from Saudi Arabia are one of the largest groups of international students in the UK, numbering 8,065 students in 2017/18 compared to 3,535 in 2007/08 (HESA, 2017/18, 2007/08).

The presence of Saudi Arabian students in the UK is a remarkable phenomenon, with increasing numbers. The rank of Saudi Arabia as a country of origin of international students in the UK rose from 16th in 2004/5 to 7th in 2017/18 (see Table 2.2) (HESA, 2004/5; HESA, 2017/18).

Table 2.2 Top non-EU countries in UK Higher Education in 2003/4 & 2017/18

Rank order	2003-2004		Rank order	2017-2018	
	Country	Number of students		Country	Number of students
1	China	47740	1	China	106,530
2	India	14625	2	India	19,750
3	US	13380	3	US	18,885
4	Malaysia	11805	4	Hong Kong	16,350
5	Hong Kong	10575	5	Malaysia	14,970
6	Japan	6395	6	Nigeria	10,540
7	Nigeria	5940	7	Saudi Arabia	8,065
8	Taiwan	5710	8	Singapore	7,020
9	Pakistan	4380	9	Thailand	6,270
10	Singapore	3905	10	Canada	6,180
11	Canada	3890			
12	Thailand	3755			
13	South Korea	3480			
14	Kenya	3085			
15	Zimbabwe	2740			
16	Ghana	2800			
17	Sri Lanka	2265			
18	Saudi Arabia	2190			

Note. Data adapted from HESA (2019).

Multiculturalism in the UK

Modern Britain can be viewed as a multicultural society that aims to balance respect for diversity with a sense of shared national belonging. Since the Second World War, the UK has experienced an influx of immigration that has radically change its nature (Ashcroft & Bevir, 2018). The population has altered from one that was generally white, ethnically British and Christian, to one constituted by faiths, cultures and communities drawn from all over the world. A demographic diversity that would have been scarcely imaginable in the middle of the previous century now shapes an inescapable aspect of British lifes (Ashcroft & Bevir, 2018).

British's belief in multiculturalism has, however, been significantly damaged by reported racial tensions and racist incidents (Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper ICSGP, 2018). Despite these incidents not being common, they are not rare either. Racism happens everywhere, in all walks of life, in every British city (ICSGP, 2018). This means that the idea that any multicultural society can, one day, get rid of racism altogether appear inaccurate (Hodge & O'Carroll, 2006). In 2017, hate crimes increased by 29% in comparison to 2016 (ICSGP, 2018). As illustrated by a London mayor, Islamophobic hate crimes in particular have increased, exacerbated by prominent terrorist attacks (De Payer, 2018).

In 2017, a London mayor started the Citizenship and Integration Initiative, partnering with the civil community to initiate activities that would help Londoners to celebrate being part of an inclusive London identity (ICSGP, 2018). In 2018, ICSGP launched programmes to make everyone feel comfortable mixing with different cultures and benefit from community centres, such as libraries and parks (ICSGP, 2018).

In the UK, international students interact within a different educational environment and a different culture and society. The UK higher education context is a very diverse environment, located within a multicultural society. Most international students have a growing sense of parity with their local peers as there are chances to work cooperatively with individuals from other cultures, and the authorities support their own personal and academic adjustment (Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009).

However, some international students may prefer to self-select into peer groups consisting mainly of individuals from their own culture. They may choose to restrict themselves to limited opportunities to interact with Britain's multicultural society. This may make them feel that they are not interacting on an equal basis with their peers, especially in the early stages of their experiences abroad, when they are encountering culture differences at their strongest (Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009).

World events

The most important event affecting the experience of existing Saudi Arabian international students overseas particularly in the US took place on September 11, 2001. (9/11). Prior to 9/11, Saudi Arabian students were able to easily get visas and travel abroad (Blanchard, 2009). A consequence of the 9/11 tragedy was that the US and other countries enforced stricter visas and immigration policies on individuals from the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia (Matthieu, 2004).

Following the events of 9/11, Saudi Arabian international students had also faced discrimination, anxiety, and a broad variety of emotions in reaction to negative media depiction (Batterjee, 2009). Ghaffari (2009) research showed that other distressing common themes in her qualitative study analyzing post-9/11 Muslim social and educational experiences in the US. These themes were experienced discrimination, isolation, apprehension for personal safety in view of possible retaliation against Muslims after 9/11 and fear concerning other terrorist attacks involving Muslims, fear related with mainstream media coverage of and portrayal of Islam and Muslims (Ghaffari, 2009). These students may also come to the western countries with predetermined notions concerning westerners or western cultures on the basis of biased media portrayal.

2.2.2.2 Moderating factors prior to acculturation

Berry (1997, 2006) believed that to develop an understanding of the way individuals experience acculturation, it is required to understand their personal characteristics before acculturation. Personal characteristics in Berry (1997, 2006) framework are age, family status, education, religion, migration motivation, and cultural distance. In this study, a range of factors has been included.

As discussed earlier, Saudi Arabian international students can be introduced to particular cultural-historical elements that can assist or hamper their acculturation. This study investigated these factors as it can assist in explaining the degree of culture shedding and culture learning (and perhaps, cultural conflict). These factors can be experienced by students due to the cultural distance between Saudi Arabia and UK.

Berry's (1997, 2006) theory of acculturation is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) research on stress and coping. Studies on stress and coping form the basis of psychological inquiry. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have defined coping as the consistently changing cognitive and behavioral actions taken to deal with specific external and/or internal demands which are assessed as taxing or going beyond the resources of an individual. Kuo, (2014) believed that acculturation has a powerful conceptual and empirical influence in psychological research due to its hypothesized and demonstrated relationships to a broad range of psychosocial factors between people in the host culture. This comprised of mental health, adaptation, acculturative stress, personality and self identity. According to Berry (1997, 2006) and Ward (2001) the central focus of the acculturation theory was the person-environment transactional theoretical paradigm of stress and coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The conceptual importance of 'acculturative stress' in the acculturation theory was confirmed by the theory's lineage to the stress-coping paradigm (Berry, 1997, 2006). Fundamentally, stress and coping were understood as intrinsic and expected elements of acculturating experiences and processes for people going through the transition process.

The conceptual beliefs of stress and coping theory form the basis of current acculturation theory (Berry, 1997, 2006; Cervantes & Castro, 1985). Berry (2006) believed that cultural adaptation of people in the host society can be understood via two unique viewpoints: the 'cultural learning/shedding' model versus the 'stress, coping, and adaptation' model. The cultural learning model assumes that cultural adaptation took place via migrants' learning of culture-specific skills that can allow them to negotiate their conduct in the new cultural environment (Ward, 2001). The model focuses on teaching and training new newcomers new knowledge, language and intercultural skills. On the contrary, the stress and coping, and cultural adaptation model was believed to be a highly flexible explanatory model to distinguish acculturation as it can tackle acculturating peoples reactions to conflicts and stresses emerging from intercultural contacts. Clearly, this latter viewpoint included both characteristics of the person and of the situation that can assist or hamper adaptation to a new cultural (Ward, 2001). The stress and coping viewpoint symbolized the most widely

accepted and applied conceptual scheme in addressing acculturation and cultural change in the literature (Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) stated that the occurrence of stress and coping becomes most salient when people experience major life changes or difficulties. Newcomers were an example of a major life event for migrants. It was quite likely that coping responses to deal with stresses emerging from cultural change are natural and predictable elements of acculturation for many immigrants, refugees, international 'students in this study' or sojourners, ethnic people of immigrant parents. In relation to this, the current acculturation literature brought forth a collection of acculturation-related stressors often experienced by migrants who demand coping reactions (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Castro & Murray, 2010; Kuo & Roysircar, 2006).

Berry (2006) stated that the terms 'stress' and 'coping' have important theoretical implications and significance in distinguishing the way migrants face negative experiences emerging from intercultural contacts. Individuals were believed to have the strategies of coping stressors to attain a range of outcomes (adaptations), varying from very negative to very positive (Berry, 2006).

Culture offered an essential context for the stress and coping process. Individualism and collectivism and often used as examples of cultural constructs that can affect each element of stress and coping; the enduring personal and environmental systems, transient life events, cognitive appraisal and coping, and health and wellbeing.

There existed wide ranging evidence on the significance of culture in particular elements, e.g. the personal system, appraisal and coping in comparison with other elements, e.g. the environmental systems and transitioning life events. However, it was necessary to assess the role of culture in stress and coping, particularly in the case of cultural salience.

2.2.2.3 Moderating factors arising during acculturation

Like the moderating factors before acculturation, the moderating factors arising during the process of acculturation also required to be examined. In Berry's framework and in the Saudi Arabian Psychological Acculturation framework, these factors were phase of acculturation, strategies of coping, societal attitudes, social support, and acculturation strategies.

In the Saudi Arabian psychological acculturation framework, acculturation strategies were believed to be more significant 'during-acculturation' factor and receive more research consideration. The reason for this was that theoretically, acculturation strategies were closely connected with other important concepts of acculturation (Berry, 1997, 2006). Empirically, acculturation strategies were believed to considerably link with the way individuals appraise their experience, use of coping strategies, use social support, experience behavioral changes and acculturative stress (Berry et al, 2002).

2.2.2.4 The psychological acculturation process and adaptation

Regarding the psychological acculturation process, this study largely explored the acculturation experience and challenges faced by Saudi Arabian international students, the way they appraised the experience and challenges, and sources of social support and the way they formulate behavioural changes and acculturative stress. However, Berry (1997, 2006) believed that the majority of acculturating people were able to positively adapt in new environments and that mental health problems were not likely to occur. Exploration conducted to ascertain if and to what degree, the Saudi Arabian international students have adjusted themselves to their living and study environment.

2.2.2.5 The overall aims of the Saudi psychological acculturation framework

This study was focused on exploring the psychological acculturation experiences and research on the acculturation of Saudi Arabian international students. The present review contributed to the existing literature by making an initial attempt in collecting and summing up related conceptual and empirical research on the subject of acculturation. Several important implications have been highlighted in this review. These insights and analysis have both direct and indirect effects in future studies on acculturation in the context of international students and ethnic minorities.

Firstly, with regard to theoretical implications, the conceptual model of acculturation has been examined. This examination has highlighted that regardless of the differences in particular content and sequential relationships between major variables, the model emphasize that coping was (a) a principal determinant in cultural adaptation and acculturation for migrants; (b) a fundamental mediator or moderator amongst acculturative stressors experienced by migrants and their psychosocial adaptation in the host culture; and (c) a process which is greatly affected by migrants' distinctive culture characteristics and contexts (Aldwin, 2007; Castro & Murray, 2010 ; Kuo, 2011).

Secondly, this model can assist in making this study formulate outlines in terms of exploring the acculturation process before conducting the present study. This model can assist in providing direction to this study in creating new and relevant research questions regarding acculturation. They can also assist in bringing forth possible related factors in this pathway during planning for research.

Thirdly, this theoretical model has provided a way and conceptual scheme that assist in directing this study in this field. This model can assist in understanding and analysing the findings of this study. This model can assist this study in developing highly rational explanations from its findings that are linked with coping and cultural adaptation between Saudi international students. Castro and Murray (2010) believed that was a shortage of a theory-driven empirical exploration and research about how people face cultural change

and deal with respect to their acculturation experiences. Hence, they strongly stated there was a need for research in this area.

Fourthly, this review has analysed existing empirically based research on acculturation and cultural adaptation which has brought forth several findings. Generally, the research analysed in this study highlight that there was a strong but complex relationship between adaptation and cultural changes for people in the host society. The findings from the research examined showed that: (a) adaptation process played an important role in the process of acculturation, especially in lessening the influence of acculturative stress and non-acculturative stress for people in the host society; (b) different levels of acculturation was linked with differentially preferred patterns of coping behaviors between ethnic minorities and groups (Kuo, Roysircar, & Newby-Clark, 2006; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Zheng & Berry, 1991); and (c) the quality of a person's perception of his/her stress and cumulative coping endeavors over time were believed to be significant in forecasting their ultimate adaptation experiences in the host society (Castro & Murray, 2010; Yakushko, 2010).

In the end, Berry (1980) believed that acculturation was not a single dimension that emerges from assimilation or absorption into the host culture, but, in fact, was a multi-linear and complex phenomenon. Hence, acculturation research can produce productive results only when they are attached to a strong theoretical framework with clearly defined variables. This chapter has built a framework by employing Berry's (1997, 2006) Psychological Acculturation framework to develop the current study framework. This framework was useful as it allowed the researcher to carry out the present study on the basis of a strong theoretical foundation.

2.3 Study One aims

Study One is important to investigate and further understand the acculturation experience of Saudi international students in the UK. The aim of this study is to examine the transitions of moving to and studying in the UK. It investigates the experiences that Saudi students reported as challenges. In addition, the study explores the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities.

Related to the study aim, the main research questions are therefore:

1. What are the experiences of moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian international students?
2. What are the experiences that Saudi Arabian international students report as challenges?
3. What are the perceived consequences on Saudi Arabian international students' sense of self and identities in the UK?

Conclusion

Chapter 2 presented a literature review: It began by (a) conceptualisation of acculturation and international students; (b) context of international students; acculturation of international students; (c) Saudi Arabian students' acculturation; and then overview of research on the acculturation experience of Saudi international students abroad. The chapter also presented the theoretical approach. I reviewed the Psychological Acculturation perspective, acculturation concepts, Berry's (1997, 2011) Psychological Acculturation Theory which is the theoretical framework for this study. Finally, the aim of this study was presented in this chapter.

The next chapter exposes the methodology used to address the research questions for Study One. Further, the chapter discusses the research approach and design followed by a detailed account the techniques of recruiting the participants and inclusion criteria that helped in recruiting the study sample. The chapter moves to discuss the study context as well. Further, the chapter presents the data collection technic including the interview methods. Finally, the chapter has discussed the analysis guidelines used to analyse data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study is an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study. It is important to investigate and further understand the acculturation experience of Saudi international students in the UK.

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. It begins with a conceptual framework, followed by a discussion of the research approach and design, followed by a detailed account of the study methods including study participants and context. It also discusses ethical considerations that were normally related to conducting this type of study. The chapter discusses in a detailed account the data collection methods and the method used to analyse data. Finally, the chapter ends with discussion of the validity and quality, and reflexivity issues.

3.2 Conceptual framework

In the conceptual framework, I illustrate the philosophical stance adopted and theoretical-methodological concepts followed in this research project. It starts with three preliminary facets, of biography, ontology and epistemology, in order to illustrate how these personal beliefs affect the selection of the research project paradigm, which can consequently be seen to shape the design of the research, the selection of participants, and the approaches and methods of enquiry all of which are set out in the methodology chapter.

3.2.1 The researcher

A qualitative approach is a process that can be defined by ontology, epistemology and methodology, which in turn are informed by the researcher's biography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, it is important to reflect upon the researcher's biography, ontology and epistemology in order for the reader to recognize how these facts have significantly affected the methodological selection in this research and the qualitative position adopted.

Biography. It seems appropriate to see how the researcher's ideas and beliefs, formed by a lifetime of experiences, have affected the current research. According to Gouldner (1961), research is not a value-free enterprise, and my selections as a researcher were an outcome of my value-laden judgements based not only on the literature, papers and books I have read, but also on the life I have lived. My interest in understanding Saudi international students' experiences in the UK and their identity negotiation is linked to my research position as a Saudi international student from Saudi Arabia. Being a Saudi international student and a researcher stimulated my interest in understanding how Saudi international students acculturate while living and studying in the UK. During my time at Oxford Brookes University as a postgraduate student, this led to a PhD project and became the research project outlined in the current dissertation. These elemental facts

affected what I planned to explore (acculturation experiences and identity negotiation), whom I planned to explore it with (Saudi Arabian international students), where I planned to explore these phenomena (in the UK higher education sector) and why I planned to explore them (to understand the acculturation experiences and identity negotiation of Saudi Arabian international students in the UK).

Ontology. Denzin & Lincoln (2003) suggest that ontology is the nature of reality. There are several perspectives of ontological assumptions. Bryman (2008), in social reality, differentiates between objectivist and constructivist, for example, but Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) distinguish between objective normalism and subjective realism. I tend to distinguish between realist and relativist. Realism is about a measurable reality existing externally and independently of the person, it is a belief in an objective reality. Meanwhile relativism believes that it is just an individual subjective experience and there is no concrete reality. In this belief, the reality can be relative to different people.

As a researcher, my ontological assumptions of a relativist reality are consistent with a constructivist paradigm. I can perceive a social and cultural construction of reality, where the reality is expressed via thought and language.

Epistemology and ontology are closely connected. If epistemology concerns how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998), then ontology is the nature of reality (Wellington, 1996). Epistemological assumptions are interested in what can be known and understood. There are two distinctive epistemological assumptions common in social research: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2008). Positivism epistemology is often associated with the natural sciences and relies upon the tenets of objectivity, deductivism and realism, while interpretivism is related to subjectivity and interpretation, and relativism is common in a qualitative approach (Bryman, 2008).

As a researcher, my ontological assumptions guide me towards an interpretivism epistemological stance whereby I believe there is no concrete knowledge and objectivity that can exist external to the individual; rather, knowledge and understanding of individual experience is a subjective interpretation.

However, when I aligned my epistemology with acculturation theory, particularly the model of Berry (1997, 2005, 2011) in Study One, I could not fully perceive knowledge as subjective and individually constructed through participation in social and cultural practices. Therefore, I ended up concluding that Berry's acculturation theory is mainly affected by a positivist line of thought (see 4.2).

Adopting Berry's (1997: 2011) model allowed addressing the experiences, challenges and positive developmental aspects of Saudi international students' experiences, but it is mainly outcome-oriented and does not capture the ongoing identity negotiation process of these students as they navigate UK culture.

Regarding my PhD progress, I finally adopted a philosophy similar to Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) constructivist-interpretivist paradigm and Schwandt's (2003) social and cultural constructivism. Constructionists hold that the reality is constructed and there is no truth without thought. So, I adopted constructionism as an epistemological position, which helped me to interact with the social and cultural construction of Saudi international students in the UK, and to attempt to understand and construct the reality from the perspective of students who have experienced the phenomenon of living and studying in the UK.

In Study Two, when I align my epistemology with dialogical self theory, in particular the model of Herman (2001, 2013), I conceptualize knowledge as subjective and individually constructed through participation in social and cultural practices, and the thoughts I have as a researcher conspire to position me within a qualitative approach.

Interpretivism. Gray (2004) indicates that an interpretivism perspective conceptualizes the world as complex, to be reduced to a set of observable laws. Also, in interpretivism, understanding the real conditions behind the reality is more important than generalizability. Further, interpretivists aim to understand the meaning of a social and cultural context from the perspective of those who experience it. As part of constructionism, the interpretivists' task is to interpret any phenomenon, understand the process of meaning construction, and explore what meanings are embodied in individuals' behaviours (Schwandt, 2003) in a way that is meaningful for the participants studied (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2003)

An enquirer conceptualises data and applies his methods to collect these via his own senses and interpret them with his mind; thus, no enquirer can be sure that he has realized the reality exactly or that his conceptualization is more appropriate than that of other enquirers (Schutt, 2006). So, there is not only one reality in a social or cultural context, as enquirers understand phenomena in different ways (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Using an interpretivism approach, I accessed the social and cultural life of Saudi international students in the UK to collect in-depth data about all aspects of their lives and study and to understand what acculturation processes they had experienced. Based on the data I collected, I have engaged in interpretations to serve the overall aims of the research, which sought to explore the acculturation dimensions of Saudi international students in the UK.

Phenomenology. Titchen and Hobson (2005) indicate that phenomenologists study lived human phenomena within the everyday social and cultural situations in which phenomena happen from the point of view of those who experience them. In other words, individuals' experience of social and cultural reality offers a foundation to perceive the meaning of that reality. Thus, the researcher must focus on generating new meanings and work on increasing his understanding of a phenomenon in relation to the social and cultural context (Gray, 2004). To achieve such an understanding, the researcher must carry out in-depth interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

There are two ways to investigate a phenomenon (Titchen & Hobson, 2005). First, in a direct way, where the phenomenon can be addressed via investigating human consciousness, as the enquirer conducts interviews with the participants in order to capture their experiences of the phenomenon. In this way, the acculturation experiences of Saudi students were treated as a phenomenon and explored from all aspects, including both genders (male and female participants). The phenomenon of the acculturation experiences of Saudi students in the UK was explored in a direct way using qualitative research methods, these include semi-structured episodic interviews to explore and understand students' experiences regarding the issues being explored. Using such qualitative methods allowed me to engage effectively with Saudi students and obtain in-depth perspectives from different aspects regarding their acculturation experiences. Second, an indirect way is where the enquirer engages in the social and cultural situation of the phenomenon to experience it personally with the participants in order to feel and recognize prevalent meanings. In this respect, as a Saudi international student, I too was a part of the field, in that I shared the participants' everyday context and so was also engaged in the field under exploration. Being a Saudi international student who has been part of this phenomenon, alongside my role as the researcher, allowed me to interact with the social and cultural context of the phenomenon to experience it personally. I then carried out an analytical process to capture the meanings of these perspectives and explore prevalent perspectives from which a conclusion could be drawn and an understanding of the acculturation experiences of Saudi students contributed to the literature.

3.2.2 The qualitative research paradigm

The purpose of this research programme is to study the experience of moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian international students. It investigates the experiences that international Saudi students reported as challenges. This programme also looks at the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities. The students' experiences are investigated using a qualitative methodology to maximize the understanding of the meaning that these students attribute to their experiences.

Typically, psychology research including research in acculturation of international students has been conducted via a positivist or "quantitative approach". This type of research needs explanations and quantifiable proof. It claims that there is only one reality that can be studied using hypotheses formulated prior to the research being complete; then, after that, it seeks to fit the results to suit the hypotheses formulated (Patton, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Meanwhile a post-positivist or "qualitative approach" is a multi-method approach, which involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. It means that qualitative research studies phenomena in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, them in terms of the meanings that individuals bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

This qualitative approach considers knowledge to be constructed and the individual as a co-creator in its construction, with set of multi-realities. Therefore, the experience being looked at by researchers is multidirectional, not separated into its parts and considered individually, as in a positivist approach (Ghanam-Ybarra, 2002; Patton, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In a quantitative approach, the researcher starts with a hypothesis and then tests the data against it. In contrast, in a qualitative approach, the researcher seeks to validate knowledge through practice and to see the multiplicity of meanings.

In order to interpret the experiences that Saudi participants and I talked about, I adopted Holstein and Gubrium's (2003) postmodern approach in which all interviewees, in addition to the interviewer, are engaged in meaning-making. In this way, both the interviewees and the researcher were co-producers of the data. In a similar way, I assume the reader of this thesis and I are also co-producers of meaning in our dialogic involvement via the medium of this text (Midgley, 2010).

It is not sufficient to concentrate on a broad range of variables that can be analysed quantitatively when investigating phenomena found in complex social systems (Flick, 2009). Qualitative research attempts to answer questions concerned with understanding meaning and experiencing the dimensions of people's lives (Flick, 2009; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

The value of qualitative research involving international students has been highlighted in some recent research and there was a growing amount of qualitative research on international students being carried out (Verkuyten, 2002; Sandekian et al., 2015; Lefsdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015). Nevertheless, this remained quite limited compared to the volume of quantitative research (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). The need for rich, interpretative research on Saudi students in the UK guided the selection of a qualitative methodology. It was decided to use a qualitative methodology in order to address the particular research question of this study. This approach allows gaining in-depth insights into and a detailed study of a phenomenon that was not easily quantifiable, i.e. the lived experiences of Saudi Arabian students in the UK. A further feature is that such an approach allows for the emergence of unexpected results (Flick, 2009; Fossey et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2009).

The study investigates international Saudi students' lived experiences in the UK using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), (Smith et al., 2009). It aims to understand what life is like "from the view of individual", to stand as much as possible in the shoes of the individual, whilst emphasising the role of the researcher as a separate presence (Smith, 2008). IPA is interested in the in-depth exploration of an individual's lived experiences and how they make sense of them (Smith, 2008).

IPA is a phenomenological approach that concentrates on exploring experience in its own terms (Smith et al., 2009). It is committed to the exploration of how individuals make sense of their life experiences (Smith et al. 2009), which is consistent with the study aims. Also,

IPA is an interpretative approach that employs what is known as a double hermeneutic, in which the researcher is trying to make sense of individuals trying to make sense of their experiences (Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009).

In addition, the nature of IPA is both phenomenological and social constructionist, it is concerned with individuals' experiences but included interpretation that involved a consideration of context.

IPA is idiographic in nature, it is concerned with the particular, with revealing events or experiences relating to the experience of each of the participants involved, and it is able to report experiences in detail about the participant group. According to Smith et al. (2009), in IPA, there is a focus on detail and depth of analysis. It is also committed to understanding how specific experiential phenomena or life events are understood in the view of specific individuals, in a specific context.

It might be asked why IPA was preferred to other qualitative methods, such as grounded theory, discourse analysis or narrative analysis. There are many research methods in a qualitative approach that have been utilised in psychology research, but the four most commonly used one are: Grounded Theory, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). In this study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is preferred to other qualitative methods. Grounded Theory aimed to derive an explanatory theory on the basis of data found within a larger sample to support wider conceptual explanations, it focuses on commonalities across different individuals. IPA is concerned with providing a detailed description and a nuanced account of individuals' lived experiences using a smaller sample (Smith et al., 2009), which is felt to be more in keeping with the aims of this study.

Within Discourse Analysis (DA), the aim of psychological enquiry is to examine the role that language plays in describing an individual's experience, while IPA seeks to explore how individuals ascribe meaning to their lived experiences whilst interacting with the environment and life events (Smith et al., 2009). Within Narrative Analysis, the goal is to provide detailed descriptions rather than explanations, it is concerned with analysing individuals' experiences and meanings in depth, rather than gathering commonalities covering different individuals (Lyons & Coyle, 2007).

3.3 Study design

This study used a qualitative interview research design to investigate the acculturation experience of Saudi international students in the UK. This section sets out the justification for using this methodological framework for the study. The section includes a detailed description of the study design, participant recruitment, the study context, ethical considerations, and data collection and analysis.

3.3.1 Study participants

3.3.1.1 Recruitment

To recruit participants for the study and begin the process of identifying potential participants for inclusion in it, three options were considered. Option one was via Saudi student societies in the UK; option two was via the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in London; and the third option was via UK universities hosting Saudi students.

Recruitment began with the first option (via Saudi student societies in the UK), the other two options were only to be used if not enough participants were recruited via the first option. However, the other two options were not needed to recruit participants.

The process of recruitment then involved the following steps:

- The names of all Saudi student clubs and societies in South East England, such as Saudi students club in Oxford, Reading and Luton, were gathered (Saudi student clubs' and societies' contact information are listed on the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau website).
- Permission was obtained from the Saudi society committee in a city in the South East England to disseminate study information to all members during their activities.
- A presentation of the research programme was developed based on the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A-1) to explain all aspects of the research programme. However, the society committee was not able to support hosting a presentation due to its busy schedule and the election of a new committee for 2015-16.
- The Saudi society's committee in a city in the South East England was also asked to forward an email on behalf of the researcher to all members about volunteering for this study.
- The researcher's contact information was included in the recruitment email script and those interested were able to email to receive information about taking part in the study.
- The researcher emailed interested potential participants who emailed after receiving the recruitment script email from the Saudi society committee in a city in the South East England and answered any questions they asked (see Appendix E-1).
- After questions were answered and information was provided by email, if an interested potential participant was still willing to take part in the study, the participant was received an informed consent form and a demographic data form (see Appendix B, & C).
- Potential participants were informed that priority would be given to participants who met the study criteria and who were interested in discussing their experiences related to the study questions.
- After reviewing demographic data forms and identifying potential participants who were eligible for this study (i.e. Saudi international students who had studied for at least one semester in UK higher education), the researcher emailed (see Appendix B) eligible participants to schedule times and settings for interviews.
- An email was sent to ineligible participants to thank them for their time.

- Once interviews were scheduled, the researcher met potential participants to conduct interviews in a booked university room that had minimal distractions.
- Each participant who volunteered to take part in the study was asked to read the participants' information sheet and given a consent form (see Appendices A-1, B).
- Informed consent was discussed with potential participants, also any concerns relevant to their well-being (they had the option to end the interview at any time and choose not to continue without having to give an explanation).
- All forms and documents with participants' information were placed in a file and stored

The recruitment started via Saudi student societies in the UK, as this option was the first option to recruit participants. Initially it was thought that the sample could be recruited via Saudi students' societies, and to this end advertisements were placed at societies' events and activities and also sent to societies' committees. In the event, only a few numbers of student participants were obtained in this way. A snowball sampling method was adopted instead, which had the advantage that the respondents were drawn from the broader community. Participants were asked if they would be willing to assist the researcher in identifying other potential participants (snowball sampling technique for recruitment), if so contact information was gathered (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A similar snowball recruitment procedure was used to recruit participants and identify eligible potential participants for inclusion in this study.

3.3.1.2 Inclusion criteria

To increase the homogeneity of the study sample, the researcher looked for potential participants who met specific criteria. The homogeneity of this study sample brought together a group of Saudi students with similar backgrounds to discuss their experiences of moving to live in the UK and study in higher education there.

To meet the criteria for this study, participants had to be: (a) Students from Saudi Arabia studying at a UK university in South East England, such as Oxford, Luton, Reading, Brighton, Portsmouth, Surrey, Southampton or Canterbury. (b) Participants had to be aged between 18 and 40 years old and represent both genders. (c) Participants had to be born in Saudi Arabia. (d) Participants had to have been studying in the UK on a degree course for at least one semester at the time of interview. (e) Participants had to be able to speak English as this was the language used during the interviews. There was a concern that using a translator might lose the richness and meaning of language. However, as all potential participants were Arabic native speakers, it was necessary to exclude anybody who was not willing to speak English during the interviews, and two potential participants were excluded for this reason. Similarly, it would have been necessary to exclude participants if they were not able to sign an informed consent form, but no participants were excluded for this reason.

3.3.1.3 The sample

The participants were eight Saudi Arabian international students (five females and three males), members of the Saudi students' society, currently studying at a university in South East England and aged between 29 and 34 years (see Table 3.1 below: participant characteristics and demographics). All participants were postgraduate students (four master students and four PhD students). Aliases are used in order to protect participants' identities.

Table 3.1 Participant characteristics and demographics

Participant alias	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Age	31	34	32	31	29	34	30	31
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female
Education	BA	BA	BA	MSc	BA*	MSc	BA	MSc
Programme of study	MSc	MSc	MSc	PhD	PhD	PhD	MSc	PhD
Length of time studying in UK	2 years	2 years	15 months	4 years	11 months	4 years	3 years	3 years
Semester in study programme	3 rd semester	3 rd semester	3 rd semester	3 rd year	1 st year	1 st year	3 rd semester	1 st year
Marital status	Married	Married	Single	Single	Divorced	Divorced	Married	Married

* Participant number five already had a BA and had started a PhD programme directly with no master's degree.

3.3.2 Study Context

The number of Saudi Arabian students in UK higher education reached 8,595 in 2014–2015 (HESA, 2014–2015). These students study across the UK including England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In this study, participants were recruited from England specifically, from South East of England region, through the Saudi Students societies in South East England, which is for Saudi Arabian students studying in universities of South East of England. The Saudi Students Society is an umbrella organisation that embraced all Saudi students and provided them with a feeling of home; it gathered them together to present a bright picture of Saudi Arabian culture, and also to provide support for all Saudi Students living in South East of England. Participants were UK higher education students, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Participants were from large cities across Saudi Arabia, such as Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Jeddah and Dammam.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) at Oxford Brookes University gave ethical approval for this study on 30 June 2015. The UREC Committee reviewed the application at its meeting on 16 June 2015 and gave approval subject to meeting four conditions. After outlining the response to the points raised by the UREC Committee, full approval was given for the study to begin on 3 August 2015. Other approval from Saudi students Society was obtained through society committee (responsible for maintaining contact information of Saudi students) to contact Saudi Students (see Appendix I).

Informed consent

Informed consent to participate in the study was given through a Participant Information Sheet to ensure that participants had read and understood what was involved (see Appendix A-1). The Participant Information Sheet explained the purpose of the study, who would participate in it, what participating would involve, what language would be used during the interviews, who would monitor and have access to information collected during the interviews and how it would be stored. Participants were also informed about confidentiality and its limitations. They were informed that they or someone who knew them might recognise some quotes from the interviews when the study was written up. However, every effort is made to ensure that they are not likely to be recognised from their quotes. In the interviews, I checked that the participants had read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, and they were given a consent form to read (see Appendices A-1, B). Participants had the option to continue or withdraw from the study at any time, and if they wished to continue, they were asked to sign a consent form before being interviewed. A signed copy of the consent form was placed in their file.

Potential distress

Any risk from taking part in this study was minimal. In general, people may enjoy the opportunity of talking to someone about their experiences. Possible risks included feelings of stress, sadness, anger or discomfort when recalling or revealing information in interviews. Participants had to commit to giving up an hour of their time for an interview. During the interviews, it was necessary for the interviewees to recall past experiences, though this was not intended to be a distressing experience. If it appeared that a participant was uncomfortable or upset, then the interview was stopped if that was what the interviewee wanted. Similarly, the participants always controlled whether or not to answer a question and they had the option to end the interview process at any time if they were uncomfortable and not continue. The researcher also had to recommend nationwide support services to participants, if requested. These support services included general practitioners (GPs) and the Samaritans. During one interview, a participant had a feeling of sadness and cried a little due to a previous sad and difficult experience. The interview

was immediately paused and the participant had the option to end the interview process and not continue. After the participant took a short break, s/he wished to continue with the interview. At the end, the researcher recommended nationwide support services to the participant.

Time commitment

The time commitment for participating in this study was planned to be up to one hour. Participation in the study involved: 1) completing a form before the initial interview began. This form was to collect background demographic information; 2) participating in an interview. From the first interviews it was realized that the time commitment for interviews could not be restricted to one hour. The narrative question itself took the participants between 10 and 30 minutes to answer. In general, participants from both genders enjoyed the opportunity of talking to someone about their experiences. Interview length ranged between 1 hour and 37 minutes to 2 hours and 50 minutes (see Table below: Length of interviews and gender).

Table Length of interviews and gender:

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Interview length	2:09:24	1:59	2:04:22	2:28:30	1:37:34	1:44:22	2:50:37	2:12:36
Gender	M	M	F	F	F	F	F	M

Interview language

English was the language used during the interviews as the participants were living and studying in the UK cultural context, where English is their everyday language; however, the researcher explained the procedure and study details in Arabic, if any participant found this more comfortable.

It was believed that the interviewees would have sufficient knowledge of the English language, due to their experience of living and studying in the UK, to conduct the interviews in English as it was assumed that using English would avoid issues with translation, interpretation and miscommunication. Whilst there was a total agreement by the interviewees with this decision, which enabled the in-depth conversations the researcher was planning, there was also a small amount of switching from both the researcher and several participants due to their familiarity with both languages, Arabic and English.

In the inclusion criteria, participants had to have been studying in the UK on a degree course for at least one semester at the time of interview and be able to speak English, as this was the language used during the interviews (see 3.3.1.2). In the current study,

participants have been studying in the UK higher education sector for around a year, and some of them up to four years (see Table 3.1). Before conducting the interviews, a Participant Information Sheet PIS was sent to the participants (see Appendix A-2). PIS informed potential participants about the language that would be used during the interviews and those who had sufficient language skills to participate in the study in English were sought.

While engaging in research in the participants' mother language may have some advantages (Shah, 2004; Tabane & Bouwer, 2006), it also can cause significant problems for the research when translation is needed (Groves, 2015). Temple and Edwards (2002) argue that translation is a methodological problematic due to the variability of language, and interpreters' own subjectivities and views are influential on the construction of data. Conceptual equivalence is especially significant in qualitative research collected in Arabic, where some words may have no linguistic equivalent in English or may have more than one meaning (Tsai, Choe, Lim, Acorda, Chan, Taylor, & Tu, 2004). Therefore, translation decisions can directly influence the accuracy of data collected and the validity of research reported. (Birbili, 2000; Smith, Chen, & Liu, 2008). Given that the participants in this research were using English at a sufficient level in their lives and studies, the study was conducted in the UK context's language, aiming to avoid problems related to translation.

The interviews for this study were conducted entirely in English. This means that it was more likely that prospective participants who were confident enough in their English language skills would accept the invitation to participate in an interview. Most participants in the present study had a good command of oral English, and had spent from one to four or more years abroad, both of which facilitated communication. As a researcher, at some point, I felt that several interviewees were excited and even proud at having a chance to show off their English skills. In some cases they insisted on responding in English although the researcher used some Arabic words during the interviews.

There was a concern that using a translator might lose the richness and meaning of language. However, as all potential participants were native speakers of Arabic, it was necessary to exclude anybody who was not willing to speak English during the interviews, and two potential participants were excluded for this reason. Welch and Piekkari (2006) indicate that, as long as interviewees are sufficiently fluent in English, interviewing in English means that the interviewer does not have to go through a translation phase wondering if s/he is selecting appropriate English words to represent the interviewees' meaning.

The researcher used several methods to facilitate communication while avoiding using the interviewee's mother tongue, such as asking frequent clarifying questions so that the interview was conducted at a slower pace. Also, using a structured interview protocol, with frequent prompt and less complex questions, or using informal English devoid of idioms, dialect and colloquialisms.

In a few cases, some participants asked if they could use a few Arabic terms during the interviews to express their experiences. The researcher said that they could use a few Arabic terms if they felt more comfortable using those rather than English. Then, as a native speaker of Arabic, the researcher translated those few terms into English.

The researcher transcribed the English responses verbatim, despite them including some grammatical errors. The researcher purposefully left the transcripts as is to reflect the interviewees' English level. Although qualitative approach research may use "[...]" to point out any linguistic errors in an interviewee's response, the researcher preferred not to do this because it would distort the meaning of the responses due to the frequency of errors.

Interviewing Saudi females

An additional ethical issue has to be considered when recruiting female participants for interviews, one that is relevant to the power distance between the genders and which has to be addressed (Skeggs, 2001). When preparing a submission for ethical approval, I assumed that this difference between the genders might create a problem in this research, since I thought that Saudi female participants might have some concerns about being interviewed by a male interviewer. The researcher's beliefs were generally based on the practices of gender segregation and restricted interaction between males and females in Saudi culture and the researcher's assumption that Saudi female participants might find interacting with a Saudi male researcher challenging.

Cultural norms strongly affect an individual's lifestyle, social interaction and everyday practices in Saudi culture (Nassir, & Leong, 2017, Abokhodair, & Vieweg, 2016, Al-Dawood, Abokhodair, & Yarosh, 2017). These cultural norms can lead to interesting challenges for researchers conducting qualitative fieldwork (Nassir, Al-Dawood, Alghamdi, & Alyami, 2019).

Cross-gender contact concerns are a challenge that can significantly influence interviewee recruitment as Saudi individuals have a heightened sense of privacy that extends to the family and society (Nassir, & Leong, 2017). This means rejecting discussions of opinions and one's personal life and information with strangers (Abokhodair, & Vieweg, 2016). This maintenance of privacy is further heightened during non-familial cross-gender contact (Nassir, et al., 2019).

Gender segregation is a lifestyle and common practice in Saudi culture as interaction between non-related males and females is generally considered culturally inappropriate (Al-Shahri, 2002). These norms may lead to challenges when recruiting participants to do qualitative fieldwork with Saudi females (Nassir, & Leong, 2017, Abokhodair, & Vieweg, 2016).

In order to address the concerns that some Saudi female participants might have about being interviewed by a Saudi male researcher, the researcher used a strategy to build

trust and establish positive relationships before recruiting any of them to be interviewed. Since the researcher is a Saudi postgraduate student in the UK, he has had chances to be a committee member of the Saudi Students society on campus and a committee member of the Saudi Student Club in the city. The researcher regularly met some committee members (e.g. Saudi female students) many times during the academic year at committee meetings or at official events and activities of the Saudi Students society and the Saudi Student Club. Being part of these organisations allowed the researcher to meet and build trust with Saudi female students. The more they had opportunities to interact with the researcher beforehand, the more they felt comfortable about interacting with him. The researcher found that establishing trust and rapport with the participants was significant in conducting qualitative research with Saudi females (Nassir, Al-Dawood, Alghamdi, & Alyami, 2019).

Initial meetings with potential participants are important events to develop mutual trust. This may make the researcher more willing to answer personal questions, e.g. about himself or his family and society (Nassir, et al., 2019). The researcher on some occasions shared some of his personal life and study experiences in order to build participants' trust. The researcher discussed his PhD research project with several participants. Also, the researcher sometimes needed to answer personal questions about himself and his family.

The researcher then contacted the first Saudi female student in one of these organisations to explain the purpose of the study to engage her to take part in the study. The researcher found the snowball sampling technic to recruit participants to be effective. This kind of chain referrals builds on personal referrals, that establish trust with the participants in order to allow researcher to access potential participants (Nassir, & Leong, 2017, Abokhodair, & Vieweg, 2016). These personal communications are respected and are sometimes treated by the referred as a request for a favour from the referee (Nassir, & Alyami, 2019).

However, only two potential female participants were concerned about being interviewed by a Saudi male. They preferred to participate in answering any form of questionnaires but were not willing to be interviewed by a Saudi male in a quiet meeting room.

3.3.4 Interview methods

Data were collected using semi-structured episodic interviews (Flick, 2000). The episodic narrative interview was developed by integrating diverse elements of narrative enquiry, semi-structured interview and episodic interview (Flick, 2000; Mueller, 2019). An episodic narrative interview is an innovative method for narrative data collection because: a) it provides a particular strategy to engage in experience-focused narrative research, b) it offers a beneficial structured protocol for researchers who are unfamiliar with narrative research methods and c) it provides a better understanding of a phenomenon by generating individual stories of experience about that phenomenon, which offers a better understanding of others' experiences, to discern the meaning that individuals ascribe to

their experiences, or to reconstruct events via multiple perspectives (Mueller, 2019; Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Seidman, 2013).

Episodic interviewing in psychology emphasizes that narrative is a technique via which individuals understand and make sense of their experiences (Flick, 2000). The current study focused on the acculturation experiences of Saudi students and the consequences of their experiences on their selves and identities. An example would be a respondent's narrative about their experiences of living and studying in the UK and how this impacts on their sense of self.

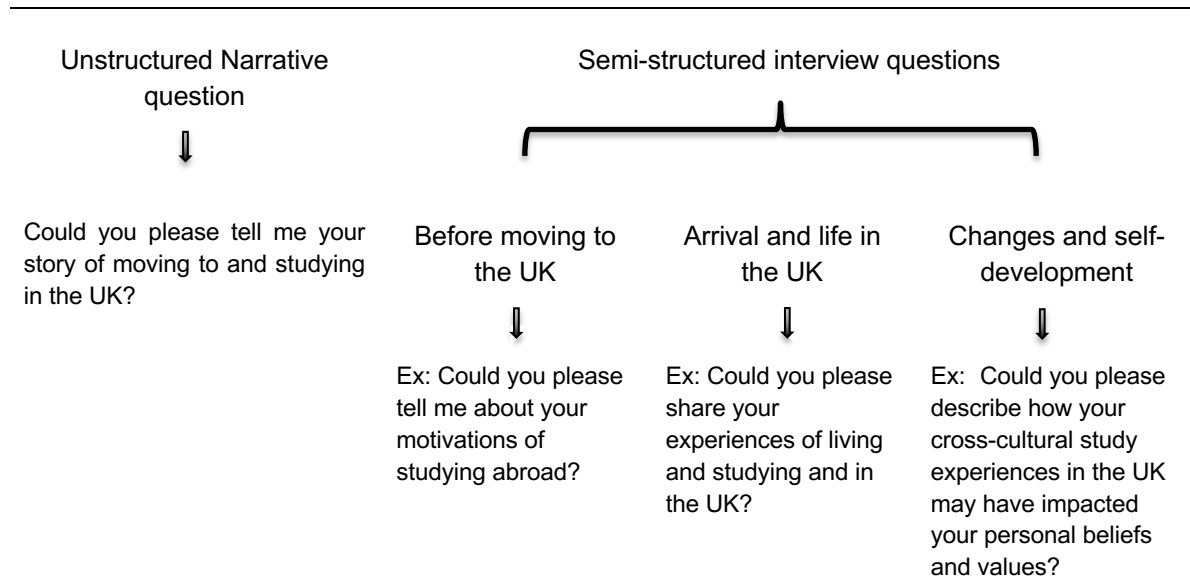
Flick (2000) explains procedures for developing, conducting and analysing episodic interviews. These procedures offer a template for the construction and operation of episodic interviews in this study. An interview schedule (see Appendix D-1) was constructed containing questions relevant to the topic. In this case, 11 questions were formulated to cover the acculturation experiences of Saudi students in the UK.

The interview started by familiarising the interviewee with the form of subsequent episodic questions and focusing on recounting concrete events. In the first stage, interviewees were asked to tell a narrative story about moving to and studying in the UK. The interviewees were encouraged to elaborate further, rather than be asked follow-up questions. This stage allowed the interviewer to ask further narrative questions (see Appendix D-1).

The second stage of the interview moved the emphasis, as it was designed to elicit answers in response to questions. As with episodic questions, probes were used to follow up on insightful dialogue generated by the interviewee. This part of the interviews comprised eight questions exploring previous perceptions: before entering the UK, the experience of moving to and living in the UK, moving to study in the UK etc. In order to probe deeply into unanticipated aspects that emerged, the interview schedule was utilized flexibly (see Appendix D-1). At the end of the interview, any follow-up questions and clarifications emerging from points made earlier were addressed.

The interview format was designed to reflect the theoretical framework of the current study. It was based on IPA principles and key themes were covered in the interview questions, drawing on a literature review that involved expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the Saudi acculturation framework in the current study with the original acculturation framework from Berry (1997, 2011) (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Structure of the interview schedule, with examples of each part:



3.3.5 Data collection

Eight Semi-structured interviews (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2008) were conducted in English, which was the language they were using in their studies as well as in their daily lives in the UK, but participants were given the opportunity to use Arabic when needed. Only a few participants responded in Arabic to express some terms, and these terms were translated into English by the researcher. The topics covered included how Saudi students experienced the acculturation of moving to and studying in the UK? What were the experiences that they report as challenges? What were the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities in the UK? The interviews lasted from around one hour and a half and to three hours (see 3.3.3 Ethical consideration: Length of interviews and gender), they were audio-recorded using an iPhone application in order to have high quality for voice tone and allow accurate transcription of the interviews. They were transcribed by the researcher using Express Scribe Transcription Software, and then coded and analysed using IPA (Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). After transcription and checking the audio-recordings were deleted. Participants were able to say where they would prefer their interview to take place, in either a university meeting room or in their own home. Seven participants chose to be interviewed in a meeting room at their universities and one participant chose to be interviewed at home. Data-collection interviews took place between 1 October and 19 December 2015.

3.3.6 Data analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2008; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) was the method used to analyse interview data. Two members of the supervisory team were experts in the IPA approach to ensure methodological quality. Data were also analysed according to IPA guidelines (Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009) through four stages: a) encounters with text, b) initial themes identified, c) grouping themes together as clusters, d) tabulating themes in a summary table.

The analysis process started with an **individual interview transcript-analysis technique**, which was subject to IPA requirements and principles (Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Each audio recording was played back to at least once, and then the interview transcript was read thoroughly and repeatedly. A summary of the transcribed text was made in one column. Initial comments were made in a second column, with exploratory comments to describe initial thoughts about the content (Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). After that, each transcript was reread and a third column was used to identify emerging themes. Using this technique, each transcript was analysed until all transcripts had been analysed in this stage.

The analysis process moved to the second stage of an individual interview-analysis technique, which was the **emergent themes stage**. This stage involved a generated list of emergent themes in order to connect related themes in clusters. Smith et al. (2009) was used as a guide to identify sub-themes through: a) abstraction (putting like with like to develop a name for a cluster); b) subsumption process (where an emergent theme itself becomes a superordinate theme as it draws other related themes towards it); c) polarization (examining transcripts for oppositional relationships); d) contextualization (identifying contextual elements within an analysis); e) numeration (the frequency with which a theme is supported); f) function (themes' functions are examined) (see Appendix J-1). This analysis process was used on each interview transcript, which involved moving on to repeat the same processes with all remaining interview transcripts.

The analytic process moved to the stage of **cross-interview transcript analysis**. This involved identifying patterns across all interview transcripts. A list incorporating sub-themes and emergent themes from interview transcripts was made to represent shared higher-order qualities (see Appendix F-1 Analyses Framework).

Using (IPA) of eight semi-structured interviews to investigate the experiences of Saudi Arabian students studying in the UK, fourteen master themes were identified in the interview transcripts. These master themes comprise previous perceptions of Saudi Arabian students before entering the UK, the experience of moving to and study in the UK and the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities.

3.3.7 Validity and quality

When evaluating qualitative research quality, different standards than those for evaluating the quality of quantitative research are required (Barker, Pistrang & Elliott, 2015). The researcher selected Yardley's (2008) guidelines to address quality issues for the current research based on Yardley's criteria; a) sensitivity to context; b) commitment and rigour; c) coherence and transparency; d) impact and importance. These guidelines are recommended by Smith et al. (2009), who describe how they apply to IPA research.

Sensitivity to context

Establishing sensitivity to context can be achieved via illustrating sensitivity to available relevant literature and previous related empirical research, the context of theory, and the social and cultural context of the research (Yardley, 2008) and the participants' narratives (Smith et al. 2009). The researcher addressed these issues in the current study's literature and theory review in Chapter Two and through the process of collecting and analyzing data. The researcher is a constructivist enquirer and aware of the influence of his position on the current research, as part of the studied group, particularly his role in ethical issues, interaction during the interviews, and interaction throughout all stages of the research. The researcher had to be cautious when addressing sensitivity to the data by conducting transcription, describing in-depth analysis and illustrating arguments with solid verbatim extracts, as this allows the participants to be heard and allows the reader to check the interpretations made (Smith et al., 2009).

Commitment and rigour

Commitment indicates in-depth involvement with the subject by ensuring competence in the methods applied (Yardley, 2008). Smith et al. (2009) state that commitment can be illustrated by observing interviewees throughout the data collection phase, and being cautious when analysing data. The researcher was unfamiliar with the IPA approach before getting involved in the current research, but he sought to enhance his competence by looking at IPA books, online workshops and published articles. This included the development of interview schedules, improving interview skills, and developing analytic skills in order to build interview schedules and an analysis framework in the current research. The researcher shows his commitment by providing an interview schedule example (see Appendix D-1) and an example of the transcript process of analysis (see Appendix F-1).

Rigour is demonstrated via the data-collection procedure and the depth and breadth of data analysis (Yardley, 2008). As the rigour of the current research was influenced by the researcher's position as an insider qualitative researcher, and practical limitations such as time and the sample accessed, the researcher has at all times sought to conduct this research in a cautious and thorough way, based on relevant training courses, workshops and a supervisory team.

Coherence and transparency

Coherence required clarity and cogency in the research process which is illustrated in the write-up stage and the presentation level where coherence between the research conducted and the underlying theoretical assumptions of the methodology should be demonstrated (Smith et al., 2009; Yardley, 2008). The researcher sought to develop coherence in the analysis by using an audit trail in the process of analysing transcripts (see Appendix F-1). Yardley (2008) points to reflexivity within the principle of transparency, which the researcher addresses in section 3.3.8.

Impact and importance

Impact and importance indicate that no matter how well and sensitively research is carried out, the most crucial way it can be evaluated is by seeing whether or not it has achieved something interesting and valuable (Yardley, 2008). To this end, throughout this thesis, I hopefully show the reader how the research project illuminates interesting and valuable aspects that make a difference, e.g. in the validity of the approach and tools used, the quality of the focus, and the reliability of a reflexive approach to research the design, data-collection process and analysis, and present and discuss findings.

3.3.8 Reflexivity

As the researcher is a constructivist enquirer, the current research involves a reciprocal relationship with the participants. What makes this reciprocity easier is that the researcher and participants come from the same cultural background, they both experience the UK cultural context as international students and they both share similar academic goals. This reciprocal relationship can involve more reciprocity with several participants sharing particular positions, such as social status, age and gender.

It was evidenced during the interviews that this was a significant influence on establishing trust, openness, a willingness to take part in the study, and share experiences and perspectives, as the interviewees seemed confident that the interviewer was able to understand their point of view. Trust and openness are enhanced when both researcher and participants come from the same background and have the same relevant experience (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Nevertheless, the extent to which the researcher sees himself as part of the studied group, sharing a context and experience, and how this situation influenced the current research, is an issue that is listed under the section on "Reflexivity".

Guba and Lincoln (2005) define reflexivity as a process of reflecting critically on oneself as an enquirer. Being a Saudi postgraduate researcher locates my role to a considerable extent, an insider researcher coming from the same cultural background and experiencing the same cultural context in the UK, and sharing the same experience of studying abroad.

Gair (2012) sees the concept of an insider as the extent to which a researcher is located either within or outside a researched group due to his common status and sharing experiences. Nevertheless, the researcher cannot claim that he went through all the same dimensions of the Saudi acculturation experience as, for example, female participants did, because the researcher is a Saudi male, and gender differences may influence one's acculturation experience.

Further, the researcher's position in the current study still locates him as an outsider. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain the complexities inherent in occupying the space between 'insider and outsider'. Researchers may think they are closer to an insider position or an outsider position, but due to their views being formed by their position as researchers, they cannot totally occupy one or other of those positions.

In this way, the researcher adopts a fluctuating stance position, which Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) describe as a researcher bringing insider voices, views and experiences to the outside. This position coincides with constructivists who look at reflexive positions through modes of knowing and representing data and positioning themselves in reality (Almariq, 2019). This position expressed by Charmaz (2005) says that researchers share in constructing what they define as data.

The researcher's position as a Saudi international student in the UK facilitated establishing positive relationships with the participants. The researcher assumed that this was an advantage for the current research. An advantage of this close association facilitates building trust with the interviewees and establishing a rapport with them to let them feel comfortable sharing their study abroad experience. With direct knowledge of the Saudi ethnic group, an insider for interview dialogue can probe interviewees' acculturation experiences. Often, a familiar colleague with equal experiences makes the interview process more comfortable for both researcher and interviewees.

Being an insider researcher and a Saudi citizen, close to individuals from Saudi Arabia and familiar with Saudi Arabian culture, these factors facilitated establishing shared basic knowledge because the researcher already has internal awareness of it. The researcher assumed that this was an opportunity to develop a rapport, unlike a researcher who is an outsider; as pointed out by Smyth and Holian (2008), a large amount of prior knowledge may take an outsider time and effort to achieve.

Being an insider promotes obtaining a shared understanding of Saudi Arabian cultural specifics, and what students coming from this specific culture may perceive challenging while navigating their new context. Thus, establishing intimacy enhances both the telling and judging of truth (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). However, Unluer (2012) states that despite the advantages of being an insider, there are also issues related to it, as familiarity may lead to a loss of objectivity and making incorrect assumptions (DeLyser, 2001). When reflecting on the interviews, this might have significant influence on some aspects of the

process of research, as the researcher might have imperiously missed an aspect that could be of interest to a research with an outsider view.

The researcher identified the following aspects where his personal bias might affect the research process. The researcher is a Saudi PhD student in the UK. As Arabic is his first language and he was brought up and received most of his education in Saudi Arabia, the researcher shares features of the participants in the current research. As a Saudi postgraduate himself, the researcher experienced similar challenges to adjust to UK culture and its education system as other Saudi students whom the researcher studied. In struggling to understand the new context, including the culture of UK culture and universities, the researcher was able to identify and empathize with the challenges encountered by the Saudi group. The researcher's acculturation experience is a ground for the current research, due to his commitment to the Saudi group enrolled in UK higher education institutions. The researcher is aware of his personal beliefs and values that could lead him to empathise with some aspects of the interviewees' accounts associated with him at any point in the research process.

To avoid this, the researcher had to be careful about the current research process and avoid building knowledge on previous assumptions that might lead to bias (Taj, 2017). The researcher had to avoid influencing the participants with his opinions while interviewing them. Yin (2003) indicates that:

“An investigator should be a good “listener” and not be trapped by her or his own ideologies or preconceptions ... A person should be unbiased by preconceived notions, including those derived from theory. Thus, a person should be sensitive and responsive to contradictory evidence” (p. 69).

Further, several interviewees automatically thought that the researcher, as a Saudi citizen coming from the same cultural background, should know and understand certain aspects of their lives, culture and society without being asked. During the interviews, for example, some participants kept repeating sentences such as 'as you know' or 'you know that', expecting the researcher to know about certain things, but the researcher intentionally requested the interviewee to 'please explain in detail what you mean'. In one case, a participant asked the researcher, 'Why would you ask about something you already know about?' The researcher's response to that question was, 'Methodologically, it is worth recording your view so that it can be transcribed and then analysed.' By asking critical questions about what normally is assumed, the researcher could begin to shift to an outsider status, such as asking for explanations (D'Cruz, & Jones, 2004). Sharing the same cultural background is important where a mutual understanding of basic cultural contexts is extended to involve the understanding of norms, boundaries, expectations and perceptions (Alsaggaf, 2015). This was applied in the analysis process to make sure the researcher was an outsider and not part of the studied group so as to keep the researcher's personal intervention as neutral as possible. Potential challenges must be acknowledged to minimize the risk of bias in the current research.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 addressed the methodology that was used in this study. It began with a discussion of the significance of using qualitative research to be an overarching framework to guide the methods and the analysis of the data. After that, the chapter presented the importance of the qualitative methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the methodology for the study and how IPA interviews seem to be an appropriate technique for collecting and analysing the data. In addition, the chapter provided the techniques of recruiting the participants and inclusion criteria that helped in recruiting the study sample. Then, the chapter moved to discuss the study context and some ethical considerations. Further, the chapter presented the data collection technic including the interview protocols, and duration. Then, the chapter moved to discuss the analysis guidelines used to analyse data according to (IPA) guidelines. Finally, the chapter has also discussed the validity and quality, and reflexivity issues.

Guided by the methodology addressed in Chapter 3, the next chapter presents the findings that emerged from the data and answer the research questions. Also, this chapter provides a discussion of the findings based on the set of data collected in this study.

Chapter 4: Findings, Discussions, and Conclusion

4.1 Findings

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of moving to and studying in the UK for a sample of Saudi Arabian students. The study investigated the experiences that Saudi students reported as challenges. In addition, the study looked at the perceived consequences on their sense of self and identities.

The present chapter is divided into three distinct sections. The first section addresses participants' pre-move approach, including key motivations and anticipations as well as the role of family structures, gender and planning in the preparation for the move. The second section focuses on arrival into and life in the UK, including notable challenges and key sources of support. The third section addresses personal changes and areas of self-development which occurred for the participants.

The (IPA) of the 8 semi-structured interviews identified 14 primary themes relating to the Saudi Arabian students' experiences of the UK. The process of producing these themes was not based on prevalence rates, but, rather, each theme was represented as being poignant and significant for the participant(s) in the interview transcripts (Jarman, Smith & Walsh, 1997). Several of these themes referred to experiences common to international students of other cultures, as documented in the literature. Other themes reflect experiences specific to the Saudi Arabian group (e.g., East, 2001; Brown, 2009; Brown, & Holloway 2008; Chapdelaine, & Alexitch, 2004; Chirkov, et al, 2007; Dentakos, et al, 2017; Dwyer, & Peters, 2004; Gu, & Day, 2010; Johnson, 2008; McLachlan, & Justice, 2009; Palmer, 2015; Popadiuk, & Arthur, 2004; Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003; Tran, 2011; Zhou, & Todman, 2009; Zhou, & Zhang, 2014). These themes were accordingly divided into three aspects, as follows:

Pre-moving: Motivations, anticipations and structures and planning.

- Motivations to study abroad
- Anticipations
- Family structures gender, and planning

Arrival and life in the UK: Challenges, coping strategies, and sources of support.

- Homesickness
- Language
- Personal challenges
- Academic challenges
- Gendered experience of female participants
- Issues of representing home culture and religion

- Gendered interaction
- Social and emotional support

Changes and self-improvement.

- Changes and awareness of self
- Self-improvement

A sequential exploration of these primary themes and their related subthemes (see Table 4.1, 4.2, 4.3) forms the structure of this chapter, with each theme illustrated by verbatim quotes from the eight interview transcripts to illustrate similarities and variations in the individual experiences of the Saudi international students in the UK who were interviewed.

It is acknowledged that these themes do not exhaustively cover all aspects of Saudi Arabian students' experience in the UK. The quotes were selected due to their relevance to the study questions. It is also acknowledged that they were only one account of the Saudi Arabian students' experience in the UK. It is openly recognised that these themes are a subjective interpretation and that other studies may have focused on different aspects of the interviewees' accounts.

In presenting the verbatim quotes, some minor "language editing" changes have been conducted to improve readability. As recommended by Smith et al, (2009), minor hesitations, word repetitions, and illegible utterances have mostly been removed. While many extracts reveal English language deficiencies, the texts provided a rich range of meanings and experiential dimensions. All information which could enable identification of the interviewees has been changed or removed to protect the anonymity of the participants and the letter **P** has been used for each participant, followed by the participant number from P1 to P8.

4.1.1 Pre-moving: Motivations, anticipations and structures and planning

Pre-moving is the first of the three foci of analysis presented in this chapter (see Table 4.1). It explored Saudi Arabian students' motivations to study abroad, their cognitive and emotional anticipations, and the role of family structures, gender and planning in shaping their experiences. These themes tend to emerge before embarking on the journey. It was an attempt to capture the genesis of thoughts, attitudes, reasons and motives behind studying abroad while they were in their home country. In this section, data were drawn from the responses given to interview questions relating to these topics such as "could you please tell me about your motivations for studying abroad?" and, "Could you please tell me about the perceptions you had about the UK before starting studies in the UK?" (see Appendix D). Each main theme included related subthemes:

Table 4.1 Primary themes and subthemes related to the pre-moving

Pre-moving: Motivations, anticipations, structures and planning	
Theme	Subtheme
Motivations to study abroad	Self-improvement
	Career-improvement
	Knowledge and skills improvement
	Experiencing a new culture
Anticipations	Positive acculturation attitudes toward study abroad
	Expecting to face challenges
	Collecting information about the UK in advance
	* Worries about wearing the Hijab
Family structures gender, and planning	Family involvement in the decision
	* Female student's companion

* For female participants

4.1.1.1 Motivations to study abroad

This theme examines Saudi Arabian international students' motivations to study abroad; it addressed their reasons and the goals that Saudi students expected to achieve by studying in the UK (see Table 4.1). The participants' accounts revealed four sub-themes as key motivations: self-improvement, career improvement, knowledge and skills improvement, and a desire to experience a new culture.

4.1.1.1.1 Self-improvement

Self-improvement here refers to the processes and actions which help an individual improve his/her own life, well-being and character. It can apply to a range of aspects of the self, including educational attainment, career boosting, increasing productivity, enhancing health or engaging in new relationships. Self-improvement can also relate to motivations, goal setting, adopting new habits, values and beliefs, improving self-awareness and seeking self-actualisation (Breines, & Chen, 2012).

Despite differences in background, five of the participants seemed to consider self-improvement to be one of the most important motivations for studying in the UK. The participants described how they would like to move to the UK to improve themselves in every possible way and to move beyond any difficulties or barriers that may limit their self-improvement. Participant 1 (male) explained how other Saudi Arabians who had studied abroad had inspired him; he was attracted to the qualities, capabilities and skills that they achieved abroad and how these qualities had resulted in self-improvement in all aspects of life. He added that addressing the challenges inherent to life and study abroad can be a mechanism for developing the self. He stated that:

'This journey started by the desire of continuing study a higher education degree abroad...This desire came from comparison between the quality of students who graduated from local universities and abroad. People who studied abroad have good mentality in sciences and the develop things faster, not just in the field but also in

their life; this is encourage me to study abroad and face problems and solve them. These problems will make me different person and different mentality; get back to S.A with huge benefits.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 3 (female) expressed her desire to explore other parts of the world. She found that her home culture was not sufficient to provide her with a lifestyle that she was satisfied with. She mentioned that going abroad was not only an educational goal but also one aimed at practicing a new culture; she was clear that she had thought about it for a long time. The motivation for studying abroad in her agenda went beyond purely education goals. She stated that:

'The aim is not just the education to be honest, I care about education and improve myself but I think there is another part of the world that is necessary for me to discover this part, I was thinking for long time and discuss this with my brothers.' (Participant 3, female)

4.1.1.1.2 Career improvement

Career improvement is one of the aspects of self-improvement mentioned by participants. It refers to the ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills in order to achieve self-improvement. It often involved career planning, professional development and skills acquisition targeted at the successful enhancement of one's career (Kamau, 2015).

A number of the participants (six in total) described how career improvement was an important motivation for moving to study abroad. They spoke about how they were motivated to study for a higher education degree to develop their future careers when they returned home. Participants believed that obtaining a postgraduate degree would help them to achieve high career positions. They described how studying in the UK could assist them in meeting their career development needs.

Participant 1 (male) spoke of his work experience with others and how they encouraged him to obtain a postgraduate degree to advance his career. He mentioned that others who graduated from the UK occupied the higher position at work, thus he was motivated to pursue a similar path. He said that:

'I had motivations from my work and friends to push me to study a master degree to upgrade in my work to get good offers in work. Friends who finished degrees in the UK get good positions. I want to expand my knowledge in engineering and share it to fill some gap in knowledge.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 4 (female) spoke of her dream to have an academic career. She pointed out that pursuing a Ph.D. abroad could assist her in achieving her goal and would improve her economic situation. She stated that:

'I decided to complete my PhD because my dream is to have an academic job, so it would be very easy after I finish my PhD. When I finish my PhD, I will earn more

money and position. I am looking for a position.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 5 (female) talked about her career when she worked in a hospital. She pointed out that an undergraduate degree was not enough for her to advance rapidly at work. She found out that her previous career was not the career she had dreamed of achieving:

'While in my 6 years in the hospital I improved my skills, but I didn't improve as a job title, or as a person that have ambitions. My work didn't meet my ambition. The only choice I had was to continue my education. Also, I was working in a medical field so I feel that my Bachelor is not enough. I should always improve myself.' (Participant 5, female)

Participant 6 (female) admitted that she was motivated to maintain her job in the home country. She added that obtaining a postgraduate degree would lead her to advance at work and become more independent. She stated that:

'I decided to go because otherwise I would lose my job. I think this is one of my motivations to go to be a doctor. To have like the salary then, and to maybe take my son, stay alone, with my life. Getting a better salary and good position.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 8 (female) talked about how difficult it can be to start a career with only an undergraduate degree, especially if it is an academic career. She believed that studying abroad could help her develop her career more effectively. She stated that:

'After I graduated, the next semester I worked as a volunteer in a university. So I volunteered for one semester. The second semester I stayed at home, I change my mind for scholarship; I can't stay doing nothing.' (Participant 8, female)

4.1.1.1.3 Knowledge and skills improvement

Knowledge and skills improvement comprise another aspect of *self-improvement*. In terms of this aspect, most of the participants (seven participants) reported that this formed a key part of the motivation behind obtaining a higher education degree abroad. They often stated that studying abroad was a perfect opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills. They spoke about their desire to obtain a better education and to benefit from the UK higher education system that was perceived to be of a higher quality than that of Saudi Arabia. They reported that graduates who gain international experience by studying abroad have obtained first-hand knowledge of another country and are better prepared for their professional and personal futures.

Participant 1 (male) spoke of the progress that he had made in his studies so far. He described how he felt confident because he was equipped with knowledge and skills to achieve his goals. He added that with all the knowledge and skills he had achieved, he felt confident to move forward in applying for a Ph.D. program. He said that:

'This journey started by the desire of continuing to study for a higher education degree abroad...I'm trying to get a PhD offer because I feel I have the abilities, tools and skills to continue. I learned the processes and technics.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 2 (male) expressed that seeking knowledge and skills was a key motivation for him to move to the UK. He believed that going outside his home country was an opportunity to improve his knowledge and skills. He said that:

'What made me came here I think English, knowledge, and experiences that I will get here.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 4 (female) described her strong desire to acquire and develop knowledge and skills. She mentioned that there is a limited number of programmes in her study field in the home country and this made her move abroad. She said that:

'Motivation, internal desire. I really want to know, and we would never know everything. And we don't have PhD programs in nutrition in S.A, but if we have the program, of course, I will do it in SA.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 5 (female) also commented on the limited availability of programmes in her study field in the home country. She believed that education abroad was of a higher quality than in the home country, and stated that this motivated her to go abroad. It emerged that studying in the home country did not meet her enthusiasm for learning. She stated that:

'In my field, there is no choice; at least in my city in SA we don't have higher education in nutrition. That's the first. And the second, still, we have this concept, this is a fact, that studying abroad is more stronger than studying in Saudi Arabia, because the education here is more accurate, motivated.' (Participant 5, female)

Participant 8 (female) commented on the limitation of programmes in her study field in the home country. She worked in academia but she needed to improve her knowledge and skills to perform better in an academic environment when she returned. She said that:

'I was a student in the university then I became an assistant teacher in the same university, I am not a student anymore, I am a teaching assistant, so in this situation I have to study nutrition, is not available in my city. So I have to go to other place to study.' (Participant 8, female)

4.1.1.1.4 Experiencing a new culture

Half of the participants (four of them) talked about their desire to experience a different culture and to meet new people or to experience new things during their study in the UK. For some participants, studying in the UK was an opportunity to change roles and to temporarily escape from gender norms and expectations back in Saudi Arabia.

Participant 3 (female) reported her desire to experience a new culture. She demonstrated that she had a strong desire to experience a different culture and to witness and engage with multiculturalism. The participant mentioned that her home culture did not provide her with what she considered adequate in this respect. When in the home country, she was surrounded by more restrictions than allowed practices. These restrictions, backed by an interpretation of culture and religion were common in a society segregating males and females. The participant believed that this missing part might be achieved by practicing a new, different culture. She believes being in the new context will allow her to practice a new lifestyle where she can be out of gender roles back in the home country, she owns her life choices, freedom, and being independent. She stated that:

'...I was just thinking I needed to change my environment. My life not enough, want to see another life. The goal isn't just education but also experience another life.'
(Participant 3, female)

Participant 4 (female) admitted that she dreamed of going out of the home country's cultural norms. She viewed home culture as a conservative culture, which limited her movement. She believed that experiencing a different culture would provide her with more space and opportunities to practice new cultural norms. She said that:

'My dream to spend this time out of Saudi Arabia is to have the greater opportunity to meet the other people with extremely different cultures, was also one of my dreams. We didn't have this opportunity in S.A it is like closed culture.' (Participant 4, female)

4.1.1.2 Anticipations

This theme examines Saudi Arabian international students' anticipations and attitudes regarding studying abroad, as well as the challenges that Saudi students expect(ed) to face when studying in the UK (see Table 4.1). Saudi international students evidenced anticipations and expectations about living and studying in the UK which were often drawn from different forms of digital media such as Internet, TV and films. Some of them developed their anticipations based on the experiences of friends who had formerly lived and studied in the UK.

4.1.1.2.1 Positive acculturation attitude toward study abroad

Half of Saudi international students (four participants) seemed to have positive acculturation attitudes about living and studying in the UK. They described how they had wanted to move to study and improve themselves in the UK. They believed that UK education system provided them with the opportunity to obtain sophisticated knowledge and training in their fields. They described their desire to experience new things and meet new people throughout their study experience.

Participant 1 (male) spoke about his attitude towards modern knowledge and technology in his study field; this was more available to him by studying abroad. He revealed that overseas education had provided him with the skills that he was looking for. For him,

studying abroad meant moving beyond the gates of the educational institutions and experiencing life abroad. He stated that:

'I have to study abroad and share what is the latest research and modern software in my field, my field is related to technology and I have to keep updated...This is the reason behind this desire, try to be better, my language will be stronger, many benefits from studying abroad. I learn a lot about life, people, social society, and nature.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 5 (female) conveyed positive attitudes that prompted her to choose to study in the UK. She mentioned that studying abroad could provide her with chances that were not available in the home country. From her perspective, the UK education system helped her to improve herself. The participant revealed that, despite her study field being available and taught in the home country, she chose to study in the UK instead. She believed that studying abroad involved more than academic knowledge acquisition. It is a journey of self-improvement. She stated that:

'The UK education system in general will open many doors and will change me totally, this was one of my expectations, it will change improve my mentality and personality. I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. If I had a chance to do a PhD in my country, I'll choose to come and study here because I was excited to start the journey more than just study.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.1.2.2 Expecting to face challenges

More than half the participants (five of them) were aware of the possibility of facing challenges during their period of studying abroad. In their responses, several participants were able to identify specific foreseen sources of potential challenge including entering a new culture in terms of norms and values, encountering an unfamiliar educational system, female codes of dress and living costs. These expectations prompted the Saudi students to prepare in coping with these challenges *before* moving to the UK.

Participant 3 (female) described her sense of distress when considering the potential challenges that she may face abroad. She expected to face difficulty in navigating the new culture, especially when communicating in an academic environment or in public. She stated that:

'I was crying every night before travel because dealing with life there. My nephew wasn't responsible enough. It was difficult time...Studying abroad will be challenge in the language and academia, Are people here better than us in academia? Are they smarter than us? I had these questions before.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 4 (female) expected similar challenges to those mentioned by participant 3. She divided these potential challenges into two key aspects. *Living* in the UK and *studying* in the UK higher education setting. She said that:

'I didn't think it would be this expensive, I thought the education level was much higher than ours. I did expect larger houses. I thought that the education would be very difficult. Getting the degree will be very difficult.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 7 (male) spoke of one the challenges he expected before moving to the UK. He mentioned how he had expected the UK to be expensive and whether that expectation was correct, especially in this city. He stated that:

'I thought it'll be expensive, and when I arrived here it was expensive. Especially this city is very expensive similar to London.' (Participant 7, male)

4.1.1.2.3 Collecting information about the UK in advance

Most of the participants (6 participants) pointed out the importance of gathering information about living and studying in the UK before arriving. Participants highlighted that the aim of collecting this information was to structure and validate their anticipations of life and study in the UK and to prepare a helpful transition plan. Several participants mentioned that collecting information about the UK in advance was an essential strategy in minimising fears and concerns about the experience.

Participant 1 (male) described his experience of gathering information regarding study in the UK. He stated that this information was highly valuable in several different ways. He first used this information to increase his awareness of the new, unfamiliar culture. Next, he used it to structure and evaluate his anticipations in terms of life and study in the UK. After this, he reflected on those anticipations to set up a plan for moving abroad. The participant spoke confidently about how this process of gathering information and responding to it in practice was an effective process. He stated that:

'I think as I collected info about the UK before getting here that helped me to build my perceptions about life and study here, I can say everything was like I expected, I expected the study will be hard here and it was, I think it was harder than my expectation, to be honest, no more change in my beliefs about society here because that I got that information before from friends, especially things related to the religion, or my wife hijab.' (Participant 1, male)

Another example relates to participant 2 (male), who talked about how he mentally prepared himself to respond to potential challenges. He seemed to intend not to become stuck in a stage of culture shock caused by a new and difficult experience, but rather he intended to focus on solving any difficulty immediately. Thus, he collected information to be used when needed. He stated that:

'I thought about many scenarios and how I can face them, may be in the Internet I could find some information that can help me to solve any problem I may face.' (Participant 2, male)

Other participants highlighted valuable sources when collecting information about the UK. For example, participant 6 (female) talked about her main source used when collecting pertinent information. She revealed that her sister had communicated her former study experience in the UK to her. She was less worried to move to the new culture as she thus had some preliminary knowledge of the UK. This experience showed how important it is for students to build a network for accessing different sources of information which should be available to them at any time. She said that:

'... My sister got an experience studying here in the UK so she just finished, I think, 2011, she just finish her PhD in the UK... I just start collecting information from her about everything. How can do that, what about sitting in the first place, maybe, what I need to do. What I need to take it with me in, before, I travel. Most important: food, and Arabic coffee.... I think that, I have some information because she was here so wasn't that I don't know anything.' (Participant 6, female)

In greater detail, participant 7 (male) described his dynamic process used in collecting information and transferring this information into *practice*. He gave an example of looking for information about UK cultural norms and dealing with UK people. However, when he tried to use or deploy some of this gathered information in practice, it was found to be useless and caused confusion. He attributed this result to others' perceptions of their experiences and how they communicate this experience to others. To resolve the confusion, the participant decided to test the practicability of information in real settings by visiting the UK on holiday in order to clear up uncertainties. He stated that:

'Before I arrived here, I read a lot in the internet, I tried to find people who had experience to give me advices....I had a feedback from people who studied in the UK... Some people told me British are friendly and kind...Some of them told me I have to start talking to British because they are never going to start talking to you. Some of them told British don't like to exchange culture with others. After I gather information about people, I found completely messy, because some of them have different points than other. However, I decided to go for, to move there for three or two months for a holiday, in summer. I just try to see by myself, and, who I should believe?' (Participant 7, male)

Participant 8 (female) revealed what limitations to information exist, and how these can be a potential challenge for students. Although information about life in this city was available, especially on the Internet, this type of information was not what she was looking for. It seemed that she was seeking information that was conveyed by individuals from her own cultural group, such as by previous Saudi students. She was looking for a type of examined information that could be effectively used to make the transition experience run more smoothly. She stated that:

'I was very happy to be in the UK but you know when I started reading about this city, but there's not much information about it on the Internet in 2012, 2013. Okay, I know this is old city, very old, but you know, I didn't know about life here. There is no much information on the Internet. This is like one problem for me. I like to collect information, just like sit and read.' (Participant 8, female)

A few of the participants commented on how it was helpful to explore the UK and to inspect potential places to live and study prior to starting studies. An example of this came from participant 4 (female) who spoke about visiting the UK for a vacation and thereby exploring the UK six months before the start date of her study programme. As she was driven by a long-term goal to study abroad, it was essential to research the location she would eventually choose before making the final move to the UK. She said that:

'... First time I came here was for vacation just to explore the country and everything, and I spent one month. Then after that.. with six months? I came for, start my English language course.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 5 (female) had the same experience as that conveyed by participant 4. She highlighted the importance of being able to explore the city's and University's daily lives in detail to make a well-informed decision about where she moved to. She stated that:

'I have visited this city before starting my program by eight months to discover the city and the university.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.1.2.4 Worries about wearing the Hijab

In Saudi Arabia, it is forbidden for any woman to be in public without her head being covered, and the majority of Saudi Arabian women wear veils (*Niqab*) (Ministry of Education, 2010). The meaning of *Hijab* is literally "to cover" or "to veil". It is important to note that the *Hijab* is not directly translatable into the English term of *scarf*. This term covers a range of clothes which included scarves, but also a wider range of dress styles from different cultures (Shimek, 2012). In Saudi Arabia specifically, the *Hijab* is known as the *Abaya*. Women must wear the *Abaya* in public. At home with relatives, in compounds and all-female settings, women can choose not to use these outer layers. The strict dress code does not mean there is no manoeuvre room for fashion statements to be made. *Abayas* can be in different cuts, styles, colours and fabrics. They range from plain black to ones to those with coloured characters on the back, and from cotton daywear to frilly ones suitable for an evening out (Shimek, 2012).

Most of the female participants (four of them) had concerns regarding the *Hijab*, as had married male participants who then moved with them. They anticipated some instances of intolerance towards traditional Saudi women's clothing, which is a face-covering form of the *Hijab*. Participants pointed out that the *Hijab* may have a major influence on their navigation of the new culture. Others had assumed that the *Hijab* may expose them to

danger and may threaten their safety. The sources of these concerns came from others; Saudi Arabia students who had formerly studied in the UK had fuelled such worries. Also, the tragic killing of a Saudi female student who was wearing the *Hijab* in Colchester in 2014 had impacted on the participants. Several participants believed that the Saudi Arabian form of *Hijab* would not be accepted in the UK public sphere; therefore, some participants developed more culturally acceptable designs of the *Hijab*, by for example changing the *Hijab*'s shape and its colours.

Married participant 1 (male) explained his anticipation of this challenge. Hijab was not simply an issue for women, but for the men who are with/married to the women. It was a complex inter-relational issue that involves the individual wearing the Hijab, the family and the culture of origin, all coming into contact with people from another culture. The participant was expecting negative reactions toward his wife's Hijab, including racism and potential harm. It seemed that these anticipations helped him to prepare for dealing with this challenge and to make him more able to cope positively. He and his wife had a plan for tackling this challenge which involved his wife making some change to her Hijab's forms and colours make it more accepted. He stated that:

'I expected some difficulties will face us as a family, my wife is always covering her body including her face due to her religion beliefs, so we expected that we will face some problems like racist against hijab and some people will try to harm us in different ways because of my wife just wearing hijab, and as we expected that before we came my wife designed some scarfs and hijab that might be more acceptable here, she expected that will face some annoying people against this.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 6 (female) comprised an example of a Saudi female student who decided *not* to change or redevelop her *Hijab* to make it more acceptable. She preferred to keep the Saudi female traditional form of *Hijab*. She spoke of her experience when she arrived at the airport and how she immediately realised that this form of *Hijab* was considered strange here and presented difficulties. She did not feel comfortable fitting into the new culture looking like this. It seemed that she intended to test the traditional form in the new culture but the negative result eventually prompted her to change her *Hijab*'s form. She ended up adopting a new form of Hijab that was more acceptable. She said that:

'I was thinking of leaving my full hijab, at the airport I was wearing my Hijab and everything, but when I just came here, It didn't work at all...Maybe I was worried about Hijab more than what I faced.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 4 (female) described her feeling of fear and worry about wearing the *Hijab* and people's attitudes toward Saudi women in the UK. She spoke of how she sought information that might minimise her feeling of fear. She was afraid of feeling rejected in the new culture due to her *Hijab*. She thought that UK people were friendly but at the same time she was worried as to the extent to which they were friendly with females who wore the *Hijab*. She stated:

'I was always asking everybody visited UK, are you wearing hijab there? Only before coming, because it really was very fast. What UK people think about hijab, I was afraid wearing a hijab. Is it acceptable, is it not acceptable?. I expect the people to be nice. I didn't expect them to be racist, but I was always afraid wearing hijab.' Participant 4, female)

Participant 5 (female) was another example of someone with fears and worries about wearing the *Hijab*. She thought that people in the new culture may judge her not based on her character but based on the fact she looked like a Saudi Muslim female. Thus, she thought her appearance with the *Hijab* might cause rejection in the new culture. She described the effect of media messages on her perceived thoughts about wearing the *Hijab* in the UK. On the other hand, she mentioned how other Saudi students informed her that wearing the *Hijab* abroad was a safe experience. However, this feedback did not deplete the extent of her fears and worries, in fact it may have added more stress due to the conflicting nature of the information. This conflicting information can negatively impact on Saudi females' anticipations about wearing the *Hijab* in the UK; this is a key perceived challenge in entering the new culture.

'I was very afraid before I came here. I was very afraid that they would be judgmental based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim. I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi. I was influenced by media even Saudis how is studying abroad saying they did not face any problems with Hijab. I was afraid and terrified from failure and racism under Hijab.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.1.3 Family structures, gender, and planning

This theme investigates Saudi Arabian international students' family structures, the importance of their gender, and their planning processes in preparing to study abroad; this related the steps and procedures that Saudi students used in order to move to the UK. (see Table 4.1). The theme captures the decisions to study in the UK and the process of arriving at this decision. These students planned and structured the process of transition in the UK based on two major considerations: a) family involvement in the decision, and b) the establishment of female students' companions.

4.1.1.3.1 Family involvement in the decision

Several of the participants (five), especially the females, flagged up the essential roles of family members in their decision to study abroad. It emerged that they were not able to make the decision to study abroad independently. Female participants described the importance of obtaining family agreement in first place and *then* submitting this agreement to the government scholarship agency as a documentary part of the official application.

Participant 3 (female) was clear that a Saudi female is not able to study abroad without permission from family. In her case, her older brother was the head of the family and was responsible for the decision. She stated that:

'I was thinking for long time, and discussed this with my brothers as in Saudi Arabia woman should take a permission from the father or a brother and because in my situation my father died before 6 years my old brother responsible about me, he discussed with me why do I wanted to travel, what's the benefits for me, you have a job, you will get married, have a family, and I know as he knows getting married is not come fast, I have to wait and waiting for me is very boring so I will not spend my life just waiting I have to improve myself and discover the other part, he agreed because he trusted me and he knows who I am, my family knows my background was wide with my family so, they gave me the permission, I was very happy and he signed my papers.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 4 (female) described her experience of encountering difficulties in convincing her family to allow her to study abroad. In her case, it emerged that part of her family was not happy to let her pursue her academic dream. Unfortunately, she was not the only female who had faced this difficulty in her family; one of her older sisters had faced the same experience before. She seemed to be suffering from a limitation in terms of support in both her home country *and* the host country. She said that:

'I was thinking how my family would allow me to study abroad alone; I was allowed to study just in this city because my companion there (her cousin). After finishing English, I had difficulty to convince my family to study a PhD. My brothers wanted me to get back and not to go again but my dad gave me the permission to study abroad because he feels guilty not to allow my sister complete her Education.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 6 (female) had a similar experience. She was a university assistant teacher and the University chose her as a candidate for a scholarship which could not be rejected, otherwise she may have lost her job. This participant described how she was stuck between her family's dictates and the University's decision. She stated that:

'It wasn't an easy decision to make to go to the UK to complete my study...but my family didn't want me to go outside and if I didn't go outside, maybe I will lose my job, I think they put us in really tough time...I decided to go because otherwise I would lose my job. So I had difficult time with my parents to convince them I would go outside...My family wanted me to go to the UK, because my sister was studying here, so they know about this country.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 5 (female) claimed that she had had a chance to apply for a government scholarship before but she had preferred to get married. However, she got divorced and

moved her life in a different direction. However, she had to involve her father in the decision, as she was also self-funding this time. She said:

'I plan to study abroad for a long time, but I had to cancel it due to family issues. After I get divorced, I told my father I want to go back to study.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.1.3.2 Female student's companion

This subtheme is relevant especially to Saudi Arabian female students, and most of them highlighted it (four participants) as an issue. According to Saudi Arabian norms and legislation, women are not allowed to study abroad without a male companion (Ministry of Education, 2010). This companion must be a *relative* of the female student such as a father, brother or uncle. It could be a husband if the female student is married. This male companion must stay with the female student from the beginning of the study period to the end. Male companions appeared as an important factor in each of female participants' experiences; both in terms of making the decision to study in the UK, and the transition to life and study there running right up to the end of their time spent abroad. As having a male companion living with the Saudi female students during study abroad is legally mandatory, most of the female students in the current study reported experiences of living with their male companions.

Participant 3 (female) justified this practice as intended to protect Saudi females while they are outside the country. She believed this male companion can provide the protection that is required. However, all the eligible male companions in her family were unavailable at the necessary time so she had to go with her young nephew. This young companion was relatively unhelpful and exacerbated the challenges which emerged. She said that:

'... This is the rule and I think this will protect me...the government thinks the male member will protect the girl outside the country and actually the male dependent could be the husband, father or brother but sometimes in critical cases like my case my brothers are busy and my nephew wanted to study outside Saudi Arabia but because his age he is not mature enough and never traveled before, I was worried how he will deal with the new culture, freedom here, because his age and he didn't travel outside before, yes, when I just arrived to the UK I discovered that he cannot protect me I actually have to protect him, keep watching him, advise him, one of the most challenges for me here, to deal with teenager in a new culture.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 6 (female) had a similar experience to that of participant 3. She had to come with her younger brother who was a high school student at the time. It emerged that a companion must be a *male* even if he is younger. She described the complexity involved in her case as part of her family was against her studying abroad and she was subjected acutely to the effects of this conflict. She added that her father provided her with encouragement and support but her mother did not. She stated that:

'...the other problem because I don't have someone to go with me, so I need to find who will go with me. My brother – all of them, they are younger than me, so one of them was in, I think high school, so if I just wait until he finished, or go with him, or – so that was a really difficult time. So he just went with me, like two or three months, and then he tried to go Saudi Arabia again. My father supported me at that time, to come here. I was shocked because he was against going outside. Mum said no, why you are traveling, leaving everything. But my father encouraged me.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 4 (female) described how it living compulsorily with her uncle as a required companion was an unsatisfactory experience. It emerged that the companion exacerbated challenges instead of providing support. She mentioned that her father forced her to live with this male companion. However, she ended up living separately from her companion and she was disappointed that she was left without any support. She said that:

'First I lived 3 months compulsory with my uncle, who was the companion. Yes, my uncle was the companion so I was, like living with my cousin like compulsory so, when my dad asked me to join me cousin. Then, after very unsatisfied experience, I finished the language and, as I said, I take a private property and I live for one year literally alone. Until now I don't know how I did it. I used to live in very large families.' (Participant 4, female)

For participant 5 (female) the father was the companion. Compared to other females, she seemed to have had a positive experience of this facet of being in the UK for study. She stated that her father provided much support to her as a companion. She described the effect on her when this companion went back home and the difficulty she encountered in losing support and having to cope alone with the new culture. She stated that:

'I came with my father. He spent with me like two weeks and it was kind of a very strange feeling that I'm not...I don't know if I'm a student or just here for a visiting. But after he left I really was shocked, now I am alone, I am responsible for everything, I am starting a new life, I am away from my family, I am away from everything, I just have to adapt myself for this new situation.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.1.4 Discussion

In the present study, participants reported remarkably similar experiences of the pre-move aspect of studying abroad. The practical features of this stage were relatively homogeneous in nature; however, when it comes to the individual experiential aspect of how they felt and perceived their imminent journey, each participant reported a unique and idiosyncratic set of concerns, excitements and ideas. The participants all responded with a discussion of core issues of motivation to study abroad, anticipation and expectations about the UK and their imminent experience of life there, and how their

planning and motivations related to family structure(s), their gender, and their political-ideational beliefs (including those relating to religiosity).

Berry's Psychological Acculturation framework represents the process of acculturation which takes place when two cultures come in direct and constant contact. The model framework is illustrated in chapter two. It contains several variables such as personal variables. Berry (1997, 2011) stated that the outcomes of an individuals' psychological acculturation relies upon the nature of these variables. Berry also stated that any research, which does not take into consideration these variables, will be incomplete and will not be able to understand the way people go through acculturation. Therefore, the current study attempted to examine these elements of the psychological acculturation framework.

Berry (1997; 2011) argues that understanding an individual's experience of cross-cultural acculturation requires an understanding of their personal attributes *prior* to acculturation. In Berry's (2011) theoretical framework, such factors included gender, age, pre-acculturation beliefs, family status role, social status, education, motivation(s), anticipations, cultural specificities, cultural distance, and identity.

In this study, the findings themes of pre-moving manifest the personal variables that Berry (1997, 2011) demonstrates in his theory as factors that exist prior to acculturation.

There was a myriad range of motivations raised in the interviews, including those pertaining to educational, political, economic, and religious considerations. Several frameworks have been developed which categorise the key motivational factors which occur as determinants of the transition and adaptation processes (see Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001; Ward, Bocher, & Furnham, 2001). The motivations and anticipations addressed by the participants in this study were key drivers of the participant's experiences in the UK and their perceptions of their study period spent there. Each participant's entrenched ideas and beliefs about the world and other cultural backgrounds were explicitly linked to key motivations and anticipations when it came to study in the UK.

Motivations, anticipatory expectations and the planning process in going to study abroad often orientated around cultural considerations of social norms, political values and societal behavioural norms. These critical considerations required exerted effort on the participants' parts to sufficiently psychologically prepare themselves for their imminent interface with a new cultural setting. The acculturation process had evidently begun at the level of the psyche *prior to* their physical transition to the UK. This cognitive process initiated a phase of decision making which prompted them to factor in the full range of their educational and other motivations. These decisions and considerations centred around the participants' expectations of UK life long before their actual arrival in the country. Berry (1997, 2002) has found that acculturation is quintessentially a process of cultural transition and self-transformation that results in managing and navigating the move from one culture to another.

The subsequent sections provide detailed explanation about the factors that exist prior to acculturation and the important phenomena that frequently takes place in the psychological acculturation process of Saudi international students.

Theme 1: motivations to study abroad

Berry et al. (2002) have reported that crucial to understanding the motivation to embark on a transition to a different country, and/or motivations to study abroad as an international student, is the pre-acculturation experiences of the individuals concerned. The decision to move to a different country can frequently be premised on an individual's motivations to develop and improve their quality of life; the intended transition is also often driven by a desire to attain certain goals and by rational expectations of achieving these goals by moving (De Jong & Fawcett, 1981). Acculturation is the process of learning about the host culture (Berry, 1997) and the motivation to acculturate in the first place, along with the fostering of a desire to do so, are determined to a significant extent by the pre-acculturation factors discussed by Berry (2011) (see also Dentakos et al., 2017).

This study focuses on Saudi Arabian international students, who are engaged in a type of sojourn. Berry et al. (2002; 2011) refer to *sojourners* as individuals living in a host society momentarily for a specific purpose and occupying different but discreet vocational roles such as being an international student, a guest worker, or a diplomat. The engagement of sojourners in their host society is influenced and shaped by their level of awareness as to their final and inevitable *departure* from the host country. Hence, many do not aim to fully involve themselves in the host culture by building close relationships and identities with the host country (Berry et al., 2002; 2011). Furthermore, *sojourners* are more likely to suffer from mental health issues due to the limited level of immediate support and social networks available to them (Berry, 2005). International students are sojourner migrants and are essentially (not invariably but nearly always) motivated by non-residency-related reasons; they voluntarily depart from their countries on a time-limited basis to achieve a specific academic objective (Berry, 2006; Dentakos, et al., 2017). They are non-permanent actors in their host societies who are conscious of their transient and project-specific rationale behind temporary migration. Thus, international students prefer to prioritise academic achievement at the cost of cross-cultural embedding and entrenchment, such that these student sojourners are *less* likely to value learning about the host culture (Dentakos, et al., 2017; Kim, 2001). Yet, when a low level of commitment to the host culture occurs, this can prompt a heightening of risk when it comes to migrant adjustment outcomes; *sojourner* adjustment outcomes may then be particularly vulnerable to that risk (Dentakos, et al., 2017). Berry et al. (1987) stated that, in contrast to permanent migrants, sojourning migrants face greater levels of acculturation stress and often show lower levels of adjustment.

It is clear from both the current study and former research that Saudi students' motivations to move abroad differ to those of many migrant groups seeking improved life chances and/or refugees escaping from wars. Saudi students often choose to enter a new and

unfamiliar societal context significantly different from Saudi culture, complicit with the challenges that entrance drives, for personal and academic motivating reasons. The Saudi students who comprised the participant sample had internal motivations relating to self-development and career enhancement, not external motivations relating to political persecution or poor opportunities in their native country. Thus, self-improvement, career development, knowledge and skills acquisition, and the experience of a new culture formed the participants' core motivations. These internal and self-referential motivations meant that the sampled Saudi students had a greater level of control over the process of entering the new culture than many labour migrants or refugees. This greater degree of autonomy in entering the UK and encountering its culture was evidenced in the Saudi students' anticipations, recourse to family structures, gender role-related considerations and planning strategies. Tran (2011) studied Vietnamese international students in Australia and found that *self-development*, *education* and *wealth* were the key motivations that the students were most driven by and that Vietnamese students had high expectations to achieve these goals in Australia. The desire to achieve these goals impacted the students' attitudes to acculturation (Tran, 2011). In the present study, there were indications that the participants both deliberately engaged in a transition to the UK in order to improve their personal skills and competencies, but also to deploy these skills to improve the Saudi Arabian culture, economy, polity and society upon their return home. This finding highlights that motivations were both personal *and* social and they involved consideration of the future both for themselves as individuals and for Saudi Arabian culture and society in general.

The participants seemed to have an intuitive sense that there are limited opportunities for knowledge and skills enhancement using educational programmes and routes of development in Saudi Arabia itself. Entering the UK and accessing its higher educational facilities were seen as means of redressing these gaps. The participants were also vocal that they were driven by a clear desire to instrumentally use their experiences and education in the UK to redress skills gaps and look at areas for improvement in the Saudi system. Chirkov et al. (2007) conducted a study of Chinese international students in Canada and Belgium and investigated the role of two factors in students' decisions to study overseas: (i) the level of self-determined motivation and (ii) the substantive nature of their goals. The former included motivations to avoid disadvantageous conditions in their home countries, and a stark desire to engage in self-development; the self-development motivations behind studying overseas tended to be more orientated around personal goals and desires than those relating to disadvantageous conditions, which were often more socially framed as there being a need for broad-sweeping improvement in the home country. These findings accord directly with the findings in this study.

By encountering, engaging with and experiencing a new culture, the participants voiced that they were acutely aware of a different mode of living to that of their home country; several participants expressed that integration requires more than just intellectual knowledge of the host culture – it involved acting within it. The participants desired to experience a different culture and to experience new things during their study period in

the UK. Being in the UK constituted an opportunity to change and challenge roles and identities, and to temporarily engage in playful experiment with gender norms and social expectations prevalent in the home culture of Saudi Arabia. Saudi international students studying in Australia showed a strong level of motivation to learn more about the society there and to integrate in practice with Australians (Alhazmi, & Nyland, 2013). Saudi students were very often willing to exchange their culture with the Australians; one key motivation behind this high level of cultural dialogue is that Saudis students are exposed to media representations of Australia as a highly multicultural and inclusive society, thereby making it look attractive and in need of experience by Saudi students (Alhazmi, & Nyland, 2013).

Theme 2: Anticipations

The participant Saudi international students often had anticipations about living and studying in the UK which were derived from information accessed via various forms of media such as the Internet, TV and films. Some of them had developed their anticipations based on the reported experiences of friends who had formerly lived and studied in the UK. Saudi international students are affected by these informal networks of information and they often form anticipatory attitudes based on the information they obtain from trusted peers (Orth, 2015). Saudi students trust such information provided by other Saudi sojourners who have already engaged in education abroad and the substantive content of their anticipations are framed very significantly by this information.

East (2001) argues that international students bring anticipations with them that are often based on incomplete or inaccurate knowledge. Orth (2015) found that Saudi international students had conducted almost *no* systematic research about Australia, or about the Australian higher education, before going there to study, outside of informal conversations. The Saudi students had very little robust information to go on in shaping their anticipations of their move to Australia. They had little if any knowledge about Australians and their community values and standards, nor about what the university would be like (Orth, 2015). Students were unconcerned about making friends easily, whether and how people would accept or reject them, and how they would deal with the different educational system (Orth, 2015).

The participants in this study tended to have positive acculturation attitudes about living and studying in the UK. They described how they had wanted to move so as to study and improve themselves while in the UK. Berry et al (1989) reported that acculturation attitudes are the attitudes that are held by individuals towards the manner in which they are keen on engaging with other individuals they meet in their acculturation sphere. The participants believed that the UK education system provided them with an opportunity to obtain sophisticated knowledge and training in their fields. For a significant number of the participants studying abroad meant moving beyond the confines of the educational institution and actually experiencing other aspects of life in the UK. They often referred to their desire to experience new things and their eagerness to meet new and diverse

peoples during their study experience. Dwyer and Peters (2004) have found that international students anticipate that they will widen opportunities to obtain better employment through studying abroad. Such anticipations support the notion of labour market globalisation whereby international students expect benefits to accrue in their own countries from studying abroad at high-ranking institutions (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Orth (2015) has found that Saudi international students in Australia expect a broader degree programme which provided greater benefits than a degree obtained in their home country. The respondents in Orth's (2015) study believed that Australian degrees would improve their opportunities in their local labour market back home.

Prior to leaving their home country, the participants formed several anticipatory beliefs and expectations. They were aware that the experience of moving to live and study in the UK would be transformational in a number of different ways. One of these transformational aspects pertains to developing their specific academic competence. This relates therefore to self-development and skills acquisition. This personal aspect of transformation was combined with a socially-minded ambition to add value to their own society upon return as a product of studying in the UK. Orth (2015) found that Saudi international students in Australia want to contribute to the improvement of their home country using their first-hand knowledge and new skills that they acquire by studying abroad.

The participants in the present study were critically aware of the possibility of facing challenges when studying abroad. Melius (2017) has found that Saudi students voice initial worries about the challenges they may face prior to moving to study in the US and that these students often worry about how they will be perceived in the host country. The Saudi students sampled in Heyn's (2013) study were worried about negative perceptions they may encounter by people in the US and about not being welcomed by US citizens. In the present study, several participants were able to identify specific sources of possible challenge including entering a new value culture and being in an unfamiliar educational system. These expectations prompted Saudi students to prepare for coping with these challenges even *before* moving to the UK. For instance, a female participant stated that she expected to encounter negative reactions towards the Saudi *Hijab*. The Saudi women's *hijab* is a central part of a Saudi woman's identity. Thus, instead of stopping wearing the Hijab to avoid negative reactions, the participant formed a psychological coping strategy for dealing with such reactions.

The participants posited that any individual can and will face challenges when engaged in study abroad, but they affirmed that these challenges can be even more stressful when studying in a profoundly different culture. The participants considered the potential challenges that they may face, and they expected to encounter difficulty navigating the new culture, especially when communicating in an academic environment or in public settings. Saudi students were also concerned that they would have difficulty adjusting because of inadequate English proficiency (Almotery, 2009; Melius, 2017). Participants often divided these potential challenges into two key thematic categories. *Living in the UK* was distinguished from *studying in the UK*.

The participants expressed the importance of gathering information about living and studying in the UK before arriving. The aim of collecting this information was to structure anticipations toward life and study in the UK and so that they could prepare a solid transition plan. Collecting information about the UK in advance was an essential strategy for minimising fear and worry orientated around this new and unpredictable experience. This information was highly valuable in increasing initial awareness of the new and as-yet unfamiliar culture; such information also enabled participants to flesh out (vague or clear) plans for *how* they would integrate and make the cultural transition. Collecting information about the UK thus helped the participants to mentally prepare for possible challenges, encouraging them to be proactive and not merely stuck in an early stage of confusion when encountering the new culture for any longer than necessary. Information collection was a recurring theme as a key component of their strategic planning for overcoming this confusion swiftly and effectively.

However, participants encountered specific difficulties in the process of collecting information and then putting this information into *practice*. Using the information in practice was often difficult because knowing about another culture and value system is not the same thing as comprehending precisely how to act in a specific contextual scenario. An ensuing confusion had led several participants to explore the UK and other places to live and study prior to starting their journey, using online sources at times. Understanding the lived experience of a given city and its university was considered very important by the participants. Entering a new culture requires a process of obtaining knowledge about practical and daily life in the host country. The participants felt that generic information about “Western” or “European” culture is only helpful in practice when the specific practices of everyday life are also understood and researched.

Distinct limitations to viable and useable information are a core challenge for students. Although information about life in the city is readily available, especially on Internet, this type of information was often not the type of information they were looking for. Participants sought information that was drawn from individuals of the same cultural group, such as previous Saudi students. The merits of these reports is that they were able to offer guidance on how to make the transition process more smooth running.

It emerged that the participants believed they would contribute to Saudi Arabian society and culture when they re-entered the home country. This finding aligns with that of Heyn (2013) and the findings in Shaw’s (2010) study whereby Saudi students wished to take their knowledge back to Saudi Arabia to help make the country a more prosperous place. The participants also held that they could make a significant contribution by recommending imminent Saudi students going to the UK on how to engage with the cultural differences; they felt that their experiences and lived knowledge generated by being in the UK will be useful for guiding and advising other Saudi students seeking to study in the UK.

The female participants all voiced concerns regarding the *Hijab*, as did the married male participants who moved with their wives. The *Hijab* can have a major influence on their expectations and encounters with the new culture both because it is a key cultural symbol and because of racism and racially motivated crime in the UK. The *Hijab* can expose students to real danger and can create a sense in students of risks to personal safety. The Saudi Arabian form of the *Hijab* tends to be considered less acceptable in the UK and this prompted women to develop more acceptable designs for the *Hijab*, for example by changing the *Hijab*'s shape or its colours.

Later, those Saudi females who preferred to maintain the traditional form of the *Hijab* and who decided not to develop it into a more culturally accepted form often stated that they felt uncomfortable because of their *Hijab*. These individuals often resorted to adapting their *Hijab* because of this sense of discomfort. The female participants were clear that they had been unnerved and worried about UK citizens' responses to the because of their *Hijab*. UK people were reported in the information sources the women accessed as being friendly but doubts persisted as to whether they would be friendly to women wearing a *Hijab*. Thus the *Hijab* was feared to be a potential cause of an experience of rejection in the new culture. On the other hand, a number of previous Saudi students informed participants that wearing the *Hijab* abroad was a safe and convenient experience. This feedback had not decreased the level of fear and worry in several of the participants; conflicting messages about the acceptability of the *Hijab* in UK culture caused an exacerbation of worries. The visibility generated by Saudi females who chose to wear the *Hijab* was a recurring issue identified by participants; they were wary of sporting markers of difference in the study spaces, and in social media. The *Hijab* as a cultural marker was more a matter of cultural identity and fears around culture than it was a matter of racially related concerns. This fact did not, however, dissuade the participants from being concerned.

Theme 3: family structures, gender and planning

This section discusses the Saudi international students' family structures, their gender, and the planning they engaged in prior to transition to the UK. It is focused on two major aspects: (i) family involvement in the decision, and (ii) the female student's companion. The contribution of family members to the decision to study abroad is essential for the participants, especially females. Women and many men are not allowed to make the decision to study abroad independently because of cultural norms. Saudi females cannot study abroad without permission being granted by the family. It is important to obtain family agreement prior to submitting an application to the government scholarship agency as part of the official application procedure. Several participants experienced acute difficulties in convincing their families to allow them to study abroad. In several cases, parts of the family had not supported studying abroad which essentially meant limited social network support at both home and host culture ends of the process.

Saudi Arabia does not allow any female to study abroad without a male companion who must stay with her from the beginning of the journey to the end (Ministry of Education, 2010). This companion must be a male relative of the female student such as a father, brother or uncle, and could be a husband if the female student is married. Male companions are seen as providing the protection and support that may be required while they are outside the country. Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) affirm that female Saudi international students are obliged to be accompanied by a male family member during their study overseas and that this has ramifications outside the classroom and lecture theatre. Cultural norms restrict the freedom of female students to go out without explicit permission; this restricts their chances for self-improvement and skills development via interaction with host culture and peoples (Alqahtani & Pfeffer, 2017).

Many related older men are considered not eligible to be companions or are unavailable at the required time or under the stipulated conditions. This prompts several female participants to move abroad with a young companion. These young men often go through a transition experience themselves and this can increase challenges for the female student. These male companions can be an effective source of support for the female students, but they can also exacerbate the students' issues and difficulties when living arrangements and home life are negatively affected.

4.1.2 Arrival and Life in the UK: Challenges

The findings emerging from the data analyses provide important insights into the challenges the participants had experienced in arriving, living and studying in the UK (see Table 4.2). These challenges include homesickness when abroad, language barriers, personal and academic challenges, gendered experience of female participants, issues when representing the home culture and religion, gendered interaction, and social and emotional support (or lack thereof). In this section, the data are drawn directly from responses to interview questions relating to these topics. Such questions included the following: "after arriving, could you please share your experiences of living and studying in the UK? What have the challenges been? What do you do when faced with challenges?"; and "Could you please tell me about support you have while in the UK?". Each main theme included related sub-themes.

Table 4.2 Primary themes and subthemes related to arrival and life in the UK

Arrival and life in the UK: Challenges, coping strategies and sources of support	
Theme	Subtheme
Homesickness	Isolation and feeling of alienation
	Crying and feeling lost
Language	Strategies for learning English
	English and communication
	Challenge with English
Personal challenges	Financial difficulties
	Finding accommodation

	Navigating the physical space and using public transport
	Food & diet
Academic challenges	Academic language & academic skills
	Differences in the education system
Gendered experience of female participants	Hijab
	Fear of being not accepted as a female
	Fear of being judge by home culture or other Saudis
	Feeling stuck between two distinct cultures
	Taking responsibilities and navigating as a female
Issues of representing home culture and religion	How “do” I look
	Media and Islamophobia
Gendered Interaction	Interaction with Saudi and non-Saudi females/males
Social and emotional support	Friend support
	Family and parental support
	Support from faculties and native students

4.1.2.1 Homesickness

This theme pertains to Saudi Arabian international students’ sense of homesickness when in the UK, including feelings of isolation, feeling lost and alienation as well as crying (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.1.1 Isolation and feelings of alienation

Isolation and feelings of alienation here refer to the distress that occurs due to separation from home and these concepts often entail thoughts of home and attachment figures (Ahmed, 2016). Feelings of isolation are often accompanied by anxiety and depression (Bhugra, & Becker, 2005). They frequently emerge when individuals move abroad and can be exacerbated by unfamiliar environments and unfamiliar cultural contexts (Hamad, 2012). A feeling of isolation is especially common among international students. These students may experience a sense of separation-induced anxiety during their first days after arriving (Ahmed, 2016).

As shown in the pre-arrival discussion, participants moving to the UK had clear anticipations; they developed concrete plans to navigate with less difficulty within the new culture. Despite this preparation, they often experienced isolation and feelings of alienation. A number of participants (6 participants) found that the transition process they had anticipated was, upon arrival, more challenging when it comes to merging both socially and academically into new culture. This discomfort often experiences when living in a culture and in a different context can threaten the understanding of self on the part of students.

Participant 2 (male) described his experiences during the first days when he felt unfit for the new and different context. He experienced a feeling of being “different” due to the unfamiliarity of places and people. The participant pointed out that the feeling of isolation was intense by stating that he came to the UK not knowing anybody prior to arrival. He

experienced a feeling of self-blame and self-castigation for making the decision to move to the UK. It emerged that the participant suffered from a limited access to support in the beginning of his journey; this made him experience worsened isolation. The social support that he received from friends was key to reducing feelings of isolation and regaining self-confidence and a sense of well-being. He stated that:

'I lived in a hotel, and I went to the city center. I didn't know any person there. I just came by myself. And I just looked around in the city center. And it's different, very old buildings. And, I went to get SIM card for my phone number. And I felt very strange. Why I came here? Nobody. I don't know anybody. And I think that's feeling was very bad feeling. How, how I can deal with this situation? And I saw this, those buildings, like these buildings I saw in the previous time in the cartoon, children's cartoons, something very old. I can't remember. I came here to study. Felt strange. And I came here day after day, to study. And after two or three months I felt really confident here. When I find the new friends and I felt more confident.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 4 (female) described her experience of entering a new life as a conflicted and internally challenging process. She felt regret and self-blame for going to study abroad. The limited support and daily difficulties made her consider going back home, despite her planned goal to collect important data for her research project. She then had internal, cognitive and emotional, difficulties when re-entering the UK after spending six months in the home country. These difficulties not only included homesickness but also depression and anxiety. The participant pointed out that going back to her home country was an attractive idea for her due to the feeling of safety that she had there. She stated that:

'...Then life became more complicated. I didn't find any accommodation, any other accommodation, I stay quiet, at the first time, I felt like regret to come here and an idiot to come here. I had very bad homesick. I decided to do the fieldwork in Saudi Arabia; I spent six months in Saudi Arabia. Then it was supposed to come after Ramadan, so I came before one week of Ramadan. I had depression and anxiety for three weeks. Three weeks literally couldn't get up from my bed. If you ask me for example, where do you prefer to live? Of course I would say Saudi. I dreamed of the day to go to Saudi. I feel safe there.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 7 (male) spoke of his experience of living with a British family. He did not seem to fit properly into the family's norms and daily customs. Staying all day in his room was evidence of the isolation he suffered from. Also, the participant showed a low level of assertiveness insofar as he did not ask the family for help in terms of his basic needs such as accessing water. Although he spent seven months surrounded by this family, he was socially and emotionally separated from them and felt acute loneliness despite the family being around him. In addition, the participant faced difficulty when he entered the university environment; this prompted him to not attend classes for two full weeks. He attributed this behaviour to his feeling of isolation. This participant constitutes an example

of students who suffer more than others due to *individual* differences in personality and approach. He stated that:

'I lived with homestay for 7 months. Sometimes, I spent whole day in my room, I wasn't confident about my language, even I couldn't ask water. Here I feel homesick, I saw how to be alone nobody around me, just me sometimes it makes me sad and crying. In the first two weeks, I didn't go to the lectures, I was a bit sick, I had no health problem, but I had something in psychology. I went one day to a lecture but I was outside the lecture. I didn't go inside. I don't know why.' (Participant 7, male)

Participant 5 (female) spoke about her experience of missing intimate, caring family life. She felt that people in the new culture could not understand why she felt alienated when away from her family. As a Saudi female, she was very close to her family, and living without the family unit was a new difficult experience. She said that:

'When I was crying in the office and miss my family, they don't understand that much.' (Participant 5, female)

Participant 6 (female) shared a similar experience to that of participant 5. She lived with her family in the home country and, according to her, this was not an ideal experience anyhow. Despite this, while in the UK, she still suffered because of being away from her family. She stated:

'I was staying with my family, even my life was not something, I really dream of it but I didn't want to go to face another challenge....The most difficult thing for me to be away from my family.' (Participant 6, female)

4.1.2.1.2 Crying and Feeling Lost

Several participants (5 in total) described that they cried and often felt lost. These feelings are concomitant symptoms of homesickness, as the participants missed the relationships they had had and the manner of their lifestyle at home. The experience of separation influenced their feelings and reactions negatively. Participants described their experiences as follows:

'When I get to London I know the city, I know where I will go, just when I get to this city I was crying every night yeah.' (Participant 3, female)

'I was coming to the university every day and going home back, and crying, because I don't understand what's going on.' (Participant 5, female)

'Sometimes when I feel sick or something happen, I cry. I cannot say anything, and then leave, I prefer to stay in the room alone not talking with anyone.' (Participant 7, male)

'I expected more support. Academic issues were nothing. I was facing, the social life, the religion, changes... Mood changes. I lost myself, I was shock of life here, I had the culture shock, maybe. No support from my dad even.' (Participant 4, female)

'In the beginning I was feeling shock, lost, confused.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.2.2 Language

This theme examines Saudi Arabian international students' experiences of the English language, including the subthemes of (i) key strategies for learning English, (ii) English and communication, and (iii) challenges with English (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.2.1 Strategies for learning English

For all the participants (8 in total), learning and using the English language was an essential part of navigating culture in the UK. Participants developed purposive strategies and plans for building and improving their English based on their original level of English proficiency and their learning needs.

Participant 1 (male) described his experience of learning English. He first focused on improving general English by attending a general English programme at English School and practising the language when living and socialising with a British family (homestay). Later, the participant moved to a university-level, pre-session course to improve his academic English. During that period, the participant planned not to contact his family so as to minimise use of his native language and to be surrounded by English people both at home and at university. He stated that:

'I spent 8 months in a general English program, I was living with a British family to help improving my English. I spent a good time with this family because they helped to improve my English. After that I achieved the score of English exam IELTS which allowed me to move to study a pre-session course of English in the university. I spend 3 months in this course, and I passed it. I was focus on studying English and I practiced my life without any problem. English, for learning English I had to be alone, I kept myself surrounding by English environment.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 2 (male) spoke about his experience of developing his English. He initially studied English via a general English programme for eight months but he commented that it was not enough for improving his English. The participant revealed that studying English only for a short time had a negative effect on progress during his Masters-level study. The participant also regretted having his family with him since arriving in the UK because he was not in an English-speaking environment to a sufficient degree. This caused him to struggle to learn English and to navigate academia adequately. He stated as follows:

'I studied general English for short time and that affected my English negatively, I didn't build good English. I learned English just for 8 months that was short time to prepare for master. I struggled when I started my master. It wasn't a good decision to bring my family from the beginning. I had to be surrounded by English environment at school and home. I had to be single and live with homestay that better, bring my family from the beginning was a mistake. I struggled to learn English.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 3 (female), after studying general and academic English, found that was not sufficient to improve her grasp of the language. She hence looked for another source of learning for improving her English. The participant sought help from a native speaker to help improve and practice her English. She said that:

'I got 5 in IELTS exam which made me studied in academe program here in the university for 3 months and I finished the course very earlier ... I was looking for a private teacher to improve my English and I found an English Muslim girl, we had a deal to exchange languages, she wants to read in Arabic and I want to learn English so our agreement about exchange languages for one year, she lives here and she knows everything in after that this agreement coveted to be a friendship very close friendship.' (Participant 3, female)

4.1.2.2.2 English and communication

Participants revealed a range of challenges that they had faced as a result of insufficient English language competence. Participants (6 in total) mentioned that their limited English skill had hindered their communications in the new culture. Limited English proficiency seemed to influence the participants in terms of self-expression, feelings, opinions and communication. Limited ability to communicate and express themselves added more challenges to the participants' experiences, especially when socialising with people in the new culture and engaging in academic social settings.

Participant 4 (female) revealed how she felt that her limited English language competency was a challenge for her when it came to expressing feelings and socialising effectively with others. Although the participant is a fourth-year postgraduate, she faces significant difficulties with her English. She stated that:

'My English wasn't perfect but I could understand and I can survive, but I will not negotiate. As I said, I can survive, but I can't negotiate. I can't say all my expressions; I can't say all my feelings. Language is the most difficult point because I can't keep the conversation going with anybody. I'm stuck always. It's very easy now to read the journals, academic paper, and books, reading is simple now, in my field. But speaking is the most difficult for me. But if I, if anyone ask me, social event, that would be very difficult, to keep myself. English is still very challenging.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 5, also female, addressed her difficult experiences with the English language in daily life. She faced difficulty in communicating with people using English. The participant revealed that she was not able to find an answer to an important question due to limited English proficiency. She stated that:

'My English doesn't improve that much but at least I can survive with my English. The first six months it was difficult, difficult to understand in English, to communicate with people. It's difficult when you have something to ask about it, or you do not understand but the language bar you from.' (Participant 5, female)

Participant 8 (female) also spoke about challenges in terms of the English language and her communication with others. English was a key challenge for her, especially in academia. The participant distinguished between communicating with a native speaker and a non-native speaker verbally. She found it easier to communicate with non-native speakers such as other international students even if they had limited language competence and made mistakes while speaking; she found it was harder to communicate with native people. She stated:

'The first challenge is the language, really and the second one for me, British people, in the class, like, when you study language, it's international, it's okay, all of us learning English, so, all of us like, the second language, it's not like the first language, and you're making mistakes, you're, or, something like that, so, you know, it's difficult. Because you have to be good enough to do it.' (Participant 8, female)

4.1.2.2.3 Challenges with English

Half the participants (4 in total) indicated that their English language competence presented challenges for them in the new culture. This experience was reported even by participants who mentioned that they had achieved the required score in their IELTS (test of English as a foreign language).

Participant 6 (female) discussed her experience with English. She felt that the English language was a challenge from the very first days of learning. This challenge remained the case for two years, her entire period of studying English. She said that:

'My first day at the College of English was difficult. They put me in the highest group. It was difficult because I can't understand anything. Every single week I just took IELTS exam. I didn't know I would be struggling with language for two years.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 8 (female) conveyed a similar experience to that of participant 6 regarding English. She revealed how it was a challenge to obtain the required score in the IELTS. She was worried every time about trying to achieve the target score. She stated that:

'For the language, the difficulty was to find 6.5 in IELTS, or to get six in each subject, so, I was like worried every time trying to find like this one or this one. So when after a while, I got a six in IELTS, which is good, and this one improve the IELTS.' (Participant 8, female)

Participant 7 (male) described challenges with English that he had faced while in the UK. He mentioned how much he had struggled before achieving the required score in the English test; this took him much more time than he had expected. His father was about to stop funding him due to the excessive time he took. The participant stated that he did not give up and he pushed himself to study more and sought support to overcome his difficulty with English. The participant believed that challenges with English were the most difficult issue for him, especially in the unfamiliar education system. He said that:

'I started thinking to move to the university. I had IELTS exam more than three times but the university asked for 5.5 out of 9. My father wanted me to get back to Saudi Arabia because, he gave me a great chance but it's difficult for him to pay more, this time I tried to find private teacher, extra time in the school. I had to get 60% to start the Master, which was difficult, I was, like, living in the library, I was trying because this was the last chance to get to the Master. This was the most difficult, different language, different education system, and new knowledge.' (Participant 7, male)

4.1.2.3 Personal Challenges

The personal challenges section examines Saudi Arabian international students' experiences of personal challenges including the subthemes of financial difficulty, finding accommodation, navigating and using public transport, and food and dietary considerations (nutrition) (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.3.1 Financial Difficulties

High living expenses made participants experience what they referred to as financial difficulties. This seemed to be a significant issue for all participants (8 of them). They experienced these financial difficulties whether they were on a scholarship or not, and this invoked emotional difficulties. The participants provided explanations as to why financial difficulties had become a burden for them. Financial issues affected their UK experience in terms of academic performance, housing, other living expenses and even emotional stability. However, the effects can also be seen on participants' networking, their intercultural interaction and their ability to achieve goals when studying in the UK, as well as their ability to become part of the new culture.

Participant 6 (female) spoke about financial difficulties that she had experienced. She revealed that living costs were high, especially housing costs. The participant made a comparison between the home country and the host country in terms of living expenses and how she had changed her behaviours accordingly. She said:

'Everything is expensive; housing is expensive. Life is expensive. In Saudi I don't care too much about money, but here I care, when I spend it, I try to find discount, or saving money.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 2 (male) shared a similar experience to that of participant 6. He noted the difference between the home country and the host country in terms of living expenses and his daily budget. He stated that:

'There is a gap between Saudi Arabia and here in terms of finance, here I have to manage my budget monthly or I'll lose.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 8 (female) discussed her experiences of such financial difficulties. High costs of living as well as having to rely solely on the Saudi government scholarship caused her to experience significant financial distress. This financial distress affected her academic performance, thereby causing emotional distress. She said that:

'When I came here, I found everything expensive, really. And because my husband, he left his work, only we have the money from Saudi government, from here. So, yeah, the situation was like economic difficulty, which affected my study, really, because I think all the time how we can manage this situation.' (Participant 8, female)

4.1.2.3.2 Finding Accommodation

Accommodation was a significant challenge for the participants. Most participants (6 in total) spoke of accommodation issues, including finding accommodation, securing a safe place to live at a reasonable cost, and being close to the university campus. They described how accommodation difficulties became a burden for them and how this difficulty affected their UK experience in terms of academic performance and emotional stability. The effects could also be seen on participants' ability to achieve their goals when studying in the UK.

Participant 2 (male) revealed that he had little knowledge of the process of finding accommodation. Not knowing the means of searching for a house was a challenge for him and his family. This participant noted how this held him back in terms of academic attendance and that affected his emotional stability. He stated that there was distinct difficulty that he encountered in buying home furniture as a newcomer with little knowledge of how to do so. It emerged that finding a house and even buying furniture was an issue because of cost, lack of knowledge, unfamiliarity with the process and the impact that the stress induced from these had on academic demands. Participant 2 stated that:

'I had no idea how to find accommodation, which was very difficult for my family. First 2 weeks, I didn't focus in study because I was looking for accommodation. Difficult to find accommodation, and this city is expensive city. I had to buy furniture and others stuff, it was difficult for someone just arrived to the UK.' (Participant 2, male)

A female Participant (3) reported her experience of difficulty in finding accommodation. She did not find any private accommodation of her own in the beginning and this meant that she had to live with a UK family (homestay). At the time the only available option to rent accommodation was to pay six months of rent in advance. She was not prepared financially to deposit this amount of money and this added more financial difficulties for her. Unfortunately for her, the participant had to temporarily pause her studies and went back to the home country to obtain this money. She stated that:

'I didn't find any accommodation, I wanted accommodation enough for me and my nephew, I didn't find accommodation, so I spend 2 months with a family then after the agency said I had to pay 6 months in advance I went to Saudi Arabia to get the money, I transferred the money to the agency.' (Participant 3, Female)

4.1.2.3.3 Navigating physical space and using public transport

A general lack of understanding of cultural differences can create frustration and lead to difficulties in the navigation of the new environment. When the participants had moved to the UK, with its unfamiliar culture, they were in need of figuring out basic life tasks such as using public transport. This can be an overwhelming experience but such tasks are unavoidable because they are a part of navigating in the new physical conditions and better understanding the host country's cultural norms. Several participants (3 in total) spoke about navigating in the new culture's physical spaces and using public transport. Participants were often seeking to experience a smooth transition but it seemed that this was difficult in terms of space and transport, especially in the beginning stages. Starting to navigate the host country in terms of the built environment can raise challenges never faced before by the participants who were away from their home culture.

Participant 4 (female) described her experience when she arrived. She considered everything to be a challenge in the first few days. The participant mentioned that managing herself and practising her religion prompted extra challenges when out of the home cultural context. She mentioned that minor life tasks required disproportionate effort, such as going on a bus or learning about the right way to use an umbrella. She stated that:

'It was very difficult at the beginning, everything was challenging, even taking the bus, even using the umbrella. It was very challenging, and because I was alone it was very difficult at first days. Challenges in life, religion, and mood challenges are more difficult than academic challenges.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 7 (male) reported his experience of navigating and using public transport in the first days of his UK stay. Understanding the system of public transportation was a challenge for him in the beginning, including when using buses and trains. Before this, he was able to communicate when using public transport, and in the UK the participant tended to use taxis which added to his financial difficulties. The participant noted his feelings of anxiety and stress due to his limited adaptation, navigation and use of

transportation facilities. He described what precisely made the use of buses a difficult task for him. The process of stopping at a bus station, hailing and riding a bus, and then stopping the bus to exit was an unknown procedure. He stated that:

'Even I didn't know how to get buses from my place to the university, so I used taxis and it cost like, 500 per month, which is quite expensive. I felt nervous, and stressed, how could I go to this city, I have no idea; it was very difficult because I didn't know how to use train. It was easy to take the bus, but in the beginning, maybe because I don't have the ability to get bus. Sometimes I wait for other students like me, and then I go. They help me, if only me, I wouldn't take the bus before. I just wait for someone. I don't want to do something wrong. If something happen I don't want to put myself in this position.' (Participant 7, male)

4.1.2.3.4 Food and Diet

Food was a significant aspect of maintaining the individual's physical and psychological well-being. It emerged that when participants moved they encountered difficulty in adjusting to the new food culture. Participants also spoke of the unavailability of specific culturally normal and religiously permissible foods (Halal) which they are instructed to eat by traditional Islamic law. The participants (5 of them) also addressed the challenges they faced in changing their original food habits due to the unavailability of traditional foods with which they were accustomed. It seemed that not enjoying local foods affected participants' transition into the new culture. The limited availability of traditional food impacted negatively on the dietary habits of a number of the participants.

Participants 1 (male) spoke about his experience of food while he was living with a British family. It was hard for him to transition to the new food and diet because he had not experienced it before. The participant stated that the family fed him but the amount of food was not enough and it was not his favourite food. Struggling with the limited food quantities and the lack of availability of traditional Saudi foods caused him to eat in nearby restaurants. The participant missed enjoying his favourite food, and he felt that eating the new food in the UK was not an enjoyable experience. He said:

'The challenge was food I struggled, just olives and potato sometimes, after I had dinner with them, I went outside to a restaurant next the house and I had dinner again. Sometime not enough, sometime they bring things I don't like, that why I go out have a dinner I was thinking about, I'm hungry and want to have a dinner. Food was horrible for me. I didn't enjoy food with that family but the language was ok.' (Participants 1, male)

Participant 3 (female) revealed that eating Halal food and reliably finding it was a challenge because restaurants and fast food outlets were the only options available to her for Halal needs to be satisfied, especially in the beginning. The participant suffered from a lack of D vitamins and low haemoglobin and eating rich and healthy food was crucial for her to

improve and sustain her physical well-being. She reported that even though eating healthily was a core requirement for her medically speaking, she was not able to meet this requirement and that this may have affected her health negatively. This point to the importance of being able to engage in tasks that might seem mundane on the face of it, but that actually gives a person a feeling of competence and engagement with their current life and also engagement with their home culture and their inter-relational past (which has ramifications for their inter-relational self in the present). It is not enough to be eating one's 'own food' in a restaurant. She has to prepare it and do all of the habitual behavioural tasks involved in 'being' a Saudi cook (i.e., not just any cook, but a Saudi cook). She said:

'...I hated restaurants, I was eating in the restaurants always, I needed a place to cook. Food was a challenge at that time. I need here to find halal food. I don't like fast food and even they are not halal. I was looking for Arabic restaurants but they were few. I have a lack of D vitamins and haemoglobin. Here I didn't care about good food for my health I ate anything. I didn't look for nutritional value of my food.' (Participant 3, female)

4.1.2.4 Academic Challenges

This theme examines the Saudi Arabian international students' experiences of academic challenges, including the subthemes of academic language; academic skills and differences in the education systems of the UK and Saudi Arabia (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.4.1 Academic language and academic skills

Participants had been in the UK for two years or more but they nearly all (7 in total) reported experiencing difficulty with English language-related skills. These skills included discussion skills, their listening ability, understanding lecture content, reading comprehension, note taking, academic vocabulary and written and oral communication. They often needed to read textbooks and produce assignments more slowly than their UK classmates and often needed to read the same text multiple times. It emerged that participants lacked confidence in their English skills and felt worried about making mistakes which may inhibit their interactions in class and cause them to feel less competent than their UK classmates. They were often encouraged to interact with native classmates to improve their English skills, but weak oral English skills to begin with often negatively affected their willingness and ability to interact with these classmates.

Participant 2 (male) described the challenges he faced with academic English and academic skills in the UK higher education system. The participant spoke about the difficulty he experienced in producing his study assignments; these took him much more time to complete compared to local students. Spending more time studying was a key strategy for him when it came to offsetting his low English language proficiency and his struggle with academic skills. In addition, due to his limited listening ability when conversing in the English language, the participant preferred to engage with international

speakers rather than native speakers during lectures. He mentioned that oral communication during the lectures was a challenge for him due to his limited English language proficiency. He stated that:

'In the master, I had to write assignments, it was challenge. I pushed myself to do lots of assignments; It takes me sometimes between 2 to 3 days to type a work that may it take a native one hour. It was strategy to spend more time to do my work. I need to learn English and learn in my field at the same time. I spent some time day and night in the library. I prefer to be with an international lecturer because it's difficult to understand a native speaker lecturer. I had a difficulty to tell the lecturer what I mean. He didn't understand me. I can't describe what was the problem because my language was in low level.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 3 (female) reported on her experience of pursuing a postgraduate degree in the UK higher education system. In addition to entering an unfamiliar educational system, she could not manage time to meet her study requirements and this prompted her to place extra focus on study over the weekends. Also, her limited English language proficiency was a key learning barrier for her in academia, especially in terms of assignment writing. Writing essays was a new form of task for her that prompted her to look for templates that she could follow to better deliver her written English works.

'Master is very difficult because a lot of works to do, there are no weekends, it's very stressful time. There was no time, with my master it was difficult sometime to find time for a shower or pray, I spent my time reading or writing. First challenge was the language, not just academic language but also general English, and with the second challenge was different system of education. I didn't know how to write an assignment in 2000 words, I never did in my life and to write 500 words was so big thing, I used several examples of assignments online, then I started to write.' (Participant 3, female)

4.1.2.4.2 Differences in the Education Systems

Navigating a new educational system that has its own processes, norms and vocabulary can be the key challenges faced by international students. Due to significant cultural differences, the system of education in the UK differs to that of Saudi Arabia. These differences between both types of education systems can be confusing. The participants (7 in total) were accustomed to a more didactic academic environment in the home country and they found it difficult in the UK to make the transition to the new educational culture. Participants indicated that adjusting to the new educational environment was a challenge. It emerged that the main priorities of the participants was adjusting to the academic environment and successfully fulfilling their study programme requirements. Participants were relatively satisfied in this respect but less satisfied with their levels of social integration. Due to their prioritisation of academic demands and course work, participants felt that little time could be spared for social activities. Also, the participants suffered from

a limitation in terms of socio-cultural knowledge. Participants acknowledged that their limited English language proficiency, exacerbated by cultural misunderstandings, was a principal source of difficulty.

Participant 6 (female) conveyed her experience with the new education system. When she enrolled at the university she noticed the differences in the host country's higher education system in terms of demand levels and the skills she would need to accomplish her goal of studying abroad. Such skills included critical thinking and argumentation. She also commented on the Masters degree structure in the UK which she believed it was very intense and stressful. She stated that:

When I came to the university I face a problem because it's completely different and now focusing on critical thinking and how to be critical or have both side of argument. Their system is different, the assignment itself was difficult. I needed to ask, to do research, to do a lot of things until I could do that. Getting Master was really difficult, getting like six or seven modules in just like nine months, so it was really hard. But finally, I just finish it. I faced difficulty with academic system and language.'
(Participant 6 female)

Participant 7 (male) spoke of the differences between the educational systems in his home country and in the host country. Although it was a new educational environment for him, he found it to be a high-quality education, which he engaged with positively. However, his limited English language proficiency was a barrier to him fully engaging in the new education system effectively. Spending more time studying was an approach he used to better fit into the new system. He stated that:

'I wanted to learn new things, especially because the education, it's profoundly different, between both countries. Education is different. When I moved here, I find the education, was not only the high qualification, the education system encouraged me to study in the UK. It's different language and different education system, if a native speaker spend one hour, I would have spent more than four hours. Practice, it makes me feel more confident. So practicing, I spent more time in the library. This was the most difficult, different language, different education system, and new knowledge. Education system was completely new for me. So I have to learn how to use this system. In my home country, I read quickly, because it's my own language, but here I spent long time to understand, to scan reading.' (Participant 7 male)

4.1.2.5 Gendered experience of female participants

This theme examines the gendered experience of female Saudi participants in the UK, covering the subthemes of Hijab, fear of being not accepted as a female, and fear of being judge by home culture or other Saudis, feeling stuck between two distinct cultures, and taking responsibilities and navigating as a female (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.5.1 Hijab

As revealed earlier in the *anticipation* theme, the four female participants raised concerns regarding the *Hijab*, as did the married male participants who moved to the UK with their wives. They anticipated intolerance towards traditional Saudi women's clothes which included the *Hijab*. Participants anticipated that the *Hijab* would influence their navigation of culture and society in the UK and in some cases may cause some risk to their safety. Even though participants developed more culturally acceptable designs of the *Hijab*, for example by changing the *Hijab*'s shape or colours, three participants experienced negative attitudes toward the *Hijab* and those who wore it. They faced some antagonistic interpersonal behaviours such as hostility and rudeness.

Participant 6 (female) spoke about when she came here first wearing her traditional Saudi Arabian form of the *Hijab* covering her face as well as her hair. It was challenging for her to appear publicly with this look. To avoid negative experiences, she did not maintain the Saudi form of the *Hijab*. She stated that:

'Here wearing my costumes clothes is so difficult comparing to Saudi. So, that was hard to be like them or trying to wear like here, because in Saudi it's completely different. So if I come from a family, everything that I need to follow all of their rules, and came here, and I'm somehow not at the same as in Saudi Arabia. Because maybe I face problem or difficulty if I'm wearing the same clothes as in Saudi when I'm here. That was really difficult for my first time, to be shifting. I didn't feel comfortable because I was studying at a small town, so they don't see people like wearing Hijab in Saudi Arabia because people are shocked. I was thinking of keeping my hijab, but when I just came here and saw people, it doesn't work at all, because at the airport I was wearing my Hijab and everything. With this look I faced difficulty, imagine how if was that my look, it would effect me more. just imagine I was wearing Hijab like Saudi Arabia, I will just put myself in a situation I don't know about.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 4 (female) faced serious interpersonal issues and encountered hostility and rudeness such as verbal attacks when in public. She described how this was a painful experience; an unknown cyclist once pulled off her *Hijab* and dropped it to the ground. The attacker also verbally assaulted her before fleeing the scene. Emotionally, the participant felt scared and upset due to this experience. It emerged that Saudi females were often targeted because of anti-Hijabism on the street. This amounts to feeling as though one's life is in danger as a result of belonging to a particular social category. This negative experience led the participant to decide not to wear the *Hijab* anymore while in the UK, especially because she was aware of the tragic killing of a Saudi female student in Colchester in 2014. The participant was thus driven to sequester an essential part of her religious and social identity to feel comfortable and to travel safely. She did not take any formal action and she did not involve any authorities to assist her. She suffered in silence and this had a negative impact on her sense of confidence. She stated:

'When I was walking in the street, a strange cyclist took off my hijab, threw it in the street and said to me dirty words, I just got my hijab back and when I got home I cried a lot. I was angry and scared. I decided to take the hijab off especially after the death of a Saudi girl in Colchester.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 1 (male), who was married, reported his wife's experiences of discrimination and negative reactions towards her Hijab. The wife was subjected to racist insults and verbal attacks on the streets. She reported when few strangers used metaphor to call her 'Ninja!' or 'Ninja is coming' to express the difficulty she experienced. Using the term 'Ninja' highlights the impact of metaphor on her experience. The participant felt this had happened because the wife was wearing her Hijab (the veil was covering her full face). The participant and his family struggled to cope with this challenge at home. However, he remained silent and did not involve any authorities such as the police or the university. The participant suffered emotionally while he remained silent and did not take action to protect himself and his wife formally. Experiencing a racist attack was a serious issue, but not knowing how to address it was another barrier to coping which made the situation worse for him. It emerged that the participant was confused and had no idea how to seek help and support in dealing with such a situation. He said that:

'My wife is always wearing hijab... when she go to her English school and get back home, a small number of noisy people shouted out to her because of her costume...Once someone called her a Ninja! or Ninja is coming...they spit... they spit in her sometimes...this the difficult thing we faced as a family... and because of that my wife could not stand that any more...she one day came to me and she said she want to go back to our country because they are noisy here...at that time I advised her to be patient, people here are not the same... people who act negatively to you is a minority and a small number.' (Participant 1, male)

4.1.2.5.2 Fear of being not accepted as a female

Several of the female participants (4 in total) reported that they experienced fear of being unaccepted in the new culture. Fears of rejection from the host culture negatively affected the participant's interactions, navigations of the host society, and sense of well-being. Participants felt that they may be rejected due to their personal appearance including their traditional clothes and their religious beliefs and practices. Female participants felt they were more likely to experience this due to the Saudi Arabian traditional form of the Hijab, which holds significance in representing their home culture and religion.

Participant 3 (female) spoke of unwelcoming attitudes emerging from local students inside and outside class. She described her negative interactions with native students during her Masters-level classes. The participant raised an example of this unwelcoming type of attitude. She felt ignored by her local classmates during a group discussion. It was a challenge for her to become accepted by her native classmates. The participant conveyed

how she could not accept being ignored and she changed her group to join an international student group instead. She reported that it was helpful knowing she was not the only international student in the session. She attributed local students' attitudes to the students being immature stating that many others showed respect and gave support whether inside the university setting or outside. She stated that:

Native students never feel friendly with us; they ignored us in the classes and out of the classes.... I told my teacher to change my group because they were all British and they ignored me. We were discussed a topic and they never talked to me, if I were the only international student in the class, it will be hard for me, but because I feel confident enough I didn't care. I just kept silent and looked to them for long time then I asked my teacher to change my group; she agreed directly I think she understood. I think they should change their ideas about us, and be more sympathetic with internationals. I didn't have a chance to correct these ideas. It's very small thing will not affect me because all university staff and my supervisor, bus drivers and officers are friendly, just students in certain ages they don't have enough experience.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 5 (female) also went through a similar experience of feeling fear around being rejected. She was afraid of being judged due to her being a representative of her home culture. She stated that:

'I was afraid they might judge me based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or a Saudi. I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi.' (Participant 5, female)

Participant 6 (female) spoke of her interactions with males the first few times. She mentioned it was difficult to be involved in a mixed gender classroom with male students, as this differed from what she was used to in the home culture. She said that:

'From my first day at the college, it was difficult to come from close society and everything is separate. First time and I faced that and I was working or sitting next to a male, it was hard for me. If I was sitting next to females, she asked me to move, she said you need to be with our culture, she just gave like, you work with a man, the first three or five months was difficult. It was difficult to maybe communicate, discuss, or talking. I didn't work in a mixed place.' (Participant 6, female)

4.1.2.5.3 Fear of being judge by home culture or other Saudis

The participants (4 in total) experienced a feeling of concern related to Saudi female's fears of being negatively judged in terms of maintaining the norms of the home culture and behaving properly according to their culture. They indicated their worries of being subjected to negative judgments by other Saudi individuals in terms of maintaining the norms of the home culture and behaving properly according to their culture. Challenging

the norm of deference to home culture can bring worries of being judged, that fully engaging in change might go against home culture norms which is a powerful deterrent to contesting a gender norm. The participants referenced to their home culture to illustrate their point of view on gender identity when they struggled with Saudi gender norms.

Participant 3 (female) described her negative experiences of rejection that she received by other Saudis. She was aware of the crucial role of social support so that she did not cease to seek help to cope with the new lifestyle. The participant expected to receive a good level of support in facing new life challenges, but she did not receive any such support. She faced difficulty in seeking assistance in the new setting from Saudi males. The participant experienced acute difficulty engaging with those of the opposite gender because she believed that she was subject to culturally specific judgments and norms of her home culture. She stated that:

'It's really hurt me when Saudi students don't want to help me to deal with life here or when they thought I just want to begin a relationship, they don't understand I'm new and need help, they have experiences here and they know how to deal with things, my nephew still a teenager. I went to students from Qatar and Arab Emirate because they are more open societies with women and they helped me in the opposite with Saudi male who refused to talk to me and because, I'm a Saudi girl no male want to speak or help her, these Saudi male students should know that I'm a girl and I needed help. So because I didn't know the system completely different from my country, yeah, these are the most difficulties here find accommodation and dealing with the Saudis.'
(Participant 3, female)

Participant 4 (female) provided an example of Saudi international students' gender-related issues experienced abroad. Being surrounded by Saudi Arabians of both gender was a challenge for her. She attributed this challenge to the power of values and norms in her home culture. To avoid ill judgement from others and herself, she tended to avoid any interaction with the Saudis. She stated that:

'One of the challenges is being between a lot of Saudis, even male or female, because they judge me depends on our culture. So when I act among them naturally they find that isn't acceptable based on the culture, on the religion, it's not acceptable this is why when I go to London, or when I go to any place where I know there are a lot of Saudis, I know change my character or I don't speak.' (Participant 4, female)

She also believed that removing her *Hijab* made her unrepresentative of her home culture. From her point of view, removing the *Hijab* was a beneficial way of avoiding negative judgments from people in the host culture. She stated that:

'Non-Saudi without Hijab they will not recognize me as a Muslim, I don't want to give their judge, their first expression, depend on my background as Muslim.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 6 (female) raised two examples that revealed the key points of differences between the two cultures. These examples pertain to freedom of speech and freedom of movement. She said that:

'In Saudi, you can't discuss your opinion but here they are open so, in talking or studying you can just to be more open. If I want to go outside walking, it's not a big deal, I can take myself out whenever I want. In Saudi, it's difficult even you want to walk, there is certain time you can go and walk and the thing, because of the weather as well, I really enjoy it here.' (Participant 6, female)

4.1.2.5.4 Feeling stuck between two distinct cultures

As mentioned earlier, being a Saudi student in the UK is a significant cultural challenge, particularly for females. Though gender issues were important for both males and females, there were specific issues unique the females in particular. Saudi female participants encountered significant cultural differences during their studies abroad. All female participants (5 in total) claimed that they experienced feeling o being stuck between two distinct cultures.

Participant 3 spoke about her experiences of the social freedoms of the new culture compared to the home culture. The participant noted how she sought to explore the host culture's norms in order to have more freedom in making her own life choices although her the home culture still presents in her mind. She said that:

'I like freedom here, I feel more free here, free from my culture, here I feel I do the right because I choose the right not because my culture wants me to do the right, the right in my opinion yes, in my culture because we are close culture and we have responsibilities toward our families, we have to offer help, see them weekly even it sometime boring but here no, I choose people that I want to go with. I can say I found what I was looking for.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 4 (female) spoke about the advantages of living in the new culture as s Saudi female who was used to being limited to doing specific familial and social activities due to the home culture's norms. The participant expressed her preference for full integration and stated her appreciation for gaining the opportunity to be exposed to the UK's culturally pluralist society but she misses home lifestyle. She said that:

'I find myself more here, but I miss life there. Here, I have opportunity to do what I cannot do in Saudi and there I have all my life that I will not have it here. I want these opportunities but in that culture.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 5 (female) described being integrated into the new culture. She revealed a considerable level of adaptation and stated that she felt increased independence and

enjoyed the new social freedoms. She nonetheless also missed being surrounded by her family. She said that:

'I was surprised because now I find British are friendly, I'm totally comfortable as being part of their society. I start to have this confusion; I really don't know where is my happiness is where I'm here or being there with my family. I like to be with my family and feel safe and here I like being independent and I can do whatever I want. I really stick between living here and there.' (Participant 5, female)

The female participants reported feelings of increased independence while studying abroad. Participant 6 (female) shared her experiences of greater independence. She tended to be independent in her UK life but it was difficult to be at times. She sometimes felt that she missed being more dependent on her family members. She said that:

'Women are independent here. But it's also difficult to be, so I'll have my independence, but also I'll face a problem. Sometimes, I don't want it, I just want to go back there and everything is done for me.' (Participant 6, female)

4.1.2.5.5 Taking responsibilities and navigating as a female

Participants (5 in total) highlighted the issues arising from the segregated home culture contrasting with the unsegregated host culture and he commented on how this affected his transition, taking responsibilities and navigation of the new culture. They seemed to have a challenge to engage with the differences between the two cultures but maintained enthusiasm about doing so.

Participant 3 (female) explained that it is important for Saudi females to not merely achieve their goals of knowledge acquisition and engaging in self-development but also to prove her worth by living and studying abroad in order to challenge cultural norms. Saudi females tended to experience challenges in being a successful Saudi woman abroad. She said that:

'Saudi girl must success in studying abroad, Saudi girl must show her family how she able to reach her goals abroad and be successful.' (Participant 3, female)

She raised several examples of adapting to the new culture. She seemed enthusiastic about practising the new lifestyle. She mentioned that adapting to the new culture caused her to change and to adopt new habits. She stated that:

'I like how they wake up early, practicing sports and walking early. I feel I'm acting like the society here, everything should be on time.... In terms of shopping I have changed completely, I just now buy what I need only, if I find something expensive I leave it and buy a cheaper one, this culture didn't existed in Saudi Arabia, this is how I become a Saudi in the UK, I know learn from them here.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 5 (female) spoke of her perceptions of the differences in lifestyle between Saudi Arabia and the UK. She faced difficulty in communicating with people in the beginning. In her opinion, even minor tasks were stressful in the beginning and often took time to become familiar with. She mentioned that using buses was a difficult aspect of public life. She stated that:

'The first six months it was difficult to understand in English, to communicate with people. I have to deal with different people from different cultures; it was difficult for me in the beginning. Stop and ride the bus was challenge, small things were taking me a lot of stress and effort to do.' (Participant 5, female)

She also spoke about her experience of dealing with daily life tasks and responsibilities. Many aspects her life used to be organised for her by a male member of the family. However, living in the UK culture required her to manage all aspects of her life for herself. She experienced a sense of difficulty in getting used to meeting these responsibilities. She stated that:

'It is difficult being lonely, and to be responsible for things you were never responsible for. It's challenge for me to be responsible of everything, British people think I'm spoilt girl but these things we are not used to do.' (Participant 5, female)

Participant 6 (female) reported on her experience of setting a budget for spending and expenses while in the UK. The participant mentioned that before moving to the UK, she was reliant on her family to design the budget and to support her financially but after moving to the UK she had to rely on herself in managing her budget. It seemed that becoming financially independent forced her to come up with a financial plan to avoid any potential financial difficulties. She said that:

'I wasn't responsible for any living expenses in S.A. So, here I need to think about my budget, think carefully about what I'm spending my money on, to be more economized. I need to stuck with my budget. I know. I try to be careful. In Saudi I don't care too much about money, but here I care, when I spend it, I try to find discount, or saving money.' (Participant 6 female)

4.1.2.6 Issues in Representing the Home Culture and Religion

This theme examines Saudi Arabian international students' issues in representing their home culture and their religion while in the UK, covering the subthemes of "how I look", interpretations of how others feel, and media messages and Islamophobia (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.6.1 How I look

Due to Saudi Arabia's and the UK's cultural differences, most participants (7 in total) faced a challenge in terms of personal appearance. Each participant had a unique experience. Participants were concerned about a range of forms of appearance including their facial appearance, traditional clothes, and religious appearance. They spoke about how their look and dress interacted with their behaviours in navigating the new culture as well as influencing the behaviours of others toward them.

Participant 1 (male) described his experiences in a class environment. He believed that it was difficult for him to interact with others (especially female classmates) while he had a beard. The participant was aware of the influence of this perception on his interactions with others. He claimed that the beard is a cultural symbol, not a racial one, and he suspected he would have found it easier not to have one. A seemingly mundane feature of one's life, a beard, assumed a powerful influence on the way that the participant was perceived externally, and this had an effect on how they experienced self in relation to others. The participant spoke about how others responded to him as a representative of Saudi culture. He stated that:

'Majority of my classmates were girls, some of them were friendly and some not, they hated people who have beard, this influenced me to share and do exercises with them, maybe because I have a long beard, that impacted my performance, I could not talk with them and share class activities. I still remember her, when I started to talk about my country or my culture, she left class, I don't know why they did that, I just avoided working with them in the class. This experience makes me aware about people feelings; I decided to change their opinion about me, my culture by acting friendly with them.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 2 (male) spoke about his attempts to communicate with local classmates but he could not achieve this with as much success as he had wished. The participant described the negative outcomes of not being engaged with local students. These feelings included a sense of being unwelcome, feeling rejection and feeling disappointment. He stated that:

'I try to contact them, I tried to contact British students they reject me, I don't feel welcome with them. One and two times, three times, I did it, and same problem, situation, I don't try to – I need to, I need to try to contact with them to practice. I think because they are natives, this is their place, and I come to them, and they don't welcome me. I'm a strange, stranger, they don't like to contact with me. But I feel like they don't welcome international student. If you came, to, to people, and you have to, you need to, to contact with them and they reject you, I think you feel... you feel disappoint.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 4 (female) experienced a feeling of concern in representing her home culture. She assumed a sense of responsibility in influencing how others interpret her culture. The

participant believed that people in the UK subscribe to a stereotype of her people and culture shaped by unfair judgements and generalisations. To represent her home culture positively, she poised as a positive representative in herself. She stated that:

‘.... you can see in London, there are a lot of people that present Saudi people in very bad way. They are showing their very fancy cars, and going to very expensive shops, when somebody asks me, where are you from, or what are you studying, they felt shame. They always think that we are not very open, we are very closed culture, and our interest is very limited, this is very wrong. I felt that, when I joined the outside activity, the English club, and having a meal with host family. So, I felt that. They say it in very polite way, but I can feel that. So, uh, before two weeks I did presentation about Saudi Arabia in English club and, at the beginning, I asked all the audience to write first three words when they think about it, when they hear “Saudi Arabia.” So almost maybe ninety percent of them, the first word was oil and money and wealthy.’ (Participant 4, female)

Participant 7 (male) described his experience of living with a British family. He was not able to show his faith publicly. It took him time to feel confident to practise his religion in the UK. The participant thought that practising his religion might lead to him facing difficulty with the authorities. He stated that:

‘When I arrived to the UK, I was with a homestay, and after three months, I started to ask where could I find a mosque in this city. When I came here I have to respect and avoid any problem with government, things regarding to the religion.’ (Participant 7, male)

4.1.2.6.2 Media and Islamophobia

Several participants (4 in total) addressed the negative role of media and of islamophobia in shaping their experiences of the new culture. They argued that the home culture is negatively represented in the UK media and its content. These participants perceived the representations of their home culture and religion as portrayed in the media to be negative, and often overly associated with conservatism. They stated that this representation caused them to be viewed by people of the host culture with suspicion. To redress theses misrepresentations as portrayed by the media, these participants assumed roles as positive representatives of the home culture. It seemed the participants’ experiences have been shaped by people’s preconceptions (whether that is the preconception of the Saudi student or the preconceptions of the UK people). So, to that extent, a current experience was heavily influenced by the pre-existing conceptions of what people from other groups are like. This showed the challenges this throws up for integration generally and for those who were international students and who are not in the host country permanently.

Participant 3 (female) believed that people in the new culture were often subjected to negative portrayals of her home culture in the national media. She felt frustrated and that she had no option but to behaviourally challenge this stereotype. She stated that:

'I think they are victims of media because media represent us as tough people, they have negative ideas about us. I have no chance to correct these ideas.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 4 (female) stated that her role was to convey a positive portrayal of her home country's cultural norms. She felt that media representations were inadequate and inaccurate. She said that:

'Present a good picture of Saudis. I always try to present a good picture. Reflect our values because few people know about the values in Saudi Arabia and they judge us in the media, and the media is not fair with us. So I since the first day I was here, I'm thinking to present a good picture for Saudi.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 7 (male) also noted that the media and Islamophobia influenced him and he stated that he hesitated to share information about his home culture publicly. He was willing to share knowledge about and represent his home culture but did so carefully and with some hesitancy. He said that:

'I would love to tell them about my religion but only people whom I really trust. I would love to tell them about our tradition, culture, and religion. Because they may hear something negative, so I try to represent in a good way.' (Participant 7, male)

4.1.2.7 Gendered interaction

This theme examines Saudi Arabian international students' issues when interacting with Saudi and non-Saudi females/males (see Table 4.2). During their study period in the UK, participants faced significant gender-related cultural differences. These challenges included having classes taught by teachers of the opposite gender, being in mixed gender classrooms with both male and female students, and there being no gender segregation in most of public life such as in offices, restaurants and shops. Since Saudi Arabia is a highly gender-segregated culture, several participants (6 in total) experienced challenges in interacting with opposite gender Saudis and non-Saudis in the new culture. The participants experienced psychological issues in handling interactions with the opposite gender. This complex dynamic presented served to restrict the participants' engagement with those of the opposite gender. The participants had two interaction concerns; fears around interacting with the Saudi student peers and psychological challenges associated with fear of males or females.

Participant 1 (male) spoke of his interaction as a Saudi with non-Saudis of the opposite gender. His interaction issues seemed to be gender-related. He stated that:

'Majority of my classmates were girls, some of them were friendly and some not, they hated people who have beard, this is will influence me to share and do exercises with them, maybe because I have a long beard, that impacted my performance, I could not talk with them and sharing class activities, when the teacher asked a female student to join me, this student ignored me and went to other student. That girl, when I get involved in her discussion, she got nervous, I award of that and I avoided doing things with her.' (Participant, 1 male)

Participant 6 (female) spoke of her interactions with Saudi or non-Saudi males the first few times. She mentioned it was difficult to be involved in a mixed gender classroom with male students, as this differed from what she was used to in the home culture. She said that:

'From my first day at the college, it was difficult to come from close society and everything is separate. First time and I faced that and I was working or sitting next to a male, it was hard for me. If I was sitting next to females, she asked me to move, she said you need to be with our culture, she just gave like, you work with a man, the first three or five months was difficult. It was difficult to maybe communicate, discuss, or talking. I didn't work in a mixed place.' (Participant 6, female)

The interactions between Saudi Arabian students of the opposite genders seemed to be a complex issue too, based on what participants reported. What had made it a complex experience, according to the participants, was that they came from a specific cultural system but were working together under unfamiliar new cultural conditions. Participants suffered from confusion in interacting with each other in accordance with the new cultural norms.

Participant 2 (male) reported a complex experience he had with a Saudi female classmate. He had a normal interaction with her during class but she did not engage in any interaction with him outside of the classroom context. The participant felt confused and he did not find an explanation as to why she had rejected him outside the class. He said that:

'I had a Saudi female in my class, she was friendly in the class, and talk to me, but when we finished our class she ignored me, she didn't want to talk to me anymore. I didn't understand why she did that.' (Participant 2, male)

Participant 4 (female) provided another example of Saudi international students' gender-related issues experienced abroad. Being surrounded by Saudi Arabians of both gender was a challenge for her. She attributed this challenge to the power of values and norms in her home culture. To avoid ill judgement from others and herself, she tended to avoid any interaction with the Saudis. She stated that:

'One of the challenges is being between a lot of Saudis, even male or female, because they judge me depends on our culture. So when I act among them naturally they find that isn't acceptable based on the culture, on the religion, it's not acceptable this is why when I go to London, or when I go to any place where I know there are a lot of Saudis, I know change my character or I don't speak.' (Participant 4, female)

4.1.2.8 Social and emotional support

This theme examines Saudi Arabian international students' experiences of social and emotional support networks while in the UK; it covers the subthemes of friendship support, family and parental support, and support from academic faculties and native students (see Table 4.2).

4.1.2.8.1 Friendship support

Friendships in the UK were a key source of social support for participants. The participants (7 in total) reported that they received vital social support from friends; this was both before they entered the UK, when they were there and even after they had lived in the UK for a longer period of time. Friends provided support in daily life tasks such as finding accommodation, using the transport system, and dealing with psychological issues such as isolation and adjusting to new issues with life and study in the UK. The participants regarded their friends in the UK as their substitute families, whom they could rely on for them to face difficulties more effectively. For instance, participant 4 (female) reported her reason for preferring to regularly be with friends, especially Saudi friends, so she could access support; it helped her that they had similar experiences in terms of their backgrounds and in terms of their experiences in the UK. This participant believed that having friendships made the adjustment process easier when abroad and provided her with a sense of having a substitute family. She stated that:

'I didn't know anyone at the time but last month. Finally, I meet two Saudi girls here, and, my Norwegian friend. I need someone to live with, a Saudi, or at least a girl has the same values. So I meet these two girls. I was lucky, because all of us were in the same situation. So these girls asked me to live with them. And it was my dream. My Saudi friends support me, they give me the feeling of family. Non- Saudi friends give me support to keep life going. They make life easier.' (Participant 4, female)

Participant 5 (female) shared a similar experience to that of the previous participant. She revealed the positive role of friendship networks in adjusting to UK life, whether in daily life or academic settings. She reported that she felt the most comfortable and most accepted when surrounded by the Saudi peer group. She stated that:

'I feel I'm being away from my family but having my friend here make it easier for me. It makes it easy when you have colleagues who are starting before you so you are trying to figure out from them. I'm lucky for having my friend, she is always there for

me, to be surrounded by people that really care and love you really makes things much easier. Saudi people make it much easier for me to feel at home. To be surrounded by Saudi people makes you more comfortable to express your feelings.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.2.8.2 Family and parental support

Family and parents were also a key source of support for the participants. This support mechanism often pertained to financial and emotional forms of support and was mainly focused on the early days when they had arrived in the UK. Participants often came to the UK with other family members such as a husband/wife or parent or brother (and a compulsory male companion in case of the female students). Having someone from their family in the UK with them during their studies abroad helped to minimise experiences such as homesickness, isolation and loneliness. All participants addressed this subtheme, three of whom were married and had children with them in the UK, five of whom came with a family member such as father or brother or other companion.

Participant 3 (female) spoke about family support although she was largely away from most of her family. The participant stated that the family had provided her with encouragement and emotional support in coping with challenges and achieving goals when studying abroad. She said that:

'I contact my family in Saudi Arabia and they always pray for me, and said you will pass this don't worry, we sure you will pass this and get back with a good certificate, yes like this encouragements. I like to show I'm good and everything is fine, the most support from my family my sisters.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 6 (female) talked about her experience of family support. She stated the social and emotional support that she received from her father, brother, and sister was vital. However, her mother had not been supportive of her decision to study abroad. The participant mentioned that she had received the most support from her brother, who acted as her male companion.

'My father supported me at that time, to come here. I was shocked because he was against going outside. Mum said no, why you are traveling, leaving everything. But my father encouraged me. My sister got experience of studying here. She gives me information. I started collecting information from her about everything. If I face anything, I just call her to provide me support. I wasn't thinking about the life that I will face it in the UK because my brother was with me, he can do all of this stuff. I was seeing my brother in transportation system, I just follow him around. I got the most support from my brother. I need someone to say to me you are good, you can do it, some kind of support from my family.' (Participant 6, female)

4.1.2.8.3 Support from academic faculties and native students

Several participants (6 in total) conveyed how support from faculties and native students had been experience. They stated that this experience of support was limited because their relationships with the faculties and the native students had lacked cultural connection, or because interactions with native students were friendly but did not constitute emotionally meaningful friendships. Several participants reported that some native students had lacked knowledge about Saudi Arabian culture and had expressed this. However, some participants felt well supported by their faculties and the native students.

Participant 6 (female) reported on how her experience of social support from native students was limited. She stated that there was a limited kind of communication between them but this was not overly significant. The participant noted that native students were willing to help if necessary. She believed these students were not willing to make friends with her but they were friendly in tone. She stated that:

'With British student it was good in the Master we got like two or three British. It was good communication. Some of them they give me their phone numbers. They just made a group for all of us. Anyone got it, think, question we can ask, and if I have question I can just message them. They are very much in their own zone but in my experience, if I ask them a question they help.' (Participant 6, female)

Participant 7 (male) had a similar experience of social support from the native students. The participant failed to make strong friendships with any native people. He mentioned that they were willing to help in study contexts but were not willing to be more informal friends with him. He could not explain why natives were not willing to build friendships with the international students. He stated that:

'It's very difficult, extremely difficult to make British friends; I tried to make some British friends. They would be happy to help, but making friend, it's very difficult. Maybe because they don't want to exchange cultures, don't want to know about other cultures. When I came here, they were very kind; they would help you if you need any help.' (Participant 7, male)

4.1.2.9 Discussion

As highlighted earlier in the discussion of pre-moving, each individual enters the acculturation process whilst possessing a wide range of personal attributes; these can include demographic characteristics such as the gender, age, marital status and level of education of the person, or social and psychological characteristics including family roles, cultural distance, religious beliefs and personal motivations (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011). These different factors play a significant role in establishing the outcomes of the acculturation process.

There are key factors which occur during the acculturation process in addition to the factors which are prevalent before acculturation, in particular religion issues, gender issues, and an unfamiliar educational system. These factors included the approach to acculturation, acculturation challenges, socio-economic status and social support mechanisms. In the current study, the factors arising during acculturation produced the key themes of arriving and then living in the UK; Berry (1997, 2011) explored these in his theories (see Table 4.2).

A number of the key considerations and concepts associated with arrival and life in the UK are examined in the current study and the findings resonate with the existing literature pertaining to international students in many respects; including themes of homesickness, language barriers, personal and academic challenges, and social and emotional support (see Brown, 2009; Brown, & Holloway, 2008; Chapdelaine, & Alexitch, 2004; Chirkov, at al., 2007; Dentakos, at al., 2017; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Gu & Day, 2010; Johnson, 2008; McLachlan, & Justice, 2009; Palmer, 2015; Popadiuk, & Arthur, 2004; Tran, 2011; Zhou & Todman, 2009; Zhou, & Zhang, 2014). However, many themes that are specific to the Saudi international students are not directly reflective of the wider literature relating to international students. Such themes included gendered experience of female participants, issues of representing the home culture and its religion, and gendered Interaction; these are discussed in the following section in connection to the existing literature.

Saudi Arabian international students are individuals in transition. Their situation as temporary sojourners in an overseas scenario for the duration of a study programme is a unique situation involving cross-cultural experiences. The students are required to managing the transition from their home culture to living and studying in an unfamiliar culture, and then making the transition back home (re-entering the home culture).

The Saudi international students, being sojourners were voluntarily motivated to leave their country on a temporary basis to achieve specific academic goals (Berry, 2006, Dentakos at al., 2017; Pedersen at al., 2011). They were conscious of the transiency of their reason for sojourning; their reasons were focused around academic achievement at the cost of cross-cultural challenges; that these students may thus have been less likely to value learning about the host culture (Dentakos at al., 2017; Kim, 2001). Yet, if weak host culture commitment plays a risk role for poor migrant adjustment outcomes, then sojourner outcomes may be especially affected thus (Dentakos, at al., 2017). Berry at al. (1987) argue that, in contrast to permanent migrants, sojourning migrants face greater levels of acculturation stress and often exhibit lower levels of adjustment.

Saudi students' sojourner status may make them an especially vulnerable student group. Not only must they positively navigate the transition to UK academia, but they have to also managed the transition into UK culture without their home social networks to support them (Dentakos at al., 2017). Saudi students therefore often experience greater challenges in contrast to their local peers (Orth, 2015; Shaw, 2010). The adjustment process is often

associated with psychological and sociocultural stressors, with effects such as homesickness, driven by personal and academic challenges, gendered experience of female participants, issues of representing the home culture and its religion, and gendered Interaction, acculturative stress and depleted social support availability (Al-Banyan, 1980; Ahmed, 2016; Alamri, 2017; Al-nusair, 2000; Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Hamad, 2012; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Morshedi, 2011; Orth, 2015; Shaw, 2010; Rundles, 2013).

The forthcoming sections provide a detailed explanation of the key experiential themes arising during the acculturation process and the important events and feelings that frequently occur as part of the psychological acculturation process for Saudi international students.

Theme: Homesickness

Homesickness is a commonplace psychological experience shared by many international students; poor adjustment for international students is strongly correlated with their levels of perceived homesickness (Yjng, & Liese, 1994). Although participants in the current study were motivated to move to the UK by certain beliefs that the process would be smooth, they often experienced isolation, feelings of alienation and feelings of extreme upset and a sense of being lost. These feelings, symptoms of homesickness, were caused by them missing home, lamenting the relationships they had at home, and recalling their former lifestyle at home. Their experiences in the UK influenced their feelings and reactions negatively. Long and Maisel (2010) argue that Saudi international students come from a culture where the family is considered the primary basis of identity and status for people and as a key source of support. The participants found the transition process was more challenging than they had anticipated; they had to merge socially and academically into a whole new culture. Navigating the new culture and different context impacted on the notions of selfhood of the students.

Consistent with the current study's findings, Hofer (2009) reports that his sample of US-based Saudi Arabian international students faced distinct difficulties relating to homesickness and loneliness during their study in the US. Findings from the current study are consistent with a number of studies in the international student experience literature too (Al Banyan, 1980; Al-Nusair, 2000; Hamad, 2012; Hofer, 2009; Lin & Yi, 1997; Luzio-Lockett, 1998; Maundeni, 1999; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Nydell, 2006; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004; Shaw, 2010; Zhou & Zhang, 2014).

Theme: Language

For participants in the current study, using and learning the English language was an essential part of their experiences in the UK. They suggested that language issues are major challenges for them as they influence their performance negatively at both academic and personal levels; this included difficulty during formal and informal conversations, when making friendships with native students, and during interaction in the classroom such as

oral presentations. The findings from previous studies also made it clear that use of and difficulties with the English language combine as one of the most influential factors of experience when studying abroad (Alamri, 2017; Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Morshedi, 2011; Orth, 2015; Shaw, 2009; Zhou & Todman, 2009). Rundles (2013) found that Saudi students reported a stark challenge and increased psychological distress when it came to daily interactions, engaging in classrooms activities and lectures, and understanding people around them. English language proficiency features as a salient challenge across many studies of Arabs in the West, due to the significant differences between English and Arabic script, phonetics and grammar (Alamri, 2017). For non-natives, English can be a very challenging language to acquire (Zwiers, 2013).

Strategies for learning English quickly and well were developed by the participants. Every individual in the current study generated key strategies and plans for improving their English, based on their specific learning needs. They often first focused on improving general English by attending a general English programme at English school and by practising the language when living and socialising with British families (during homestays). Later, they moved to a higher education institution to improve their academic English. Palmer (2015) has defined the process of learning English in international students as divisible into three aspects. First, people arrive with the English proficiency level that they have from their home countries. Nevertheless, upon arrival to an English-speaking country, international students find that the English used is not at the same level as the one they learned, due to the frequent use of informal language. In addition, these students have to use an advanced form of language in academia, where they encounter the challenge of understanding the academic English pertaining to their study area's concepts and ideas (Palmer 2015).

Achieving English language competence was challenging for all participants in the new culture. This experience was reported by participants who had nonetheless achieved the required score in their test of English as a foreign language. The participants felt the English language was a profound challenge from the first days of learning. This challenge often remained the case for the entire period of study. Ahmed (2016) confirms that even after studying English for two years with support from the Saudi government, for students whose English is at a foundational level, this is not enough to be fully confident at academic level. This was a key factor that the Saudi international students suggested had pushed them to go back home, but they worked hard to overcome the challenge (Ahmed, 2016).

A number of additional challenges were brought about as a result of insufficient English language competence. Limited English skills hindered the participants' communication in the new culture. Limited English proficiency seemed to influenced the participants with regards to self-expression, feelings, opinions and communications. These limitations placed on being able to express themselves can add more challenges for the participants when socialising with people in the new culture and in terms of engaging effectively in academic environments. Limited English language competence was a crucial challenge

to expressing feelings and socialising effectively with others. Although the participants were postgraduates, they still faced difficulties with English due to their limited English competence. Orth (2015) has argued that Saudi international students struggle especially with written English and they require assistance from academic institutions to understand how to arrange their thoughts and ideas in English and to convert those concepts into cogent written English.

Theme: Personal Challenges

Living expenses were a significant issue for all participants. They experienced financial difficulties whether the participants were on a scholarship or not. This limited cash flow affected their UK experience in terms of academic performance, housing, other living expenses and even emotional stability. The effects of this can be seen on participants' networking, intercultural interactions and their ability to achieve goals when studying in the UK and becoming an integrated part of the new culture. Orth (2015) has noted that Saudi students have a lifestyle in their home country which is heavily affected by on-going support from their family. In Saudi Arabia, children stay with their parents at home even after they are married, and everything is provided for them by the family unit. This can provide a good explanation of the difficulties that some students faced when studying for the first time abroad, in particular regarding finance management, finding accommodation and dealing with landlords (Orth, 2015).

Accommodation was a significant challenge; this covers finding accommodation to stay in, assuring a safe place to live, meeting a reasonable cost need, and being close to the university campus. Accommodation difficulties became burdens for them and they affected their UK experience in terms of academic performance and even emotional stability. Participants seemed to have low levels of knowledge of the process of finding accommodation in the UK. Not knowing the ways to search for a house was a key challenge. It appeared that viewing a house was not an issue in itself but the process of finding it was a core issue.

A lack of understanding of cultural differences led to difficult navigation of the new environment. When participants moved to the unfamiliar culture, they needed to figure out basic life tasks such as how to use public transport. This can be an overwhelming experience but is unavoidable because it is part of navigating around a newfound built environment. Participants looked for smooth transition experiences, but encountered challenges, especially in the beginning. Starting to navigate the host country geographically raised challenges never before faced by participants in their home culture. They considered everything to be a challenge in the first few days. Managing the self and practising religion also emerged as key challenges when out of the home culture context. Saudi Arabian students reported having most things done for them in their home country and now, abroad, they were forced to be far more independent. They found this to be a challenge when doing simple tasks but they realised that they were alone and were required to be more independent (also see Orth, 2015).

Food is a recurring aspect in maintaining the individual's physical and psychological well-being. When participants moved to the new culture full of unaccustomed food, they had difficulty in adjusting to the new food culture. Yue and Terry (2014) found that new food was one of the most important factors influencing international students' transition to the new environment in Australia. When relocating to a new country, it can be a challenge for students to become accustomed to local food types (Yue, & Terry, 2014). International students may at times forced to change their traditional dietary habits due to the unavailability of cultural specific food or ingredients, or the different ways food is processed in the new culture (Yue, & Terry, 2014).

Participants also noted the unavailability of specific religiously permitted food (Halal) in accordance with traditional Islamic law. Yue, and Terry (2014) have argued that Arabic and other predominantly Muslim country members are affected by the unavailability of culturally specific food in Australia when studying. In addition, Pan et al. (1999) have confirmed that the unavailability of culturally specific food is one of salient issues faced by Asian students in the US. In the UK, a study by Mustafa (2016) revealed that Muslim international students face distinct complications in identifying and deciding on Halal food choices.

The participants noted challenges in terms of changing their original food habits due to the unavailability of accustomed traditional food. Not enjoying local foods can affect participants' transition into the new culture. This limited availability of traditional food and the new diet impacted negatively on the experiences of a number of participants. It proved hard for them to shift to the new food and diet; they had not prior experience of it. It was perceived that food choices were a significant challenge during the transition, besides academic stresses, because international students were inexperienced with the UK food culture (see also Mustafa, 2016).

Theme: Academic Challenges

Although the participants had been in the UK for two to three years or more, they reported experiencing academic difficulty with English-related skills. These skills include discussion skills, listening to oral English, following lecture content, reading comprehension, note taking, vocabulary and writing and verbal communication. They needed to read textbooks and complete assignments more slowly than their UK classmates and they often needed to read the same text multiple times. This finding is consistent with those of other studies addressing Saudi international students (Abdel Rezak, 2012; Alamri, 2017); Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Hall, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Melius, 2017; Orth 2015; Shabeeb, 1996). Alamri, (2017) has reported that the challenge involved in acquiring competence in English aimed at academic success is a key perceived barrier to learning among Saudi international students. Al-Zubaidi (2012) notes that international students from Arab countries belong to a different academic context and tend to have different approaches to cognition. This can be noted in their different oral and writing work style in the classrooms.

English academic institutions generally ignore the fact that Arab international students have a different background in terms of academic literacy (Al-Zubaidi, 2012). Saudi international students are in greater need of assistance to adjust to the UK academic requirements and the academic writing format and to overcome several challenges pertaining to the different genres and styles in academic writing (Al-Zubaidi, 2012).

Participants reported a lack of confidence in their English skills and they felt worried about making mistakes; this may inhibit their interaction in class and make them feel they are less able than their UK classmates. Melius (2017) conducted a study of Saudi students in the U.S and found that limited English skills and fear of making mistakes when speaking the language were common for the sampled students. Furthermore, the students mentioned that they were not taught academic skills, such as note-taking and studying for exams, and that the majority of the instructors in the home country gave students the information that was relevant to the exam paper (Melius (2017)). At a minor level, this can be seen also related to a context that attempted to foster independence and critical thinking and a culture that attempted to foster dependence and proscribed thinking.

Although often encouraged to interact with native classmates to improve their skills, weak oral English skills may negatively affect the students' ability to interact with their classmates. East (2001), in his study of international students in Australia, found that students were disappointed due to their limited interaction with native students, and the students revealed feeling excluded from classroom activities. Students attributed this experience to their low proficiency in English and they felt their limited English had impeded their interactions and academic progress. Orth (2015) found that Saudi students tend to communicate more than other minority groups and they participate in groups with greater enthusiasm than other groups, but that this was not welcomed by native students. This made them feel uncomfortable in classrooms and encouraged them to withdraw and continue group associations only with other Saudi international students (Orth, 2015).

Navigating around an unfamiliar education system which has its own processes, norms and vocabulary can be a challenge for students. The system of education in the UK differs to that of Saudi Arabia and this can create confusion for participants who are accustomed to a didactic academic environment in their home country. Participants found it difficult to make the transition to the new education system. The first issue concerned adjustment to the academic environment and successful fulfilment of study requirements. Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) have found that Saudi students experience challenges in adapting to the UK educational system, raising issues around academic skills such as research, critical thinking, understanding core terms, conceptual thought and use of equipment Bousquet (2012) argues that "scaffolding" is needed to help international students in transition from one education system to another, in particular when international students are in their beginning of their study programme. Burns (1991) suggests that academics staff have to look at the "whole student" approach in which a more holistic view is assumed in perceiving the international student rather than a myopic view of merely academic progression.

Participants were relatively satisfied in terms of academia but less satisfied with their social integration. Due to the prioritisation of academic demands and coursework, participants felt that little time could be spared for social activities. The participants suffered from a limited level of socio-cultural knowledge. Their limited English language proficiency, exacerbated by cultural barriers, was a concomitant source of difficulty here. Razek & Coyner (2013) have indicated that Saudi international students are not lacking subject knowledge as much as they lack culturally specific and contextual communicative skills. Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) argue that communicating with supervisors is a critical academic challenge for these students that relates back to differences in the educational systems and the expected roles of supervisor and student.

It was also difficult for the participants to be in a mixed-gender education environment for the first time. Interaction with classmates of the opposite sex during class activities was an unfamiliar experience. Al Morshedi (2011) studied gender issues in international Emirati and Saudi students and revealed that gender is not an issue in participation with other students. Students are comfortable collaborating with those of the opposite gender, however in this study some female students expressed their discomfort when working with male students.

Theme: Gendered experience of female participants

Saudi females associated themselves with the behaviour of Saudi women as they were concerned with their gender-specific apparel. Alrefaie (2015), in her study, indicates that Saudi females were concerned with issues that were not of significant concern to male participants as female participants were concerned about the hijab. Macias (2016) found that the hijab for most Saudi females was their way of maintaining their culture and religious values in the United States where, in the context of maintaining Saudi culture, participants discussed wearing the hijab as a means to adhere to Saudi standards.

Female participants had worries regarding the *Hijab*, as did married male participants who moved with their wives. They anticipated intolerance towards traditional Saudi women's clothing including the *Hijab*. Participants anticipated that the *Hijab* would be a major factor in the UK which may in some cases cause danger or risk to their safety. Even though participants developed more acceptable designs of the *Hijab* for example by changing the *Hijab* shape and colours, they at times experienced negative attitudes towards the *Hijab* and the person wearing it. Rundles (2013) argues that students who look more obviously Muslim or Arab, particularly females who wear the *Hijab*, are more likely to face discrimination. The finding of the current study is consistent with that of previous studies; these have revealed that sojourners appear as more obviously distinct, face a greater challenge because of this and face more discrimination (Almotery, 2009; Amer & Hovey, 2007; Brown, 2009; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Johnson, 2008; Melius, 2017; Orth 2015; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Rundles, 2013; Shaw, 2009).

Participants faced relatively serious interpersonal behavioural difficulties such as hostility and rudeness. Although participants struggled to cope with this discrimination, they kept silent and did not involve the authorities to assist them, such as the police or the university authorities. Saudi students tended to deny or downplay experiences of discrimination, which may link back to their unwillingness to report discrimination (Rundles, 2013). Padilla and Perez (2003) stated that stigmatised people may not relate their negative experiences to others due to a reduced sense of control and self-esteem. This may offer a theoretical explanation for the students' refusal to report these experiences and it may indicate that such experiences caused damage to well-being. Experiencing a racist event was a serious issue, but not knowing how to address it was an issue that made the situation worse for the person victimised. The participants were confused and had no idea how to seek help or support or how to deal with the situation. A previous study of Saudi students in the US (Shaw, 2009) has confirmed that discrimination can lead to breakdown of a sense of community and connection with the host society. Amer and Hovey (2007) argue that, although they do experience discrimination, many Muslims and Arabs tend not to report these barriers and stressors to acculturation.

Female participants experienced fear of being not accepted in the new culture. In a study of Saudi female students in the US, Lefdhahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) have found that a number of Saudi females remarked that people in the US appear to be culturally ignorant, and in particular have incorrect notions of Saudi culture and people. Heyn's (2013) study revealed that Saudi international students worried about negative perceptions they may encounter by people in the U.S and they were concerned they may not be welcomed by them. Some participants experienced unwelcoming attitudes from local students in the new culture whether directly or indirectly. Brown (2009) has observed that local students demonstrate a low level of interaction with their international peers at a university in the South of England. Rundles' (2013) study found that Saudi students reported feeling unwelcome, and this made adjustment difficult and sometimes undesirable. Melius (2017) found Saudi students in his study faced discrimination and negative perspectives from locals on campus and off due to their Saudi Arabian associations and their outer appearance.

Perceptions of expected rejection from the host culture can negatively impact on participant's interactions, their navigation of new society and culture and their well-being. The participants felt that they might become rejected due to their personal appearance. The female participants were more likely to experience these feelings due to Saudi Arabian traditional forms of Hijab being potentially problematic even though they accurately represented the home culture and religion. Several participants had negative interaction experiences with native students during classes. It was a challenge for them to be accepted by the native classmates. They attributed this barrier to their role as exemplars of the home culture. To better interact in the academic environment, they joined with other international students instead. There was distinct uncertainty about participants' relationships with local students, with participants stating that they did not feel welcome in the local student community.

Interaction with other classmates was essential not just during class activities in academic settings but also to fit positively into the new culture. Consistent with previous studies that have reported challenges to interaction with local students (Caldwell, 2013; Shaw, 2009), participants in this study found local students to be hard to deal with and unwilling to help them acculturate. Participants sought to communicate with their locally based classmates, but they could not achieve this effectively. Orth (2015) has stated that many Saudi students find it challenging to make friends with other students and non-Saudi Arabian people and this can be seen as an evidence of ethnocentrism. The participants experienced negative feelings derived from not being well engaged with local students; they reported feelings of rejection and disappointment in this regard.

Further, an increasing representation of Saudi females abroad is taking place due to the loosening of Saudi Arabia's long-standing restrictions on female travel and acceptable fields of study and career (Sandekian et al., 2015). It is important for Saudi females to not just gain knowledge but also to be able to prove their worth in living and studying abroad, contrary to cultural norms and expectations. The Saudi females experienced a challenge in being a female abroad. Sandekian et al. (2015) have found that Saudi females showed a strong desire to succeed when studying abroad, both in terms of personal advantage and anticipated contribution to their home country. Saudi females not only considered continuing their programmes of study but also focused on proving their positive image when back in Saudi society; therefore, they studied very hard to meet the university's requirements for the study abroad programme (Ahmed, 2016). They did not want to fail in the programme and go back to the home country without a degree; they would thus prove the notion that Saudi females can achieve more than just being housewives by engaging head-on with their studies (Ahmed, 2016). Female participants noted the social freedoms of the new culture. Females mentioned how they sought to be out of the home culture norms in order to have greater freedom in terms of life choices.

There is a high level of distinction between Saudi Arabian culture and UK culture. Moving across the two contrasting cultures, each of which imposes and normatively supports very different behavioural expectations and public life restrictions, requires a delicate management of the new situation, often void of ample social resources in doing so (Sandekian & el at., 2015). Therefore, the female participants often compared these two cultures in terms of their differences and not their similarities. They reported their experiences of the profoundly different perspectives in the two culture, including differences in lifestyle, social freedoms, education systems and cultural norms. This finding is consistent with former research pertaining to Saudi international students (Alamri, 2017; Al Musaiteer, 2015; Shabeeb, 1996; Hamad, 2012; Hofer, 2009; Razek & Coyner, 2013).

Living and studying in the UK is a uniquely exciting experience for Saudi female students with many opportunities emerging, but there are also challenges that students must overcome as they adapt to the UK's norms and common lifestyle. Most of these challenges

stem from the deep-running cultural differences between home and host cultures which reflects differences in what it means 'to be a person' in each culture. In their transition to the UK, the participants reported differences in lifestyle between home and host country. Hamad's (2012) study of the personal constructs of Saudi students sojourning in Canada found that Saudi students encounter a challenge in adapting to the Canadian culture due to these normative differences. Rezak's (2012) study found that cultural norms and religious differences were a major challenge for Saudi international students in the U.S to manage and navigate. He revealed that a range of challenges, including religious ones, prevented Saudi female students from participating in most social events.

The transition from what is a highly segregated home culture to an un-segregated host culture affected the living and studying processes and the degree of cultural adaptation that the participants achieved in the host environment. Berry (1998) has argued that psychological issues at the individual level frequently emerge during the acculturation process; he refers to this as acculturative stress. The participants attempted to adapt to the differences between the two cultures effectively, partly due to their cross-cultural awareness; they invariably appeared enthusiastic about the new culture. Participants remarked on the issue of maintaining and operationalising both cultures. They preferred to integrate and enmesh both the home and the host cultures.

Alamri (2017) has found that while Saudi students appreciate their Saudi culture, they are also keen to adapt to the new host culture. However, they often face challenges in keeping to their culture norms and being engaged more in the host culture at the same time (Alamri, 2017). In this study, it was found to be beneficial to take advantage of both cultures to achieve core goals associated with studying in the UK. Female participants in particular experienced the advantages of living in the new culture as Saudi citizens who were used to being limited in their daily lives due to home culture norms. They expressed a preference for integration, noting their appreciation of the opportunity to enjoy being in the UK's culturally pluralist society. Alqahtani and Pfeffer (2017) argue that Saudi cultural norms often restrict the freedoms of female students, which in turn restricts their chances of engaging in self-improvement and acquiring skills by interacting with host country people.

Saudi females were able to resist some differences in female gender norms during their study in the UK. They were able to exceed some Saudi gender norms and actively navigate mixed-gender contexts. However, Saudi female students felt bound by the gender norms of their culture and felt that their home culture, too, expected them to strike a balance between living in the new context and holding on to the gender norms of their culture. Saudi females showed a greater sense of belonging to their cultural group, thus, identification with one's own culture, adherence to home country norms and exposure to UK cultural values were associated with gender role identity.

Dealing with daily life responsibilities is a challenge too. Many aspects of life used to be handled for the participants by one or male family members. However, living in the UK

requires Saudi females to manage all aspects of their lives for themselves. Female participants reported experiencing greater independence while studying abroad. Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) found that although Saudi international females were challenged by their study experience in the US, they also reported increased mobility independence, greater freedoms, enhanced confidence and intellectual improvement. Several of the participants in this study nonetheless lamented being looked after in Saudi Arabia and missed certain aspects of this.

It is concluded from the data that Saudi female identity is affected in terms of perceptions of their home country, its norms, culture and values. Exposure to new norms, culture and values in the UK apparently incites in Saudi females a desire for improvement in certain areas of Saudi Arabian life, namely, independence and self-reliance, and developing an independent sense of self. Given the centrality of gender segregation and the traditional gender role in the home culture, developing their independent sense of self, independence and self-reliance represents a significant change in female identity. However, this has to be considered in combination with the findings on gender roles in the new context, as Saudi females continue to maintain close ties with their home culture and still consider them to be of the utmost importance. Saudi females reportedly develop aspects of their identity in the new context, but they still retain a strong sense of their Saudi cultural identity.

Theme: Representing the Home Culture and Religion

Due to Saudi Arabia's and the UK's cultural differences, participants faced a challenge when it comes to self-appearance or "personal appearance". Participants were influenced by different forms of appearance, including facial appearance, traditional clothes and religious and moral practices. How the participants look, and dress affected their behaviour in the new culture as well as the behaviour of others towards the participants. In class environments, it was difficult for several participants to interact with others because of how they themselves look. The visibility of their status as Saudi students with their marked facial appearances and traditional clothes emerged as an issue; it was identified by participants that they had concerns about their personal appearance and markers of difference in the study spaces, and when travelling in public spaces. Worries about personal appearance were not directly linked to race or skin colour but were related to visible cultural symbols.

The participants were acutely aware of the influence on their interactions of their self-appearance. They moved beyond that statement to voice how others felt about them and they stated that they made themselves a positive exemplar of their home culture. Alamri (2017) confirms that Saudi students in the U.S engage in discussions about their Saudi culture with the explicit desire of correcting misperceptions about Saudi Arabian culture and people. Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) have reported that Saudi females in the US are keen to act as good representatives of Saudi culture; in the study, the females often had worked to dispel myths that they were oppressed, and they shared knowledge about the true tenets of their religion.

Participants reported the negative role of the media and Islamophobia on their experiences in the new culture. They perceived the representation of home culture and religion in the media to be negative and overly associated with conservatism. This representation caused them to be viewed by people of the host culture with suspicion. This finding is consistent with those of other studies that have revealed that Saudi international students encounter challenges associated with the issue of Islamophobia (Abdel Rezak, 2012; Alamri, 2017; Al Musaiteer, 2015; Heyn, 2013; Hofer, 2009; Shaw, 2010). Abdel Rezak (2012) notes that Saudi students commented on the media and inaccurate representations and perceptions of Saudi culture. Abdel Rezak (2012) argues that stereotypes about Saudi culture, particularly those spread via the media, are offensive for Saudi students in the US. Heyn (2013) has found that Saudi international students in the US face being stereotyped and encountering Islamophobia but they maintain their efforts to correct these misperceptions about Saudi culture. Participants felt that the negative image of their culture portrayed in the media was inaccurate/unrepresentative. To challenge these misrepresentations portrayed by the media, they took on the role of clearly representing the home culture positively (Alamri, 2017; Heyn, 2013; Melius 2017; Rundles, 2012).

Theme: Gendered Interaction

During study in the UK the participants faced significant cultural challenges. These differences include having classes taught by different gender teachers, being in mixed-gender classrooms, and there being no gender segregation in most of their life aspects. Since Saudi Arabia is a gender-segregated society and culture, participants experienced a challenge when interacting with Saudis and non-Saudis in the new culture. The psychological difficulties pertaining to this gender interaction issue are associated with the students' sociocultural, contextual backgrounds (Al-Hazmi, 2013). There is a pervasive gender-segregation discourse and ideology prevalent in Saudi Arabia and this is expressed overtly in politics, and this discursive ideology, being radically different to that of the UK, can cause cultural integration issues (Alhazmi, & Nyland, 2013). The female participants experienced interactions with Saudi or non-Saudi males for the first time. It was difficult for them to be involved in a mixed-gender classroom with male students, because this was very distinct experience to what they were used to in the home culture. This issue relates to Berry's (2010) acculturation framework, particularly in terms of strategies of acculturation and the role of background and cultural identity in cross-cultural transitioning (Berry, 2010). Berry et al. (1987) have identified significant junctures in the acculturation process, including experiencing new dynamics of social relationships whether in-group or out-group, and in dominance patterns which may become established.

The interaction between both Saudi Arabian males and females seemed to be a gender issue premised on what participants had formerly experienced. The participants were thus experiencing academic challenges at the very same time as gender-related cultural ones. Alhazmi and Nyland (2013) argue that Saudi students have two interaction issues: social

and cultural challenges associated with interaction with other Saudi students and psychological challenges associated with fear of males or females. This can lead to students being concerned about interacting with the opposite gender and this is exacerbated by fears of being judged by other Saudi community members (Alhazmi & Nyland, 2013).

Participants suffered from confusion in their interactions with each other when adhering to the new cultural norms around gender. Saudi students in another study have reported that the intermingling between males and females in Canada was a new and innovative experience for them (Alamri, 2017). This finding is consistent with other studies of Saudi Arabian international students (Abdel Rezak, 2012; Alhazmi & Nyland, 2010; Alqahtani, 2015; Al-Rasheed, 2013; Musaiteer, 2015; Shaw, 2010). Unlike the argument in other studies, Alqahtani (2015) argues that not all Saudi international students consider interaction with the opposite gender to be a major challenge and many such students are willing to interact, while other students are happy to be involved in interactions with individuals from the opposite gender as long as some clear boundaries are set and purely professional interactions are maintained between them. When interacting with those of the opposite gender, the students interacted with non-Saudis differently to their Saudi peers. When they interacted with non-Saudis in places such as the classroom and lecture theatres, where interaction with others from the opposite gender was inevitable, a number of students maintained minimal communication and tended to participate only with the same gender. Others tended to interact with individuals from the other gender but engaged only in professional interaction directly related to work and study activities, not going beyond this and into informal conversation (Alqahtani, 2015).

Theme: Social and Emotional Support

Social support is crucial for positively navigating culture when abroad due to its provision of tools for coping with life changes. This finding supports those of former studies that have identified social support as an invaluable part of psychological adjustment when in a new culture (Melius, 2017; Razek and Coyner, 2013; Rundles, 2013; Shaw, 2009). Being away from home and old support systems, especially family and friends, the participants often faced difficulty in adjusting to the new, unfamiliar culture. They were aware of the importance of social support in achieving a positive adjustment, so, they planned to seek social support as a powerful coping resource. This is consistent with Tseng and Newton's (2002) strategies of well-being; these are as follows: establishing social contacts, seeking help, developing relationships with instructors and advisors and making friendships.

As for seeking social support, Alamri (2017) has found that the most common way of coping for Saudi students is asking friends from the home country to be their main source of support. Friendships in the UK were a key source of social support for the participants. Previous literature on international students has indicated that making co-national friendships is an essential strategy for feeling a sense of connectedness, and to recreate or mimic a sense of family belonging (Al-Jasir, 1994; Brown & Holloway, 2008;

Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Pederson, 1991; Rundles, 2013; Shaw, 2009). Participants received social support from friends whether it was before they entered, or when they first entered, or even after they had lived in, the UK. These friends provided support in terms of daily life assistance such as finding accommodation, being on public transport, and with complex issues such as feelings of isolation and adjustment difficulties in living and studying. Shaw (2009) has found that there is cultural norm among Saudi international students to share information and look after each other, particularly with new students. The participants regarded their friends in the UK as their substitute families, whom they could rely on to support them. They reported the rationale behind this preference to be with Saudi friends as being because of them sharing the same culture and having had similar experiences of being Saudi students in the UK. Bousquet (2012) has argued that Saudi international students tend to make friends with other Saudis when they are abroad as they share a distinct commonality in being sojourners as well as a common need to receive support and provide support to other. Having friendships made the adjustment process easier when abroad and provided feelings of there being a substitute family. Also, participants felt the most comfortable and most accepted when surrounded by Saudi peers. Rundles (2013) stated that Saudi international students view the Saudi student community as being essential in their adjustment and this makes them feel a sense of familiarity in an overall unfamiliar culture.

Family and parents were also a key source of support for the participants. As mentioned earlier, isolation and loneliness are common experiences for Saudi international students because they are very used to close-knit and communitarian family support structures (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Participants received family support although they were physically away from their families; this support included encouragement and emotional support. This family in the early days was most intense and was considered most appreciated and valued. The participants often came to the UK with other family members such as with a husband/wife or a parent or brother as a male companion in case of the female students. Having someone from their family in the UK with them during their study period abroad can minimise issues such as homesickness, isolation and loneliness.

Participants spoke about support provided by faculties and native students. Support was limited because relationships with them were lacking cultural commonality and because interactions with native students were often unfriendly and did not comprise friendships. Many Saudi students reported finding it difficult to make friends with other students and non-Saudi Arabians (Orth, 2015). Several participants reported that many native students are lacking any form of credible knowledge about Saudi Arabian culture. In a study of Saudi female students in the US, Lefdahl-Davis and Perrone-McGovern (2015) have found that a number of Saudi females remarked that people in the US appear to be culturally ignorant, and in particular have incorrect notions of Saudi culture and people.

Melius (2017) found that Saudi students experience local students as closed off from them and reluctant to be informed by them about Saudi culture. Several of the participants noted that they had felt supported by their respective faculties and by native students. They

stated that they had been willing to help if necessary but not overly willing to make friends with them. This is consistent with findings in Orth's (2015) study that identified that Saudi students often engage in friendly interactions with peers and with the university staff and teachers.

4.1.3 Changes and Self-Development

Findings from the data analyses provide key insights into personal changes and increased awareness of self that the participants developed as an outcome of living and studying in the UK. Such changes and increased awareness of the self comprise the final foci of this chapter (see Table 4.3). This section relates to the personal changes and changes to awareness of self which took place for the participants. These two themes break down into several subthemes, including awareness of self-transformation and new self-images, the adoption of new values and beliefs and learning and self-development. In this section, the data are drawn from responses to interview questions such as "could you please describe how your cross-cultural study experiences in the UK may have impacted your personal beliefs and values?" and, "could you please describe your other experiences in the UK that may have impacted your identity and self-understanding as a Saudi Arabian student?" (see Appendix D-1). Each main theme included related sub-themes.

Table 4.3 Primary themes and subthemes related to Changes and Self- development

Changes and Self-development aspects	
Theme	Subtheme
Changes and awareness of self	Awareness of changes and new self-image
	Learning new values and beliefs
Learning and self-development	

4.1.3.1 Changes and awareness of self

This theme examines changes and alterations in the awareness of self that Saudi Arabian students reported as outcomes of living and studying in the UK (see Table 4.3). It includes the subthemes of awareness of change and new self-images, as well as the adoption of new values and beliefs.

4.1.3.1.1 Awareness of changes and new self-images

When individuals experience overseas study, they are more likely to be subjects of personal change. Studying overseas entails becoming accustomed to the foreign culture's norms and values and these can impact on the individual's identity. All participants in this

study spoke of the changes they perceived in themselves since coming to the UK. These included changes in self-confidence, independence, competence, communication skills, value systems and identity in general. Moreover, the participants were aware of how these changes had influenced their conceptualisations of self in many respects. Participants seemed to be consciously and constantly well aware of their internal states and their interactions in the new context.

Participant 1 (male) described how he perceived changes in his self-awareness level after living in the UK, as compared to his experiences of living in the home country. The participant attempted to give reasons for why such change had taken place. The participant felt that living in the new culture and experiencing associated challenges led him to developing new abilities and increased self-awareness. He stated that:

'Living here is completely different than my home country, I learned how to manage time, my mentality, my family, and finance, and these things actually change my mentality, I learn.. I discover myself because I sort out these problems and I see the process of solving any problem, I see how can expand my abilities to think and if I believe in something I'll achieve it. I find myself here is completely different person because life in Saudi Arabia is much easier than here, here I have to care about every single thing I have to do.' (Participant 1, male)

Participant 5 (female) spoke about changes in the positioning of the self that she had undergone when dealing with people in the UK context. The participant distinguishes between two self-positionings; her Saudi-to-Saudi one and her UK one. The participant was not only aware that changes to self-positioning had occurred but also stated that these changes would affect her when re-entering the home country. She gave examples of the changes; these included increases in self-reliance, independence and self-confidence. Significantly, the participant reported that she experienced a conflict from being in the UK, because her newfound independence, freedoms and life choices were in conflict with aspects of the home culture. At the same time, she tended to feel safe when surrounded by her family, who provided her with support. She said that:

'My character should be – I will not say totally different, but I'll not deal with a UK person as I deal with a Saudi. I will go back to my country completely different person. It's challenge for me to be responsible of everything, British people think I'm spoilt girl but these things we are not used to do. I become more responsible, independent, more self- confidence and stand up for others rights. I become stronger in my personality and I think the system and rules makes me more comfortable to take my right. I like to be with my family and feel safe and here I like being independent and I can do whatever I want. I really stick between living here and there.' (Participant 5, female)

4.1.3.1.2 New values and beliefs

Most of the participants (7 in total) spoke about learning about new values and beliefs as a key aspect of change and enhanced awareness. These values and beliefs were drivers of personal change, increased awareness of self and self-developments. In addition, the participants spoke about several aspects of public life, such as interactions with others, voluntary activities, respecting others, open-mindedness and openness to other ideas and beliefs as key drivers of self-development.

Participant 3 (female) indicated that changes in her beliefs had taken place and that further change was anticipated. The participant believed that changes to her beliefs would continue when she returns to her home culture. She was anticipating/acknowledging that Self will continue to change in the future. In this case, she was talking of things that she has control over and that she can predict (e.g., walking, going to the gym). Also, she gave an example of her belief changes (in terms of assertiveness) when she spoke about Saudi cultural norms that can limit her movement as a woman in a conservative society. There will also be changes that she can't predict simply because uncertainty is a part of the ongoing experience of living. She stated that:

'My beliefs have changed and also I think it will change more in the future. For example the physical activities here is part of people time in my country no, when I go back to Saudi Arabia I will do like people here, try to walk every day or be in the gym, also I can refuse, I can see no for anything I don't believe it's correct or benefit for me not because my society or my culture.' (Participant 3, female)

Participant 7 (male) stated that studying abroad had helped him not just to learn in classes but also to learn about different worldviews and values. The participant perceived challenges to be part of an overall learning process that could lead him to changing his values and beliefs over time. He said that:

'Traveling abroad to study, it's not just only learn how to study it's also how to learn maybe how to do things I never did it before. All things that happened and the difficulties and all things I learned during my education, so it's lead me how to manage, how to believe myself, how to be responsible.' (Participant 7, male)

Participant 5 (female) spoke about her experience of learning new values. The participant mentioned the specific social values that she had learned about when dealing with others from different backgrounds. She spoke about tolerance and accepting other ideas and beliefs. She stated that:

'Respect other people wherever they came from, nations, or religions, or colour, anything. Or race. And to respect other opinions. This is a very good thing, that I have respect for, I have learned here. I took the value of organization and following the system.' (Participant 5 female)

Participant 6 (female) shared her experiences in terms of learning new values. The participant reported how she became more interactive with other people, more tolerant and more open-minded about others from different backgrounds. She said that:

'I changed to be more socialize, talking with more people, to be more open. I can accept anyone, because we are working here together. I think I'm not just judging everyone because of his religion. I will just respect.' (Participant 6 female)

4.1.3.2 Learning and self- development

This theme examines the learning and self-development that the Saudi Arabian students reported as being outcomes of living and studying in the UK (see Table 4.3). Most of the participants (7 in total) spoke of learning and self-development. The participants perceived self-development during studies in the UK to have enhanced their lives in terms of well-being, education, career, relationships, health, productivity and other personal goals. The main aspects of self-development involved goal-setting, motivation, developing self-awareness, changing habits, identifying and building on their values and beliefs and self-actualisation.

Participant 4 (female) reported engaging in a positive process of self-development while in the UK. She spoke about how she felt that in the host culture she was able to behave and think as she wished without pressure from the cultural norms of the home country to act and express herself in a particular way. She used metaphor when she said 'put like a mask' to express the experience that was difficult to express directly. Using the term "mask" highlights the power of metaphor for sharing her experience and the way in that metaphor makes sense of the participant's experience as the capacity of metaphor to make a connection between disparate her idea and concept. The participant indicated that the host culture provided her with more space to develop her sense of self. Being outside of her home culture was an opportunity for her to evaluate its norms, values, and beliefs. However, at the same time, the participant described the conflict she experienced by having to integrate both cultures. The participant struggled with this conflict in cultures value systems. This conflict appeared to drive a feeling of uncertainty. Although she found that the new environment provided an opportunity to learn and develop herself, several aspects of the home culture's norms were still pervasive in her mind. The nature of Self, on the one hand, says that there is an essential inner self that can be revealed in some contexts but not revealed in others. On the other hand, it says that self is inter-relational and that is interwoven with some cultures brings forth a different inter-related self than in others which is less of a sense of an isolated, individually bounded self than in the former case. This can be an illustration of the paradox of being in a new culture where there are some greater freedoms, but also the connectedness is lower than in the home culture, while both autonomy and connectedness were fundamental needs. The participant felt the need to honour both cultures. These cultures and their co-integration were influential in reconstructing her self-image. She stated that:

'I'm here who I am but when I go to S.A, I have to put like a mask, just to respect cultural rules, in my opinion Saudis don't want to be judged just based on their culture, they don't even believe in it, but here, everyone has to be herself. It's difficult, I can find myself more here, but I miss my family, I miss our values. There are still values there not present here. Here, I have opportunity to do something I cannot do in Saudi Arabia. But there I have all my life that I will not have it here, for that reason it's complicated. I want these opportunities but in that culture.' (Participant 4 female)

Participant 7 (male) also spoke of his experience in terms of learning and self-improvement. The participant stated that the UK study period was an opportunity to learn about and practice new things and forms of life that were not available in his home country. In addition, receiving limited support from his parents in the new environment made him more self-reliant, and he enjoyed the greater freedoms provided by the new environment. The participant noted that all the challenges he had faced were necessary steps in an overall process of self-improvement. He said that:

'I need to manage life because in my home country most of me rely on my parents but here in the UK it's my life. I have more freedom and responsibility of my education and life. For me, it was much better than before, because learned many new things I never learned before. Even about my education, independent life, and make real friends. It makes me feel proud of myself, like I have done this work alone without any help. All things that happened and the difficulties and all things I learned during my education, so it's lead me how to manage, how to believe myself, how to be responsible.' (Participant 7 male)

4.1.3.3 Discussion

Participants had similar though nuanced experiences of change and self-development while living in the UK; when it comes to the details, each participant reported a unique experience. Further, the participants were both males and females, and this variation in gender had produced different experiences including changes and awareness of self and self-development and transformation.

These phenomena are echoed in the theoretical literature on cross-cultural studies, in which the development of a cross-cultural experience has been recognised (Sam & Berry, 2006). The key premise underlying this developmental perspective is that the new cultural context fundamentally contributes to the individual's socio-psychological development. Thus, transitioning to a new culture can *add* to an individual's internal development (Sam & Berry, 2006). The result of living within and across two cultures is that the acculturating person often experiences considerable changes which entail physical, economic, social and cultural growth (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005). Cultural change is an emerging theme of interest in acculturation research. These changes can range from very superficial ones

such as daily habits to major changes such as shifts in identity (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

When individuals are exposed to a foreign culture its behavioural norms and its cultural values will impact on the individual's self-identity. Individuals who have studied overseas often or perhaps invariably undergo change, for example their perceived competence is boosted, their style of communication is modified, their value systems placed under scrutiny, and their behaviours can be altered. The nature of these changes also depended on personal and demographic factors, for example factors such as gender, age, language proficiency, motivation to study abroad, length of study period and cultural background.

In the present study the participants' experiences that self-development was invoked by the study abroad experience was remarked on frequently, with the participants indicating that their very *identities* had changed. They reported being more self-aware as to their identity, becoming more skilled, and changing their socio-cultural perspective while studying abroad. The participants perceived these changes as a core component of the study overseas experience and reported that cultural exposure was an essential driver of their self-improvement. While international students interact with a new educational system, a novel social environment and an unfamiliar culture, they develop new communicative skills, greater intercultural awareness and wider-framed attitudes which enable them to function effectively within the host (and home) country/countries. The process of identity transformation is, therefore, interwoven with the development of maturity and intercultural understanding (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010).

Before entering the UK, the participants anticipated that they would face significant challenges arising from the nature of UK culture and the traditions of UK society and its values. The participants were aware of the differences between the two cultures, which arguably should have made the transition easier. Overall, the participants posited that the changes that happened within them during their study overseas had a positive impact. As they increasingly assumed more responsibility, they became more confident, more independent and more satisfied with themselves. They believed the changes had made them more aware of who they had become, and of the role of their home culture in shaping their identities, values and norms. This enhanced awareness of identity formation processes had helped the participants to better understand their senses of self and this had spurred on their confrontation with new challenges arising from their transition. The participants increased awareness of the social construction of their identity helped them to critically and successfully engage in negotiating the two cultures in their minds.

The data also indicate that Saudi students are not a homogenous group who encounter the same experiences when it comes to gender role identity. Quotes from the interview data address Saudi female students' culture-specific gender norms. They illustrate that the female participants went through a process of change and development of the self. However, diversity in the change and self-development process was also noted due to

differing attitudes towards their home culture and how they understood gender role identity.

Saudi females were able to resist some differences in female gender norms during their study in the UK. They were able to exceed some Saudi gender norms and actively navigate mixed-gender contexts. However, Saudi female students felt bound by the gender norms of their culture and felt that their home culture, too, expected them to strike a balance between living in the new context and holding on to the gender norms of their home culture. Saudi females showed a greater sense of belonging to their cultural group, thus, identification with one's own culture, adherence to home country norms and exposure to UK cultural values were associated with gender role identity.

For these females, challenging the norm of deference to the home culture may bring worries about being judged, that fully engaging in change might go against home culture norms, which is a powerful deterrent to contesting a gender norm (Song, 2019), and that led to submitting to traditional Saudi gender norms. Instead, they focused more on changes from within and became more self-reliant, confident, independent, open-minded and tolerant of other groups, and developed views on aspects of the home culture and society.

The female participants referenced their home culture to justify their point of view on gender identity when they complied with Saudi gender norms and saw balance as an appropriate path. Song (2019) argues that Saudi females' home culture perspective, then, can be seen to justify gender identity roles and can allow Saudi females new ways of understanding themselves as females. This suggests that the validity of Saudi females' social identity is advocated by the home culture.

Theme: Changes and awareness of self

The findings relating to changes in awareness of the self pertain to how the foreign culture's norms and cultural values impact on an individual's identity. The participants experiencing overseas study stated that they were more likely to be subjected to radical and profound identity changes. These changes pertained to self-confidence, independence, perceived competence, communication skills, value systems, and individual personality and preference. Melius (2017) has investigated how Saudi students have cognitively and behaviourally processed their period of study in the United States, including how they have reacted to and changed as a result of their academic achievement, making adjustments to who they are not just what they think. In this study, most of the Saudi students indicated that their experiences in the US had influenced their personalities. Moreover, they were more aware of those changes and what factors had influenced the self. In this current study, the participants seemed consciously and critically aware of their internal states and their interactions with the new context. The participants also noted these changes in self-awareness having lived in the UK compared to being in the home country. The participants felt that living in the new and different culture and

experiencing resulting challenges can lead to the development of new abilities and increased self-awareness. Dolby (2004) confirms that studying overseas can increase self-awareness and studies have found (see Schmitt, Spears & Branscombe, 2003) that this can lead to perceived self-development.

The participants revealed a process of positioning the self when they dealt with people in the new UK context. They distinguished between two self-positionings; the first position emerges during interaction with the new context and the second one comprises the Saudi-contextual self-positioning when dealing with people from the home culture. The participants were not only aware of these distinctions in self-positioning but could also comment on changes to and in the self which would have a lasting effect when re-entering the home culture. They gave examples of changes that they perceived themselves to have undergone in terms of selfhood, including enhanced self-reliance, greater independence and boosted self-confidence. The participants reported this as a form of internal conflict; they experienced being in the new context and being provided with greater independence, more freedom and diversified life choices as being a conflicting and challenging experience, not solely a liberating one.

Participants learned new values and adopted new beliefs. These new values and beliefs were signs of identity change, increased awareness of self, and on-going self-development. The participants contended that studying abroad had caused them not simply to learn in the classroom but also to gain experience in new areas that they had not expected or foreseen. They perceived there to be challenges which were inherent to being in a different culture which prompted a learning process and caused them to modify their values and beliefs. Heyn (2013) confirms this finding in her study of Saudi international students in the U.S. She found that students felt they underwent a considerable change in terms of a number of their personal values and beliefs. The participants indicated that they had developed in several aspects of social development such as in interaction with others, when engaged in voluntary activities, ways to demonstrate respect to others, open-mindedness and openness to others' ideas and beliefs. They became more aware of the importance of voluntary activity and of providing support to others. They developed crucial social values that they acquired by dealing with others from different backgrounds. The participants felt they were thereafter more interactive with a range of people, more open-minded to others, more tolerant and more accepting of others' ideas and beliefs. The findings of the present study are consistent with those of Heyn (2013) in which Saudi international students conveyed that studying in the US had helped to develop tolerance and an increased cross-cultural awareness in them.

Furthermore, the participants in the present study revealed that these change in their beliefs and more change were consciously anticipated. They expected that changes to beliefs would ensue, and they believed that these would help them in an on-going way when they re-entered their home culture.

Theme: Learning and self-development

In terms of learning and self-development, the participants perceived self-development in this context as comprising the improvement of their lives in terms of well-being, education, knowledge, career, relationships, health and productivity. The main ambitions in terms of self-development included goal setting, fostering motivation, building on self-awareness, changing entrenched habits, and identifying personal values and beliefs by relating these to their culture. In former studies, Saudi Arabian students have revealed that studying in the US has positively influenced their comprehension of good education and key educational values by helping them to acquire new academic skills as well as an increased understanding of other cultures (Akhtarkhavari, 1994). Pham & Saltmarsh (2013) argue that the Vietnamese international students they surveyed experienced the (different) value and norms in Australia as effecting their own traditional values; this was particularly so in terms of their eagerness to succeed in education (Pham & Saltmarsh, 2013).

The participants in the present study experienced a positive level of self-development resulting from studying abroad. Heyn (2013) found that Saudi international students often reported that their experiences in the US, while being difficult at the beginning, were overall highly beneficial. These students felt as though their experiences had helped them learn a lot about themselves, others, and the US (Heyn, 2013). Al-Jasir (1993) found that Saudi international students' experiences in the US were in general positive, and students would recommend it to other Saudis. In the host culture, they can practice what they believe without pressure being placed on them by the cultural norms of their home country. The participants generally felt that the UK host culture provided them more space to develop their independent sense of self. Being out of the home culture was an opportunity for them to evaluate their norms, values and beliefs in order to move forward and improve their identities. Pham and Saltmarsh (2013) studied Vietnamese students in Australia and found that the students were keen to integrate with Australians but they often faced challenges arising from cultural differences and language barriers and, in the process of overcoming these challenges, students became more aware of their own culturally contextual identity. Dolby (2004) argues that studying overseas can increase internal awareness of one's *national* identity and (see Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003) achieving a better understanding of this can lead to intrapersonal development for the international student.

In this study, the participants viewed self-development as being the opportunity to learn and practice new things that are not available in their home country. Because receiving support from family was not possible in the new environment, this made them more self-reliant, especially with the greater freedom of movement and belief provided by this new environment. Thus, the challenges they faced were a necessary component of the overall process of self-development. Brown (2009) argues that international students require a period of adjustment in understanding the new and sometimes seemingly threatening behaviours evident in the new culture; by adjusting so, they can develop their personal,

emotional and social skills. The participants in the current study voiced a perceived conflict which emerged from integrating between and into *both* cultures. Although they found the new environment to be an opportunity for learning and developing the self, several aspects of home cultural norms remained present in their minds, and this at times caused internal schisms and confusion.

Studying in the UK exposes Saudi females to different views on aspects of their own culture that are not commonly possible for them at home. It is concluded from the data that Saudi females' identity affected in terms of perceptions of their home country, its norms, culture and values. Exposure to new norms, culture and values in the UK apparently incites in Saudi females a desire for improvement in certain areas of Saudi Arabian life, namely, independence and self-reliance, and developing an independent sense of self. Given the centrality of gender segregation and the traditional gender role in the home culture, developing an independent sense of self, independence and self-reliance represents a significant change in female identity.

In a culture as male-dominated as Saudi Arabia's, the reported independence and self-reliance of Saudi females in the UK is a phenomenon that marks a notable change from Saudi Arabian cultural norms. This has the potential to impact on Saudi female identity, not in the sense of belonging to the home culture, but in that it creates a space for these females to develop an identity or sense of self removed from the traditional gender role in the home culture, which is unique for them. It should be noted that their individual identities develop and change in response to the new social context (Bilal, 2017), where the hopes they envision for their Saudi identity in these areas are influenced by the standards they experience in the UK.

However, this has to be considered in combination with the findings on gender roles in the new context, as Saudi females continue to maintain close ties with their home culture and still consider them to be of the utmost importance. Saudi females reportedly develop aspects of their identity in the new context, but they still retain a strong sense of their Saudi cultural identity.

4.2 Conclusion

The findings and analysis presented in this chapter overall support the Psychological Acculturation Theory as proposed by Berry (1997,2011). Acculturation dimensions such as religion and gender issues were the key to understanding the acculturation process in the Saudi student group. This was evidenced in the main themes related to the participants' experiences in the pre-move and acculturation phases, and also in the impact of the socio-cultural context on their self-development.

As for pre-move, the participants showed their motivation to study abroad, anticipation and expectations about their imminent experience of life in the UK, and how their planning

and motivations related to family structures, their gender and their political-ideational beliefs. The participants' motivations, anticipatory expectations and planning process to move to study in the UK often orientated around cultural considerations of social norms, political values and societal behavioural norms.

As for arrival and life in the UK, many key considerations and concepts associated with that were examined and the findings resonate with the existing literature pertaining to international students in many respects; including themes of homesickness, language barriers, personal and academic challenges, and social and emotional support. However, a number of themes that were specific to the Saudi international students were not directly reflective of the existing wider literature relating to international students. Such themes included gendered experience of female participants, issues of representing the home culture and its religion, and gendered interaction.

Although the participants were motivated to move to the UK by certain beliefs that the process would be smooth, they found the transition process was more challenging than they had anticipated; they had to merge socially and academically into a whole new culture. Navigating the new culture and different context impacted on the notions of selfhood of the students.

The participants' experiences that self-development was invoked by the study abroad experience was remarked on frequently, with the participants indicating that their very identities had changed. They reported being more self-aware as to their identity, becoming more skilled, and changing their socio-cultural perspective while studying abroad.

The participants felt that the UK host culture provided them more space to develop their sense of self. They viewed self-development as being the opportunity to learn and practice new things that are not available in their home country. However, the participants voiced a perceived conflict that emerged from integrating between and into both cultures. Although they found the new environment to be an opportunity for learning and developing the self, several aspects of home cultural norms remained present in their minds, and this at times caused conflict and confusion.

It is evident in the current study that any change involved a challenge. The participants leaving the home culture experienced a challenge in terms of their experiential self and also their self-concept. They realised that they will have new experiences, but they did not know whether those experiences would be distressing or fulfilling. Their home culture was challenged. It seemed that Saudi Arabia funds many of the students, but they did not really know how the students they supported may change during their time abroad and how they will act when they return home. The whole experience of Saudi students abroad was replete with uncertainty but seemed to be underpinned by hope for change despite nobody being sure what form that change will take.

Study One was exploratory and followed a broad approach aiming to understand the students' experiences of the transition involved in moving to and studying in the UK. It emphasized identifying the challenges faced by students as they confronted a cultural setting that might be quite different from that of the home country. Guided by an acculturation perspective, this study has focused on challenges and student adjustment, and identity integration. This study has concentrated on exploring several aspects of the study abroad experience for Saudi students. It has addressed the assumption of a (best) outcome, one that involves the finalization and achievement of identity that typically involves some sort of integration of a previously conflicting cultural self and a commitment to the newly integrated identity (Velez-Gomez, & Bell, 2018). Consequently, this study is mainly interested in assessing the outcomes of study abroad. However, it has been primarily outcome-based and has not explored the ongoing identity negotiations of these students as they navigate an unfamiliar cultural setting. It has not addressed questions such as: What is the meaning of living and studying experience in the UK from Saudi students' perspectives? To what extent might these meanings create identity conflicts? When this conflict occurs, how do students negotiate it?

Acculturation theory, from Berry (1997, 2011), was used as a framework to investigate Saudi Arabian international students' responses to challenges associated with transition. Ontologically, Berry's acculturation theory (Berry & Sam, 1997) has firmly planted its philosophical roots in realism, which posits an objective, knowable and universal reality (Ngo, 2008). Berry and Sam (1997) argue that despite "substantial variations" in the life situations of cultural backgrounds that involve acculturation, the psychological processes that function during acculturation are generally the same for all cultural backgrounds; therefore, a universalist perspective on acculturation is adopted (Berry & Sam, 1997). This empirical and universalist perspective about acculturation led to a considerable body of theoretical work that ignored historically, politically and socially existing realities encountered by participants in the current study and lacked an explanation of acculturation experiences in terms of similarities and differences between female and male participants where gender emerged as very salient in Saudi female participants' lives in the UK. Therefore, these differences have not really been addressed in depth as the participants' experiences have been homogenised with more attention paid to culture than to gender (e.g. see 4.1.2.5 & 4.1.3.1). In the current study, gender, and how it is experienced in different cultural contexts, shapes aspect of female participants' educational experiences as well as their participation in different UK social and physical contexts, including experiences of discrimination and racial abuse (see e.g. 4.1.2.5.1 Hijab) when coupled with religious discrimination.

Furthermore, using a qualitative approach (IPA) and Berry's acculturation theory, which is mainly influenced by a positivist line of thought, was a challenge due to the ontological and epistemological differences between these two perspectives. Sensitivity as one of IPA's qualitative research criteria needs to be addressed in a more general context to show more sensitivity to the historical, social and political context. For example, the interpretation of the quote (4.1.1.1.4) "a strong desire to experience a different culture and

to witness and engage with multiculturalism” does not entirely reflect the symbolic sensitivity of this quote. In another example, the quote by (married) participant 1 (male) in 4.1.1.2.4, the sensitivity to context was not addressed although sensitivity to context could be achieved here and a more in-depth analysis around constructions of ‘otherness’ in a Western context and how these students reacted when constructed as the ‘other’.

Using IPA, the particular gendered issues and conflicts the female participants talked about in the current study could be highlighted more. As IPA is idiographic, so the focus should always be on the individual’s detailed subjective lived experience, beliefs and experiences of the current study. This is consistent with a critique of acculturation as a universal perspective, assuming that the psychological processes are the same for Saudi international students from different cultures without considering the diversity of Saudi international students’ experience. Moreover, the current study has highlighted that these acculturation psychological processes are not even the same for members of the Saudi ethnic group, and these experiences are shaped by different gendered positions.

As acculturation theory holds an epistemological position of objectivism, it is concerned with certainty, facts and quantification (Ngo, 2008). Acculturation theory, in particular, often draws upon dispassionate, empiricist ethnographic work to develop its theoretical framework of acculturation, and then systematically formulates psychometric instruments to measure acculturation (Ngo, 2008). These measurements overwhelmingly overlook structural issues of acculturation and reduce complex socio-psychological processes of acculturation to concrete ones, such as language use and preference, social affiliation, daily living habits, cultural norms, gender identity and discrimination ((Ngo, 2008). This compartmentalisation of acculturative experiences prevents insight into the processes involved in acculturation. Hermans (2001) argues that Berry’s theory mistakenly implies that psychological processes are the same for migrants from different cultures. Berry’s theory also considers integration “to be a linear trajectory that leads to an end-goal” (Hermans, 2001, p.271), but it does not demonstrate how that goal can be achieved, given the power and status differences between majority and minority cultural groups.

Roland (2001) rejects cross-cultural psychology’s assumption that acculturation is usually the same for everyone and that each individual faces it with the same psychological makeup. Further, he indicates that the acculturation process is more important than the outcome, as there is usually a question of how much of the indigenous self is maintained or disavowed in relationship to a newer self in the eventual makeup of a multicultural self, in particular when an individual moves between very different cultures.

To understand in depth the complexity of acculturation and address its dynamic nature, it is argued that acculturation is a meaning-making process whereby individuals must reconstruct their identities within a new context (Chrysochoou, 2004). It is evident from the data analysis that this more dynamic approach is fundamental to understanding the complex experiences of Saudi students’ transition to the UK. In this way, acculturation considers a dialogical process that involves dialogue between different identity positions.

It is proposed that the theory of the dialogical self can provide an appropriate theoretical approach for the study of acculturation. This view is dynamic and sees acculturation as a process, not an outcome (Andreouli, 2013).

Adams and Markus (2001) suggest that dialogical self theory, with its focus on a multiplicity of identities as a constructor of identity, makes a significant contribution to the theory of identity negotiation. They see this theory as illustrating how the self operates as a “zone of proximal development” (p.16), where both self-identity and cultural-identity categories “make each other up” (p.16). Dialogical self theory supersedes the one-dimensionality of acculturation theory (Berry & Sam, 1997), which views cultures as mutually distinct and internally homogeneous, and presupposes a linear conception of cultural change. In the dialogical self, identities can be hyphenated and hybrid constructions formed from heterogeneous and contrasting aspects.

As addressed earlier (see 3.2.1), ontologically, this study adopts an interpretivism epistemology stance whereby it assumes there is no concrete knowledge and objectivity that can exist external to the individual, rather knowledge and understanding of individual experience is a subjective interpretation. When this study attempted to align its epistemology with the acculturation theory of Berry (1997, 2005, 2011), it did not help the researcher to completely perceive knowledge as subjective and individually constructed through participation in social and cultural practice. Therefore, the researcher ended up perceiving that Berry’s acculturation theory is mainly affected by a positivist line of thought.

Berry’s (1997: 2011) model has addressed the acculturation experiences and positive developmental aspects of Saudi international students’ experiences in the current study, but it has been mainly outcome-oriented and has not pointed to the ongoing identity negotiation process of these students as they navigate UK culture, as the researcher adopts constructionism as an epistemological position that helps him to interact with the social and cultural construction of Saudi international students in the UK attempting to understand and construct the reality from the perspective of students who have experienced the phenomenon of living and studying in the UK. In the following study, when aligning my epistemology with dialogical self theory, in particular the model of Herman (2001, 2013), I will be able to conceptualize knowledge as subjective and individually constructed through participation in social and cultural practice, and the thoughts I have as a researcher conspire to position me within a qualitative approach.

Recognizing the importance of illustrating the identity negotiation process, as narrated by Saudi international students, the next study will provide a framework for the analysis of identity processing as narrated by them. The framework guiding the research is a dialogical perspective that emphasizes the dynamic, ongoing nature of identity meaning creation (Hermans, 2001 & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). In addition, it addresses the perspectives of Saudi international students, who have so far been underrepresented in the current study. The next study will extend the research, drawing on the findings of the current study. It will address several subthemes identified in the current study and explore

how these issues impact on Saudi Arabian students' sense of self. This study will involve an expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the original acculturation framework of Berry (1997, 2011) with the dialogical self theory of Hermans (2001) to examine how Saudi Arabian students give meaning to the idea of acculturation and being Saudi students in the UK. The next study will investigate the acculturation process of negotiating the demands of various identity positions in order to illustrate some of the various patterns of dialogue that may be created among divergent identity positions.

Part II: Acculturation and Identity negotiations of Saudi Students in the UK: A Dialogical Self perspective

Part II builds on the analysis conducted in Study One and explored Saudi Arabian students' experiences in the UK from a Dialogical Self perspective. It comprises the following chapters: A research background to Study Two is presented in Chapter 5. This chapter begins by presenting Key findings emerging from Study One and then illustrating the expansion from the acculturation perspective to dialogical self. This chapter also presents the methods and study design used in Study Two. Chapter 6 presents and discusses the findings on the acculturation experience and identity negotiations in Saudi students using the dialogical self-theory. Finally, the last chapter is a general conclusion. Chapter 7 summaries the key findings of Study One and Two. It also discusses the implications of the findings and articulates the contribution to the literature. It highlights the limitations of the research and presents areas for future academic research.

Chapter 5:

5.1 Background to Study Two

The main findings of Study One showed that Saudi students experience certain difficulties, such as homesickness, personal and academic challenges, gendered experience of female participants, issues relating to their home culture and religion, as well as gendered interaction, that can lead to psychological distress when studying abroad. However, Study One also reported some self-development as the outcome of students' acculturation, such as increased awareness of the self, a new self-image, adopting new values and beliefs and self- and social improvement, as well as skills development.

5.1.1 Key findings emerging from Study One

Significantly, when talking about changes and self-development, the participants raised negotiations, tensions and conflict between being in the UK and being affiliated to one's country of origin. They focused on different types of dialogue in identity positions linked to their home culture (Saudi) and being in the UK. Further, the variation in gender had produced different experiences including changes and awareness of self and self-development and transformation.

Studying in the UK exposed the participants to a new foreign culture's norms and cultural values that impacted on the participants' identity. They stated that they were likely to experience profound identity changes. These changes pertained to self-confidence, independence, perceived competence, communication skills and value systems. The participants felt that living in a new and different culture and experiencing resulting challenges could lead to the development of new skills and increased self-awareness.

The participants spoke about change and positioning the self when they experienced dealing with people in the new UK context. They distinguished between two self-positions; the first position emerges during interaction with the new context and the second one involved Saudi-contextual self-positioning when dealing with people from the home culture. Examples of changes in the self in the new situation included self-reliance, greater independence and boosted self-confidence. The participants reported this as a form of internal conflict; they found being in a new context and gaining greater independence, more freedom and diverse life choices a conflicting and challenging experience, not just a liberating one.

Several participants reported that they fit better in the UK than in their home country. In their interviews, they juxtaposed the UK with Saudi Arabia and compared them on the basis of opportunities and open-mindedness. While the UK was represented as a place of development and freedom, Saudi Arabia was represented as a conservative society that

restricts a participant's freedom. Self-identity, societal norms and interpersonal relationships for these students are greatly affected.

The participants generally felt that the UK host culture provided them with more space to develop their independent sense of self. They viewed self-development as an opportunity to learn and practise new things that are not available in their home country. The participants voiced a perceived conflict that emerged from integrating between and into both cultures. Although they found the new environment was an opportunity to learn and develop the self, several aspects of home cultural norms remained present in their minds, and this at times caused conflict and confusion. Thus, a deeper understanding of the impact of study-abroad experience on self-identity is required. In order to gain a better understanding of this impact on identity, Study Two examined how Saudi students negotiate identity in their host country.

The findings illustrate that the participants are not a homogenous group who face the same experiences when it comes to gender role identity. The female participants experienced a process of change and self-development where diversity in the change and self-development process was noted due to differing attitudes toward their culture and how they understood gender role identity.

Being in the UK exposes Saudi females to different views on aspects of their own culture that are not commonly possible for them in the home culture. The findings illustrate that the Saudi females' identity impacted in terms of perceptions of their home country, its norms, and culture. Exposure to a new culture in the UK apparently incites in female participants a desire for improvement in certain areas of Saudi Arabian life, namely, independence and self-reliance, and developing independent sense of self is a significant change in female identity.

Given the centrality of traditional gender role in the home culture, the reported independence and self-reliance of Saudi females in the UK is a phenomenon that marks a notable change from Saudi cultural norm where it created a space for these females to develop an identity or sense of self removed from the traditional gender role in the home culture which is unique for them.

5.1.2 From acculturation to dialogical self

Acculturation theory, from Berry (1997, 2011), was used as a framework to investigate Saudi Arabian international students' responses to challenges associated with transition. This theory suggests that acculturation begins in the home country and continues in the host country. Factors such as language, the roles of religion and family, expectations and cultural distance are crucial factors that can lead to the transition to a foreign environment being more challenging. Berry and Sam (1997) argue that despite "substantial variations" in the life situations of cultural backgrounds that involved acculturation, the psychological processes that function during acculturation are generally the same for all cultural

backgrounds; therefore, a universalist perspective on acculturation is adopted (Berry & Sam, 1997). Acculturation strategies indicated the underlying psychological processes that are active during transition to an unfamiliar cultural environment.

Berry (1980) argues that an “integration” strategy is optimal for acculturating the individual since it provides social support that allows involvement in the new culture while maintaining connections to the home culture (Berry, 1980). However, Hermans (2001) argues that Berry’s theory mistakenly implies that the psychological processes are the same for migrants from different cultures. Berry’s theory also considered integration “to be a linear trajectory that leads to an end-goal” (Hermans, 2001, p.271), but does not demonstrate how that goal can be achieved, given the power and status differences between majority and minority cultural groups.

Roland (2001) rejects cross-cultural psychology’s assumption that acculturation is usually the same for everyone and that each individual faces it with the same psychological makeup. Further, he indicated that the acculturation process is more important than the outcome, as there is usually a question of how much of the indigenous self is maintained or disavowed in relationship to a newer self in the eventual makeup of a multicultural self, in particular when an individual moves between very distinguished cultures.

To understand in depth the complexity of acculturation and address its dynamic nature, it is argued that acculturation is a meaning-making process whereby individuals must reconstructing their identities within a new context (Chrysochoou, 2004). It is evident from the data analysis this more dynamic approach is fundamental to understanding the complex experiences of Saudi students’ transition to the UK. In Study Two, acculturation considered a dialogical process that involved dialogue between different identity positions. It is proposed that the theory of the dialogical self can provide an appropriate theoretical approach for the study of acculturation. This view is dynamic and sees acculturation as a process, not an outcome (Andreouli, 2013). Hermans, (2001) stated that: “At the intersection between the psychology of the self and the dialogical self, the proposed view challenges both the idea of a core, essential self and the idea of a core, essential culture.” In apparent contradiction with such a view, the present viewpoint proposed to conceive the self and culture as a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can be established. Particular attention is paid to the collective voices, domination and asymmetry of social relations, and embodied forms of dialogue. Cultures and selves are seen as moving and mixing and as increasingly sensitive to travel and translocality (Hermans, 2001, p.243).

Adams and Markus (2001) suggest that dialogical self theory, with its focus on the multiplicity of identities as a constructor of identity, makes a significant contribution to theory of identity negotiation. They see the theory as illustrating how the self operates as a “zone of proximal development” (p.16), where both self-identity and cultural-identity categories “make each other up” (p.16). Dialogical self theory supersedes the one-dimensionality of acculturation theory (Berry & Sam, 1997), which view cultures as

mutually distinct and internally homogeneous, and presupposes a linear conception of cultural change. In the dialogical self, identities can be hyphenated and hybrid constructions formed from heterogeneous and contrasting aspects.

This current study extends the research, drawing on the findings of Study One. It addresses several subthemes identified in Study One and explored how these issues impact on Saudi Arabian students' sense of self. This study involved an expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the original acculturation framework of Berry (1997, 2011) with the dialogical self theory of Hermans (2001) to examine how Saudi Arabian students give meaning to the idea of acculturation and being Saudi students in the UK. The study investigated the acculturation process of negotiating the demands of various identity positions in order to illustrate some of the various patterns of dialogue that may be created among divergent identity positions, taking into account the acculturation context and the meanings it implies for students themselves.

Although the self is constituted of multiple voices, the self of students can be organized into two broad and conflicting cultural contexts. This study thus situated the I-positions of students against cultural backgrounds; it explored the conceptual differences and series of interrelations between "individual voices", "multi-voices" and general group-based contexts of thought. In doing so, it thus deepens our understanding of the subjects' self-dialogues pertaining to issues relevant to both contexts.

5.2 Theoretical framework for Study Two

5.2.1 Dialogical Self Theory

Dialogical Self Theory combines two concepts, self and dialogue, so as to develop a unique combination which can be used to explore a range of phenomena in a manner that fuses self and dialogue as compatible fields of study (Meijers & Hermans, 2018). This fusion of two concepts confers a theoretical benefit, insofar as it demonstrates that dialogues take place between individuals and groups, but also within the self. Individuals have internal dialogues as well as engagement with other people in dialogue. The theory thus places psychological processes within a wider context of societal processes; thus, a link is made between self and society. Overall, the dialogical self as a theory serves to refute self and society as antithetical concepts. It pertains to their interplay (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

Dialogical Self Theory has developed from two divergent traditions. First, the conceptualisation of the self, which was developed by William James (1890) according to the American pragmatic school of thought; second, the dialogical thoughts of Mikhail Bakhtin (1929/1973). Dialogical Self Theory is thus influenced by both traditions and it profits from the fertility of insights that have arisen from them during the past and present centuries (Hermans, & Hermans-Konopka, 2008). The theory has expanded on both

traditions, yet it is important to build on these traditions' respective histories in order to facilitate a detailed study of individual, societal and intersubjective interplays between self and dialogue.

Dialogical Self Theory proposed an approach to comprehending the self and its construction in a way that honours how different characters, occupying different positions, establish a dialogue and negotiate the meanings and values of a given event. A myriad range of voices is engaged in constructing individuals' life stories, and each decision made is the outcome of a dialogue between a society of voices and internal, e.g. "I as a researcher", and external, e.g. "my mum in me", voices (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, 2001).

The self is intrinsically unstable because there is a vast number of contexts, relationships and new experiences, and uncertainty concerning the future, which constantly challenges the dialogical self. The potential for reconstruction of self positions is endless and is comparable to the acts of a play. As in a play, where each act creates a new context with new dynamics and dialogues that inform who takes the leading role, with other voices remaining in the background, the 'self' is morphic according to the context, with certain identities and social presentations of the self emerging as prior in certain situations. The self is thus construed as being relational in nature. This lack of stability can be compensated by other aspects of the self, which are "occupied" by more stable positions of the self in order to sustain stability and the continuity of the system. Hermans (2003) believed that the "I as a Relational" I-position may "occupy" that domain.

This dynamism and flexibility of the self prompts questions about how identity is kept relatively consistent and continuous. By using the concept of the dialogical self, whereby semiotic processes of meaning construction and formulation occur via the negotiation and mediation of signs, we can answer these questions in greater depth. This is because the self comes to be understood as a semiotically self-regulated system, which navigates different contexts whilst assuming different 'I-positionings' (Hermans, 1996; Valsiner, 2005).

Each I fluctuates between diverse or even contradictory I- positions that have the ability to give each I- position a unique voice, so that dialogical relations among I-positions can be created. In this sense, the voices become interacting 'characters' in a narrative; these characters take on their own momentum of meaning to 'fit' the new narrative of the dialogical, social situation. Every character is a story of experiences with its own stance. As a multiplicity of voices, these characters negotiate information about their respective 'Mes' and their spaces, and the outcome is a complex and narratively structured self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

The concept of dialogue plays a significant and potentially constitutive role in forming a basic link between self and society. It causes individuals, as part of society, to engage and learn from each other in productive exchanges and permits the person to learn from

himself. Thus, the dialogical self works as a 'part-whole', as a 'society of the mind' with tensions and conflicts as core aspects of the self while participating in society at large, with similar conflicts and tensions (Hermans, 2013). In this way, the self-society bridge proves to be an extension of the self to society. Other multiple voices of individuals, collective voices of groups and societal institutions enter the self-world and challenge the self. Thus, a self appears in which some voices correspond or otherwise with each other, leading to integration or conflict (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Hermans, 2013).

Central concepts in the Dialogical Self

The dialogical self notion from Hermans (1992) has been popularised since the 1980s. This theory is premised on James' (1890) distinction between 'I' ("self-as-knower") and 'Me' ("self-as-known"); these are the two core self-components.

The dialogical self suggests a decentralized notion of the self to some extent, considering it a multiplicity of voices and dialogicality. DST can be explained as dynamic multi-voiced I- positions in the landscape of the mind with, at the same time, these I- positions being intertwined as this mind is with the minds of others. In this notion, these diverse positions are associated with a continuous I and brought into a relationship with each other through dialogical situations (Hermans, 2013).

DST is also premised on Bakhtin's (1984) analysis of Dostoevsky's literary theory, as Bakhtin suggested the concept of the polyphonic novel (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010). Bakhtin (1984) illustrates how Dostoevsky utilizes multiple voices in his literary stories. Bakhtin suggests that the characters in Dostoevsky's literary have distinct voices, what he terms a polyphony of voices, through which the novel is told, rather than a single voice of the author (Hermans et al., 1992).

Bakhtin developed the concept of polyphonic voices further when he suggested that dialogue, for example, can be applied from literature to the concept of self (Hermans et al., 1992). He proposed that, throughout life, individuals are engaged in continuous dialogic processes (Salgado & Hermans, 2005). Bakhtin believed that self-narrative is produced where distinct voices interact, and that dialogical processes involve the interaction of distinct voices where the narratives constructed through voices can be illustrated diachronically and associated with time and space (Hermans, 1996).

The concept of I-positions

An I- position can be defined as "a position in which one places oneself towards other positions in the self or towards the positions of other people in the world." (Hermans, 2018, p.399)

According to Hermans' (2013) dialogical self-theory:

The central notion of DST, I-position, acknowledges the multiplicity of the self, while preserving, at the same time, its coherence and unity. Subjected to changes in time and space, the self is intrinsically involved in a process of positioning and repositioning. As such it is distributed by a wide variety of existing, new, and possible positions (decentring movements). At the same time, the I appropriates or owns some of them and rejects or disowns others. In this way, the self is involved in a process of organizing them as parts of a structure (centring movements). The 'appropriated' or 'interiorized' parts are experienced as "mine" and as belonging to the extended domain of the self. This organization and stabilization guarantees a certain degree of coherence and continuity in the self. By placing I-positions in a dialogical framework and processing them in 'dialogical spaces,' both within and between selves, they are 'lifted up' to the level of mutual enrichment and alterity. When the positions are allowed to express themselves from their own specific point of view, they are respected as dialogical partners in the 'democracy' of the self. (p.7,8)

This statement highlights the core features of Hermans' theory insofar as they diverge from that of James. Where James sees the I "as a unifying principle that is responsible for organizing the different aspects of the Me as parts of a continuous stream of consciousness" (Hermans, 2001, p.246), Hermans views it as embodying "the possibility to move from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time" (p.248). Hermans' theory thus emphasises flux over static properties. James' I is continuous and physically bound – these qualities of stability and physicality are indicative of static properties; meanwhile Hermans' I indicated discontinuity and continuity, in that it notes the temporal qualities of the self and combines these with spatially dynamic qualities.

Dialogical self theory contends that multiple I-positions can come to be assumed by one person in a set point in space and time (Hermans, 2001, 2013), thus indicating that identities are fluid and multiple in essence. The theory supports a conception of the self as continuous through space and time (Richardson, Rogers & McCarroll, 1998). The theory can thus be placed under the overarching umbrella of 'multiple selves' theories from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This theoretical school included the works of James, whom Hermans and other related colleagues (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992; Hermans & Kempen, 1993) make clear references to; Dialogical Self Theory, however, builds on this wider theoretical base by introducing the multiple I-positions concept of dialogue.

The concept of internal and external positions in the self

I-positions can be 'internal', e.g. I as father, husband or man, and also have 'external' relevance to the extended self domain, e.g. my partner, my child or my nationality. See

Herman's (2001) model, below, of spatial positions in a multi-voiced self, where I-positions are located within one of two concentric circles. The other is not just an object but can be considered as 'another I'. (For the extension of the self and the other-in-the-self.) Internal and external positions are not isolated from one another, they are associated with one another as an aspect of a dialogical process at some specific point in time. They tend to be combined in flexible ways and to reflect how the self belongs to the environment, e.g. I-as a mother of two children, I as a friend of a Syrian refugee or I as a human rights activist (Meijers & Hermans, 2018). Thus, the person is involved in a process of positioning in which internal and external positions meet in a process of negotiation, cooperation, opposition, tension and conflict (Hermans, 2001).

Figure 5.1 Positions in a multi-voiced self:

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Note: From Herman, (2001) The dialogical self: towards a theory of personal and cultural positioning. *Culture and Psychology*, 7(3), p.253, Fig. 1.

A dialogical relationship can be established between various positions within the self. Dialogues may take place between internal ones and can also be established between internal as well as external positions in the self. Dialogues may also take place between two external positions of the self.

Dynamic of I-positions

The notion of the I-position has generated a range of associated concepts; I-position, third position, meta-position, promoter position and the processes of positioning (e.g. positioning, counter-positioning, repositioning and dispositioning).

I-position. While preserving self-unity, the I- position concept recognizes self-multiplicity at the same time. The *I* can be subjected to change in time and space, involved in the

process of positioning and distributed by different existing positions and new positions. Hermans (2012) stated that the concept of 'I-position' indicated "a highly dynamic process of positioning, repositioning, and counter-positioning, where individuals place themselves or are placed vis-à-vis other positions in personal or social spaces, in this way giving expression to their sense of agency". (p. 20) Individuals are able "to position themselves as congruent or incongruent with basic human experiences such as anguish, ecstasy, anxiety, desire or safety" (Hermans, 2012, p.21). For example, we see 'I- as different from others in the new culture' as counter-positioning 'I- as acting similarly to people around me in the new culture'.

Third position. When conflict occurs between two positions, they, under particular conditions, reconcile in a 'third position', which mitigates the two original positions. Additionally, the 'third position' takes advantage of the energy originating from the two original positions in the service of its further progress and development. 'Third positions' are generated via dialogical creative interactions between I-positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Contrary to being the simple integration of formative primary I-positions, third positions can be totally or partly new, whereby 'relationships of tension are transformed into conciliation and creation' (Surgan & Abbey, 2012, p.165). It is argued that there are different mechanisms through which this takes place in the case of transcultural migrants, several of which fall under the broad category of cultural 'hybridisation' (Surgan, Abbey & Valsiner, 2002).

Meta-position. A meta-position is considered a superordinate position that emerges as the product of two or more positions (Raggatt, 2012). It is formed as the outcome of self-reflection, a position that allows the self to have an overview or make an over-arching evaluation of a greater variety of specific positions and, therefore, makes possible reflection and decision-making as to how and in which direction to modify those I-positions (Hermans & Gieser, 2011). For example, we might see 'I as a Saudi in the UK' as a meta-position which encompasses a myriad of other positions around images of what being a Saudi person in the UK means.

A meta-position can be explained as 'meta-cognition', which has several specific features. It allows a specific distance from other positions. Though a 'meta-position' can be cognitively and emotionally attracted toward some positions more than others, it paints an overarching picture so that some positions can be viewed at the same time and relevant relations between positions can be visible (Hermans, 2013), thus individuals can interrelate positions as part of their personal history. It enables individuals to evaluate some positions and organize them so that the direction of change and the significance of some positions in view of future possibilities become clear (Hermans, 2001).

Meta-position is substantial due to its three functions: unifying, executive, and liberating. According to Hermans (2014):

As unifying, it brings together different and even opposed positions so that their organization and mutual linkages become clear, and it prevents the self from becoming fragmented. In its executive function, it creates a basis for decision making and choosing directions in life that take into consideration a broader array of specific positions. As liberating, it acts as a stop signal for automatic and habitual behavior produced by well-established but maladaptive patterns of positions. Considering them from the broad and long-term perspective of a metaposition increases the chances for innovation of significant parts of a dialogical self. As a matter of distinction, metaposition and promoter are different concepts. Whereas a metaposition is a spatial concept that provides an overview of large parts of the repertoire, a promoter has temporal aims because it gives an impetus to future development. Whereas a metaposition works as a vertically ascending helicopter providing a view of the landscape from a distance, a promoter functions like a motor, pushing the machinery of the self into a particular direction at a horizontal plane. (p.149)

Promoter position. A position that guides the development of other positions and is also capable of generating new positions. It functions as a guarantor of continuity of the Self through linking the past, the present and the future; however, it can also generate discontinuities when promoting new positions. It works as a mechanism of innovation of the Self, and any I-position or counter-position can act as a promoter at some time (Hermans, 2018)

According to Hermans (2013):

In order to understand the organization of the self from a developmental perspective, a special concept, a promoter position, is required for creating order and direction. While meta-positions facilitate coherence and organization in the self from a spatial point of view, promoter positions do so from a temporal perspective. Promoter positions imply a considerable openness towards the future of the self and have the potential to produce and organize a diverse range of more specialized but qualitatively different positions in the service of the development of the self as a whole. Due to their openness and broad bandwidth, they have the potential to synthesize a variety of new and already existing positions in the self and reorganize the self towards a higher level of development. Promoter positions function as innovators of the self, par excellence. (p. 23)

Basically, important others – real or imaginary – play a significant role in one's self, serve as promoter positions, such as mother, father or teacher, and may exert their long-lasting effect as promoters of an individual's development, or as anti-promoters, in case they function as an obstacle to an individual's development. Also, inspiring figures in all areas of the Arts, sport, science or politics may serve as promoter sources, which have the possibility to facilitate the development of existing I-positions or even generate new ones. As an outcome of openness to the future, promoter positions have an influential place as

others-in-the-self that populate the extended (external) domain of the self (Hermans, 2013; 2018; Hermans & Gieser, 2012)

Culture and I-positions

In connection with culture and I-positions, the dialogical self looks at cultures as collective voices which function as social-positions in the self, "...as expressions of embodied and historically situated selves that are constantly involved in dialogical relationships with other voices" (Hermans, 2001, p.272), and "the movement of positions and their mutual relations are dependent on cultural changes" (Hermans, 2001, p.255). As for study abroad, Hermans proposed that if individuals received education in one culture, they can be located in a context where two or more conflicted internal positions, e.g. I as a Saudi student and I as a Saudi student in the UK, may interact with a variety of conflicted external positions, e.g. in the educational system, I interact with UK students and other international students. These positions may function as conflict and tension. They may also create a coalition of positions where they coexist in relatively independent ways, or they may even fuse so that hybrid combinations arise in the shape of multiple identity positions (Hermans, 2001). In this way, this concept can assist in understanding the experiences of Saudi international students in the UK.

In the process of living and studying in the UK, Saudi international students negotiate dialogic relationships with others and also themselves, and these affect the organization and re-organization of their self-system, and the cultural elements that they share with others may be highly divergent. Thereby, they may generate multiple identity positions. The increasing interconnections between cultures in the accelerating process of globalization involved an unprecedented challenge to the study-abroad experience. Hermans' (2001) dialogical self theory sees the self and culture as multiple positions between which dialogical relationships can be developed.

I-positions make up a "society of the mind" (Hermans & Gieser, 2012), and similar to members of a given society they function as coalitions and hierarchies. Thus, primary I-positions may group within the mind into "coalitions" of I-positions. In this way, "meta-positions" are placed in a hierarchically superior relation to coalitions of primary I-positions, insofar as they enable individuals to observe their own I-positions; from the outside, they function as acts of self-reflection (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

In the current study, acculturating individuals, in this way, become capable of grouping their I-positions into two coalitions, among several others, one comprising I-positions which relate to their home country, and the other related to the UK; in addition, each coalition can be viewed independently or as a collectivity via a meta-position unique to each coalition. This integrative role of meta-positions and coalitions of I-positions is the feature which renders these concepts critical for understanding acculturation.

5.2.2 Acculturation and the Dialogical Self

The self encounters an unfamiliar density of I-positions via border-crossings by individuals from different countries and cultures arriving in diverse situations. Thus, the individual positions repertoire becomes heterogeneous and complexly organized, it becomes laden with tensions, differences and contradictions, while increasingly interacting with unfamiliar local cultures and groups (Meijers & Hermans, 2018). As a result of the diverse and increased speed of situational changes, “the repertoire receives more “visits” by unexpected positions and there are more and larger ‘position leaps’ in the self: the individual has to make more and larger ‘mental jumps’ resulting from international educational contacts and immigration” (Meijers & Hermans, 2018, p.9).

There are diverse, constant and rapid situations that can motivate decentring movements activities or centrifugal movements activities within the self, and which probably expand the space of the self and offer various possibilities. Nonetheless, when motivating decentring movement activities become excessively dominant, as is normal with individuals and groups when they transition to different countries, this can involve dangers of disorganisation, uncertainty, confusion and fragmentation. The self can come to be occupied by numerous contrasting and opposing multi-voices, and this can lead to a ripped identity or conflict (Arnett, 2002). The self thus requires a process of centring or (centripetal) movement activities in order to find the required balance. In offering coherence and consistency, such movement activities enable people to structure self-organisation, especially when the current order is destabilised. Both movements are, overall, mutually complementary and are both necessary for finding the required balance between changes, challenges and innovation; and at the same time, consistency, coherence and order as well (Meijers & Hermans, 2018).

The dialogical self hence challenges both the notion of a core, essentialist self and the notion of a core and essential culture. “Self and culture are conceived in terms of a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can develop; that allows for the study of the self as ‘culture-inclusive’ and of culture as ‘self-inclusive’ (Hermans, 2001, p.243). At the same time, “this conception avoids the pitfalls of treating the self as individualised and self-contained, and culture as abstract and reified” (ibid.).

The theory of the dialogical self highlights the fact that culture and self co-construct each other and the theory thus draws from history, the body and the social environment and considers these to be intrinsic features of a developing personhood, localised in time and space. The dialogical self is a paradox of unity and diversity, being eligible for experiencing both. For the dialogical self, new and diverse meanings and possibilities of action emerge via reaching a dialectical synthesis, unity within diversity (Hermans, 2001).

Hermans (2013) makes the dialogical self into an analogy of the ‘society of the mind’. This is a suitable allegory for emphasising the heterogeneity and conflict found in the self, and it reminds us that our selves emerge out of social exchanges in a pre-existing social order

and within its system/s of meanings. This becomes particularly clear in the case of immigrants, who must move and navigate between two radically different social groups and cultural systems. The positions generated by each group only achieve logic against the *cultural* background of the group. To understand a particular voice within a single subject, we must obtain knowledge of the cultural background within which that role is expressed. The situation becomes further complicated for immigrants, insofar as they have to operate within two cultural frameworks simultaneously. Their selves are thus re-constructed at the intersection of the two.

Our increasingly interconnected and interdependent global society necessitates greater attention being paid to dialogical relations among diverse cultures, among and within diverse selves, and among and across diverse cultural positions in the self (e.g. multiplicity of identities). Cultures are, arguably, collective multiple voices which are elaborated as social positions within the self space. These multiple voices are expressions of embodied and historically-situated selves which are consistently engaged in dialogical interrelationships with other multiple voices. These multiple voices are concomitantly and constantly subjected to differences in power relations (Hermans, 2001).

5.2.3 Study Two aims

The findings of Study One offered a novel contribution to knowledge. The findings reinforce experiences that are common to all international students, but in particular they highlight experiences that are very specific to the sample of Saudi students studied. The novel findings were used to guide development of Study Two. The purpose of this study is to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the way Saudi students negotiate the demands of different identity positions. It also examines various patterns of dialogue that may be established among divergent identity positions, taking into consideration the context of acculturation and the meanings it has for students themselves.

The aim of Study Two was to investigate the negotiation between being a Saudi student in the UK and being affiliated to one's country of origin. Drawing on the key findings of Study One, Study Two focused on the following questions:

1. What identity meanings do Saudi Arabian students establish when dialoguing about their home country and the UK study experience?
2. How are self systems organized in the congruence and tension between I-positions?
3. In what ways are identity meanings acknowledged and negotiated when there are conflicts among I-positions?

5.3 Methods for Study Two

5.3.1 Study design

This study used a qualitative interview research design to investigate Saudi Arabian international students' acculturation process of negotiating the demands of different identities. It also examined various patterns of dialogue that may be established among divergent identity positions. A convenience sample of participants was used to collect data, drawing on IPA principles in order to have a homogenous sample.

5.3.2 Study participants

5.3.2.1 Recruitment

The recruitment technique was the same as for Study One, it consisted of the following: recruitment started via Saudi student societies in the UK, as this was the first option to recruit participants in Study One. Initially, it was thought that the sample could be recruited via Saudi student societies, and to this end advertisements were placed at society events and activities and also sent to society committees. In the event, only a few student participants were recruited in this way. So, a snowball sampling technique was adopted as described in 3.1.3.1. Participants were asked if they would be willing to assist the researcher in identifying other potential participants (snowball sampling technique for recruitment); if so, contact information was gathered. The recruitment steps were the same as for Study One, as described in 3.1.3.1 (see Appendices E-2, B, C, A-2, B).

5.3.2.2 Inclusion criteria

To increase the homogeneity of the study sample, the researcher looked for potential participants who met specific criteria. The homogeneity of this study sample brought together a group of Saudi students with similar backgrounds to understand how Saudi students negotiate the demands of different identity positions. The Inclusion criteria were the same as for Study One, as described in 3.1.3.2. As all potential participants were Arabic native speakers, it was necessary to exclude anybody who was not willing to speak English during the interviews, and two potential participants were excluded for this reason.

5.3.2.3 The sample

Study One used an acculturation perspective that required developing a suitable methodological design, interview guide and interview questions for the sample. In the findings of this study, the participants raised issues that required more exploration and collecting more data.

Since Study Two uses a dialogical self perspective combined with an acculturation perspective, this will require developing a suitable methodological design, interview guide

and interview questions in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences. Also, it is planned to broaden the sample in order to look at different experiences of Saudi students from different cities in the UK.

The participants were 11 Saudi Arabian international students (6 females, 5 males), members of Saudi student societies, currently studying at universities in South East England and aged between 25 and 35 years (see Table 5.1, below: participant characteristics and demographics) Participants were undergraduate (one) and postgraduate (two master's, eight PhD) students. Aliases are used in order to protect participants' identities. To clarify that the participants in the current study were not the same participants who took part in Study One.

Table 5.1 Participant characteristics and demographics

Alias	Age	Gender	Education	Program me of study	Length of time studying in UK	Semester in study programme	Marital status
P1	30-34	Female	MSc	PhD	2 years	3 rd semester	Divorced
P2	30-34	Female	MSc	PhD	3 years	2 nd semester	Single
P3	30-34	Female	MSc	PhD	7 years	8 th semester	Divorced
P4	25-29	Male	Foundation	Bachelor	5 years	6 th semester	Single
P5	30-34	Male	MSc	PhD	1 year	2 nd semester	Single
P6	30-34	Female	MSc	PhD	4 years	4 th semester	Single
P7	30-34	Male	MSc	PhD	2 years	4 nd semester	Married
P8	30-34	Female	MSc	PhD	4 years	8 th semester	Single
P9	30-34	Male	MSc	PhD	10 years	4 nd semester	Married
P10	35-39	Female	Bachelor	MSc	2 years	2 nd semester	Divorced
P11	25-29	Male	Bachelor	MSc	1 year	2 nd semester	Married

5.3.3 Context

At the time of conducting Study One, the number of Saudi Arabian students in UK higher education was more than 8,000 (HESA, 2014–2015). The number of Saudi students in UK higher education in 2016–2017 again exceeded 8,000, and there has been significant growth in Saudi student numbers in the last decade in the UK (HESA, 2016–2017). These students live and study across UK universities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In Study Two, participants were recruited from England through Saudi student societies in Oxford, London, Birmingham, Southampton and Reading. Saudi student societies are umbrella organisations that embraced all Saudi students and provided them with a feeling of home; they gather them together to present a bright picture of Saudi Arabian culture, and also provided support to all Saudi Students living in the UK. In addition, a snowball sampling technique was adopted, at the same time, as explained

earlier (see 6.3.2). Participants were UK higher education students, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. They were all born and brought up in Saudi Arabia. They were from large cities across Saudi Arabia, such as Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, Jeddah and Dammam.

5.3.4 Interview methods

Semi-structured episodic interviews were carried out to collect data (see 3.3.4). Episodic interviewing emphasizes that narrative is a technique by which individuals understand and make sense of their experiences (Flick, 2000). The current study focused was on understanding the way Saudi students negotiate the demands of different identity positions drawing on the key findings of Study One. Flick (2000) provided procedures for developing, conducting and analysing episodic interviews. These procedures offered a template for the construction and operation of episodic interviews in this study.

An interview schedule was constructed containing questions relevant to the topic. In this case, sixteen questions were formulated to cover the participants' experiences in the UK and how those experiences impacted on the participants' lives, the meaning of self and identity. The interview started by familiarising the interviewee with the way of the subsequent episodic questions and focus on recounting concrete events. In the first part, interviewees were asked to tell a narrative story of how moving to the UK may have impacted on how they made sense of themselves. The interviewees were encouraged to elaborate further aspects of their narrative in follow-up questions (see Appendix D-2).

The second part of the interview moved the emphasis, as it was designed to elicit answers in response to questions. As with the episodic questions, probes were used to follow-up on insightful dialogue generated by the interviewee. This part of the interview comprised 15 questions exploring 'I' as a Saudi (questions about being a Saudi before transition), 'I' as a Saudi in the UK (questions about being a Saudi living in the UK) and questions about others' views of being a Saudi in the UK (see Appendix D-2). In order to probe deeply into unanticipated aspects that emerged, the interview schedule was flexible (see Appendix D-2). At the end of the interview, any follow-up questions and clarifications emerging from points made earlier were addressed.

The interview was designed to reflect the theoretical framework of the current study. It was based on IPA principles and dialogical self theory. Key themes were covered in the interview questions, drawing on the findings of Study One and a literature review that involved expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the original acculturation framework from Berry (1997, 2011) with the dialogical self theory of Hermans, (2001) (see Figure 5.1).

The diagram shows a flow from an unstructured narrative question to four specific semi-structured interview questions. A large bracket groups the four semi-structured questions under the heading 'Semi-structured interview questions'.

Unstructured Narrative question	Semi-structured interview questions			
Could you please tell me your story of being a Saudi in the UK and, in particular, experiences and feelings relating to how this may have impacted your understanding of who you are as a person?	Being a Saudi person before moving to the UK	Being a Saudi person living in the UK	Others views of being a Saudi in the UK	Others views from Saudi culture
	Ex: What is the meaning of being a Saudi person for you before moving to the UK? And how did you feel about that?	Ex: How do you think experiencing the UK culture has changed your sense of self so far?	Ex: How do you think others in the UK look at you as a Saudi? Do you have any examples? How do you feel about that?	Ex: How do you think others at home look at you as a Saudi person? How do you feel about that?

Eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted in English, which was the language they were using in their studies as well as in their daily lives in the UK, but participants were given the opportunity to use Arabic when needed. Only a few participants responded in Arabic to express some terms, and these terms were translated into English by the researcher. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to narrate their personal and meaningful situations, rather than to give short precise responses. The topics covered included how Saudi Arabian students give meaning to the idea of acculturation and being Saudi students in the UK, the acculturation process of negotiating the demands of different identity positions, and the different types of dialogue that can be established between divergent identity positions. The interviews lasted from around 40 to 75 minutes, they were audio-recorded using an iPhone application in order to have high quality for voice tone and allow accurate transcription of the interviews. They were transcribed by the researcher using Express Scribe Transcription Software, and then coded and analysed using a qualitative research approach informed by IPA and dialogical self theory (Andreouli, 2013; Aveling & Gillespie, 2008; Cline & de Abreu, 2012; Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009; Prokopiou & de Abreu, 2012; Velez-Gomez & Bell, 2008). After transcription and checking the audio-recordings were deleted. Participants were able to say where they would prefer their interview to take place, in a university meeting room or

their own home. All participants chose to be interviewed in a meeting room at their UK university. Data-collection interviews took place between 29 June and 19 December 2018.

5.3.6 Data analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed word by word. Transcripts were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis IPA (Smith et al., 2009) and dialogical self theory (DST) (Hermans, 2001), combining both phenomenology and interpretation with the aim of capturing participants' subjective experiences and meaning-making through a process of interpretation. In this way, the analysis hinged on the points of view expressed by the participants in their interviews.

IPA principles for qualitative data analyses align with dialogical self theory in terms of an idiosyncratic focus, and dialogical self theory has been linked to phenomenological experiences in regard to cultural positions (Cunha & Gonçalves, 2009). Although dialogically-based analyses are approached in different ways from researcher to researcher depending on the aims of the study, in the current study the analysis procedures drew on several previous studies that involved the identification of I-positions, inner-other positions and interactions between positions in relation to a plurality of cultural interactions. (Andreouli, 2013; Aveling & Gillespie, 2008; Prokopiou & de Abreu, 2012; Velez-Gomez & Bell, 2008).

The analysis process started with an individual interview transcript-analysis technique. Each audio recording was played back at least once, and then the interview transcript was read thoroughly and repeatedly. A summary of the transcribed text was made in one column. Initial comments were made in a second column, with exploratory comments to describe initial thoughts about the content (Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). After that, each transcript was re-read and a third column was used to identify the main I-positions expressed by the participant in relation to all aspects of the Saudi international student experience as covered in the interview. In addition, conflicts and tensions among positions were identified and assessed as to how these appeared to be perceived and negotiated by the participant. Using this technique, each transcript was analysed until all transcripts had been analysed in this stage (see Table 5.2 example of interview transcript and comments, initial stage of identifying I-positions), and (see Appendix F-2 Analyses Framework).

Table 5.2 Example of interview transcript and comments (initial stage of identifying I-positions).

Original transcript	Voice	I-positions
Re: Tell me your story of being Saudi in the U.K. and in particular, experiences and feelings related to how this may have impacted your understanding who you are as a person.		
P6: At the beginning, I divide my experience being in U.K. in two parts. One, there was positive part, and then the negative. So, I'm going to start with the positive experience, which is also can be divided in being more independence in my life and have more freedom, best education in the right way.	I'm going to start with the positive experience, which is also can be divided in being more independence in my life and have more freedom, best education in the right way.	1. I- as independent & more freedom
P6: In education system for myself and my family and some extended as well. So, starting on being more independent. So in back home, I was more family person and going out together in somewhere, everything together. Being in U.K., I'm the most ... One of my sisters, I'm the most one on the family attached to my mom. so being here in U.K., by myself, individual, affect me a very huge like experience being more independence. So, at the beginning, it was more difficult to be alone, I'm the one more responsible for myself, for my health, for my eating, when I have to wake up, when I have to stay, everything. I have to buy things by myself, electricity bills, renting, and everything by myself. So, it was a very huge responsibility, but it was difficult in the beginning, but I really like it after like six months, one year. So, as I'm here, what, three years now. Yes, this in terms of independence.	So in back home, I was more family person and going out together in somewhere, everything together. Being in U.K., I'm the most ... One of my sisters, I'm the most one on the family attached to my mom. so being here in U.K., by myself, individual, affect me a very huge like experience being more independence. So, at the beginning, it was more difficult to be alone, I'm the one more responsible for myself, for my health, for my eating, when I have to wake up, when I have to stay, everything. I have to buy things by myself, electricity bills, renting, and everything by myself. So, it was a very huge responsibility, but it was difficult in the beginning, but I really like it after like six months, one year. So, as I'm here, what, three years now. Yes, this in terms of independence.	2. I- as from a family person to a solitary person and independent. (Tension)
Re: Okay.		
P6: The other part is being more freedom, which I need. Back home, yes I was ... You couldn't do things by yourself because you have ... I think what we experienced it back home, we can't drive. So being here, I have more freedom to go by my own self, again, whenever I want, wherever I want. There's no restriction.	The other part is being more freedom, which I need. Back home, yes I was ... You couldn't do things by yourself because you have ... I think what we experienced it back home, we can't drive. So being here, I have more freedom to go by my own self, again, whenever I want, wherever I want. There's no restriction.	3. I- as having freedom in the UK vs. no freedom back home. (Tension)
Re: Okay.		
P6: So, it's a positive side because as long as in the right way I don't think things like contradict my beliefs or contradict my culture, so, yes, the freedom could be positive could be negative but I used it in positive things. So which is okay positive aspect of being here.	So, it's a positive side because as long as in the right way I don't think things like contradict my beliefs or contradict my culture, so, yes, the freedom could be positive could be negative but I used it in positive things. So which is okay positive aspect of being here.	4. I-s as having the freedom that does not contradict my cultural beliefs.

The analysis process then moved on to a second stage involving an individual interview-analysis technique, the emerging themes stage. This stage involved generating a list of emergent themes in order to connect related themes in clusters. Smith et al. (2009) was used as a guide to identify sub-themes through: a) abstraction (putting like with like to develop a name for a cluster); b) subsumption (where an emergent theme itself becomes a superordinate theme as it draws other related themes towards it); c) polarization (examining transcripts for oppositional relationships); d) contextualization (identifying contextual elements within an analysis); e) enumeration (the frequency with which a theme is supported); f) function (themes' functions are examined) (see Appendix F-2 Analyses Framework). This analysis process was used on each interview transcript, which involved repeating the same process with all remaining interview transcripts. The analytic process then moved to a stage of cross-interview transcript analysis. This involved identifying patterns across all interview transcripts. A list incorporating sub-I-positions and emergent I-positions from interview transcripts was produced to represent shared aspects of the

Saudi international student experience related to cultural identity for representative students (see Appendix F-2 Analyses Framework).

A list of 59 emerging themes was identified via the analytical procedure of allocating themes capturing the essential quality of the texts. This list of emerging themes was then revised and merged, resulting in 14 themes that were considered similar to one another. After this review, the remaining 28 emerging themes were clustered into three superordinate themes via abstraction, and in accordance with conceptual similarities, as a way of identifying common patterns from among them. The detailed analysis identified three distinct I-positions: I-as a Saudi in the UK, I-as a Saudi Arabian national identity, and identity negotiation processes among these positions. The three findings sections are derived from these three superordinate themes (see Appendix F-2 Analyses Framework). Excerpts from the narratives of the interviews are presented in the findings section, together with interpretations. The excerpts were selected based on their clarity in terms of illustrating, in depth, participants' experiences and meaning-making of I- positions and negotiations of cultural identity.

Conclusion

Chapter 5 presented the research background to Study two. It began by presenting Key findings emerging from Study One and then illustrating the expansion from the acculturation perspective to dialogical self. It also proposed a theoretical framework for linking together acculturation perspective by Berry to Herman's Dialogical Self Theory. This chapter also presented the methods and study design used to address the research questions for Study Two. Further, the chapter provided the techniques of recruiting the participants and inclusion criteria that helped in recruiting the study sample then it moved to discuss the study context as well. Further, the chapter presented the data collection technic including the interview methods. Finally, the chapter has also discussed the analysis guidelines used to analyse data.

Guided by the methodology addressed in Chapter 5, the next Chapter 6 presents the findings on the acculturation experience and identity negotiations in Saudi students using the dialogical self-theory. This includes being Saudi person in the UK and identity negotiation processes. This chapter also discusses the findings of this study in terms of their theoretical perspective of the dialogical self and practical acculturation experiences of Saudi students.

Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion

6.1 Findings

Saudi international students' identity I-positions can be investigated via the notion of 'I' positions by looking at how UK culture affects the self while interacting with the sociocultural context and through constant dialogue between I-positions. In particular, this is achieved by looking at 'voices' in students' narratives (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008), which change and develop over time and also depended on positions of the self in terms of the sociocultural environment in the UK.

This section presents the findings from IPA and dialogical self theory (DST) of 11 semi-structured interviews to understand how Saudi students negotiate the demands of different identity positions and the various patterns of dialogue they may establish among divergent identity positions, taking into consideration the context of acculturation and the meanings it has for students themselves.

The findings are presented, considering a) the Dialogical Self Analysis identified 28 I-positions across the entire interview transcripts. When co-constructing the self it appeared that I-positions could be largely classified as falling into one of two meta I- positions. The 'I' appeared to emerge in dialogic conjunction with I- as a Saudi in the UK, and I- as having Saudi national identity.

The meta I- position I- as a Saudi in the UK 'as a unifying function' brings together different positions (e.g. I- as how I see people in the UK look at me, I- as the UK having a different meaning of Muslim, I- as I need to change, I- as acting similarly to people around me, I- as a Saudi interacting with the opposite gender, I- as open-minded in the UK, I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard), so that their organisation and mutual linkages become clear in order to prevent the self from becoming fragmented (Hermans, 2014).

The meta I- position I- as having Saudi national identity 'as a unifying function' also puts different I-positions in contact, connecting different voices (e.g. I- as keeping my national identity, I- as maintaining Saudi culture, I- as a representative of Saudi culture) (see Table 6.1 below: meta I- positions and related I- positions); b) Identity negotiation processes among positions present the findings of I- position conflict of negotiating being a Saudi national and a Saudi in the UK. This has the ability to make decisions where it privileges one position over others in a given event 'as executive', facilitating the ability to stop habitual or automatic patterns, related to common positions, and give priority to new ones, less automatic, 'as liberating' (Hermans, 2014).

The I- positions identified by the participants are I- positions that, in a specific moment in time and space, emerge as more significant and more active for the individual. In the conceptualisation of dialogical self theory, these I- positions are the nucleus of the

dialogical self perceived by the individual as "I am this" or as the centre of self-definition (Hermans, 2003).

Table 6.1 Main meta I- positions and related I- positions:

meta I- positions	I- positions (voices)
I- as a Saudi person in the UK	I- as having some uncertainty about U.K society
	I- as different
	I- as how I see people in the UK look at me
	I- as look and dress differently than when in Saudi
	I- as the UK having a different meaning of Muslim
	I- as a Saudi person interacting normally with non-Saudis but having difficulties interacting with Saudis of the other gender
	I- as I need to change
	I- as acting similarly to people around me
	I- as a Saudi interacting with the opposite gender
	I- as interacting within a multicultural context
	I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard
	I- as an open-minded in the UK
	I- as I improved myself in the UK
I- as having Saudi Arabian national identity	I- as keeping my national identity
	I- as maintaining Saudi culture
	I- as a representative of Saudi culture
	I- as how I see people look at me at home
Identity negotiation processes among positions	Uncertainty of being in the UK vs. Enjoying a new life
	Different UK meaning of look and dress vs Saudi meaning of look and dress
	Becoming conscious of being a Saudi vs Uncertainty over being a Saudi after coming to the UK
	A need to change vs I feel like a stranger back home
	Independent study style in the UK vs. Home study style
	Acting similarly to the people around me vs Being isolated
	Saudi male interacting with the Saudi opposite gender vs Coming from a segregated culture
	How I see people in the UK look at me vs. I as a Saudi Arabian person
	How I see people at home look at me vs How I became a Saudi in the UK
	Representative of Saudi culture vs Receiving criticism from Saudis
	Different UK meaning of being a Muslim vs Saudi meaning of being a Muslim

6.1.1 I- as a Saudi person in the UK

Thirteen I-positions are related to I- as a Saudi person in the UK, reported by the participants (see Table 6.2, below). It highlights the ongoing identity negotiations of Saudi students as they navigate UK culture, in particular exploring the meanings (positions) of experience from the participants' perspectives. While each of these I-positions addresses

a unique aspect of experience, they all focus on what being a Saudi person in the UK is like, how the participants come to identify themselves in the new environment, and what identity positions mean to them. The meta position 'as a unifying function' here puts different positions together in order to make their organisation and mutual linkages become clear in the self, where it privileges one position over others in a given event 'as executive', facilitating the ability to stop habitual or automatic patterns, related to common positions, and give priority to new ones 'as liberating' (Hermans, 2014).

It can be seen here how the self was identified as comprising specific positions associated with UK culture, e.g. I- as I improved myself position and meanings regarding UK society, as well as meanings related to their international student experience. Also, I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard meanings and the ways these intersect with meanings of family and the home culture. The I-as interacting within a multicultural context position focuses on participants' dialoguing about interacting with others in the UK., whether from the same nationality group or the opposite gender.

In this meta I- position, data are drawn from the responses given to interview questions relating to topics such as "Could you please tell me your story about being a Saudi in the UK and, in particular, experiences and feelings relating to how this may have impacted on your understanding of whom you are as a person?" and, "How do you think experiencing UK culture has changed your sense of self so far?" (see Appendix D-2).

Table 6.2 I- positions linked to meta I- position: I- as a Saudi person in the UK:

I-position	Number of participants co-constructing I-position
I- as having some uncertainty about U.K society	6
I- as different	5
I- as how I see people in the UK look at me	11
I- as look and dress differently than when in Saudi	9
I- as the UK having a different meaning of Muslim	5
I- as a Saudi person interacting normally with non-Saudis but having difficulties interacting with Saudis of the other gender	8
I- as I need to change	10
I- as acting similarly to people around me	5
I- as a Saudi interacting with the opposite gender	6
I- as interacting within a multicultural context	9
I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard	8
I- as an open-minded in the UK	6
I- as I improved myself in the UK	11

6.1.1.1 I- as having some uncertainty about U.K society

This I- position is an exploratory attempt to gain an understanding of the initial interactions of the participants in the UK. More than half of the participants (6 in total) negotiated I- as having some uncertainty about U.K society. It addresses how the participants described their feelings of uncertainty after leaving the home country to go to the UK and also how these uncertainties affected their interpretations of initial interactions when they arrived.

	I-position (I- as having some uncertainty about U.K society) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P1f	I wasn't totally aware about what's, it was you were under anesthesia, so I was not like fully conscious about what's going on. so I remember even at that time I told to my friend that I am feeling very confused that am I a student or am tourist here, because in the first two weeks I was just enjoying the time here and I was discovering the city I'm going to the Uni just for one hour chatting with my friends and going back home so I wasn't like fully in that situation. Generally I can say they were bad days, bad days I was feeling lost I was feeling super afraid and I think lost is the most word that can explain my situation at that time I was totally lost because I wasn't understanding exactly what's going on I wasn't understanding even the basic things about how to get into the Bus and ask for a ticket I did not know how buy from the supermarket. I hate myself at that moment because I do not know. When I came here I was like I am totally lost and I was feeling like a child who is following his mum everywhere.
P4m	I remember that was very different than what I thought. I haven't travel a lot before I come to the U.K. I thought I had an understanding of how the Western people would act because a lot of movies, and T.V. shows, but when it came to reality it was in the beginning shocking. It's not the same that I saw in a movie or a T.V. show which is also have implemented a lot of thoughts in my mind. Should I continue with my previous thoughts and imagination or should I change them to see the reality and face the facts? It was exciting and afraid at the same time, it was like I had options in my life, it was like "okay, should I continue to do studies in the U.K., or should I go back and continue my studies back home?" I remember the first two months I was like, why am I in U.K.? What do you do in U.K.? When I go back home, I have everything, I have my car, I have my house, the house is here.
P8f	At the beginning there was a lot of ups and downs. Early on, first year. It was I think the worst year for me because of adjusting to new place, new culture, new everything. But after that first year I understood more how the society, how to get engaged with the people here. If I describe it, maybe the first year was a lot more like feeling of isolation, or depression and things like that. After that, once you understand the new environment and the new culture, and you know how to engage with people from different backgrounds, things became much better.
P9m	In the first two months, it was very challenging. I decided to go back home, if it hadn't been for my advisor at the Saudi Culture Bureau, I would've been back home now. I found accommodation, and at night, I think they had party and I was scared. I was in my room, there were girls inside the house, smoking. I think, weed, having drinks. Alcohol, it's something completely new for me. My impression about people who take alcohol are those who attack you. I locked my room and I was scared in the room. I decided to leave the house. I booked a bus ticket to London. it wasn't easy for me. I went to Saudi Cultural Bureau, I told them I want to go back home. But they switched my scholarship from (city to city) and gave me a hotline contacting them whenever I

need. I just needed help for few days and after that, I was fine. Settled. I decide to go to Saudi Arabia because, it was shocking for me, living in an environment that is completely different to mine. I thought all people in the street drink alcohol like the man I was living with in Preston. I was scared, at some points, because the stories we hear about alcohol consumption. Drugs and women being semi-naked in the streets. It's completely different for us and it was somehow, I consider a shock. I consider a shock, but it didn't last for a long time.

As illustrated in the quotes above feelings of uncertainty often frequently emerge when individuals move abroad and can be exacerbated by unfamiliar environments and cultural contexts. The participants found that the transition process they had anticipated was, upon arrival, more challenging when it came to merging both socially and academically into the new culture. This uncertainty, often experienced when living in a different culture and context can threaten, one's understanding of self on the part of the participants. The interviews generated several aspects of participants' uncertainties as they interacted for the first time with people in the UK. These uncertainties included interactions with new people, navigating a new education system and academic behaviour, and the UK lifestyle.

A lack of understanding of cultural differences led to feeling uncertain about navigating the new environment. When the participants moved to an unfamiliar culture, they needed to figure out basic life tasks, such as how to use public transport, as participant 1 indicated. Starting to navigate the new country caused uncertainty due to challenges never before faced by participants in their home culture. They saw everything as a challenge when they first arrived, as participant 8 mentioned. Repositioning the self emerged as a key challenge when outside the home culture context. Participant 1, for example, reported having most things done for her in the home country and now, abroad, she was forced to be far more independent. They also attributed the way they were feeling to a personal deficiency in which the uncertainty is grounded in inter-relational issues, yet the deficiency is perceived as personal. Participant 9 described his experience during the first days when he felt unsuited to the new and different context. He experienced feelings of uncertainty due to the unfamiliarity of places and people. This participant experienced feeling of self-blame and self-castigation for making the decision to come to the UK.

For participant 4, living in the UK was a uniquely exciting experience with many opportunities arising, but it was also a challenge to make sense of the UK's norms and lifestyle. As can be seen in the participant quote, most of their uncertainties stem from deep-running cultural differences between home and the host culture.

Participant 9 described his experience of entering a new life as a conflicted and internally challenging process. He felt regret and self-blame for going to study abroad. The limited support and uncertainty of people's behaviours in the new context made him consider going back home. The participant pointed out that going back to his home country was an attractive idea for him, due to the feelings of safety that he missed here.

Navigating a new educational system that has its own processes and norms can be a key challenge. Due to significant cultural differences, the system of education in the UK differs from that in Saudi Arabia. These differences between these two education systems can cause uncertainty and confusion, so participant 8 found it difficult in the UK to make the transition to the new educational culture. The main priorities of the participant were adjusting to the academic environment and successfully fulfilling study programme requirements, but the participant indicated that adjusting to the new educational environment was a challenge.

6.1.1.2 I- as different

This I-position addressed how the participants negotiated their multiple identities by talking about aspects of difference they felt, reflecting upon them in the context of their new environment as illustrated in the table below with examples from each participant. This was a common voice in half of the sample (5 in total), and it gained its significance from participants' choice to perceive themselves as different from the rest of UK society.

	I-position (I- as different) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	I think my first memories were not good ones or happy ones. I was awkward in many situations. I did not know how to behave well in those situations, especially queues; I'm not familiar with them.
P5m	It is just an idea that I am different but, they don't have like specific stereotype because I'm the only Saudi in my department. I don't think they have like kind of specific background or a specific stereotype but, I feel they look at me like I am different there is nothing specific.
P10f	As I told because my reaction looks different from their reaction. The topics that I open. The topics that I am talking to or interested in, it is not the same. When I talk, for example, about my culture, it is so different from what they think. If they ask, for example, in my country what kind of adventures that I make, and I told them that, "Nothing." They think how strange I am. Yeah, so if they ask me about the sport that I make in my country, and then I told them that, "Nothing." "So what kind of volleyball?" Or, "Can you ride a bicycle? Let's do this," and I say no, no, it's first time, first time, first time. It's like I'm boring to them.
P11m	I came here to this culture. I'm different, I'm encouraged to be different and stay different. And that bring richness and that brings diversity and that brings new ideas and people respect each other and that's what makes the U.K. great, because they bring people and they make them engage with each other and exchange ... and accept their differences. And this is something that I really, really want to have in my culture, but I see it live now in practice here and people are going along very well.

The participants found it hard to be fully engaged in the UK due to being seen "as different". It is clear that being in Britain and being Saudi are viewed as tensional identities, since Britain is constructed on the basis of its culture. This cultural representation positions Saudi students as different, 'forcing' them to feel one identity position conflicting with the other as the two positions are represented as incompatible. Such asymmetrical relations among voices in the self illustrate how feeling different can be reflected in the dialogical self, as participant 10 indicated in her quote. Thus, cultural representations of the UK impact on the pattern of dialogue that can be established among identity positions.

In the above quotes, participant examples are presented as examples of conflictual interaction between an individual's position in relation to their new environment and developing identity. In these examples, participants 2, 5 and 11 first described how they saw themselves as sharing with their new community, then described how they saw themselves as different, and finally described differences as constructed by their new community. This conflictual interaction is in contrast with their own construction of a multicultural identity, which is presented in section 6.6.1.4.

Their experiences in the new context often contrasted with those in the mainstream, where the participants' experiences ranged from feeling normal as members of a multicultural society to feeling that they were different. Moreover, the participants' different experiences within their new community positioned them as having different meanings, and their cultural identity construction was seen as being affected by the way they perceived the new community. The participants talked about feeling similar to, and different from, their new community, similar to their own community, as well as feeling they were multicultural persons as they reported that they were able to interact in their multicultural context, as reported earlier section 6.6.1.4.

6.1.1.3 I- as how I see people in the UK look at me

All the participants (11 in total) addressed I- as how I see people in the UK look at me. As illustrated in the following quotes, the responses of the participants in this I- position presented how significant are the meanings of their cultural heritage within the context of the new environment in the UK, including how the participants perceive people in the UK look at them.

	I-position (I- as how I see people in the UK look at me) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	Their look at me mostly is a negative one. But I learned not to care about this because. They think that being, especially Saudi women, they think we are ... oppressed. They think we are very restricted. Sometimes they think we are very ignorant, not all English people, but other Arab people, they think these women are ignorant, they don't read, or ... So, yes, the image is negative, oppressed, ignorant.
P3f	When I say to someone I am from Saudi Arabia, they think about the main area of Islam. People with strong Islamic values. Some of them they think we have extremist Islamic values. They think that we are rich people. Some of them, they think that we are extremists. Some of them, they think we have ... because as a woman, single woman lets say, if I don't practice my own life or like fun, have fun or have nice life like them, they think that I'm not a normal person or not. But it's my choice to be like this. I feel I need to change this kind of stereotyping. And also I feel they, in academia, they have stereotyping about Saudi student, that they don't have critical thinking, they don't understand, they don't work hard, so I feel some difficulties to change these stereotypes.
P4m	I've seen a lot of situations even in my schools, even with friends that they just cannot deal with me as a person, they would deal with me as a group of people, they would deal with me as a society by myself, which is very judgmental. As I said earlier, I leaved with the students from foundation last year, and that also gave me a lot of different people, which was so interesting to discuss with them. I would sense that they would judge me as Saudi when I speak in politics and religion. I would say what they talk about the culture of Saudi Arabia and how women being

	treated. I would always be protective and be like "why would you talk about my country like this?" I would give you a bad example of your country in front of you, and see how this feel.
P9m	I think, the general image is negative. Not on me as a person, but on me as a Saudi because people don't judge you as a person, they judge the society. I think, the general image is negative. That is impacted by the mass media, definitely and by the few people who misbehave. Pass the wrong image about us and normally, the negative spreads. Negative image, they give messages. People just tend to be negative all the time, they like to pass it. A good thing, they just keep it. They like it, okay. That's fine, but they don't pass it to others, when they talk with each other word of mouth. My expectation is that they look at us as backward people.
P10f	I don't know, but sometimes I feel they don't trust much. I mean, they need time to trust me. so they need time to engage with me. Also, I don't know, maybe they think like ... I'm not European. Also I noticed that I'm not interacting with them the same way they do because we have different cultures. So, this make me react in different way what they expect, maybe what they consider rude. Or maybe, like when we used to do like in my country, you don't say please a lot but here they use it a lot. But you try to be politer, according to them.

All participants addressed their feelings and thoughts regarding how people in the new culture understand them as Saudi students. Several of them argued that the home culture was negatively represented in the consciousness of UK people.

Participants 2, 3 and 4, for example, perceived the representations of their home culture and religion, as portrayed in the consciousness of people around them in the UK, to be negative, and often overly associated with conservatism. As participants 2, 10 stated, this representation caused them to be viewed by people of the host culture with suspicion; and to redress these misrepresentations as portrayed, the participants assumed roles as positive representatives of themselves and their home culture.

The participants' reactions articulated a lack of being perceived in the consciousness of people around them in the UK, or their Saudi culture often saw their positions being stereotyped negatively. As newcomers to the UK with generous government scholarships that pay not only their tuition, but often in addition support them by paying all of their living expenses, they can be seen as rich, inactive, incompetent and even dishonest, in contrast to serious students interested in academic achievement.

This stereotyping was reflected in the participants' identity positions, both educationally and socially. Stereotyping the participants negatively broadened the segregation between them and others in the UK. The participants believed that the ways they are generalised create feelings of disconnection and locate them in positions of vulnerability within the new context. Two of the above interviewees, 2 and 10, reflected deeper on their stereotyping and its effects. The participants demonstrated how they made assumptions about how others perceived them, which shaped part of their attitudes to people in the UK, and how some of these views had changed during interactions with others during their stay in the UK.

6.1.1.4 I- as look and dress differently than when in Saudi

Due to cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the UK, the participants faced challenges when it came to self- or “personal appearance”. The visibility of their status as Saudi students, in their marked traditional clothes, emerged as conflict; it was identified by participants that they had concerns about their personal appearance and markers of difference in study spaces, and on public transport.

Most of the participants (9 in total) faced a repositioning of their personal appearance as illustrated in the table below with examples from each participant, and with further quotes. Participants were concerned about their appearance, including their traditional clothes, and religious appearance with Hijab and makeup for female participants. They spoke about the effects of looking and dress while navigating the new culture, as well as influencing the behaviours of others toward them.

	I-position (I- as look and dress differently than when in Saudi) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P1f	I bought a lot of Turbans (head cover as Hijab) So when a non-Muslim look at to me probably, they will not know that I'm wearing Hijab because it will look like a hat at the end. I am afraid that people will judge me because I am always saying it doesn't matter if you are inside your heart you hate me or disrespect me, it doesn't matter with me as long you do not shout verbally or by your behaviour, so I do not mind. I know that most maybe many people in the community here in the Uni maybe they do not like me as Muslim or they do not feel that they are comfortable being surrounded by Muslim. I do not mind that because at the end something inside their heart as long as they are treating with me very respectful way I think this is the most important, so I was the most fear is I do not want to be to get abused or get hurt because I am Muslim.
P3f	You know in Saudi Arabia we have one unique dress, is of the black Abayah and Niqab but here, I keep the general forms of hijab. So I keep the same headlines, but I changed the colours only. So I keep the long dress. I keep it loose. so I changed my dress to be just accepted and welcomed in this country, and not to be like a ninja. I'm sorry about this. They see me like that. They don't understand that I, when we cover out faces that we practicing our religion. And also they are worried for safety reasons, they worried about that. So we avoid to be in area that people afraid and scared from us, yeah.
P7m	In Saudi Arabia we wear the traditional clothes all the time maybe. Not all the time, I would say five days a week of course you will be with that. But during the weekend you might be with a little bit wearing jeans and T-shirts. But here, as you know, I have to wear my trousers and shirts all the time just to not look weird when I walk on the street. I love the way that how I look. I always have that picture of that gentlemen and they're all wearing what you're wearing now. So that's why, it's part of it. Especially when I have let's say a very formal date here for example, I'm wearing my suit. So that of course will give me some feelings that, "Okay, I am one of them now."
P11m	I did not dress Saudi traditional clothes and the main reason for my not being part of it. Which is to fit in, because this is how we expect to see you. And this is why I wear it. This is what people expect to see me on the streets. This is what everybody's doing, which is like the social pressure. I get to work with them, to wear the same thing. It's also similar to the idea of hijab and niqab. It's not about bringing the attention and then a lot of people have bad perception about your country for example, or culture or religion. I think that's why I do it. Just to fit in.

People dress without any purposeful, conscious thought for the most part. However, the participants were placed in a position where even the most taken-for-granted part of daily behaviour (putting clothes on) becomes an event that is replete with meanings that may provide obstacles for their interactions throughout the day. This showed how much more 'mental work' goes into being a Saudi person in the UK than into experiencing life as a native.

The participants felt that they might be rejected due to their personal appearance, including their traditional clothes and religious beliefs, in regard to their look and dress. Female participants felt they were more likely to experience this due to the Saudi Arabian traditional form of the Hijab, which has significance in representing their home culture and religion. Female participants are more noticeable as members of a different culture (due to head coverings and dress) than their male counterparts.

For example, participant 1 described her experience of negotiating her look and dress to avoid any discrimination, rejection and judgement in the new environment. This negotiation account ended up being a dialogical example of the third position; instead of leaving her Hijab behind, she decided to use a different form of head-covering (Turban) to cover her hair, as this can function as a Hijab according to her religion's beliefs while others in the UK perceived it as a turban and a kind of fashion. As she believed, this let her maintain her home culture and religion but also fit into the new context in the UK.

As stated above, the participants were aware of the influence of their self-appearance on their interactions. They moved beyond that statement to voice how they made changes and developed their self appearance in order to fit positively into UK culture.

6.1.1.5 I- as the UK having a different meaning of Muslim

Almost half of the participants (5 in total) reported I- as the UK having a different meaning of Muslim. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position included different meanings of being a Muslim in UK culture.

	I-position (I- as the UK having a different meaning of Muslim) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	I used to think that, because I come from Saudi Arabia, we are told that our country is a representative of Islam, and it protects Islam, and people respect it everywhere. But by coming to the UK, and specifically interacting with the Muslim community, I learned that they have very different point of view about my own government, and my own country. I used to get angry at the beginning, and then maybe fight and say things that I regret later, but then I learnt that these people, even though they are Muslim, but because they are brought up in this country, they are independent thinkers, and they have their own point of view even about Islam, and even about another Muslim country.
P3f	People feel it's strange for them, but I didn't understand this from the beginning. I understand that they attack our identity, they hate us. But with time, I realize that I should go on the middle point. I keep my Islamic values, but in the way that I can be accepted in this society and be welcomed without harsh or racist comments. For example, I do it now, if it's right or wrong I don't know, but

	during all English language courses, I decided to stay with my Niqab. (Face cover) When I entered the university with master degree, I said, "This is my decision." I said, "Okay," I'll not cover my face and all my family support me with that, "I can take off my Niqab."
P9m	When I came to the UK, talking and communicating with women was a bit challenging for me, at the beginning. Because, I just didn't feel comfortable about it, apart from that I think I was more religious at that time. Feeling like actually not cross those barriers of the religion, but throughout the time those things have melted. Today, I still find some issues communicating with women, but I'm more confident. Probably, more like a forward person. the other thing is the extent to how religious I was and how I am now. I think, my understanding of my religion has changed. It's not being less religious, but I have a different understanding. Because, I can see things around me from a different perspective and I had the chance to read other things and meet people from different backgrounds, things have changed so far. Being religious or more religious before coming here, it wasn't a choice. It was how the community is. I just move ahead through the same direction that the community goes through. When I came here, I changed a lot of things, because I had the chance to develop my own perspective I don't see that contradicts with what I was before.
P11m	I always try to question things I don't believe in. I learned this in the U.K., because you see a different culture. I start questioning the things that I used to believe in, and then I say what are the things that you believe that's good or bad or there's a base for it. Evaluate what I believe in. What is the logic behind it? And when I looked for example, I mentioned earlier about hijab, there's one point five million Muslims and I would say just maybe thirty to forty million of them wear niqab so, we cannot just generalize that we are much more Muslim than the other Muslims. And there is some logic behind it so I have ... And then I looked for other scholars from different countries to see the logic behind it and I came to realize that the idea of what is the logic behind hijab and then I came to the conclusion.

Saudi students define themselves through their religion and, in some cases, in this way rather than their country of origin. In being responsive to the challenge of questioning their identity in the UK, the participants are choosing to reconsider their own cultural norms and religion and to practise more openly with increasing awareness.

Participants 2, 3 and 9, for instance, while representing their conservative Saudi Islamic identity, experienced identity negotiations because of the perceived conflict with their Islamic identity in the UK. On the one hand, they had their own Islamic teaching views, both 'theoretical and practical', and their own way of practising those teachings as they used to do in the home country. On the other hand, they interacted with British Muslims who perceived their Islamic teachings in the British context. This caused the participants to negotiate their identification with British Muslim society in their everyday lives.

In many situations that some Saudi and British Islamic norms do not fit together in a way that can accommodate the participants' needs. Thus, the non-conscious flow of everyday practice can be disrupted because of a collision between these two Islamic meanings that can produce contradictory objectification of specific Islamic social situations. As addressed earlier that being Muslim and Islamic teachings vary in diverse cultural backgrounds; therefore, the statements given by the participants reflected how they understood the conflict they experienced as arising from the juxtaposition of a British Muslim perspective versus a Saudi Muslim perspective. As the participants in their interviews were aware of this contradiction, they felt they needed to renegotiate meanings for what was implicated, and, in so doing, they were positioning themselves and negotiating their Islamic identities, as participant 3 indicated. This marked a visible moment within the British multicultural

community regarding being a Saudi Muslim in the UK, in the sense that the participants' identity is in part defined by their active re-construction of the relation between the traditions they hold from the home culture, the position of religion within that culture and the relation between those traditions and religious beliefs and British Muslim culture and identity.

6.1.1.6 I- as a Saudi person interacting normally with non-Saudis but having difficulties interacting with Saudis of the other gender

More than half of the participants (8 in total) spoke of I-as a Saudi person interacting normally with non-Saudis but having difficulties interacting with Saudis of the other gender. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position included the challenge of interacting with Saudi individuals from the opposite gender in the UK.

	I-position (I- as a Saudi person interacting normally with non-Saudis but having difficulties interacting with Saudis of the other gender) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	With non-Saudi males, I think, as a woman, I can be comfortable, I can talk with them as a friend, and I know that they will not have a negative point of view. I can smile, I can laugh out loud, they will not have misunderstanding. But, with Saudi men, and Arab men, in general, I think I have to be careful in how I behave, how I talk, how I smile, how much I smile, they can misunderstand it. But what I noticed is that if I smile and laugh with Saudi men, they mostly think I'm interested in them sexually. They will think am not an honour able or virtuous woman. I noticed this in their facial expressions and their behaviours.
P3f	I don't have difficulties to deal with men from different cultures. Because they didn't find it problem for them. It's normal. But the difficulties when I interact with men, the other gender from my culture. Sometimes, I have some, let's say, embarrassing situations. Also, I should be specific and direct in my language. Keep it formal, and also, as a single woman here, I should deal with them as a lady, not a female. And it's big different.
P4m	Saudi females are always hard to interact with, unfortunately. I have, as I said, friends from Saudi, I see them every single day during my studies and we interact like "hello, how are you? How are you doing?" But the strange like I cannot interact, but with non-Saudis it's easy to interact with them. I think culture wise have been involved in this, we've been born and raised to not talk to them. Even your cousins, if she's thirteen or fourteen, you cannot talk to her. You talk to her brother, her father, but not her, and that's unfortunately built barrier between us and the other gender even when we come here, even when we interact it's so weird compared to the people who are born and raised in England, and it's so weird for us to interact with females, but for now for us right now, for me for example, five years in U.K., now I have the understanding how to deal with them, how to talk to them, how to open, how to interact with them.
P9m	I speak with the non-Saudis female with normal tone, normal way of communication, but with the Saudis there is a barrier between us and there is always ... It's always difficult to communicate with them, even when I was a student in my Master's, in my undergraduate. I had some female Saudis. When I see a Saudi woman, I just try to be as much avoiding sensitive topics as I can. Because, they take things seriously, in every way. It's always difficult to communicate with females, maybe it's on something inside me. Maybe, it's something is real. I would love to speak with Saudi women, but I just feel saying something that you like. The reaction is not good, so I try ... It's safer for me to stay away. Be as much professional with them as possible.

P10f	Actually, if they are Saudis, I'm trying to avoid them. But if they are not Saudi, actually I need time to understand them, because I'm afraid that they'll think of me as an English girl regarding sexual matters and all that. So yeah, they should understand that this is different for me from others from not here. But still, for Saudi I'm trying to avoid them as much as I can because I know the way they judge people too. And the way they react to women and all that. So ...

The majority of the participants found interacting with Saudi individuals of the opposite gender challenging due to the lack of mixed interaction experiences between males and females in Saudi Arabia, as participant 4 said above, and also because of the expectations imposed on them by their Saudi group members. It looks like he would like to interact naturally with Saudi women but he also sees that the cultural heritage they both bring with them has 'built a barrier' that undermines that natural interaction. Further, the Saudi female participants tend to perceive the experience more challenging than their Saudi male participants counterparts. Being in a mixed gender interaction environment was a challenge for the female and that some Saudi female participants preferred isolating themselves rather than interacting with Saudi male participants while female participant 3 even called the interaction experience with males 'embarrassing situations.'

As addressed earlier, the participants were able to reconstruct their interactions with non-Saudi individuals of the opposite gender, but they found interacting with Saudi individuals of the opposite gender challenging. Previously, in Saudi, people could just put on their clothes naturally without thought. In the UK they had to think about how to present themselves. Female participants had associated themselves with behaviours of Saudi women as they were concerned with their gender-specific norms. They were concerned with issues that were not of significant concern to the male participants as female participants were concerned about behaviours such as "have to be careful in how I behave, how I talk, how I smile, how much I smile, they can misunderstand it, if I smile and laugh with Saudi men, they mostly think I'm interested in them sexually" as Participant 2 said, or "I'm afraid that they'll think of me as an English girl regarding sexual matters and all that" as Participant 10 said, and these voices are linked to other I-positions "such as "a honourable or virtuous woman" or "a lady, not a female". These are powerful voices created from this positioning and are very different from the male voices which illustrate how the Saudi gender identity of women in this culture may influence their individual perceptions and experiences when interacting with male participants. see new proofread

Female participants could interact naturally with the UK males by expressing her emotions and her talk, smile, laughter honestly and without regard for how that behaviours might be perceived. With the Saudi males however, female participants felt that they need to restrict their emotional expression in case they are labeled in a stigmatized way by people from her own culture. While the participants reported that there is interaction between the participants and non-Saudi individuals of the opposite gender, such as British students and other international students, as participants 2 and 3 mentioned, it seemed there were certain reasons why the participants were disinclined to interact with individuals from the opposite gender.

The first cause of this unwillingness to interact with each other may relate to the fact that the participants were unfamiliar with mixed interaction between Saudi males and females in the home culture, a situation which may create a sense of confusion and uncertainty when dealing with each other. This understanding of the strict demarcation between the two genders is attributed to the meaning of gender interaction between males and females they acquired in the home culture through their primary socialisation in the family and at school. Thus, the lack of interaction between men and women in the home country context seems to have created a gap and difference between the genders, but that did not affect interaction with non-Saudi individuals of the opposite gender in the UK context, because the participants were able to overcome the issue of interaction with them, as reported by the participants earlier.

The participants also gave, above, an explanation for the absence of interaction between Saudi males and females that related to their worries of being subjected to negative judgements by other Saudi individuals in terms of maintaining the norms of the home culture and behaving properly according to their culture, participant 10 spoke about that above. There was an implicit awareness that their cultural heritage has induced a split between the genders that is difficult to bridge. That was a massive barrier to overcome. How interesting that one of the key challenges to interacting with other people in another culture involves interacting with one's own people in that new culture.

6.1.1.7 I- as I need to change

Almost all of the participants (10 in total) addressed I- as I need to change. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position included changes in many aspects, such as self-confidence, independence, competence, communication skills, value systems and identity in general.

	I-position (I- as I need to change) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	When I leave my family and come here, what happened with me is I tried to forget about everything I learnt and start building myself again, choosing my values, choosing my thoughts. One of them was how to deal with other people, relationships, they noticed this huge change again when I went back home, the way I dealt with my younger brother, the way I dealt with them. In a good way, I mean, they noticed that I'm trying to make them feel good about themselves. because also with people here, I used to misbehave or mistreat them sometimes and the reaction was not a good one. I learned, okay, I have to know how to deal with other people. I think it has changed me a lot but in a good way, but I want to say something. That it was not without pain. It was very painful sometimes.
P5m	Basically, I think everyone changed his environment has to be changed like you'll be forced to be changed. Because, I think the wave of the environment is way stronger than the persons himself. I can't resist like a whole society and be like myself if I want to do that then at the end I'll be isolated. And I would not be like normal and I can't function, I'll be abnormal. The life itself like even like simple things like crossing the streets you need to look right instead of left. Simple things that you need to ...to adjust it when you are in this society. I would say like even like the tone of English that you hear. Small things but, all of them like at the end they have

	major impact in me and that needs time like I would say, like first two months was like ... Yeah is like struggling even to understand.
P6f	UK gives us all of the freedom to do whatever we want but it's not easy like in Saudi. Sometimes you have to change yourself a bit. Like you have to adapt a bit just to make everything settle down. I really enjoy being with non-Saudi people just to be in mixed culture and understand because being around them they have most effect on my knowledge, and my language, and everything. I like being with them. The idea that like I believe, and I still believe, that we are not allowed as Muslims to stay together in one table with wine drinks or alcoholic. But if I didn't go out with them that means I would miss this part. I have to just change myself and to accept that I'm going to stay with them. Okay they drink? I'm not drinking, that's okay. Other thing is shaking hands with men. It's more about religious beliefs. Shaking hands, if I don't do it they thought I disrespect them. So sometime I have to do it, if they are special in academic because they thought we are not need any relations, we are in academy. They don't understand we are not doing it, even though they respect Muslim but they don't know details.
P7m	Well, living in the UK now for two years, almost two years. A lot of things have changed personality wise, character wise. Moving from a conservative community to an open community that of course will make a big impact on my character. So, coming to the UK from that society was a big shock. If you want to say education wise first, studying with man and woman at the same classroom, that wasn't something we normally do in Saudi Arabia.

The result of living within and across two cultures is that the acculturating person often experiences considerable changes which entail physical, social and cultural growth (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005), participant 7 addressed that in his quote above. These changes can range from very superficial ones such as daily habits to major changes such as shifts in identity (Berry, 1997, 2002, 2005, 2011).

Study One's findings provided key insights into changes in and awareness of the self that the participants developed as an outcome of the experience of living and studying in the UK (see 5.3). The current study attempted to deepen the understanding of this I-position (I- as I need to change) and alterations in the awareness of self that participants reported as a requirement of living and studying in the UK. As participants 2 and 5 addressed in their quotes above, it included voices of awareness of the need for change and new self-images, and the adoption of new values and beliefs. Participant 2, for example, talked above about changing the way that she interacted with other people back in Saudi. She said she was more encouraging. Perhaps this relates to seeing the potential for development in others. Still, the thing to recognize was that there was a marked change in interacting with others at home in a positive way.

Studying in the UK entails becoming accustomed to the UK's culture norms and context and how these can impact on the participants' identity. The participants in this study addressed the need for changes they perceived in themselves since coming to the UK. These included changes in many aspects, such as self-confidence, independence, competence, communication skills, value systems and identity in general. In addition, the participants were aware of how these changes had influenced their conceptualisations of self in many respects. The participants seemed to be consciously and constantly well aware of the perceived consequences for their sense of self and interactions in the new context. This enhanced awareness of identity formation processes helped the participants to better understand their sense of self and this spurred them on to confront the new

challenges arising from their transition. The participants evidenced that their increased awareness of the social constructivism of identity had helped them to critically and successfully engage in negotiating two cultures in their minds.

6.1.1.8 I- as acting similarly to people around me

For the participants in this sample, the I-position of being similar to people in the UK community emerged as a powerful position. Almost half of the participants (5 in total) reported this I-position. This voice was created through the I-position of those participants "I- as acting similarly to people around me" and led to the following sub-voices.

	I-position (I-as acting similarly to people around me) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P1f	After like almost four years I can't say that till now I am very able to fit in this community, so I have a silly example. Every time I go back home for holiday when I come back the first question how was your holiday? ok. So first I was so happy with my honest answer I saw my family and I was really excited and I noticed that the reaction all the time it was like ok that's a very boring holiday did you go just to see your family and then what else did you do? and I was like ok I saw my family and friends and that's all and I really enjoyed that way, and they are just looking to me and that's all you did not do anything? so the last two times I went back home to Saudi when I return back I was preparing the answer what should I answer them in a way that I do not feel very boring to them. So I started like to observe their answers when they ask each other so they answer like I eat a lot of delicious food and everyone was WOW ok that so excited for them they tried a new food, so I started to answer in the same way how was your holiday I saw my family and I eat a lot of food and ohh WOW that's cool.
P2f	Sometimes if I'm speaking with someone and I notice that they come from a very different background, maybe they are too open minded, I try to show them that okay, I understand, I'm familiar with this. so I try not to have an argument with them. I have tried to just understand them without making judgements about them.
P6f	That's like shaking hands is one example of being like, just to within them, to be normal. Stay with them while drinks if they have drinks. I can be there but ... even though I don't have to drink. They have to go out for socialising or say goodbye to someone leaving, they have to meet as to a party they're going for a drink, "Let's go for drinks." If I say no I don't want, that's mean I'm not engaging in university activities. If I say yes I want, some people they're expecting I'm going to drink but no I'm not. I have to be by myself, alone, even though the place they go I don't like it but I have to be within their culture.
P8f	Here, during events or end of year gathering or Christmas dinner. The social events that are part of the department. We tend to for example go for a meal together. These things I wouldn't do in Saudi Arabia, because the society there is a bit different in terms of going with my colleagues into for example a restaurant and having a meal with both genders. Here, because it's a mixed gender environment I don't feel any problem going out with the group and a social gathering outside of the university. If we were in let's say in Saudi Arabia, yes I will think twice three times before doing that because the way ... Again, the culture, the norm there is different.

As is evident above, these participants represented being an ethnic minority within the majority community by talking through their positions of living in a multicultural society and thus being persons who fit well in this context because they felt they were acting similarly to other members of society through their diversity.

Thus, in the same way that those participants identified themselves as being different to the majority community in the UK (see example quotes in 6.4.1.2), they also voiced their attempts to be similar to those around them. More specifically, the participants who talked through their positions of being different, such as being Muslims, clearly valued the religious part of their cultural identity because it was perceived as helping them to locate themselves in contrast to the multicultural context of the UK. However, acting similarly to those around them was also represented by these participants having a sense of integrating into their new cultural community, as participants 1, 2 and 8 mentioned in their quotes above.

One important voice that was created in this way, when the participants talked through their positions of being ethnic minority students in this new context, was the voice of feeling like a normal person, as participant 6 said for example. This voice also provided insights into the ways the notion of "normality" can be represented depending on which I-position the participants were talking about. In this sense, the participant who approached the voice of normality through the I-positions of being similar to people in the UK and living in a multicultural society perceived herself as a normal person, because "being multicultural" in that context was perceived as normal. This is an example of a voice of normality generating positive feelings because it is characterized by an agreement between the individual's positioning of herself as different and yet similar to those around her. On the other hand, the participant who approached the voice of normality by positioning himself within this new cultural community's context perceived himself as normal when following religious and cultural practices, but also thought he was perceived as different by others, (see examples quotes of I- as different in 6.4.1.2), something that may indicate tension when there is a discrepancy between "how I see myself" and "how others look at me".

6.1.1.9 I- as a Saudi interacting with the opposite gender

More than half of the participants (6 in total) reported I- as a Saudi interacting with the opposite gender. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position included interactions with individuals from the opposite gender in the UK.

	I-position (I- as a Saudi interacting with the opposite gender) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	With non-Saudi males, I think, as a woman, I can be comfortable, I can talk with them as a friend, and I know that they will not have a negative point of view. I can smile, I can laugh out loud, they will not have misunderstanding. But, with Saudi men, and Arab men, in general, I think I have to be careful in how I behave, how I talk, how I smile, how much I smile, they can misunderstand it. But what I noticed is that if I smile and laugh with Saudi men, they mostly think I'm interested in them sexually. They will think am not an honour able or virtuous woman. I noticed this in their facial expressions and their behaviours.
P5m	That was like my first supervisor female supervisor that kind of break the ice like ... And here now like opposite gender especially like work here is a part of work itself. You have to reach the limit that you need to deal with them like in a certain level that is ... We don't use to do it Saudi or like in is or ... It's different, or you can't because is considered like racist is not a good thing in their culture or like a religious thing. I think yeah like ... I deal with them like normal I

	can talk to them like ... Saudis or none Saudis I don't feel like they are different I can deal with them.
P6f	In the hospital, because I'm in the medical field, so in hospital I can treat men and women. It's not like men in Saudi I have to ... I have experience to treat only women. So here yes, I can treat both which affect me because I can see differences.
P8f	It depends on the need of interaction. Of course, coming from Saudi Arabia with the culture that we have. I always have to put this sort of certain limitations in terms of the way I interact. For example, if it's something for my research or even with my supervisors, I interact normally because there is a need for that but sometimes for example, when we go for example for a social gathering, or like social life outside the university, If it's a group thing I usually go, If it's mainly for example male colleagues I don't. I still put some sort of restriction or limitations in terms of that. With Saudi students, I think the same. If there is a need to interact in terms either for research or for any other commitment I have, I'm happy to do that within the cultural, the formal setting.

The participants were willing to be involved in interactions with individuals from the opposite gender as long as some clear boundaries were set, and purely professional interactions were maintained between them. When the participants interacted with non-Saudis in places such as a classroom or lecture theatre, where interaction with those from the opposite gender was inevitable, they tended to interact with them but only engaged in professional interaction directly related to work and study activities, not going beyond this and into informal conversation.

Male and female participants from Saudi Arabia are used to studying in separate classrooms where their segregation is ensured; however, this is not the case when they study in the UK. Therefore, interactions with individuals from the opposite gender are more likely to happen. Thus, the participants negotiated how they managed their skills when they had these kinds of interactions. There were occasions when interactions with non-Saudi individuals from the opposite gender were inevitable in academia or public places, as participants 2, 6 and 8 indicated, above. Drawing on their diverse knowledge and attitudes, the participants employed certain skills when they interacted with individuals of the opposite gender.

Male and female participants (e.g. participant 8) were more likely to find it challenging when they interacted with non-Saudi individuals of the opposite gender because of the gap created between males and females as a result of gender segregation (see 5.2.7). Therefore, this I- position investigated how the participants negotiated interactions with non-Saudi individuals of the opposite gender and whether they were willing to interact with them, or if they avoided such situations due to conflicts with their Saudi cultural identity.

The findings showed that the participants' gender positions are based on their cultural norms, they also vary depending on their understandings of those cultural norms. Therefore, several participants voiced that what formed their understanding of what it means to be a Saudi male or female interacting with individuals from the opposite gender

in the UK reflects their understanding of the positions of their culture and religion on such interactions and previous experiences in the home culture.

When the participants had the opportunity to negotiate identity positions on common ground through their daily interactions with others, the participants told of interpreting and relating these based on new cultural norms. These accounts enabled them to reach the I-position that their interactions with the opposite gender were acceptable because they were clearly for academic and/or professional purposes. However, the participants' voices of willingness to interact with the opposite gender varied and ranged from willing to interact on the one hand and avoiding any situation that might lead to interacting with the opposite gender on the other, in order to keep their interactions professional and avoid any intimate relationships. Therefore, the establishment of intimate relationships with the opposite gender constitutes a boundary that the participants were not willing to cross, especially females. The participants explained that their ways of interacting with the opposite gender should be recognised in the sense that they did not wish such interactions to develop into anything beyond mere acquaintanceship.

6.1.1.10 I- as interacting within a multicultural context

Most of the participants (9 in total) spoke of I- as interacting within a multicultural context. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position included interacting within the multicultural context in the UK in everyday practice.

	I-position (I-as interacting within a multicultural context) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P1f	I think it gave me the feeling that I can deal with different people so whenever there the background of them. And I discover new things in my personality that I am not a judgement of person at all because I like I dealt with a very different people from different background with a different thinking way that I thought that disagree with them, but I was always like respecting them.
P4m	I remember the first thing when I came here, I studied the English language for a year, and that year I had faced a lot of things and a lot of different people, because in the English schools you always meet the international students, so I have gained a lot of experience first year, especially dealing with people from all different countries like Spain, Italy, and like different places. I have a lot of British friends, like we go out like to different places, we travel together, I have a lot of British friends.
P6f	I meet a lot of people from different culture which open my eyes, open my thoughts of how people can think, how people changing information, changing everything which is so great. It affects me, affects myself in terms of knowledge, how I see people in different ways. Back home I was taught like just we are totally different but there is some common things in between cultures, some common things in between religious as well. So, Yes, they change me in positive way. I still believe, that we are not allowed to stay together in one table with wine drinks or alcoholic but if I didn't go out with them that means I would miss this part. I have to just change myself and to accept that I'm going to stay with them. Okay they drink? I'm not drinking, that's okay.

P9m	I had chances to meet people from all areas of the world and from there, I started learning new cultures. New practices in my life and I think the stage of studying English was a very critical stage of my life, because that's the stage that you begin meeting new people. Having new understanding of what is the world around you.

Multicultural interaction was catalysed by continuous negotiations of openness, freedom and independence from social constraints happening via a dialogical process between various I-positions. The participants were motivated to maintain an attitude of multicultural openness in order to allow them to overcome cultural tensions and resolve those. Maintaining an attitude of openness assisted these students to approach, rather than avoid, peers from diverse cultural backgrounds, thus increasing their cross-cultural communication competence and self-efficacy. Specifically, the participants reported that exposure to people from the host culture and multicultural sharing increased understanding, improved participation and helped with the adjustment process by allowing them learn new cultural rules and roles. More communication with students from different cultural backgrounds also promoted a deeper understanding between the participants, other international students and domestic students, thus creating a multiculturally inclusive environment, all the participants gave several examples of that.

The participants, for example, attempted to provide an understanding of their complex intercultural communication experiences. Two cultural streams, representing a Saudi national identity and a UK cultural identity, were presented in the participants' cultural positions; but at the same time, they were accompanied by other positions associated with other cultural norms, religion, family and gender. Though the participants did initiate intercultural communication with other local and international students, they had some conflicts when engaging with certain multicultural events organised by the university or friends from other backgrounds, since some of these events involved drinking alcohol, eating non-halal food and gathering in bars, or fears on the part of the women of them not being accepted by non-Muslims because of wearing the Hijab for example. The ideal path, according to several participants, is multiculturalism, in which participants communicate competently, approach diversity openly and learn about the new culture, yet still maintain their own cultural identity. Maintaining their cultural identity is crucial for Saudi international students, as the adjustment process upon re-entry into their home country may involve the same issues as their adjustment in the host country.

6.1.1.11 I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard

More than half of the participants (8 in total) spoke of I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position covers three aspects of freedom, independence and making their voice heard in the UK in everyday practice.

I-position (I- as having freedom, independence and my voice being heard) and examples of related voices' quotes:

P7m	Most of the time, I am in front of the desktop or facing my rig [machine] trying to run some experiments. So that thing it's really boring, boring as hell. But, the good side of it, it changed me a lot. It made me thought about myself a million times during these two years. I have time to sit with myself and speak to myself and see where is my strengths, where is my weakness, and how to develop myself basically. Where in a community like a Saudi Arabia you don't have that opportunity. That's for granted, because it's a very busy life. The moment you wake up until you go to bed, you don't own yourself. Your parents want you, your friends want you. So, having that free time with yourself, it's really beneficial in a way you will know yourself way better after you finish your schedule.
P8f	Living for example in Saudi I live with my family, but here I'm more independent. I tend to do things that I wouldn't do there. For example, riding a bicycle to school there you'd never do that. Living in the UK culture exposed me to different ways of thinking. For example, in Saudi let's say, I'm always part of the community and people always try to make sure that the other person is doing right, and is not doing anything wrong. There is always a sense of, not control, but the society look at each other and try to ... If someone is doing something wrong try to, they keep watching each other maybe. So they have one opinion and you have to follow that, here it's more, everyone is free to think, do, whatever they want. And they don't judge you on it. For example, I don't know if choose a certain lifestyle, or if I choose whatever thing to do. People wouldn't necessarily judge me or treat me based on my decision. My decision is mine and that's it.
P10f	After coming here, I've become something different. I have to take decisions. It was so difficult in the beginning, because I'm not used to. I feel like I want someone to decide, because I'm not used to doing that before. But by being with friends it is giving me some confidence, and also the life here gives you the opportunity and this confidence that you must be like that to continue living here. 4. I wanted, since I was there, I want to be independent. I like this feeling. I like to have my own house. I like to run everything myself. To buy my stuff myself. And to have my own job and have control my economy myself. But I couldn't do that before in Saudi Arabia.

The meanings of freedom and independence in relation to the study abroad experience prompted the participants to engage in UK culture. The participants reported that they appreciated independence and freedom in their life choices, while female participants indicated more freedom of mobility as well. Sojourning away from home country while studying in the multicultural context of the UK promoted a sense of freedom and independence in Saudi students. Both male and female participants seemed to appreciate the independence and freedom that they lacked back home.

These participants argued that they fit better in the UK than in their home country. In their interviews, they juxtaposed the UK with home and compared them on the basis of independence and freedom, and opportunities to extend and negotiate the self. While the UK was represented as a place for recounting the development of identity positions, the home culture was represented as a conservative context that restricts a participant's independence and freedom. Participant 7 reported above 'You don't own yourself'. He could not do that in an isolated, individual fashion, He was always socially embedded. Social influences and interactions play such a powerful role in shaping the person in Saudi but Here, he could reflect on his life and who he is. It seemed like the reflection was the important part, and the space to be free of those typical social influences that shape who he is.

The meanings of freedom and independence for the participants were often a challenge to negotiate vis-à-vis Saudi cultural norms, practices and expectations. Even though for

several participants becoming independent was frightening at first, most participants had come to value parts of their new independence, such as more freedom, making life choices, privacy, and responsibility, which they realized they had gained. The participants spoke more meaningfully about independence and freedom in a way that reflected them recognizing that their existence is one of 'potential' – they can be, can do, can think, a variety of things but which of those things could they commit to, and which of those things were they able to commit to given the social constraints they find themselves in. However, because of the dominant Saudi cultural characteristics of Saudi students, several participants realized that becoming independent could impact on their relationship with the home culture.

For several participants, especially females, a certain level of dependence appeared to be perceived as undesirable. For example, participants 8 and 10 mentioned that they did not want their mobility to be controlled by their parents after finishing their degrees and going back home. Yet, at the same time, most of the participants spoke about feeling lonely at times and missing their family as negative parts of their independence and freedom. Therefore, several participants presented back and forth movements between freedom and independence in relation to family and the home culture.

6.1.1.12 I- as open-minded in the UK

More than half of the participants (6 in total) addressed I- as open-minded in the UK. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position included change in the open-mindedness experiences of the self in the UK in everyday practice.

	I-position (I- as an open-minded in the UK) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P4m	It took time for me to change my point of view of judgement and how should I judge people, and also accepting the others opinion. Sometimes because I'm a believer, I'm Muslim, so sometimes Atheists will come to talk to me about how God exists, why God exists, and that kind of questions I cannot ask these questions in Saudi Arabia, or I cannot ask community that believes in the same thing because to be honest, the community of Saudi Arabia and most of gulf countries we're very closed community, we don't have a lot of international people around us, we don't have a lot of people, we don't have mixed cultures, we have the same culture. When I came here, they have mixed cultures, they have a lot of differences, there is no similarity, you probably can find difference in one family, probably can find the mother is Christian, the son is Atheist, and it's different. Everyone has their own personality; however, the problem with accepting the other opinion, I remember until now I had a lot of discussions with people but in the beginning I was so arrogant to where I was like, "no, I am the truth and I am the right one, and you're doing the mistake, and we have to fix that." you cannot say that you're always right, you cannot say that you're always doing the right thing and what you have done in your country or what you have done in your society is the correct thing and other people are false.
P6f	I have to be more open to the other culture before I judge them. Become more, more open open-minded. Open-minded to accept any people before I judge if they are good or they are bad, like to have more details from them. They change me also in thinking and everywhere in every culture there are a good and bad person. Before I just thought all of them are bad because they drink so they do bad things.

P11m	I think one of the things that I've learned a lot here is how to be open to new ideas. How to respect differences. When I come here, I see people, different cultures, different opinions about the topic and what I learned a lot is how can I accept being criticized. How my opinion can be criticized and yet you don't take it personal. It's in my environment where I exchange ideas. I think this is something we really miss back home. Having accepted into the university being open mind. Appreciating and encouraging diversity and be for instance is something that I think we need to do back home, and I need to do with every interaction that I have instead of looking at the people that they are different to us or they are different mindset different. Different ways of looking at things. I should appreciate that instead of just attacking them, more looking, judge them.

The participants faced a challenge in accepting others from different backgrounds because they did not have much exposure to those different backgrounds before their transition. Participant 4 is an example of a student who comes from a society where they are mostly surrounded by those of the same race, religion and educational background, so it can be a challenge to accept others from different backgrounds.

However, more than half of the participants portrayed themselves as enjoying life (I-as open-minded in the UK). They spoke about their positive open-minded self that existed at different times and in different situations, e.g. in the context of their studies or their social life. In the examples above, the participants negotiated the I-position of as 'I- as open-minded'. They realized the diversity of their new context, including different people, ideas and cultures, as illustrated in the quotes from participants 4, 6 and 11, above. It was essential for them to develop an understanding of cultural differences and to acknowledge that other people can be different, and also to accept diversity in the first place. Then, they discussed the dynamic position of developing themselves so as to accept others by interaction with others, whatever their backgrounds, as participant 11 mentioned.

As these participants had not previously interacted with many others from different cultural backgrounds, their first course of action was to judge others who were different. Therefore, they revealed that they worked hard to understand cultural differences and to avoid judging others based only on their cultural backgrounds. Thus, they ended up with the idea that others, no matter what their cultural background, had different opinions, habits and lifestyles, and the sooner they were aware that everyone is different, the easier it became to understand and accept cultural differences.

6.1.1.13 I-as I improved myself in the UK

This I- position is one of the most recognizable and identifiable I- positions expressed by the participants in this study. All of the participants (11 in total) spoke of I- as I improved myself in the UK. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position covers the participants' sense of an increased, broader and deeper understanding of the self in the UK in everyday situations, a sense that their self developed in a way that they perceived as improvement.

	I-position (I-as I improved myself in the UK) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P2f	While I was in Saudi Arabia, I did not have this broad understanding, but by coming to the UK, by actually making mistakes and learning from those mistakes, I learn a lot. I think my understanding of myself has changed a lot in the UK. I mean, I can say before coming to the UK I did not know exactly who I am, but after I came to the UK, I learned so much about myself. It's not that I ... it's because in the UK there are many things to explore and try. In Saudi Arabia, I worked as a teacher assistant at a Saudi University. I learned so much during that experience, I learnt so much about myself. But I don't have so many things to try in Saudi Arabia, apart from going to school and then getting back. But, by being in the UK, by interacting with the Muslim community, and people from different countries. I learned so much, yes. I would say I think this experience has had the most impact in my life because it has changed so much about myself, especially in terms of self-love or self-respect.
P3f	If I want to tell you about the benefits that I have from my living here in the UK, maybe I can say this scholarship make me refined myself again, my view about myself, goals, hobbies, and priorities in my life. Also, the benefits from being here in the UK, I realized that I'm really good, for example, in making relationship, making public relationship, and also I discovered myself as a good a tourist guide and I can do logistics support to groups. I can't say it's 100% positive experience. It has ups and downs. I think before, I was like a disable from practicing normal life, really, I mean this, I was disabled to examine the life around me. But when I come here, I know that what I am good at, what I'm not good at.
P9m	I feel like ... I wouldn't say what I was doing was wrong or what I was practicing was wrong, but I say it's a different perspective. Now, I feel I'm a better person, than I was before Britain. Being religious or more religious before coming here, it wasn't a choice. It was how the community is. You just move ahead with the same, through the same direction that the community goes through. When I came here, I changed a lot of things, because I had the chance to develop my own perspective I don't see that contradicts with what I was before. I think so. I'm not completely different person. I'm still the same person, but I'm more advanced person, I think. In my ways of thinking, analyzing things, critical way of thinking. It's a development, rather than a change.

The participants believed they developed themselves in many ways, such as self-understanding, sense of self and self realisation, as participant 2, for example, explained above. Living and studying in the UK exposes students to situations that require them to position themselves to cope with demands on the self in the UK. The development of I-positions is essential to navigate the student experience.

The new UK environment provided the participants with a dialogical space to develop their sense of self. They perceived self-improvement as comprising opportunities to learn and practise new things not available in the home country, as participants 2 and 3 indicated. They voiced a perceived conflict and tension which emerged from integrating between and into the host and home cultures. Although the participants found UK culture to be an opportunity for developing the self, several aspects of home cultural norms remained present in their selves, and this at times caused conflict and confusion which might shape Saudi students' identity negotiation in the UK, as participant 9 expressed above. The dynamic of new I-positions was an opportunity to highlight undiscovered dimensions within the self. In their interviews, participants perceived I- as I improved myself during study in the UK to have improved themselves in terms of well-being, education, relationships,

health, productivity etc. The main aspect of self-improvement involved the positioning of a new self image, self-love, self-respect and being a better person.

6.1.2 I- as having Saudi Arabian national identity

Four I-positions related to the meta position I- as having Saudi Arabian national identity were reported by the participants (see Table 6.3, below). It addresses the identity meanings (I-positions) established by the participants in their negotiation of experiences abroad. It illustrates a description of the contents of popular dialogical I- positions identified among the participants and represented a context for the analysis process. While each of these I-positions addresses a unique aspect of their experience, all the participants focus on what Saudi Arabian national identity positions meant to them, and how they came to negotiate their national identity and its meaning in the new environment. The meta position 'as unifying function' here put different positions together in order to make their organisation and mutual linkages become clear in the self, where it privileging one position over others in a given event 'as executive', facilitating the ability to stop habitual or automatic patterns, related to common positions, and give priority to new ones 'as liberating' (Hermans, 2014). see new proofreading

Positioning as expressed by the participants in the interview transcripts is grouped into four content elements. The first concern is the meaning of having a Saudi national identity, I- positions related to Saudi Arabian society and I- positions related to the participants' study experience in the UK; the second described I- positions of maintaining Saudi culture and how these intersect with I- positions of cultural norms, religion and family; and the third focuses on participants' dialoguing regarding being representatives of Saudi culture in the UK, which draws on the opportunities to showcase their national identity; and the fourth described I- positions of how others at home look at the participants after they are associated with UK culture and how these intersect with I- positions of family, friends and the home culture.

In this element, data are drawn from the responses given to interview questions relating to topics such as "What is the meaning of being a Saudi person for you before moving to the UK? And how did you feel about that?", "Do you feel you are a representative of Saudi culture or that you should be? If so, how do you do that?" and "How do you think others at home look at you as a Saudi person? How do you feel about that?" (see Appendix D-2).

Table 6.3 I-positions linked to I- as having Saudi Arabian national identity:

I-position	Number of participants co-constructing I-position
I- as keeping my national identity	9
I- as maintaining Saudi culture	10
I- as a representative of Saudi culture	11
I- as how I see people look at me at home	11

6.1.2.1 I- as keeping my national identity

Keeping one's national identity (I- as keeping my Saudi national identity) was significant national identification for most of the participants (9 in total), including participants who had been in the UK for more than three years, and up to five or even seven years for some of them. As making sense of their Saudi national identity was of considerable significance, they became aware of their Saudi identity as they moved outside the home country, and this awareness influenced their encounters with their new context. The participants explained that through experiences with their host culture, they began to identify some aspects of their home culture that they wanted to learn more about. It seems from the interviews that the participants first began to recognize themselves as Saudis during their study abroad experiences; and in doing so, they were able to identify dimensions of their national identity and then began to negotiate dimensions.

	I-position (I- as keeping my national identity) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P1f	Before coming because I was living in a community most people like 99% people around me they are Saudis so just I think you take it for granted you never think about how important is it or how do you feel, just your nationality, so it does not matter it's just a nationality that I have. That I think something we have been raised and we have been taught in the school the belonging, it's a good thing raised but we did not have the chance to show this proudness that I'm proud about my nationality because I'm living in a community that all the people around me are already Saudi. I was feeling that I am proud I mean when I travel around abroad like just for tourism for example when I went like to Germany and someone ask you where are you from I feel proud to say I am Saudi. I feel something inside me that like pressure me that I have to be proud that I am Saudi whatever the people think about Saudi Arabia or about any people who is holding this nationality. When I say that I am Saudi I feel more stronger, It is so strange but I really have this feeling.
P3f	I believe before that I, and I still believe, that I'm from strong country. Well-known country, let's say. Maybe this view changes a little bit when I came here. It's like any country in the world. Also, to be Saudi means to have strong Islamic values. Maybe before, I think before we don't have the clear idea about ourselves. We can't introduce ourselves really well before we come here. We didn't face that. We didn't face to introduce ourselves to others from different nationalities or different cultures. We started maybe to think about Islam. We invite them to Islam. We want them to behave like us. But nothing else.
P7m	A Saudi person is a conservative person. I'm Muslim for sure, but some ... it's really difficult to explain, but I'll try my best. A Saudi person is really conservative on his community or her community. And coming from a region where there is only one religion, same people all around the country. Same mentality, same culture, that is not good for when you move out of this region. You feel like you are in a comfortable zone when you are there. But the moment you get out of there, it's gone. You feel like you're lost. You're going from one planet to a different planet. 4. So being a Saudi is just you're isolated. You're isolated from the rest of the world.
P8f	I've always seen myself as a Muslim first, and then Saudi. Of course, I'm proud to be Saudi. That's a great country with great culture, and people there are very ... generous. Yeah. We have really good values. I've always seen myself as a Muslim first, and then comes your nationality or your identity. I've always been proud to be a Saudi. I guess in terms of living in a different country and a different culture I sort of stick to my, or I appreciate my roots, my values more because whenever the topic comes up I'm the person to talk about my country. It increased this self of I am Saudi, because the pressure that the people around me put in terms of you are from there, tell us about how life is. Back to your questions about being a represent.

Sort of people might force me to be a represent to my country. I guess this increased my feelings towards like, yes I am a Saudi.

When referring to I- as a Saudi, it was Saudi culture that the participants spoke about. This culture has a number of components, such as religion, life-style and traditional norms, but the important aspect was religion, this being a priority, as participants 7 and 8, for example, explained above. The participants gave their views on the characteristics of ordinary Saudis. Saudis were located as Muslims, generous and social. These characteristics may be in opposition to the participants' perceptions about UK culture, which was perceived as more solitary.

An issue mentioned by most participants was uncertainty over the meaning of their own national identity before exposing it to a different culture. The experience of exposure to an unfamiliar cultural context made the participants feel the differences between whom they are as Saudis, where they came from and what they believed in, and their new context in the UK.

Perceiving themselves as Saudis was a crucial component of their study abroad experience, as the participants realised that their Saudi national identity, in this situation, was essentially adaptable as a middle path of national identity to be negotiated by them. They negotiated to find a path to hold on to their sense of Saudi national identity while interacting with the new context via making room for others' perspectives. The participants constructed a character who is respectful of others, open-minded and willing to accept criticism of the home culture's role, as addressed earlier in the position of (I- as open-minded in the UK).

The participants often referred to Saudi Arabia as home, and their national identity of I- as Saudi turned out to be even more salient than when participants were negotiating their current position as international students in the UK. For a number of them, remaining in the UK for a substantial time period made them rethink and question their national identity. Therefore, the recognition of their national identity as Saudis was in a position central to each participant's study abroad experience. Even though with the willingness to experience change and to engage in new ways of thinking and new inter-actions, it was important to recognize that the participants had to have an understanding of the socially-embedded self that was the object of that potential change (and potential stability). Each of the participants began to recognize themselves more deeply as Saudis, as participant 3 indicated. On the one hand, wanting to 'keep' a national identity suggests stability. On the other hand, there were aspects of the identity that they would like to change and there were also aspects of their culture that they would not necessarily like to change, but would like to learn more about and, perhaps integrate that into their existing self-understanding and also their future self-practice and self-understanding. This demonstrated an interplay between stability and change.

Several participants discussed the Saudi meaning of belonging to a country of well-being that they were proud of. Their increased appreciation for their Saudi national identity was clear, as participants 1, 3 and 8 expressed identity.

6.1.2.2 I- as maintaining Saudi culture

Most of the participants (10 in total) raised the issue of maintaining their Saudi culture. The interviews showed that the cultural practices of the participants remained largely unchanged after entering the UK community. Many cultural norms and practices of their home culture, specifically religion, gender roles and traditional food and dress, continued to affect how they interacted when in the UK.

	I-position (I- as maintaining Saudi culture) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P1f	I have been changed but till now it so normal and I have been I did not change like in a different MJ or become like a very different personality or I think my family will be the honest people around me if they see that I have been changing like in a very different way they will tell me in my ,straight to my face. But I think till now the changing is very good and I do not think that there is like incompatible in me. I still have my values still keeping my religion keeping my values keeping my things that I believe my principals yea I do not think the changing in the basics like in a basics of the principles of the value. The principles and the value are till the same the things that I kept from Saudi with but I have been like just change the way of thinking that's all.
P3f	You know, at the same time, we make some changes, but in the same time, we try not to break or destroy the things that we have before. So we try to be with this society, to be accepted. You know, but some things, some ideas are not acceptable also for me to be more engaged in this society. I have just identity and religion belief that prevent me to go to these places. Or maybe I can't ...I can't trust also even myself if I go on this path, maybe something bad will happen. So I have some changes in my life, but it's not that, it's limited also by my own religion and cultural norms.
P6f	I was fighting with myself because I just feel like I'm in a direction I might be changed and I want to be stuck with my culture, with my Saudi culture. I don't want to be change for any ways. I don't want my stay here in UK, or the culture, or the way they are changing me for anything. I mean in negative part but it takes for me a while to understand what are my limits even though I'm being here in UK. What is my limitation, how I stuck with my beliefs, how I can interpret my beliefs to the other people like other friends from school. Non-Muslims to deliver what's my belief that is not allow me to 1,2,3...how to stuck with it, because sometimes they can affect me but I was like fighting myself at the beginning how to let nothing affect me because this is who I am. To keep my identity, as I said. To keep my identity and I don't want to be changing a lot. Then, yes, it takes for me a while to understand things.
P11m	In classes, I mean with women. Some of them want to come to hug, after we got to know each other but I had to tell them I'm not supposed to do that. I try to keep all the communication or greetings from distance. The good thing is that a lot of people are coming to understand why I am doing it. The thing is I did not have the time to explain it to some of them because some of them thought that's kind of a weird response. Now they expect me to hug them, because there's some Muslims and some people from the Middle East they hug, but for me I'd rather stick on my principles and what I believe in. I do really respect whatever they do but at the same time I need them to respect what I do. That doesn't mean that I don't respect them, I just ... This is my beliefs, and I don't want to do it.

The participants were international students seeking to achieve their academic goals in the UK and to return to the home country, but the temporary nature of their residence in the UK appeared to be influenced by their desire to maintain their Saudi identity and culture. Therefore, the inevitable return to the home country and home culture lifestyle required the retention and maintenance of their Saudi cultural identity throughout their sojourn experiences in the UK.

Each participants' quote above mentioned 'boundaries' in some way, boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They all implied that it would be possible to change, but they seemed to be making a choice regarding what they are prepared to do. In that sense, they were 'owning' the cultural boundaries of their homeland. In this case, there was authenticity in establishing particular boundaries because they can accept authorship of the socially-proscribed way of behaving.

The participants come to the UK with an identity partly derived from their religion and the unique cultural practices of their home country. During their stay, this identity is challenged by exposure to the culture of the new community. The extent to which this identity and associated cultural practices are maintained is of interest in understanding how they interact in the new community.

The interviews indicated that the participants' strong sense of Saudi cultural identity highlighted their need to maintain their Saudi cultural style of behaviour during their study sojourn. For example, participant 2 foregrounded an identity based on her cultural values and religion, and her response highlighted the importance of her keeping this identity. She accepted making some changes, but not neglecting the cultural norms she had before. For participant 1, the foundation of her values was her culture and religion, which she would not compromise. Similarly, participant 6 expressed the importance of maintaining her Saudi identity and values through this experience, as she said above, she would stick with her culture.

Maintenance of the home culture was evident with the continuation of cultural traditions. For these participants, their Saudi identity created a desire to maintain their cultural practices throughout their study sojourns. Participant 11 revealed how he had to tell female classmates that he was not supposed to hug them as he would rather stick to his principles and what he believed in. He prioritised cultural maintenance while interacting with the other gender in the new culture. Thus, the home culture identity may affect the participation of Saudi students in the UK by limiting their interaction.

It is clear that several aspects of Saudi culture continued in the new community and these aspects, in conjunction with a desire to maintain the home cultural identity, limited interaction. A strong sense of Saudi cultural identity coincided with a desire to maintain Saudi culture throughout their experiences abroad, even at the expense of opportunities for interaction in the new environment.

6.1.2.3 I- as a representative of Saudi culture

All of the participants (11 in total) voiced that living in the UK made them realise the importance of providing a positive view of Saudi culture in the UK. They stated that they made themselves positive exemplars of the home culture.

	I-position (I- as a representative of Saudi culture) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P3f	Yeah. I'm a representative for my culture, yeah. I can be a good representative. And I'm proud of that, yeah. I can be representative of my country in terms of I think I have at least. I have deep understanding about my culture, my identity, and the changes that happen in my country. So maybe my country is unique because it's well known country. In the head of the news always, So I think I have understanding about my identity and my culture and changes that have in my country that I can represent my country really well and defend if there is any bad stereotyping about it. In myself, as a person, every day I represent my country everywhere. Yeah, if someone ask me, "Where are you from? From Saudi Arabia?" And the information that I give people, also how I look, also, it's a way representing my culture.
P4m	I think at some events I have to act as a Saudi, at some events I have to represent myself as a Saudi, it's an idea came from our embassy where they send an email saying you are an ambassador of your country so I would take that as yes, we are the ambassadors and unfortunately we are, and I say unfortunately because we could see the generalizing and judging coming toward us by the amount of people coming here, studying English, and do the opposite of the stereotype of Saudi Arabia. So I think I'm trying to represent my country in some events by acting with the manners and behaviours of the country.
P8f	I feel that I need to sort of, not defend, but deliver a better image that's more representing the real life there, because sometimes in the news they make it very dark, women don't drive, women don't work. They are just sitting at home waiting for their Mahram. I feel that I have to show that no it's not that dark. Women there do have good lives actually.
P11m	I feel that I'm representing my country and my culture here. I don't know why but I feel the need to explain things to people, to just clarify the misconception that they have about the Saudi, either the culture, the country, even the government. I think it's not a choice whether I should or should not, because people will look at me as I'm a representative. Somehow, I'm representing the culture. The people have bias. Even though they all agree that they should not make generalization, we all do. And this is unfortunately the case, so I know that about people, so I try to be a good representative of the culture.

The participants when in the UK felt they were cultural representatives of their country of origin through their behaviour and cultural attendance in all aspects of their experience. The participants stated that their role was to give a positive portrayal of their home country's cultural norms. They felt that representations were often inadequate and inaccurate. The participants believed that people in the new culture were often subjected to negative portrayals of their home culture. They felt responsible and that they had no option but to challenge this misrepresentation behaviourally. To redress these misrepresentations, the participants assumed the role of positive representatives of the home culture.

The participants seemed to have in mind a constant awareness of representing the home culture through their behaviours. They seemed to pay close attention to their behaviour in the UK in order to give a positive impression of their culture. They believed their actions can be frequently taken as representing the entire home culture. They perceived that their behaviours were not conceived as merely personal but could be taken as representing the home culture in its entirety.

The participants engaged in discussions about their Saudi culture with the explicit desire of correcting misperceptions about it. Participants 3 and 11 positioned themselves to answer any questions in regard to their home culture to make sure it was presented positively.

The participants in the UK were keen to act as good representatives of Saudi culture; in the study, female participants often worked to dispel myths that they were oppressed, and they shared knowledge about the true tenets of their religion. For instance, participant 8 felt the responsibility to deliver a real image of the reality of Saudi females' lives.

It is normal in the home culture that participants who study abroad are told that they represent their religion and Saudi traditional norms. This burden forces them to maintain the Saudi cultural image so that it dominates their behaviours and attitudes in the host culture. Participant 4 was an example of this, he indicated receiving emails from his government to encourage him to represent the home country positively and be an ambassador for his country.

6.1.2.4 I- as how I see people look at me at home

All of the participants (11 in total) voiced I- as how I see people look at me at home. As illustrated in the following quotes, this position focuses on the participants' positions being perceived in an acceptable manner by others according to the home culture standards. This affected the participants' conformity with their home culture and sometimes brought a lot of criticism of their behaviour and views from their family, friends and the home society.

	I-position (I- as how I see people look at me at home) and examples of related voices' quotes:
P5m	I think I would say like there is positive and negative, the positive they always think that you gained a lot and you are so beneficial for society. And they kind of like prize you more than what you deserve. The negative side they're always like they are some things that you kind of like lost or the values that you had from that society and you just destroyed all that by the living there Just because of some ideas that sometimes you say or like just because a picture that you shared on the social media or something.

P6f	Some people, see me I changed to a bad way because I'm away from my traditional culture. Sometimes they feel I'm so open in their perspective, their view I'm being more open and sometimes I need to justify everything I did just to make them agree with me. Other people feel I have more power, more strength because the environment here make me that: independent. Being different than them so they not accept some people different than them. And other part, there's a different group of people they are so proud of me and how I'm changing myself. They say you are totally different but in a very good way, we like it. We like you at this state.
P9m	I think now, I hide a lot of my beliefs and understandings of things when I go back home but not here. There is a thinking gap between me and my family, for example. My family, for example, for few times, I was talking about things that considered- My parents, my sisters, my brothers. They don't understand I'm thinking, so I try to cope with them. I was down for a bit at the beginning but then I realized there's a gap definitely. The experience I had and the influence I had in my life is different from what they [parents and friends at home] had. They only see things from their perspective because of the influence they receive from limited sources. But, for me, I receive influences from unlimited resources. From everywhere, whether it's social media or TVs, or just mass media. Messages from the society around me, the UK. My friends in the UK. It's all influence, I think that changes you in some ways. You don't need to be as strict.
P10f	Actually, they consider me like a bad person in case they know what I'm doing here. Because they don't know that I'm not wearing hijab, so if they know that I'm not wearing hijab, I'm walking around and, living the life and traveling and ... It is like something so, so, so bad it's affecting even their honor and dignity. They won't allow me to come back because they feel like they consider the culture, what people they say more. They will just ask me to stay, whatever. Even if it's costs my study or my future or anything. Because in the country they care about culture, and they speak of people they say about them more than my future or what I want to be.

As noted earlier, the participants are international students who sought to achieve their educational goals in the UK and return to the home country. Therefore, the inevitable return to the home country and home culture lifestyle requires maintenance of the home culture while living in the UK.

The participants were part of their home culture but living in a host culture changed their perceptions and behaviours. While they still communicated with their family, friends and the home society, they found certain norms of the home culture frustrating, although these were cultural norms that the participants lived by before moving abroad. Saudi culture is a conservative one that makes it challenging for unfamiliar ideas to be accepted (Antal, 2001). Since knowledge and ideas transfer is a challenging process, it is to be expected that the participants would experience difficulties in positioning their ideas in the home culture, especially unfamiliar ideas developed in a different context.

The participants believed that they would not be able to transfer changes they had made while in the UK to their lives once back home country. They believed that the pressure from family, friends and society would prevent them integrating aspects of their sojourn experience.

Several participants seemed to be guarded as to their opinions to avoid others' criticism and judging. Participant 9 sought to avoid negative criticism about his identity reconstruction. He explained his fear of the intolerance of Saudi culture. He shared his experience of how he had to consider the receptivity of others to reduce misunderstanding his views. He believed this issue is associated with an observed gap in their mentality, as there is a gap between people who have never studied abroad and those who have. This makes a difference to whom to interact with openly and when to be careful about what to discuss.

The participants indicated earlier that they had a great amount of freedom in their study abroad experience. This freedom they gained in the UK was perceived positively and reflected in developing their identities. However, interacting with others from their own country had an effect upon freedom in their lives as it can make them feel restricted in their actions and opinions. Participant 10 shared how getting used to her lifestyle living in the UK and not wearing the Hijab affected her freedom, but she understood the cultural traditions of a society where she doesn't live without Hijab, as she used to in the UK.

The participants spoke about their feelings in regard to how others in the home culture understood them as students studying abroad. Several of them, for example participants 5 and 6, argued that others in the home culture perceived them positively in several aspects, such as gaining first-hand knowledge abroad yet at the same time they were negatively represented in the consciousness of people at home.

6.1.3 Identity negotiation processes among positions

In the previous part, the focus was on exploring the meanings (positions) of experience from the participants' perspectives. In particular, I-positions were related to (I- as a Saudi person in the UK) and (I- as having Saudi Arabian national identity) reported by the participants. They focused on what being a Saudi person in the UK means, how participants come to identify themselves in the new environment, and what identity positions mean to them. In addition, what Saudi Arabian national identity positions mean to the participants, and how they come to negotiate their national identity and its meaning in the new environment.

In this part, the analysis addresses the question of dialogical tension and conflict between I- position meanings and illustrates the ways in which tensions and conflict are negotiated. The process began with the a) identification of dialogical tensions in the whole data set, where the participants expressed their positionings, as there was significant tension between meanings related to their being in the UK, holding on to their national identity and the study abroad experience; b) in order to illustrate this dialogical tension that some participants felt, tension in one particular area expressed it better than in others; c) then, dialogical tension was developed in a case study format that was established based on each participant's narrative in terms of how he or she negotiated dialogical tension.

The analyses presented here are selected findings from each participant's transcript, reflecting a specific aspect of expressed conflict. Where the analysis of findings has moved to specific cases, portraits demonstrating the most crucial aspects of the analysis are presented for each participant. The narrative extracts are selected based on their importance during the analysis. The aim is to illustrate how the participants' identity takes shape amid the interplay of tensions and conflicting forces between and within I-positions, while navigating the new sociocultural context in the UK. The participants are accommodated in a process of positioning in which the positions meet in a process of negotiation, opposition, tension and conflict. Thus, a self emerges in which some voices agree or disagree with each other, leading to conflict.

The data set consisted of interviews with 11 participants. It was evident across the data set that the individuals were experiencing significant conflicts due to opposition and contradiction in their positions in a process of negotiation. It explicates 11 dialectical tensions that are at the core of the participants' identity negotiation (see Table 6.4). The analysis focuses on tensions expressed by the participants in their positionings. Through descriptions of these tensions, it illustrates how the participant positions, from the perspective of the participants themselves, interact with other aspects of identity.

Table 6.4 Participants' biographical information, topic areas of tensions:

	Age	Program of study	Length of time in UK	Topic areas of tensions
P1f	31	Ph.D.	2 years	Uncertainty of being in the UK vs. Enjoying a new life
P2f	30	Ph.D.	3 years	Different UK meaning of look and dress vs Saudi meaning of look and dress
P3f	33	Ph.D.	7 years	Becoming conscious of being a Saudi vs Uncertainty over being a Saudi after coming to the UK
P4m	25	Bachelor	5 years	A need to change vs I feel like a stranger back home
P5m	31	Ph.D.	1 years	Independent study style in the UK vs. Home study style
P6f	30	Ph.D.	4 years	Acting similarly to the people around me vs Being isolated
P7m	30	Ph.D.	2 years	Saudi male interacting with the Saudi opposite gender vs Coming from a segregated culture
P8f	33	Ph.D.	4 years	How I see people in the UK look at me vs. I as a Saudi Arabian person
P9m	30	Ph.D.	10 years	How I see people at home look at me vs How I became a Saudi in the UK
P10f	35	MSc	2 years	Representative of Saudi culture vs Receiving criticism from Saudis
P11m	28	MSc	1 years	different UK meaning of being a Muslim vs Saudi meaning of being a Muslim

Participant #1 (Uncertainty of being in the UK vs Enjoying a new life)

Participant 1 is a female in the age group 30–34 years (divorced without children), who is pursuing a PhD. She had been in the UK for two years at the time of the interview, and it was her first experience of living abroad, apart from visiting some countries as a tourist.

She engaged in a dialogue between her 'I as having uncertainty over being in the UK' and 'I as enjoying a new life' identity positions, see Table 6.5. Participant 1 spoke about her 'I-as having uncertainty being in the UK' position to express how she perceived herself in an unfamiliar context that she could not make sense of.

Table 6.5 Participant 1's I- position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
I wasn't totally aware about what's, it was you were under anesthesia, so I was not like fully conscious about what's going on. so I remember even at that time I told to my friend that I am feeling very confused that am I a student or am tourist here, because in the first two weeks I was just enjoying the time here and I was discovering the city I'm going to the Uni just for one hour chatting with my friends and going back home so I wasn't like fully in that situation. Generally I can say there were bad days, bad days I was feeling lost I was feeling super afraid and I think lost is the most word that can explain my situation at that time I was totally lost because I wasn't understanding exactly what's going on I wasn't understanding even the basic things about how to get into the bus and ask for a ticket I did not know how buy from the supermarket. I hate myself at that moment because I do not know. When I came here I was like I am totally lost and I was feeling like a child who is following his mum everywhere.	I -as having uncertainty of being in the UK	I-as enjoying a new life

Before entering the UK, the participant expected to have an enjoyable experience based on the idea of travelling to study abroad, but she experienced tension between the reality that she experienced and what was anticipated in her mind. It seems that she, unconsciously, linked the idea of travelling to study abroad and having an enjoyable times; however, she described her experience of entering a new life as a conflicted and internally challenging process. She felt regret and self-blame.

Feelings of uncertainty emerged when she moved abroad into an unfamiliar cultural context for her. The participant found the transition process she had anticipated to be normal was in fact confused when it came to navigating both socially and academically in the new culture. This uncertainty led the participant to experience a threat to her understanding of the self. This generated several aspects of uncertainty as she interacted for the first time with UK culture, including navigating a new education system and academic behaviour, and the UK lifestyle.

When she needed to figure out basic life tasks, for example, using public transport, an absence of understanding cultural differences led her to feel uncertainty in the new

environment. Starting to navigate the new country resulted in uncertainty, due to situations that she had never experienced before in her home culture. Everything was as a challenge when she first arrived, and repositioning the self emerged as a key challenge when outside the home culture context.

The participant described her experience of conflict during the first days, using powerful terms such as unaware, under anaesthesia, unconscious, confused, afraid and feeling lost. These terms clearly showed a great amount of tension that can involve dangers of disorganisation, uncertainty, confusion and fragmentation in/of the self.

Participant #2 (Different UK meaning of look and dress vs Saudi meaning of look and dress)

Participant 2 is a single female in the age group 30-34 years who is pursuing a PhD. She had been in the UK for three years at the time of the interview, and it was her first experience of travelling to live and study abroad.

She engaged in a dialogue between her 'I- as the UK's different meaning of look and dress' and 'I as Saudi's meaning of look and dress' identity positions, see Table 6.6. The participant's 'I- as the UK different meaning of look and dress' position showed the negotiation of personal appearance as tension. The participant experienced this due to the traditional Saudi Arabian form of the Hijab, which holds significance in representing the home culture and religion.

Table 6.6 Participant's 2 I- position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
Of course, I dress differently. In Saudi Arabia, I have to wear Abaya, here I can wear modest clothes, not necessarily Abaya. How it makes me feel, actually I don't have a problem with it because I know that when I go back, I have to wear Abaya again but at least I made up my mind to wear different colours when I go back home not black ones, but I want to wear different colours. To be honest, I want to do this because it makes me feel better and it's a way of challenging the society because I believe that we need to change something. When I go back I could wear a black one but I want to wear different colours because I feel there's no reason not wear different colours.	I-as different UK meaning of look and dress	I-as Saudi meaning of look and dress

Before entering the UK, the participant used to dress in an Abaya, which is a plain, loose over-garment, basically a robe-like dress. It is a long, usually black, cloak covering the entire body, with a scarf covering the head called Hijab. However, in the UK, she shifted from a black Abaya to a Hijab with the option of not covering her facial features. The participant faced repositioning of her personal appearance, traditional clothes and

religious appearance with Hijab. The visibility of her status as a Saudi female student, with her marked traditional clothes, emerged as a conflict.

The participant's remarks showed that the changes she made to the way she wore the Hijab happened during her stay in the UK. She mentions a new way of wearing her Hijab, saying she now wears modest clothes in different colours but not the traditional black Hijab (Abaya) to make it easier for her to communicate with others in the UK. This new style of Hijab showed how she changed the way she wore the Hijab to look more liberal. The idea of embracing a more modern style than the traditional Hijab is unique to her in order to present a modern appearance.

The participant copes with conflict by finding a balance between following the home culture and religious norms with regard to wearing her Hijab on the one hand, and the desire not to look traditional on the other. Thus, by changing from wearing her Hijab in a more traditional way, the participant's new Hijab style may give her a more modern and acceptable appearance. Therefore, she mentioned that she felt comfortable with the new style, especially as she was the person making decisions without any pressure from her family and culture. This alteration illustrated that the new headscarf style had a positive impact and increased her self-esteem since, as she pointed out, she felt more comfortable. Also, she admitted that the new style of Hijab was temporary, she will return to the Saudi style of Hijab (Abaya) once she goes home.

This conflictual process may continue as the participant plans to keep the new style of Hijab when she re-enters the home country. The participant repositioned herself to the UK's new meaning of look and dress that was reflected in more convenience (it made her feel better she said) and it would be a challenge to revert to the Saudi meaning of look and dress. At home the participant will be in conflict with the Saudi Arabian traditional form of the Hijab (black Abaya), which holds importance in representing her home culture.

Participant #3 (Becoming conscious of being a Saudi vs Uncertainty over being a Saudi after coming to the UK)

Participant 3 is a female in the age group 30-34 years (divorced with a child). She obtained a master's degree and was now pursuing a PhD. She had been in the UK for seven years at the time of the interview, and it was her first experience of travelling to live and study abroad.

The participant engaged in a dialogue between her 'I- as becoming conscious of being a Saudi' and 'I- as uncertainty of being a Saudi after coming to the UK' identity positions, see Table 6.7. The participant's 'I- as becoming conscious of being a Saudi' position illustrated the negotiation involved in being a Saudi person in the UK as tension.

Table 6.7 Participant's 3 I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
I think before I didn't have a clear idea about myself. I couldn't introduce myself really well before I came here. I didn't face that. I didn't face to introduce myself to others from different nationalities or different cultures. I started maybe to think about Islam. I invited them to Islam. I wanted them to behave like us. But nothing else.	I-as becoming conscious of being a Saudi	I- as having uncertainty over being a Saudi after coming to the UK

The participant indicated that living in her home culture did not give her space to identify her position as a Saudi person. From her perspective, she had no insight into the meaning of I- as a Saudi person before entering the UK, as living in her homogenised society did not require her to generate meanings of being a Saudi person. The negotiation of Saudi identity positions was not part of identity demands in her dialogical self, thus there was no need for new meanings to arise and provide new insights for the participant to expand her thoughts and perspective.

For the participant, having to introduce herself in terms of where she was from, which did not arise prior to studying abroad, became a path for her to reflect on and enact her national identity. The participant reported that this realisation originated from her experience of exposure to the new context as she kept insisting that she was Saudi in her sojourn in the UK. The conflict she experienced led to the emergence of her Saudi identity. Thus, identity tension eventually led to enhancing her Saudi identity.

Her experience of identity challenges led to a need to distinguish herself as a Saudi person and mark her difference from others in the UK. At the same time, due to the conflict in her identity positions, she started to feel more conscious of being a Saudi person. For her, self-reflection was not the only key to intercultural awareness, it was also important to make sense of herself, using tools for repositioning the self. The UK environment, rich in international and intercultural comparisons, enabled the participant to reflect on her Saudi national identity and culture, as seen in the extracts.

For her, the act of negotiation and comparing to significant others in the new context was further extended beyond borders in the interpersonal communication context during the study abroad experience. As a result, the boundaries of what it means to be Saudi were drawn and redrawn through her contact with the UK context. In particular, the inconsistencies between (I- as Saudi and I- as Saudi in the UK) identity positions led to conflict episodes in study abroad situations.

Participant #4 (A need to change vs I feel like a stranger back home)

Participant 4 is a single male in the age group 25-29 years, who is pursuing a bachelor's degree. He had been in the UK for five years at the time of the interview, and it was his first experience of travelling to live and study abroad.

The participant engaged in a dialogue between his 'I- as I need to change' and 'I- as feeling like a stranger back home' identity positions, see Table 6.8. The participant's 'I- as I need to change' position illustrated the negotiation of being a Saudi person in the UK as tension. The voices showed the impact that the experience of being in the UK had on the participant's identity identification. When it comes to the participant's identity positions, a variety of negotiation tensions were evident as the participant introduced changes related to his identity identification.

Table 6.8 Participant's 4 I-position of tension and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
I would say my identity had been changing since 2013 until now, it's still changing because every time I face a new situation, a new thing that's not familiar to me and I need to change to adjust myself to the situation or adjust myself to the environment of the U.K. so I would say that my experience in the U.K. has been rich with a lot of experience, a lot of things that have changed my identity to even now when I go back to Saudi Arabia I feel stranger, which is like funny. In Saudi Arabia, they see me a different, they always ask me why do you think this or that? They always try to explore my opinion about many things, like for example when they had the new system of taxes and the new system of opening to the world, and they've had a lot of questions. And it happened when I went back, a month ago. I find it very interesting because they always try to figure out what is my point of view of that and why would I have this point of view. They look at me as I have lived the life that might be coming in the future of Saudi Arabia.	I- as I need to change	I- as I feel like a stranger back home

The result of living in a multicultural environment is that the participant experienced a need to make changes and showed a great deal of change over time and contexts. These changes ranged from very superficial ones such as daily habits to major ones such as shifts in identity positions. The participant reported identity demands to live and study in the UK including voices of awareness of the need to make changes and have a new self-image. Being in the UK entailed the participant becoming accustomed to the UK culture's norms, and this had an impact on the participant's identity. Therefore, the participant addressed the need for change he perceived in himself since coming to the UK and, for him, the most profound outcome of his attempt to engage meaningfully in the environment in which he lived was his identity reconstruction in response to the identity demands in the new environment.

The participant's identity was called into question by change; the transition into a distinctly unfamiliar role during acculturation often contrasted with that adopted at home, creating conflict. This explains what occurred during the transition process when the participant encountered situations that undermined his previously perceived and valued identity, which is located at the core of the self. Transition to a new identity demands a process of repositioning, which can establish tensions among the desire to maintain the structure of the self and to reconstruct new patterns in keeping with the changed positions.

The participant voiced that upon changing homes, there was no return to the old self because of the experience of negotiating different ways of thinking and living; for him, it was necessary to reconstruct his identity and such a profound repositioning led him to identify himself as being different from those around him and also, at the same time, to feel that he was positioned by others as different, a 'stranger'. He felt different from others around him at home and he felt he was treated differently. It seemed as though Saudis saw him as the 'stranger within'. That is, they ask for his opinion because they can trust him. Saudis may see him as having a different way of looking at things (potentially anyway), but that they also know that he will appreciate the traditional Saudi way of looking at the same thing. In a way, he represented both an independent view, but also a traditional view. Perhaps this is where positive change will be made, from those 'trusted strangers within' who have experienced life beyond Saudi culture.

Although the participant may change or re-position some aspects of his identity positions, he may do so in order to manage his intercultural interaction rather than as a result of a long-term change to his identity as he plans to return to the home culture, and he considers that in the home culture context he will not be perceived as a stranger. In this case, the participant may encounter difficulties in negotiating his positions since his behaviours may contradict with his identity positions in the UK, and this could result in conflict.

Participant #5 (Independent study style in the UK vs Home study style)

Participant 5 is a single male in the age group 30-34 years who is pursuing a PhD degree. He has been in the UK for one year at the time of the interview, and it was his second experience of travelling to study abroad as he studied for a master's degree in the US.

The participant engaged in a dialogue between his 'I- as independent study style in the UK' and 'I- as home study style' identity positions, see Table 6.9. The participant's 'I- as independent study style' position explains the negotiation of being in an unfamiliar education environment for the first time, and interaction with a supervisory team during academic activities was an unfamiliar experience, causing conflict.

Table 6.9 Participant's 5 I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
...Let's say how to deal with the supervisor. It was like different, I mean here they deal with me as a professional, like they totally independent like they, and this level was like kind of, is different to me even I don't have this trust while I'm working and they do give me this trust while I'm a student. They force me to be that person is not like an optional thing. That the way they deal with me like in the beginning that I come with the mentality that I'm a student so they will be supporting me but here, no like they force me to be independent to do things by myself like the way that I think is right not the way that they think is right. Then I can discuss if I want to discuss how is that right or wrong but, the initial action is from me. Which I use to the difference is like the initial action to be from them then I continue but, here I initiate the action and they can help me in the way.	I- as independent study style in the UK	I- as home study style

The participant indicated that his conflict was attributed to the effect of the Saudi educational system that emphasises students' reproduction of knowledge rather than encouraging an independent style of education. Coming from such a background and an education system that undervalues independence, it may be a challenge to adapt to the demands of the UK education system that reinforces an independent, analytical approach to knowledge. Therefore, being familiar with the pattern of a different educational style for a long time may explain why he found aspects of the academic style conflicted in the new context.

In the home country, the educational system is teacher-centred; the participant tends to listen to the teacher as an expert and speak only if asked. In the UK it is different, education is a student-centred process; students' opinion are sought by lecturers who may frown on students who are reluctant to speak out. This independent learning style was perceived to be a significant aspect of the UK educational system, a facet of academic life for which the participant was not prepared before arrival. The contrasting academic norms in the two cultures were held responsible for the participant's academic behaviour conflicting with the new culture. Such behavioural conflict is attributable to distinctions in the cultural aspect of power distance.

Studying in the UK posed a major conflict for the participant whose previous education differed from what he confronted in the new culture, and the significance of being in the UK higher education system reflected in the participant's progress criteria academically. There was a recognition that the participant's socialisation in another academic environment had formed his attitude toward education, making it a complex experience to cope with either the supervision or in the new context. As the self construes and reconstrues due to exposure to the new cultural norms, that requires the participant to challenge familiar and accepted assumptions, so the educational style in the home country

was questioned by the participant, as illustrated in his tension when coping with a new and conflicting style. The participant was thus subjected to a collision between two contradictory cultural styles of education, and academic challenges emerged due to the need to negotiate the pull between 'reverential reproduction' and argumentation.

The participant, who comes from a tutor-centred, passive educational system, undoubtedly expects his lecturers to be experts in his study field and to be the only source of his learning. According to Saudi educational norms, education is based on the model of an apprenticeship, comprising many years of memorisation and tutelage. As this participant is from Saudi culture that looks for certainty in learning and expects his lecturers to answer all of his questions, exposure to a different approach that encourages an independent approach to knowledge acquisition obviously had the effect of asserting a preference for a dependent educational style.

To perform successfully in an unfamiliar education system, understanding unfamiliar learning norms is the only viable to success. Nevertheless, the principle of independent learning that is deeply ingrained in UK academic norms is one that the participant struggled to accommodate, resulting in experiencing conflict. The participant clarified that the cultural style of independent study that is familiar in UK higher education was different for him: it is unlikely that academic norms will be changed to assimilate the internationalization of UK higher education, thus a burden may continue to be placed on the participant to cope with tension.

Participant #6 (Acting similarly to the people around me vs Being isolated)

Participant 6 is a single female in the age group 30-34 years who is pursuing a PhD. She had been in the UK for four years at the time of the interview, and it was her first experience of living abroad, apart from visiting some countries as a tourist.

She engaged in a dialogue between her 'I- as acting similarly to the people around me' and 'I- as being isolated' identity positions, see Table 6.10. The participant's 'I- as acting similarly to the people around me' position is an example of conflict negotiation that relates to the physical contact between the participant and individuals of the opposite gender. The physical contact that the participant reported was related to shaking hands, an action which is prohibited between males and females in her culture and religion.

Table 6.10 Participant's 6 I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
My early experience was regret myself a lot when I do it (shake hands with men). Let's say at the university when one of the supervisors wants to say hello and shake hands. I do it but I blame myself all day. At the same time, I don't have the strength or the power to say no, I can't because I don't want to lose them. I was	I- as acting similarly to the people around me	I- as being isolated

regretting myself but then I got used to it. I think yes this is how it's going far in fact for myself was impact me negatively. Starting at the beginning for a whole weekend was thinking, I can't think about how to change, how to say to them to find a one way like sentence to say it in a very professional way, but I don't have this power to say it and then regret myself for one day then forget. I feel like I'm not accepting it for myself, I'm forcing myself to do it just to make people comfortable with me not changing me. so, this affect people, their view toward me, their perspective toward me. They like me because they thought I'm a different Saudi. They said I'm open-minded because I go with them and I like that, because they like me, because I want them to engage with me.		

The participant's attitude to engaging in interaction with the opposite gender in academia varied and ranged from a willingness to experience this kind of interaction on the one hand, to resisting any occasion that might lead to experiencing interaction with the opposite gender on the other, in order to avoid any physical communication (shaking hands with men, as she mentioned).

Shaking hands with men constituted a boundary that the participant did not wish to cross. The participant tried to avoid any form of physical interaction with male individuals since she feared contradicting her beliefs. Therefore, she did not wish to experience shaking hands with male individuals. She did not completely reject interacting with male individuals, but she preferred not to have physical interaction by shaking hands with them. This example showed that being a Saudi female in the UK can be a possible space of conflict due to the contradictory norms between the home and host cultures.

Feeling uncomfortable about shaking hands with a male supervisor showed the participant's concerns about putting her beliefs at risk. The concern in the participant's remarks about shaking hand with males seem to be related to the religious teachings she follows that prohibit her interacting physically with individuals of the opposite gender.

It seems that what shapes her knowledge and attitudes toward experiencing interaction with individuals of the opposite gender reflects her understanding of the stance of her culture and religion on the interactions between males and females from her previous experience. She mentioned that she does not wish anything to change her beliefs on this matter. It seems that the belief that she refers to is her religious perspective, which requires that any interaction between males and females must be kept to a minimum, and done only when necessary, such as interacting in academia. Therefore, she seems to prefer to keep her religious perspective on this type of interaction unchanged.

The participant did not seem to be able to make her discomfort obvious to her male supervisor, because she seems to have judged it inappropriate to ask him to not greet her physically by shaking hands because she does not shake hands with men. This

experience showed the conflict between the participant's experience of interacting with men in academia, as she came to the understanding that her interactions with males were merely for academic purposes. She was confronted with the choice of whether to shake hands with her supervisor and feel guilty or avoid shaking his hand. When she did shake his hand, she experienced tension because her belief system did not support an attitude of openness to the other gender. Therefore, she could not avoid this tension, but she pretended to accept this kind of physical contact with men in order to avoid rejection.

The participant expressed her feelings of guilt for shaking hands with men when she was in a situation where she felt that it would have been inappropriate if she had refused to do so. She did not manage the dysfunction that arose from such interactions nor did she showed her attitude towards shaking hands with a male individual, an act which caused her conflict so that it even stopped her from sleeping at night. She indicated that she experienced tension because she felt that she had done something that went against her understanding of her culture and religion. The participant showed conflict in both her belief and practice concerning shaking hands compared to when she was at home. This type of conflict occurred as a result of her intercultural communication experiences in the UK. The participant's conflict is supported by her belief that she needs to fit in with others. She is, therefore, suspending her own beliefs concerning shaking hands and she changes her view concerning shaking hands, reflecting her attitude, since she is not acting within her understanding of culture and religion.

Although this cultural norm was a core component of her behaviour in the home culture, she struggled to identify how she associated with this cultural norm in the UK cultural context, where such a norm is not a core aspect of behavioural practice. The participant's desire to fit in with the new culture and her desire to maintain home cultural norms appear to demonstrate that she is negotiating her identity positions in two cultures, UK academic culture and the home culture.

Participant #7 (Saudi male interacting with the Saudi opposite gender vs Coming from a segregated culture)

Participant 7 is a married male in the age group 30-34 years who is pursuing a PhD. He had been in the UK for two years at the time of the interview, and it was his second experience of traveling to study abroad as he studied for a master's degree in the US.

He engaged in a dialogue between his 'I- as a Saudi male interacting with the Saudi opposite gender' and 'I- as coming from a segregated culture' identity positions, see Table 6.11. The participant's 'I- as a Saudi male interacting with the Saudi opposite gender' position showed the conflict that relates to the meaning of being a Saudi male and how this Saudi male is interacting with Saudi individuals of the opposite gender.

Table 6.11 Participant's 7 I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
The way how I look at (Saudi) woman and I kind of have barriers and I'm shy to have conversations and just basic talks. So yeah, before it was a bit awkward to be honest. As I told you I'm a bit shy. I feel like I'm talking to ... The way how we grow up is just this is how we grow up. So when you live like 30, 40 years on one way, and then you're asking why you have that attitude when you talk to woman, well this is how I grow up. So before I come here, it was impossible. So I've never experienced that in Saudi Arabia. Never, until the moment. But here, in the beginning it was ... It's not difficult. It's a bit weird, I don't know, a weird feeling. A weird feeling. Saudi females, I think we both man and woman have problems. I try to be ... From woman's side, this is what I realized based on my short experience. Maybe it's different, but this is how I see it. From woman perspective, they're looking at men as, "Oh, you want to date me. You are a playboy, and I'm not talking to you. Don't even try to talk to me." This is how they look. So they would rather go talk to a UK man. That's the only reason that I see. When you grow up in a country where they tell you that this is wrong. Schools are segregated. Malls are segregated.	I- as a Saudi male interacting with the Saudi opposite gender	I- as coming from a segregated culture

Interactions between Saudi men and women are at much higher levels while living and studying in the UK. As both of them lived separately for the entirety of their lives while in Saudi Arabia, the participant had never experienced spending time with members of the opposite gender. The raised interaction level led the participant to experience a great deal regarding cross-gender interaction, particularly with Saudi women in the UK. One of the primary issues is feeling deficient in terms of verbal communication, or any kind of communication. It's as though the participants want interactions to be effective, smooth, and silent in terms of not having to involve any negotiation or conversation about what is going on. This is not peculiar to Saudi culture but might be universal. However, it looks as though the gender relations in Saudi make this a particular problem.

For the participant, living in the UK meant adjusting his norms to interact with females who, men have been led to believe, are a threat from whom they must be shielded for the whole of their lives. The interaction he had had with Saudi women in the UK had also made him question the beliefs originally taught to him in the home country as he recognised his own experiences were divorced from those teachings.

The participant experienced conflict in adjusting to a social environment that is extremely different and might be, in some ways, contradictory to his home social environment in terms of interaction with the opposite gender, particularly Saudi females. His cultural norms entailed avoiding interaction with Saudi females as the observance of conservative Saudi culture promotes gender segregation and discourages interaction between the genders.

Although sharing the same religious beliefs, language and country of origin, the participant identified Saudi individuals from the opposite gender as others who could not be dealt with due to the limited interactions between the genders in Saudi Arabia. All of these experiences showed the inconsistencies and conflicts of the participant's identification with regard to concepts of interaction with the opposite gender outside the home country context.

The participant perceived interaction with Saudi individuals from the opposite gender as challenging. He was probably willing to interact with the other Saudi gender, but the participant was unfamiliar with mixed interaction experiences between Saudi males and females in the home culture. This situation created a sense of confusion, conflict and uncertainty in dealing with the other Saudi gender. He further explained that the strict demarcation between the genders is attributed to the meaning of gender interaction between males and females that he acquired in the home culture, segregated schools and malls, as illustrated in his quotes, through socialization. The participant also gave an explanation of the absence of interaction between Saudi males and females that is related to Saudi women's fears of being negatively judged in terms of maintaining the norms of the home culture and behaving properly according to their culture.

The interactions between him and the opposite gender seemed to be a tense area. What made it a tense area, as the participant illustrated, was that both Saudi males and females come from a specific cultural system, but they were working together under unfamiliar new cultural conditions in the UK, thus leading the participant to suffer confusion when interacting with the opposite Saudi gender in accordance with new cultural norms. Conflict pertaining to the gender issue is associated with Saudi students' sociocultural, contextual backgrounds. The interaction between the participant and Saudi females seemed to be a gender issue, premised on what participants had previously experienced. The participant was thus experiencing living abroad challenges at the same time as gender-related cultural ones.

Participant #8 (How I see people in the UK look at me vs. I as a Saudi Arabian person)

Participant 8 is a single female in the age group 30–34 years who is pursuing a PhD. She has been in the UK for four years at the time of the interview, and it is her first experience of traveling to live and study abroad.

She engaged in a dialogue between her 'I- as how I see people in the UK look at me' and 'I- as a Saudi Arabian person' identity positions, see Table 6.12. The participant's 'I- as how I see people in the UK look at me' position showed the negotiation of her feelings and thoughts regarding how people in the new culture understand her as a Saudi person. In this position, the participant's tension about her personal appearance was related to visible cultural symbols as a Saudi female wearing Hijab.

Table 6.12 Participant 8's I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
I learned a lot about the lifestyle of for example people who live in Britain. I feel that ... I understand that I'm different, especially for example being a Muslim and wearing a hijab. At the same time, I don't see this difference as a barrier to engage with others. I can slowly build that sort of relationship. Especially for me for example, being someone who wears a hijab. I feel at the beginning that people are a bit afraid. Not afraid, but they keep a distance. Because they don't understand what is this. This is different for them. Right now, that's completely the opposite. They know me, they engage with me. I break that sort of barrier that was there in the beginning.	I- as how I see people in the UK look at me	I- as a Saudi Arabian person

The participant's look and way of dressing affected her understanding of herself and the perspective of others towards her looks, and it was identified as a tension area when interacting with others. The visibility of her status as a Saudi person with her marked traditional clothes emerged as conflict; it was identified by the participant that she had concerns about her personal appearance and markers of difference in the study environment.

The participant was concerned about how others might react to her appearance as a Saudi and a Muslim. In a process of comparison which involved awareness of the status of one's identity positions, she had a view of herself as being foreign in terms of being a Saudi and a Muslim. Since this involved how she understands her relation to others, her identity positions as a Saudi student were not the only way available for her to identify herself in comparison to others. However, she chose to focus on aspects that distinguished her from others and identified her as different.

How she identified herself did not only depend on what she understood about herself in comparison to others, her self-recognition drew upon her expectations of how people in the UK would look at her. She was concerned about how others perceived her.

The participant illustrated that her self-appearance as a Saudi woman wearing Hijab as portrayed in the consciousness of people around her in the UK was negative and often overly associated with conservatism. Therefore, the way she was generalised created feelings of conflict and placed her in a position of tension within the new context, as the participant indicated that this representation caused her to be viewed by people of the UK as different. This stereotype reflected the participant's identity positions. Stereotyping her negatively widened the segregation between her and others, but to address this conflict, she tried over time to build relations with others.

The participant found it hard to become engaged in the UK because she perceived herself as different. For her, being in the UK and being a Saudi person were seen as conflicting identity positions. This representation positions her as different, forcing her to feel one identity position conflict with the other, as the two positions are represented as

incompatible. Such asymmetrical relations among positions in the self illustrate how feeling different can be reflected in the dialogical self, as indicated in her quote. It is a conflictual interaction between the participant's positions in relation to the host culture and repositioning her identity.

The participant indicated that she experienced an unwelcoming attitude from others in the new culture as people kept their distance from her and showed less willingness to interact with her. There was uncertainty about the participant's relationship with others, with the participant stating that she did not feel welcome. The participant was concerned about her form of appearance, including her traditional clothes and religious appearance. She spoke about how her look influenced the behaviour of others towards her. As a female participant, she experienced this conflict due to the traditional Saudi Arabian form of Hijab, which has significance in representing her home culture and religion.

Experiencing conflict caused her to have reduced interaction due to raised concerns about how others might react to her self-appearance. This was exemplified in her concern over others' reaction to her wearing hijab and the realisation that she is a Muslim. Coming from a conservative Saudi Arabian culture that is unfamiliar to her new academic community might limit the extent to which she can accept the new norms of social practice and attributes of interaction.

The participant was aware of the conflict as regards interaction over her self-appearance in academia. She moved beyond that statement to voice how others felt about her. She believed that people in the new culture were often subjected to negative portrayals of her and her cultural background. She felt tension and that she had no option but to behaviourally challenge this stereotype. The participant stated that she had a willingness to move beyond this barrier and initiate communication with others in the UK. Although the participant illustrated how she made assumptions about how others perceived her, which shaped part of her attitude towards people in the UK, this view had changed during interactions with others while she was in the study environment. The participant's self-appearance seems to be a barrier with people who don't know her yet but once they get to know who she really is, self-appearance becomes relatively 'invisible' or at least loses its power to convey who she is in totality.

Participant #9 (How I see people at home look at me vs How I became a Saudi in the UK)

Participant 9 is a married male in the age group 30–34 years who is pursuing a PhD. He had been in the UK for ten years at the time of the interview, and it was his first experience of travelling to live and study abroad.

He engaged in a dialogue between his 'I- as how I see people at home look at me' and 'I- as how I became a Saudi in the UK' identity positions, see Table 6.13. The participant's 'I- as how I see people at home look at me' position showed the negotiation of re-entering and visiting the home country as an area of tension. In this position, the participant wanted

to change the dominant cultural patterns by presenting his thoughts and views towards cultural difference. He explained his willingness to share his views, but his fears of being misunderstood restricted him from participating. He faced this conflict by maintaining his image for society but meeting society's expectations stirred up conflict for the participant because failing can affect his relationships negatively.

Table 6.13 Participant 9's I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
I was down for a bit at the beginning but then I realized there's a gap definitely. The experience I had and the influence I had in my life is different from what they [parents and friends at home] had. They only see things from their perspective because of the influence they receive from limited sources. But, for me, I receive influences from unlimited resources. From everywhere, whether it's social media or TVs, or just mass media. Messages from the society around me, the UK. My friends in the UK. It's all influence, I think that changes you in some ways. You don't need to be as strict. The first time I came back home, people were very picky. They would look at what I do and they would criticize it. They think I'm British or something like that. That affected me and affected the way I show things around. I'm not changing as a person there, but I try to hide things from them.... At the beginning, they were looking at me as a person who is not showing the reality of himself. He's showing off, for example, but after that they got used to me. I was discussing with a friend of mine, I told him that I don't like it when people say I changed. He still remembers that, he still talks about it when I go back home and he laughs at me. Because, I was trying to hide things, from my society. The way I think, the way I ... For example: When I go back home, I try immediately to shift from the UK way of life to the Saudi way of life. The way I speak with people, I try my best to speak with them the same way I was before. He was asking me why do you do that? I told him, people just criticize me for changing, as a person. I try to hide that. I didn't like it.	I- as how I see people at home look at me	I- as how I became a Saudi in the UK

The participant raised a significant worry when it came to people's perceptions of him at home. He seemed to be concerned that any changes he might introduce would result in negative responses from other people in the home country. He illustrated the negotiation of conflicts presented by family or friends at home that he experienced when he introduced changes to his practices. Therefore, he made the decision that he should not exhibit any changes in his world view and practices in order to avoid remarks from others in the home country.

The participant was aware of his cross-cultural background but showed a level of behaviour that can fit the culture's standard image in the UK. The adaptive changes that occurred to the participant in his time abroad happened through his continuing interaction with the sociocultural environment of the host country. However, the level of adaptation the participant developed in the host country affected how he readapted into and contacted his home country. The participant shaped new unique identity positions that

were affecting how he belonged in both the host and home cultures. Therefore, there was a shift in identity positions and how his newly transformed identity was shaped.

When the participant visited his home country from time to time, he experienced significantly different perspectives toward several of the cultural system's practices. These differences in perspectives were found to be associated with feelings of conflict, although he accepted these behaviours before his study abroad experience. These changed values resulted from his exposure and adjustment to the host culture in the UK.

It was fundamental to understand the participant's changes that developed in the host culture and how these influenced his re-entering experience in his home environment. The pre-entry characteristics of the participant illustrated the effect of cross-cultural experience and the changes and conflicts that developed his identity positions. The participant had lived all his life in a culture that has conservative values where religion, for example, had a primary role in his decisions. The structure of Saudi society affected how he behaved. Entering a new unfamiliar culture where the participant was exposed to different values made him observe a different lifestyle and adapt to it as a result. The participant's quotes showed that he noticed changes in his identity that life and education in the host country helped shape.

Addressing these characteristics helped broaden the understanding of the impact these changes had on the participant's experience. The participant indicated that the cultural exposure he encountered in his overseas study experience changed his identity vis-à-vis different life aspects. The participant shared how his study abroad experience had an effect on him and how being part of a new culture made him appreciate things differently. He perceived these changes as part of his study abroad experience and cultural exposure, which were a significant part of his identity development abroad. He explained the effect that his study abroad experience had on him and how he perceived himself and the changes that occurred to his identity. He also indicated the level of awareness he had of his identity changes and his anticipation of the extent of challenges that probably negatively affect him on re-entering his home country.

The participant illustrated the effect of the absence of freedom on his life as it made him feel restricted in his actions and opinions. This restriction was still considered to be an ongoing conflict for him, even after visiting the home country and returning there. Upon his re-entry, the participant compared the host country and the home country. He described space in his host country as a sphere that let him develop the self, but this development had a negative effect on the participant functioning in his home culture upon re-entry.

After gaining a great amount of freedom during his study abroad experience, coming back to his own country affected his mobility and ability to participate equally in life there. The freedom he gained abroad reformed his character and was perceived positively concerning how it developed his identity. In his narrative, he shared how getting used to

the lifestyle abroad affected him in the home country, but understanding the cultural traditions-based society where he doesn't live independently like he used to, he lives with his parents and friends, made him adjust his behaviour. Although the participant some of his freedom and independence and perceived this in a negative way, he found a way to deal with these challenges by accepting some of the limitations the culture imposed on his mobility. He explained how he preferred to hide some of his functional identity changes in Saudi Arabia.

The participant found his own way to negotiate this lifestyle. This negotiation was shown to be associated with his understanding that it is part of the cultural structure of his home country. He shared his conflict over reaching a negotiating point, but his awareness of being part of this culture helped him reposition himself. Also, the participant's negotiation was linked to minimizing his feeling uncomfortable with his parents, friends and society's system.

The participant explained that part of the challenge was being ruled by societal traditions and not being able to go against what was appropriate in his eyes. He explained how it was very difficult for him to have an opinion opposing that of his family and society. This challenge brought a lot of criticism of the participant's behaviour and views from his parents, friends and society. In addition, a lack of support played a role in how the participant negotiated with this area of conflict due to not having enough support from parents and friends. The participant explained that his parents and friends noticed changes in him, and they did not encourage his development, which affected the participant negatively.

The participant faced difficult challenges in re-adapting, especially considering the complexity of the Saudi environment. The sociocultural system demonstrated that the participant faced challenges in dealing with the society's existing cultural system and ideologies. This explained the cultural effect on the participant and the influence it had on his interactions and development. Also, these challenges were reflected in how he behaved and his beliefs were restricted. The participant was mostly dissatisfied with the existing sociocultural system and perceived these challenges with criticism. However, the participant had to find his own unique way to balance his home environment and the cultural challenges facing him. The participant shared his own unique way to reduce conflict by using avoidance as a technique to deal with society. He indicated that his unwillingness to present a particular behaviour to be accepted led him to use avoidance. This illustrated how the participant set boundaries to avoid any negative comment or criticism about his changed identity.

Participant #10 (Representative of Saudi culture vs Receiving criticism from Saudis)

Participant 10 is a female in the age group 35–39 years (divorced with one child) pursuing a master's degree. She had been in the UK for two years at the time of the interview, and it was her first experience of travelling to live and study abroad.

She engaged in a dialogue between her 'I as a representative of Saudi culture' and 'I as receiving criticism from Saudis' identity positions, see Table 6.14. The participant's 'I as a representative of Saudi culture' position showed the negotiation of personal appearance as an area of tension. This I- position of the participant's Saudi national identification came across during the interview as the participant felt that her duty, besides her studies, was to represent Saudi Arabia in the most positive way but she experienced conflict due to abandoning the traditional Saudi Arabian form of Hijab which has significance in representing the home culture and religion.

Table 6.14 Participant's 10 I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
If you think about good Saudi culture, yeah, I am. But not all of our cultures are good. I'm representing for example, good manner of Arabian like being so generous and helping others and being so helpful, okay that's me. But to think of people and keep judging people, which is part of our country, no. I'm not that person. Or trying to cover myself (wear Hijab), I'm not that person too. I represent Saudi Arabia in the eyes of my British friends or foreign friends. But I think to Saudi people I don't represent that. They feel like I'm not like them. They keep judging me, so I feel like not so much, they don't accept me as who I am. Those who don't like to be with me, I'm not forcing myself to engage with them, they want you to act and talk the way they like, they used to say that.	I- as a representative of Saudi culture	I- as receiving criticisms from Saudis

The participant was willing to be a cultural representative of her country of origin through her cultural attendance in all aspects of her experience in the UK. The participant stated that her role was to convey a positive portrayal of the home country's cultural norms. She felt responsible and that she had no option but to assume the role of a positive representative of the home culture.

The participant carefully considered what people in the UK culture thought about her Saudi culture. She seemed to have in mind a constant awareness of representing the home culture through her behaviour. She seemed to be paying close attention to her behaviour in the UK in order to leave a positive impression about her culture through being, for example, generous and helping others. She perceived that her behaviour was not perceived as merely personal but could be taken as representing the home culture. She believed that when she is in the UK, she has to care about how British people look at her Saudi culture. She believed she has a responsibility to deliver a positive image of her country abroad.

Although the participant reported that her British friends perceived her as a representative of Saudi culture, she experienced not being accepted as a representative of Saudi culture in the eyes of other Saudis in the UK. The participant reported receiving criticism over her facial appearance, modern clothes and religious beliefs and practices, as she decided not to wear the traditional Saudi Arabian form of Hijab, which has significance in representing

her home culture and religion, while in the UK. Being a representative of Saudi culture in the eyes of the British but not in the eyes of Saudis involved her in an area of tension where she experienced conflict over identifying herself in the host culture.

The participant's self appearance affected her understanding of herself among Saudis in the new culture as well as the behaviour of other Saudis towards her. It was difficult for the participant to interact with other Saudis because of how she herself looked. The visibility of her status as a Saudi female without the marked traditional Saudi Hijab emerged as conflict; it was identified by the participant that she had concerns over her personal appearance and markers as they were different from other Saudis. This suggests that her interactions with other people imply that there's a limited number of acceptable ways of presenting oneself as a Saudi (whereas there may be a greater number of acceptable ways of presenting oneself as a UK citizen). Therefore the 'horizons of meaning' for being Saudi maybe relatively limited in terms of traditional understandings of how a woman should present herself.

The participant was acutely aware of the influence of her interaction on her self appearance. She experienced not being accepted by other Saudis in the new culture. She was worried about the negative perceptions of Saudis in the UK that she encountered and was concerned that she was not be welcomed by them due to her western personal appearance. The participant moved beyond that statement to voice how other Saudis felt about her and she stated that she attempted to avoid other Saudis who rejected her self appearance, which did not comply with the home culture code of dress. Perceptions of expected rejection from other Saudis negatively impacted on the participant's sense of herself in the UK environment and interaction with her Saudi group.

Despite being a Saudi citizen, the participant did not feel that she identified herself like other Saudis as a result of her adoption of a UK code of dress and discarding the Hijab since coming to the UK. Therefore, being a Saudi, but feeling she did not fit in with other Saudis at the same time, led to her experiencing conflict over her national identification. This conflict mainly came from the fact that she did not wear the Hijab that defines Saudi women; also, her conflict over her Saudi identification seemed to come from her life and study in the UK, although having being brought up in Saudi Arabia.

Participant #11 (different UK meaning of being a Muslim vs Saudi meaning of being a Muslim)

Participant 11 is a married male in the age group 25–29 years who is pursuing a master's degree. He had been in the UK for a year at the time of the interview, and it was his second experience of travelling to study abroad as he studied for a bachelor's degree in the US.

He engaged in a dialogue between his 'I- as the different UK meaning of Muslim' and 'I- as the Saudi meaning of being a Muslim' identity positions, see Table 6.15. The participant's 'I- as the different UK meaning of being a Muslim' position showed the negotiation of religious practice as an area of tension. This position considers the account

the participant gave of his religious practice in the UK. It highlights the change the participant made to his practice, which he perceived as contradicting his religion.

Table 6.15 Participant's 11 I-position of tensions and related voices' quotes:

Voices	I-Position	Vs.
In terms of dealing in classes (with female classmate), I tried to, because we're obligated and a part of our religion, culture, we're not supposed to touch the hand of woman and that was really challenging for me, especially when you start a program with 300 students. For one or two weeks they trying to get to know each other and the first thing they do, they start shaking hands. For me it was really difficult. I did not want to shake hands, but I ended up doing it. I mean with women. Even since some of them want to come to hug, after we got to know each other but I had to tell them I'm not supposed to do that. I try to keep all the communication or greetings from distance. The thing is I did not have the time to explain it to some of them because some of them thought that's kind of a weird response after I shook hand with them the first time. Now they expect me to hug them, because there's some people from the Middle East they hug and they do what they do, but for me I'd rather stick on my principles and what I believe in. I do really respect whatever they do but at the same time I need them to respect what I do. And the same thing I feel about my wife, and she feels the same thing about me. She doesn't want me to engage with the females in term of shaking hands or hugs. At the same time this is how I feel about my wife when she's studying English in the English centre.	I- as different UK meaning of being a Muslim	I- as Saudi meaning of being a Muslim

The I- as the Saudi meaning of religion was presented in the participant's quote when speaking about shaking hands with women or even hugging them. This presence of religion in the participant's quote showed how his religious identification was challenged as a result of his intercultural contact with his classmates. The participant's religious identification was challenged because he shook hands with women, which led him to criticize himself, since he follows some teachings of Islam but not all. The challenge is obvious in his quote as he tries to act like a Saudi Muslim but at the same time engage with his social network in the UK. Shaking hands with women and hugging them, which is forbidden under the Saudi version of Islam, seems to lead to him experiencing tension, as he is a Muslim and thus has to follow all Islamic teachings.

This was forced upon him as a result of his cultural communication with his non-Muslim classmates in the UK. Otherwise, this tension would probably not have emerged in his consciousness, as he views religion as a way of identifying himself and as a doctrine whose teachings he must follow. From his perspective, the participant was making his own meaning of what it means to be a Saudi Muslim, alongside accepting that identification as something that is from his culture.

The participant's male classmates did not seem to encounter the same challenge as him, even though they shook hands with female friends and hugged them, and this runs counter to Saudi Islamic teachings on gender interaction. The participant seemed to experience

confusion, while his male classmates did not. This relates to the participant's interpretation of Islamic teachings. Unlike them, his male classmates did not consider shaking hands with females and hugging them as a violation of any cultural teachings. They were, therefore, more confident and comfortable about shaking hands with females and hugging them in the UK. But the participant saw shaking hands with females and hugging them as violations of Islamic teachings and, therefore, he believed that he should not shake hands with females or even hug them. The two sides constructed their meanings differently from each other, depending on their cultural backgrounds. This explains that the tension the participant experienced resulted from engaging in experiences and events that conflicted with his beliefs.

The participant started negotiating his options over some religious practices. Therefore, he started shaking hands with women in order to communicate positively. His decision seemed to come from his willingness to socialise with his female classmates. He shook hands with women as he did not want to appear different from others. However, modifying his behaviour did not seem to come easily to the participant, since he expressed his feelings about shaking hands with women as he had not done this before. Here we see an illustration of the type of conflict that the participant experienced when he modified his interactions.

Although the explanation that shaking hands with women and hugging them is prohibited by his religion may seem irrational to other classmates, it does not seem so for him, as he does not believe in shaking hands with women. However, he ended up doing so and gave a reason from his religious beliefs for that. He is, therefore, suspending his own beliefs concerning shaking hands with women and this change does not necessarily reflect an attitude of openness to others since he is not acting within his understanding of his religion as he showed conflict when it comes to his religious beliefs.

The participant's quotes showed that the changes he made to both the way he interacted with female classmates and his way of greeting women by shaking hands happened during his study in the UK as an international student. This showed how he changed the way he greets female classmates in order to look more liberal and avoid any confrontations that he might encounter. To make it easier for him to communicate with female individuals, he tried to find a compromise between following religious teachings with regard to shaking hands with female classmates on the one hand, and the desire not to look weird on the other. That is not to say that the participant did not have an attitude of willingness to seek out chances to engage in communication. Rather, he did not seem to show an attitude of openness as regards relativizing his own beliefs and meanings. Therefore, his trying out new and unfamiliar experiences was done to enable him to manage his communication while, at the same time, admitting that he did not approve of this altered behaviour (shaking hands with women). This conflict explains the feelings of guilt that accompanied his quotes. This willingness to modify his behaviour while in the UK may be related to a desire to give a positive impression of himself.

6.2 Discussion

For Saudi students in the UK, questions about their national identity are inevitable. Given the large and growing percentage of Saudi students in the UK today, the study of multiple identity positions is clearly important, both for a specific understanding of processes of identity change and development as well as to learn more about how these students experience and adapt to their new circumstances. How do Saudi students position themselves with regard to their national, ethnic and religious positions in the UK? These questions of study abroad experience and multiple identities are at the heart of cross-cultural research into how the growing number of international students in the UK can become integrated into their new society. The purpose of this study is to explore what influence cultural change, through study abroad, has on the dialogical self, and what occurs within the dialogical self when participants negotiate their identity positions.

Study abroad experience for Saudi students clearly offers a new multicultural space in the UK which poses challenges for these students in a culture unfamiliar to them. The process of moving to and studying in the UK has an influence on the identity positions of the participants because identity positions are constantly reconstructed by the self and in relation to others (Hermans, 2012). It was expected that cultural changes would have an influence on the participants and that this would be expressed through negotiating identity positions and resultant processes to reposition the dialogical self. This is evidenced in the participants relaying narratives of negotiation concerning their identities.

As the participants experienced challenges in their cultural contact, the ongoing viability of their identities was brought into question due to the great changes from the environment surrounding them in the UK; and consequently, the question of whom they are culturally was brought into focus by the dialogical self. This current study aims to explore the ways in which I- positions are negotiated by participants now living in a multicultural space and what identity positions are suggested that might resolve the gap in the self and in relation to others.

The dialogical self is a self-organizing system that maintains the self's continuity via real-time dynamic processes by negotiating I- positions, repositioning and minimizing or amplifying certain aspects to resolve uncertainties and combat conflict in the self (O'Sullivan-Lago, & de Abreu, 2010). In this study, the dialogical self of the participants was engaged in negotiating I- positions and repositioning processes, which were dependent on and prompted by the participants' goals of studying abroad and their preferred future.

The question of how the multi-voiced dialogical self negotiates stability when living and studying in an unfamiliar culture is one that can be answered by referring to the findings of the current study. The two meta I- positions 'I- as a Saudi person in the UK' and 'I- as having Saudi national identity' indicated why certain I- positions take central stage as 'meta I- positions' in the self can be the key to understanding this process. The main findings

from this study suggest that the negotiation of identity positions among Saudi students in the UK reflects a number of diverse processes, with meaning-making I-positions associated with location, culture, religion, gender, academia and family. The participants underwent contextually embedded acculturation experiences which (before coming to the UK and after arriving in the UK) were negotiated through the home culture and host culture interactions.

It is apparent from the current findings that exposure to cultural change prompted a reaction in the participants, resulting in a reconstruction in the dialogical self. They reconstructed certain I- positions in the dialogical self to achieve stability. This reconstruction frames identity dialogues and provides stability to the self via linking it to the new environment (Andreouli, 2013). The participants did not abandon their cultural identity positions in the new context, though they were willing to develop other more stable I- positions to negotiate identity demands. The participants initially found it difficult, challenging and uncertain; and thus they engaged in active processes of negotiation in order to resolve it. Relating to the new culture, the participants in this study developed particular I- positions co-constructed by their social and cultural positions in order to control tensions and maintain continuity, despite changing social and cultural positions.

The findings also indicated that the participants' responses in the dialogical self were sense-making moves toward identity demands. Reconstruction and positioning were inherently strategic as the participants suggested several I- positions that would restore continuity in the self.

Exploring what the participants were doing to resolve their identity demands through repositioning offers insights into processes of the dialogical self. This included identity negotiation processes among positions and also dialogical tensions among I-positionings and the ways in which tensions are negotiated.

The findings from the current study illustrated key areas of dialogical self experience of Saudi students. The first area illustrated experiences of being a Saudi person in the UK. The second area illustrated experiences of being a Saudi in the UK but having Saudi national identity. The third area illustrated the dialogical tensions and identity negotiations involved in being a Saudi person in the UK versus having Saudi national identity.

The following part discusses the research questions and shows how they have been addressed according to the findings of Study Two. The first research question asked: What identity meanings do Saudi Arabian students establish when dialoguing about their home country and their UK study experience? The second research question asked: How are self systems organized in the congruence and tension between I-positions? These two questions are answered in light of the first and second areas of experience that build upon being I- as a Saudi person in the UK and I- as a Saudi in the UK having Saudi national identity.

The third research question asked: In what ways are identity meanings acknowledged and negotiated when there are conflicts among I-positions? This question was asked in light of the third area of experience that builds on the dialogical tensions and identity negotiations involved in being a Saudi person in the UK versus having a Saudi national identity (dialogical tensions and identity negotiations).

I- as a Saudi in the UK

The participants in this study reconstructed certain aspects of their identity positions. The 'I- as a Saudi person in the UK' meta I- position of the participants expressed their integration into a new unfamiliar culture. The participants dynamically repositioned their identities in the dialogical self in correspondence to their identity demands in the new environment and desired future. They developed the I-position of 'being a Saudi in the UK' to reconstruct themselves in new positions. The development of this position was based on their identity demands and future orientation. They wished to live and study in the UK and therefore connect with this new environment. The development of this position was evidence of their intent to assimilate into UK culture in order to successfully adapt.

A number of I-positions are associated with "I-as a Saudi person in the UK". These I-positions highlight the ongoing identity negotiations of Saudi students as they navigate UK culture. While each of these I-positions addresses a different aspect of experience, they all focus on what being a Saudi person in the UK is like and how Saudi students come to identify themselves in the new environment.

The participants address positions related to perceived changes in their identity I-positions as a result of the study abroad experience such as the I- as I improved myself position and meanings regarding UK society, as well as meanings associated with their international student experience. Also, I-as having freedom, independence and my voice heard meanings and the ways these intersect with the meanings of family and the home culture. The I-as interacting within a multicultural context position focuses on participants' dialoguing about interacting with others in the UK, whether from the same nationality group or the opposite gender. Also, meanings associated with comparisons with their previous life in Saudi Arabia.

Drawing on the participant interviews, the findings of this study showed that depending on one's study abroad path one can attach different meanings to one's identity. Self-improvement, open-mindedness, having freedom and independence and interacting within a multicultural context are among other ideas contained within the dialogical self as regards UK culture for Saudi students who live and study in the UK. Therefore, for the dialogical self, identity negotiation is polyphasic and ambivalent, a finding also indicated by Andreouli (2013). As such, identity negotiation can be construed by the participants in this study as both a boost and an identity threat as it threatens the participant's self-system organization (Andreouli, 2013). At the same time, participating in UK society can also be related to ideas of interaction, acceptance and open-mindedness. Identity

negotiations then become a complex negotiation between the identity I- positions of changing or maintaining a participant's identity.

The identity negotiation process is further complicated by the fact that living in an unfamiliar dominant society can give rise to constraints as to which identity I- positions can be taken on and how participants come to identify their identities in the new society and what these identity positions mean to them. This context constructs levels of difference and similarity and delineates domains of identity I- positions that can be developed (Andreouli, 2013).

In the set of findings, the dominant dialogical self of what it means to be a Saudi person in the UK was evidenced to have an influence on the patterns of dialogue that are created between identity I- positions. As an example, maintaining two distinct identities and at the same time looking for an adapted Saudi-UK identity can be a response to the identity demands of mainstream UK society. It has been argued that I- positions of cultural difference determine what dialogues are needed to fit in with the new environment (Andreouli, 2013), which means there are different dialogue expectations towards different types of positions depending on how they are negotiated. On this point, identity positions can result in incompatibilities and conflict may be experienced. For example, with the participants in this study coming from Saudi Arabia and being seen as "different", this can be the underlying cause of conflicts between identity positions. Nevertheless, as much as the participants are restricted by such dialogues, there is a level of negotiation in resolving these dialogues. The participants negotiate identity demands through privileging some I- positions in several domains or situations during their experiences, by reconstructing identity I- positions.

While this meta I- position has focused on the identity position of I- as a Saudi in the UK, the findings also indicated that the dialogical self does not just involve having two cultural identities or aspects of these. It included other unique aspects of identity positions. For example, "being different", "acting similarly to people in the UK", "the meaning of being a Muslim" and "contact between the genders" became prominent identity I- positions for a number of the participants and played a core role in how they negotiated their identity positions in the UK. This showed that the dialogical self has complex processes that accommodate multiple 'significant others' (e.g. other gender, colleagues, supervisors etc.) and dialogues of multiple I- positions (e.g. gender role, religion, tradition, freedom etc.). Positioning the self within these dialogues then becomes a multifaceted process, taking place in multiple domains of living and studying in the UK, which cannot be reduced to states of separation, marginalisation, integration or assimilation.

I- as having Saudi national identity:

The meaning of being Saudi emphasized a predominant orientation and commitment to Saudi culture and the perception of Saudi people as friendly, and willing to share their culture. The participants' commitment to Saudi culture norms raised conflicts for them

related to gender issues, interaction with others and independence or dependence, for example.

As expected, the negative perception of Saudi culture as a conservative religious country was a significant issue for these participants. Sojourners undergo an identity conflict when abroad as an outcome of experiencing a negative image that others might have of their national culture (Brown, & Brown, 2013).

Living and studying outside their country of origin raised the possibility of multiple identity positions salient to Saudi students. Given that a considerable number of participants preferred to maintain some attachment to their country of origin at the same time that they made a connection to their country of residence, understanding Saudi students' identities required insights into the process of negotiating multiple identities.

Saudi students not only encountered the challenge of navigating a new society but also the question of how strongly to maintain a sense of their ethnic group belonging. Therefore, these dual objectives involved conflict as regards reconciling individuals' sense of belonging and commitment and combining contrasting world views and normative expectations. Thus, conflict resulted when the participants experienced their ethnic and host national identities as incompatible or in opposition to each other (Hirsh & Kang, 2016).

In the current study, the 'I- as having Saudi Arabian national identity' meta I- position was a reconstruction in its attempt to reduce and control cultural change emphasizing maintenance of the home cultural identity positions. The maintenance of their Saudi Arabian national identity allowed stress over their intention to return to their home country. In this way, the participants could reconstruct the settings of identity positions and live at a distance from the original culture temporarily as international students in the UK.

For the Saudi students in this study, their multicultural dialogue included endorsing Saudi cultural preservation through cultural amalgamation. And simultaneously, the participants in the UK preserved their ethnic culture by maintaining several aspects of Saudi culture and representations of this culture and the home country. These aspects of practice helped them to maintain their Saudi identity while embracing the environment of UK culture. The Saudi cultural stream promoted cultural preservation and reconstruction during intercultural exposure; thus, Saudi students were affected by the ways in which their identities were approved of by dominant societal discourses around the significance of preserving a Saudi cultural identity. A number of these participants not only chose to preserve their Saudi culture identity but also sought to share it with others.

The meta I- position of I- as having Saudi national identity is a primary cultural identification among Saudi students in the current study. It appears to be part of the negotiation process of study abroad acculturation. Particularly, study abroad acculturation is a dialogical space, and it has been found negotiable as to whether Saudi national identity remains prominent over UK cultural identity.

As shown in the data set, through acculturation, cultural aspects (cultural I- positions) formerly taken for granted are reconstructed into cultural identity positions in order to respond to the dynamics of identity position demands, threats or maintenance (Schwartz, Vignoles, Brown, & Zagefka., 2014). Therefore, cultural identity positions formation were affected by the level to which the participants exposed to study abroad acculturation experienced their culture positions as being threatened by the presence of the new culture in the UK; such a threat may result in raising one's ethnic-cultural orientation (Ozer, Bertelsen, Singla, & Schwartz., 2017). Also, this identity position formation process was affected by the social power differences between cultural identity positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Thus, the participants appeared to be responding to what was perceived as an identity position threat by maintaining and endorsing their Saudi national identity. However, the participants appeared to be involved in a negotiation concerning the impact of acculturation dialogues. As a Saudi national identity has multiple aspects, it may be endorsed along with a UK cultural identity and openness to new cultural identity positions. This complex process of negotiation cultural identity development happened through dialogue between various I-positions and inner-other positions in the self, reflecting contextual impact.

Dialogical tensions and identity negotiations

The question of dialogical tensions among I-positionings and discussion of the ways in which these tensions are negotiated was expressed by the participants, as there was ongoing tension among meanings related to their being in the UK and holding on to their national identity in the context of their study abroad experience. Dialogical tensions were presented in a case study format that was established based on each participant's narrative in terms of how he or she negotiated dialogical tension.

Through participation in cultural contexts, Saudi students experienced an acculturation process with multiple cultural I- positions. These I- positions guided students to expand their position repertoire and generate experiences of significant complexity and contradiction. This cultural multivoicedness required self negotiations between contradictory I-positions. Exposure to acculturation while sojourning outside the home country appeared to suggest incompatible positions and tensional meanings.

As dialogical tension was selected based on its significance as expressed by the participants in their positionings, it illustrated how the participants' identity took shape amid the interplay of tensions and conflicting forces between and within I-positions while navigating the new sociocultural context. The participants were involved in a process of positioning in which positions meet in processes of negotiation, opposition, tension and conflict. Thus, a self emerges in which some voices agree or disagree with each other, leading to conflict.

It was evident across the data set that individuals were experiencing great conflict due to the contradictions in their positions in the process of negotiation. This explicated the dialectical tensions at the core of the participants' identity negotiations. Through descriptions of these tensions, it was illustrated how participant positions, from the perspective of the participants themselves, interacted with other aspects of identity.

It was found that identity I- positions appeared in atemporal (e.g. before coming to the UK and afterwards) and spatial (the UK and Saudi Arabia) dimensions in the self narratives of all of those participating in this study. In this study, it was observed that experiences in the past must have a proper place in one's self-narrative (e.g. being a Muslim, wearing Hijab, not mixing in society). Therefore, this dialogue – between I-positions, such as I- as Saudi coming from Saudi culture and I- as a Saudi living in the UK now – might help to acknowledge not only past experiences but also those happening in the present. This dialogue refers to the past in Saudi Arabia and the present in the UK – as far as multiple identity positions experiences are concerned. Thus, identity positions can be seen as accepting the multiple identities of both cultures, even though these identities positions showed contrasts or conflicts.

Several of the participants, even those who reported having studied abroad before, e.g. in the US, reported feeling uncertainty and confusion. The great diversity of cultural positions and considerable perceived distances between the traditional home culture and UK cultural streams can lead to uncertainty and instability, also the perception that one's traditional home culture is endangered (Hermans, 2015, Ozer, et al., 2017). These perceptions underlie many of the tensional meanings. This also was expressed by Colombian international students who reported feelings of uncertainty and confusion as a result of being away from their home country (Velez-Gomez, & Bell, 2018). In the identity negotiation processes among I- positions, an associated meaning related to the study abroad experience expressed by the participants in the current study and the Colombian students were feelings of uncertainty, confusion and not fitting into this new cultural setting. The tensions and conflicts among meanings that we identified in the data set (Table 6.1, Identity negotiation processes among positions) relate to the participants' Saudi identity I- position and the perceived differences between UK and Saudi cultures.

The data set illustrated a dialogically-based analysis of identity position processing that draws on dialogical self-theory principles, as demonstrated earlier. The analysis process addressed the conflicts and tensions expressed by the participants in their positionings, including when participants spontaneously approached the resolution of tension so that I-positions were not causing conflicts or tensions any more. In this regard, the analysis process of conflicts and tensions contributes to the Saudi student literature. As Study One's findings indicated, Saudi students experienced acculturation challenges, so it was significant to explore in more detail the validity of the findings and the patterns of tension experienced by Saudi students.

The findings from this study indicated that every participant's experience might include tensions for them but not others. It is not necessary to consider any participant as being generally more or less likely than others to negotiate identity tensions or to suggest resolutions for such tensions. Tensional meanings can be expressed by participants at some points in time, but these are not necessarily expressed as such by other participants, or even the same participants at other times. Also, tensions can have different levels and happen for various reasons. Also, tensions and conflicts among identity positions, more often referred to as ruptures, are not necessarily negative. Tensional meanings and ruptures may at some points suggest consequential development with far-reaching implications for the self. In fact, these are often regarded as the dynamics of dialogical self development reflecting identity reconstruction. Identity ruptures may represent an extended identity. It is the multiplicity of identities (Hermans, 2012) that repositions previously existing ones, while allowing certain potential dimensions for the future; thus, due to identity position ruptures, another dialogical voice becomes evident in self meaning positions. In this process of negotiation, another reconstructed meaning questions the existing identity position of being and promotes repositioning the self in relation to that other.

Drawing on dialogical tension analysis, the participants expressed evident tensions among meanings related to their study experience in the UK. Several cultural aspects associated with religion, gender issues such as female clothing and the interaction between genders were seen by the participants as conflictual. The participants had been strongly influenced by not only their home country meanings of, for example, Islam, look and dress and education system style, but also by the Islamic religious community in the UK; and also the liberal British culture and UK educational system generating multiple contradictory positions and tensional meanings. These aspects indicated the presence of cultural incompatibilities that can preclude integration, resulting in a degree of tension and confusion. The participants showed tensions among dialogical positions associated with their Saudi national identity and characteristics related to UK society. Several participants showed tensions that were ongoing among I-positions that offered resolutions to such tensions. Tensional meanings do not necessarily suggest resolutions or new ways of envisioning the self, they may remain as tensional meanings for periods of time. Also, other participants showed tensions with the resolutions offered to these dialogical tensions through promoting an identity synthesis of perceived incompatible positions, through development of their identity, through resulting hybridised and extended identities. Tension resolutions can be seen as the emergence of extended identity positions, as new meanings prompted by tensions. This is consistent with dialogical self theory holding that the self is an organized system. In this way, negotiations among I-positions are significant, and then also the ways in which identical and non-identical positions become organized in subsystems of the dialogical self (Herman, 2012). In this approach, the interpretation of identity associated meanings illustrated how identity processing occurs in terms of meanings that may be identical, or in ongoing tension, or where tension has prompted the rise of novel identity meanings and associated practices.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This final chapter concludes the research project by summarizing the key findings and describing how they are interrelated. In addition, it discusses the implications of the findings in terms of contemporary research on and the understanding of the acculturation experiences of Saudi students in the UK. Further, the limitations of this research project are presented and evaluated. Finally, it includes suggestions for potential areas of future research in acculturation experiences, identity negotiations and international Saudi students.

7.1 Summary of key findings

This research project included two (IPA) qualitative studies. The first study set out to answer three research questions about the acculturation experiences of Saudi international students in the UK. Key findings associated with each of these research questions are presented in the summary below.

RQ1: What are the experiences of moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian international students?

IPA analysis of eight semi-structured episodic interviews showed 14 themes relating to the acculturation experiences of Saudi international students in the UK. Based on Psychological Acculturation Theory from Berry (1997; 2011), the themes were located in two stages of transition. The first stage was before moving to the UK; and the second stage was arriving and living in the UK; a third major theme emerged in the data, which was the impact of change on self-development.

The findings confirmed the acculturation experiences reported in the literature by other international students, but in particular they addressed acculturation experiences that were very specific to the participants in the current study. While this study provide insights into acculturation processes and outcomes, it is presented together as illustrations of how and why factors such as religion, gender, and different educational system deserve more systematic attention in acculturation research. Religion and gender issues are at the core of acculturation process in the current research. This study provide insights into how dimensions of acculturation are assessed and the implications. This assisted in achieving a more nuanced understanding of how acculturation domains and dominant aspects of culture operate in the process of acculturation in the Saudi students group. new proofread

In the pre-moving stage, the participants addressed their motivation to study abroad, their anticipation and expectations about their imminent experience of life in the UK, and how their planning and motivations related to family structures, their gender and their political-ideational beliefs. The participants' motivations, anticipatory expectations and planning

process to move to study in the UK often orientated around cultural considerations of social norms, political values and societal behavioural norms.

The participants' core motivations were self-improvement, career development, knowledge and skills acquisition, and the experience of a new culture. The participants deliberately engaged in a transition to the UK both in order to improve their personal skills and competencies, but also to deploy those skills to improve the Saudi Arabian culture, economy and society upon their return home. The participants' motivations were both personal and social and they involved consideration of the future both for themselves as individuals and for their country, the KSA, in general.

RQ2: What are the experiences that Saudi Arabian international students report as challenges?

In the stage of Arrival and living in the UK, a range of challenges emerged from the IPA analysis. Some of these were specific to the participants in the current study, including issues such as gendered experience of female participants, representing the home culture and its religion, and gendered interaction. However, it also included a number of themes that were reflective of the wider literature relating to other international student groups including issues of homesickness, language barriers, personal and academic challenges, social and emotional support.

The participants discovered that the transition process was more challenging than they had anticipated. They had to merge socially and academically into a different cultural context that impacted on the participants' sense of self.

Acculturation experience in the UK was a uniquely exciting experience for the participants, with a range of challenges that students must overcome as they adapt to the UK's lifestyle. Most of these challenges stem from the deep-running cultural differences between the home and host cultures where acculturation dimensions such as religion and gender issues were the key factors influencing the acculturation process in the Saudi student group. However, the participants preferred to integrate and enmesh both the home and host cultures. They found it beneficial to take advantage of both cultures to achieve their goals associated with studying in the UK.

RQ3: What are the perceived consequences on Saudi Arabian international students' sense of self and identities in the UK?

A third major theme that emerged from the data was the impact of change and self-development. The participants' experience that self-development was invoked by studying in the UK was remarked on frequently, with the participants indicating that their very identities had changed.

Before moving to the UK, the participants anticipated that they would encounter a range of challenges arising from the different nature of UK culture compared to the home culture. However, they posited that the changes that happened within them had a positive impact. In terms of Change and awareness of self, the participants stated that they were subjected to identity changes in many aspects, such as self-confidence, independence, perceived competence, communication skills and value systems. They became more self-aware of their identity, becoming more skilled, and of changing their sociocultural perspective. The participants saw these changes as a core component of their study in the UK and reported that cultural exposure was an essential driver of their self-improvement, which enabled them to navigate effectively within the UK.

In terms of Learning and self-development, the participants perceived self-development in this context as comprising improvements to their lives in terms of well-being, education, knowledge, career, relationships, health and productivity. The main ambitions in terms of self-development included goal setting, fostering motivation, building on self-awareness, changing entrenched habits, and identifying personal values and beliefs by relating these to their home culture. However, the participants voiced a perceived conflict that emerged from integrating between and into both cultures. Although they found the new environment to be an opportunity for learning and developing the self, several aspects of home cultural norms remained present in their minds, and this at times caused internal schisms and confusion.

The second study set out to answer three research questions about understanding how Saudi students negotiate the demands of different identity positions and the various patterns of dialogue they may establish among divergent identity positions. Key findings associated with each of these research questions are presented in the summary below.

RQ1: What identity meanings do Saudi Arabian students establish when dialoguing about their home country and the UK study experience?

Analysing the participants' narratives by drawing on dialogical self theory illustrated that participants' identities, expressed in the acculturation experiences of Self, were made up of a multiplicity of positions that varied across space and time. These positions drew upon experiences of being a Saudi person living and studying in the UK.

Motivated by their goals of studying abroad, each participant's dialogical self was engaged in negotiating I-positions and repositioning processes. As they wished to study in the UK and therefore connect with this new environment, they established the I-position of I-as a Saudi in the UK to reconstruct themselves in new positions. This meta position consisted of a range of I-positions that showed the ongoing identity negotiations of Saudi students while they lived in the UK. All of these positions emphasised what being a Saudi person in the UK is like and how Saudi students come to identify themselves in the new environment.

Depending on the participants' study abroad path, they seemed to attach different meanings to their identity. Self-improvement, independence and interacting within a multicultural context were among other ideas contained within the dialogical self as regards UK culture for the participants in the current study.

In I-as having Saudi national identity, the participants reflected I-positions with a strong connection to the home culture, maintaining Saudi culture in the self and presenting it to others. The participants' narratives reflected I-positions related to people in previous contexts (how they see people looking at them at home). They negotiated positions related to perceived changes in their identity positions as a result of their study in the UK, such as becoming more aware of the home culture's dimensions, and how they negotiated these I-positions with others in their lives.

The position of being Saudi focused on a predominant orientation and commitment to Saudi cultural norms. However, the participants' commitment to their home culture raised conflicts for them that were associated with such issues as gender, interaction with others and independence or dependence.

RQ2: How are self systems organized in the congruence and tension between I-positions?

The findings showed how the multi-voiced dialogical self negotiated stability while the participants navigated UK culture through their meta I-positions: 'I-as a Saudi person in the UK' and 'I-as having Saudi national identity'. These I-positions indicated why certain I-positions took central stage as 'meta I-positions' in the self and can be the key to understanding this process.

The participants reconstructed certain I-positions in the dialogical self to achieve stability by linking it to the new environment. They did not abandon their cultural identity positions in the new context, although they were willing to develop other more stable I-positions to negotiate identity demands. The participants initially found these challenging and uncertain, so that guided them to engage in active processes of negotiation in order to resolve them. As for the new culture, the participants established particular I-positions co-constructed by their social and cultural positions in order to control tensions and maintain continuity, despite changing social and cultural positions.

The dominant dialogical self of what it means to be a Saudi student in the UK appeared to have an impact on the patterns of dialogue created between identity I-positions. Therefore, maintaining two unlike identities and at the same time seeking an assimilated Saudi-UK identity can be a response to the identity demands of the mainstream UK context. For instance, with the participants coming from Saudi Arabia and being seen as "different", this can be an underlying cause of conflicts between identity positions. However, as much as the participants were restricted by such dialogues, there was a level of negotiation in resolving these.

The 'I-as having Saudi Arabian national identity' meta I-position was a reconstruction in its attempt to reduce and control cultural change, emphasizing maintenance of the home cultural identity position. The maintenance of their Saudi Arabian national identity allowed stress on their intention to return to the home country. In this way, the participants could reconstruct the settings of identity positions and live at a distance from the original culture temporarily as international students. The participants responded to what was perceived as an identity position threat by maintaining and endorsing their Saudi national identity. However, they engaged in negotiation concerning the impact of acculturation dialogues.

RQ3: In what ways are identity meanings acknowledged and negotiated when there are conflicts among I-positions?

The participants faced an acculturation process with a number of cultural I-positions that made them expand their position repertoire and generate experiences of significant complexity and contradiction. This cultural multivoicedness required self-negotiations between conflict with or opposition to other I-positions.

Dialogical tension highlighted how the participants' identity took shape amid the interplay of tensions and conflicting forces between and within I-positions while navigating the UK sociocultural context. The participants were engaged in a process of positioning in which positions came together in processes of negotiation, opposition, tension and conflict. Therefore, a self emerged in which several voices agree or disagree with each other, leading to conflict.

The participants showed tensions among meanings associated with their study abroad. A number of cultural aspects associated with religion and gender issues were viewed by the participants as conflictual. They had been strongly affected by not only their home country meanings of Islam, look and dress and educational style for example, but also by the Islamic religious society in the UK; and also, the British culture and UK educational style prompted multiple contradictory positions and tensional meanings.

A number of participants showed tensions that were ongoing among I-positions that offered resolutions to those tensions. Tensional meanings do not necessarily suggest resolutions or new ways of envisioning the self, they may remain as tensional meanings for periods of time. Also, other participants showed tensions with the resolutions offered to these dialogical tensions through promoting an identity synthesis of perceived incompatible positions, through development of their identity, through resulting hybridised and extended identities. Tension resolutions were seen as the emergence of extended identity positions, as new meanings prompted by tensions consistent with dialogical self theory, holding that the self is an organized system.

7.2 Implications

This research addressed the experiences of Saudi international students in the UK. It focused on acculturation experiences and identity negotiation processes. The outcomes of this have several implications in terms of the acculturation experiences, identity negotiation, theoretical, methodological and educational implications and contributions of this study.

7.2.1 Implications in terms of acculturation experiences

The main implication of this work in terms of understanding the acculturation experiences of international Saudi students in the UK, in line with research elsewhere concerning the acculturation experiences of international students (Alqahtani, & Pfeffer, 2017; Ahmed, 2016; Shaw, 2009; Abdel Razek, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Heyn, 2013; Lefdahl-Davi, & Perrone-McGovern 2015; Melius, 2017; Orth, 2015; Sandekian et al., 2015), is that there is a paucity of literature on acculturation theory and Saudi students. That said, the few existing papers have already indicated some challenges that seem to be specific to Saudi Arabian students due to their particular cultural background, including the unique roles of religion, family and gender in Saudi Arabia. Participants' acculturation in the UK were reported by other international students around the world, but the acculturation findings addressed here are very specific to the participants in the current study.

Acculturation experiences were located around two stages of transition: before coming to and after arriving and living in the UK, and the impact of change on self-development. Before coming to the UK, the participants highlighted their motivation to study abroad, expectations about their imminent experience, and their planning and motivations related to family structures, their gender and beliefs.

After arriving and living in the UK, a range of challenges emerged, such as homesickness, personal and academic challenges, gendered experience of female participants, representing the home culture and its religion, and gender issues. Acculturation experience in the UK was rich, with a range of challenges that participants must overcome. However, they preferred to integrate both the home and host cultures in order to achieve their goals associated with studying in the UK.

Self-development was reported as the outcome of students' acculturation, the participants were subjected to identity changes in many aspects, such as a new self-image, adopting new beliefs and skills development. The participants found cultural exposure was an essential driver of their self-improvement which enabled them to navigate effectively within the UK. However, they voiced a perceived conflict emerging from integrating between and into both cultures, and at times this caused internal schisms and confusion.

Acculturation theory from Berry (1997, 2011) was used in the construction of the Saudi psychological acculturation framework to understand Saudi students' acculturation experiences associated with transition. The Saudi psychological acculturation

framework's originality relies on its relation to Berry's (1997) psychological acculturation framework. Berry's (1997, 2011) framework has rarely been used to understand the acculturation experience of international students; and this framework has not previously been used to understand the acculturation experiences of international students in general, and Saudi international students in particular.

The current study has promoted the flexibility, applicability and practicality of Berry's (1997, 2011) acculturation framework by incorporating the Saudi acculturation framework into Berry's (1997, 2011) acculturation framework. By using the Saudi psychological acculturation framework on Saudi international student groups successfully, the current study illustrates the validity and advantages of using the Saudi psychological acculturation framework.

Initially, addressing the Saudi psychological acculturation framework was based on a review of the literature associated with Saudi international students and Berry's (1997, 2011) psychological acculturation framework (Chapter 2). However, the findings that emerged from applying the Saudi psychological acculturation framework to the current study supported further enhancing the Saudi psychological acculturation framework

The current study satisfies Berry's theory criteria for fully understanding Saudi students' experiences of acculturation. The Saudi psychological acculturation framework developed offers a solid theoretical foundation, based on which one can better understand the context which the participants leave and the one into which they are about to acculturate. Further, this framework has provided data about the extent to which participants are prepared for their acculturation experiences. Also, the Saudi acculturation framework was constructed according to data collected from Saudi international students in the UK, and it is specific to the Saudi group. It should be noted that, to increase the applicability of the Saudi acculturation framework to other cultural contexts, it needs to be modified to fit other contexts.

7.2.2 Implications in terms of identity negotiations

Drawing on dialogical self theory, Study Two obtained a more in-depth understanding of how the participants negotiated the demands of different identity positions. The participants' identities, expressed in acculturation experiences of the self, comprised a multiplicity of positions drawing upon experiences of being a Saudi person in the UK.

The multi-voiced dialogical self negotiated stability through meta I-positions: 'I-as a Saudi person in the UK' and 'I-as having Saudi national identity'. The participants reconstructed certain I positions within the dialogical self to achieve stability by linking it to the new environment. They did not abandon their cultural identity positions in the new context, although they were willing to develop other more stable I-positions to negotiate identity demands.

In terms of the new culture, the participants established particular I-positions co-constructed by their social and cultural positions in order to control tensions and maintain continuity, despite changing social and cultural positions.

In order to connect with the new environment, the participants established the meta I-position of 'I-as a Saudi in the UK' to reconstruct themselves in new positions. The participants reflected I-positions of maintaining Saudi culture in the self and presenting it to others by focusing on a predominant orientation and commitment to Saudi culture norms. The 'I-as having Saudi Arabian national identity' I-position was a reconstruction in its attempt to reduce and control cultural change, emphasizing maintenance of home cultural identity positions. In this way, they could reconstruct the settings of identity positions and live at a distance from the original culture temporarily as international students. However, the participants' commitment to their home culture raised conflicts associated with issues such as gender and interaction with others.

Dialogical tension highlighted how the participants' identity took shape amid the interplay of tensions and conflicting forces between and within I-positions in the new context. The participants were engaged in a process of positioning in which positions came together in processes of negotiation, opposition, tension and conflict. Therefore, a self emerged in which several voices agree or disagree with each other, leading to conflict.

Study Two used a dialogical framework that emphasized the dynamic, ongoing nature of identity meaning creation. It is evident from the data analysis that this more dynamic perspective is fundamental to understanding the complex experiences of Saudi students in the UK. In this study acculturation considered a dialogical process that involved dialogue between different identity positions. The dialogical self provided an appropriate theoretical approach for the study of acculturation which is novel in terms of exploring transitions in higher education and experiences of Saudi students in the UK.

Dialogical self theory superseded the one-dimensionality of acculturation theory which views cultures as mutually distinct and internally homogeneous, and presupposes a linear conception of cultural change. In the dialogical self, identities can be hyphenated and hybrid constructions formed from heterogeneous and contrasting aspects.

This study involved an expansion of the theoretical framework by combining the acculturation framework of Berry (1997, 2011) with the dialogical self theory of Hermans (2001) to examine how Saudi Arabian students give meaning to the idea of acculturation and being Saudi students in the UK.

Study Two satisfied Hermans' (2001), theory criteria for exploring Saudi students' identity negotiations. Dialogical self theory provided a theoretical foundation framework to analyse identity processing as narrated by Saudi international students. Saudi students' acculturation considered a dialogical process that involved dialogue between different

identity positions, thus dialogical self theory provided an appropriate theoretical approach for the study of this acculturation.

The self is constituted of multiple voices and the self of Saudi students was organized into two broad and conflicting cultural contexts, one comprising I-positions which relate to their home country, the other related to the UK. Dialogical self theory thus situated the I-positions of Saudi students against cultural backgrounds by illustrating the conceptual differences and series of interrelations between "individual voices", "multi-voices" and general group-based contexts of thought. In doing so, it thus deepens our understanding of the subjects' self-dialogues pertaining to issues relevant to both contexts.

Dialogical self theory illustrates that when the participants received education in the new culture, they were located in a context where two or more internal positions conflicted, e.g. in the educational system, I interact with UK students and other international students. These positions functioned as conflict. They also created a coalition of positions where they coexist in relatively independent ways, and they fuse so that hybrid combinations arise in the shape of multiple identity positions. In this way, this concept assisted in understanding the experiences of Saudi students in the UK.

'Society of the mind' (Hermans & Gieser, 2012) in dialogical self theory is a suitable concept for emphasising the heterogeneity and conflict found in the self in the case of Saudi international students who have to navigate two radically different social groups and cultural systems, where they had to operate within two cultural frameworks simultaneously and their selves were thus re-constructed at the intersection of the two.

7.2.3 Methodological Implications

The need for rich, interpretative research on Saudi students in the UK guided the selection of a qualitative methodology. Saudi international students' experiences were investigated using the qualitative methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in order to maximize the understanding of their acculturation experiences and the meanings that students attribute to their experiences in the UK.

IPA is a phenomenological approach that concentrates on exploring experience in its own terms (Smith et al., 2009). It is committed to the exploration of how individuals make sense of their life experiences (Smith et al. 2009), which is consistent with the study aims. Also, IPA is an interpretative approach that employs what is known as a double hermeneutic, in which the researcher is trying to make sense of individuals trying to make sense of their experiences (Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). In addition, the nature of IPA is both phenomenological and social constructionist, it is concerned with individuals' experiences but includes interpretation that involves a consideration of context.

Study Two was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009), which aligns with dialogical self theory in terms of an idiosyncratic focus, and

dialogical self theory has been linked to phenomenological experiences in regard to cultural positions (Cunha & Gonçalves, 2009).

Study Two used IPA to address interview data and DST was used to interpret the findings. IPA analyses qualitative data and DST (Hermans, 2001) combines both phenomenology and interpretation with the aim of capturing participants' subjective experiences and meaning-making through a process of interpretation. In this way, the analysis hinged on the points of view expressed by the participants in their interviews. The analysis procedures drew on a number of studies that involved the identification of I-positions, inner-other positions and interactions between positions in relation to a plurality of cultural interactions (e.g., Andreouli, 2013; Prokopiou & de Abreu, 2012). Smith et al. (2009) was used as a guide to identify sub-themes through: a) abstraction; b) subsumption; c) polarization d) contextualization; e) enumeration; f) function. The IPA characteristics used in the study were considered to be of a high quality that satisfies Smith's (2011) outlines for IPA characteristics for high quality research.

It proposed that the study of acculturation and identity negotiation can be developed through the qualitative methodology of IPA, which can capture more of the complexity and dynamics characterizing acculturation (Chirkov, 2009; Ozer, et al., 2017). IPA was useful in capturing more contextual situatedness, and the fluidity and ambiguity involved in negotiating among multiple identity positions. Further, it offered significant advancement for promoting the understanding of acculturation experiences and captured such details as ambiguous processes of negotiation, domain specificity and situatedness in the Saudi group. DST showed a sophisticated framework that captured the multiplicity, complexity and dynamics of different I- positions within the self, which were activated through the acculturation of Saudi students. DST provided a useful framework through which to analyse in detail the responses to acculturation, capturing continuous negotiation between I-positions. This theory was proposed as applicable to the Saudi student context in the UK as it ensures sufficient flexibility to capture a contingent and changing self.

Study Two used an integrative approach suggesting that diverse modern and postmodern theoretical approaches exploring acculturation and identity negotiation reflect a new emphasis going beyond the emphasis on the studied phenomenon. That is, Study One's broader findings on Saudi international students' acculturation extracted from Berry's acculturation model were collected by this study, thus providing insights associated with participants' unique experiences, where the phenomenology of acculturation and negotiation of cultural identity among Saudi students reflected a number of diverse processes with meaning-making I-positions related to the home and host cultures, religion, family and gender. Further, exploring a complex acculturation process, including a detailed IPA qualitative analysis with dialogical sensitivity, has developed our understanding of the continuous dynamics of acculturation in the Saudi student group.

In addition to its theoretical contribution, the research may help prospective and current Saudi students to become better informed regarding the challenges they may encounter

when studying in the UK. This will help to better prepare future students, and help current students as well, in their efforts to attain the goals associated with their study abroad experience. This research may also help the Saudi government to better inform students' decisions to study abroad by understanding the challenges faced by Saudi students in an overseas educational institution. It may help the Saudi government to design courses and pre-departure programmes to better support students during the adaptation phase of their study abroad experience. In the UK, this research provides an in-depth description of the needs, expectations and challenges encountered by Saudi students. With this information, the government can initiate constructive changes and generate specific policies and programmes that better address students' challenges, and better meet their unique needs and expectations.

7.3 Limitations

Despite its contributions and implications, there are several limitations regarding the methodology, analysis and findings of this research that should be recognised. Since it is IPA qualitative research, the number of participants is small, eight participants in Study One and 11 in Study Two. Further, the sample was mostly self-selecting (snowballing technique), consisting of participants who became part of the study because they volunteered when asked. The researcher recruited volunteers to take part in the research, and those participants who volunteered may have differed in ways that are not known from other students who chose not to take part in the research or those that, to a certain degree, have persisted in their study abroad. However, generalisability was not a focus of the current IPA research. Thus, the focus is more on the possible transferability of findings from group to group rather than generalisation (Heffernon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

Further, Arabic is the mother language of Saudi international students but interviews were conducted in English. Even though a criterion to take part in this research was that a participant must have studied in the UK higher education for at least one semester, some participants experienced challenges in expressing some of their experiences in English. For instance, there were a few occasions during the interviews when some participants could not express their feelings, experiences and perspectives in a correct form of English.

Further, the researcher is a Saudi international student, as are the participants, and this may have influenced the research findings; interviews conducted with international students from Saudi Arabia by interviewers from different backgrounds may have obtained somewhat different findings.

In addition, the researcher was a Saudi male, and female participants might feel concerned at being interviewed by a male Saudi researcher, given the research focus on issues surrounding sensitive topics such as gender, so they might have felt stressed around a male Saudi researcher.

Also, important to mention is that all students in this research were UK higher education students. The inclusion and study of non-higher education students may indicate very different lived experiences while studying in the UK.

7.4 Further research

There is a limited amount of research on the experiences of international Saudi Arabian students, particularly in the UK. Understanding the acculturation experiences of this group of students is still in its early stages, which may offer potential opportunities for future research.

In understanding the acculturation experiences of Saudi students in the UK, research may be promoted by involving the perspectives of students' family members, spouses and faculties. Research may be promoted by also focusing on gendered experience of females and gendered interaction where gender emerged very salient. Also, studies might use interviews conducted in Arabic. Further studies could focus on the experiences of students after completing their education and returning to the home country. It is important to explore how international Saudi students engage in the home country after a period of time of living and studying in the UK, and whether there are any changes in their perspective and identity negotiations. Particularly, several participants in the current research indicated experiencing reverse cultural differences when they re-entered the home country to visit.

The sample of this research was focused on international Saudi students in specific areas in the UK. It is suggested that future research could include a larger sample, and one covering more individuals from different Saudi groups, not only university students, in order to boost the generalizability of the findings.

This research's findings can be useful as a point of reference or comparison tool for future studies on the acculturation experiences of Saudi students or any other international groups from different backgrounds. For instance, there could be studies exploring the acculturation experiences of Saudi students in the US or Australia.

The psychological acculturation perspective and dialogical self perspective can be examined in other contexts and with other data sets. This can provide the double advantage of further examining the investigative power of both frameworks, and providing new perspectives on questions and contexts that have been previously explored with other analytical models. The findings of the current research indicate that this can be particularly useful for research on the acculturation experiences of international students and cross-cultural contexts in general, and identities in the negotiation process.

7.5 Concluding remarks

This research project involved two IPA qualitative studies. The first study looked at the acculturation experiences of Saudi international students in the UK from an acculturation perspective. The findings showed that the acculturation experiences of Saudi students hinged on two stages of transition: before coming to the UK and after arriving in and living in the UK, and a third major theme emerged in the data, which was the impact of change on self-development.

The findings illustrated experiences that are common to all international students, but in particular, they explored experiences that were very specific to the sample of participants in this study. The findings showed that Saudi students experienced various challenges but also reported self-development as an outcome of their acculturation. When talking about change and self-development, the participants addressed the negotiation, tensions and conflict between being in the UK and being affiliated to one's country of origin.

The findings that emerged from Study One were used in the development of the second study, which aimed to explore Saudi international students' identity negotiation processes and the perceived consequences on their sense of self from a dialogical self perspective.

The findings identified distinct identity I-positions of Saudi students in the UK in the way they experienced identity positions: I-as a Saudi in the UK, I-as having a Saudi Arabian national identity, and Identity negotiation processes among these positions. The dialogical self of the participants was engaged in negotiating I-positions and repositioning processes, which were dependent on and prompted by the participants' goals of studying abroad and their preferred future.

The participants reconstructed certain I-positions in the dialogical self to achieve stability by linking it to the new environment. The participants did not abandon their cultural identity positions in the new context, although they were willing to develop other more stable I-positions to negotiate identity demands.

These novel findings offer an in-depth understanding of acculturation and identity negotiations for Saudi international students in the UK. In doing so, they contribute significantly to the existing literature, which consists of a number of acculturation studies related to cross-cultural experience, yet with few on Saudi students, a growing international student group.

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Appendices

Appendix A-1 Participant information sheet (Study One)

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to participate in a research programme titled, Saudi students' experiences in the UK from an Acculturation perspective. This project will form part of the requirements of my doctoral degree in Psychology funded by Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in London. This letter will explain the purpose of this research and will go over the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research programme. Please read this information carefully, and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

The purpose of this research is to study the experiences of moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian students. It investigates the experiences that Saudi international students report as challenges. In addition, the research looks at the perceived consequences on their sense and identities. A hoped-for outcome of this research is to provide information that will be of particular interest to Saudi students, Saudi Arabia governmental and industry leaders who sponsor students for study abroad, and the UK institutions hosting Saudi students.

Who can participate in this study?

Students from Saudi Arabia studying at a UK university in the South-East of England between 18-40 years are invited to take part. Additionally, I ask that, you meet the following criteria: (a) have Saudi Arabia as your birthplace and, (b) have studied in the UK in a higher education degree for at least a semester at the time of interview.

Where will this study take place?

Interviews will take place in a convenient booked room at the university where you are studying, or in quiet public places such as libraries that are convenient to you.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

If you volunteer to be a participant, you will be asked to take part in one individual interview. Before the interview, you will be asked to sign the informed consent document and then fill out a background demographic information form. The interview will last for an hour.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

Participation in the study involves: 1) completing one form before the initial interview begins. This form is a background demographic information form; 2) involves participating in an interview. The goal will be to complete the interview in a hired room at the university where you are studying, or public places such as libraries. The interviews will last for an hour and you will be asked questions about your academic and personal experiences as a Saudi international student in the UK. The researcher will digitally voice record interviews to ensure accuracy of the data.

What information is being gathered during the study?

As a Saudi Arabian international student in the UK, you will be asked to discuss your perceptions about the UK before beginning studies here, your personal experience studying here, including any academic and personal challenges experienced and your experience with support services. You will also be asked about how your experience studying here may have influenced your perceptions and the possible impact and influence of your cross cultural study experiences in the UK on your personal values and belief systems.

What language will be used during the interview?

English will be the language that will be used during the interview as you have been studying for a UK university degree for at least a semester. However, I am happy to explain the procedure and study details in Arabic if you would find this more comfortable.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. No one apart from the researcher will know what you have said in the interview. I will not discuss the content of the interview with anyone in a way that will identify you. As I am only speaking to a small number of people in total you need to be aware that you or someone who knows you might recognise something you say when the study is written up. However, in any written work using quotes from the interview every effort will be made to ensure that individuals are not likely to be identified by their comments.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

I anticipate minimal risk to you while participating in this research. However, if discussing your experiences makes you feel uncomfortable then you have the option to end the interview process at any time and to choose not to continue. I can also recommend support services to you, at your request.

What if you want to withdraw from the study?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw / withdraw your data at any time and without having to give an explanation.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

One of the ways that you may benefit from the study is by having the opportunity to reflect on and share your academic and personal challenges studying in the UK. The information provided by you will be used to contribute to the research literature on cross cultural education and international student adjustment, as well as increase the understanding of helping professionals concerning the experiences of Saudi Arabian international students in the UK. You may obtain a summary of the findings by providing your email address on the attached consent form.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

If you take part, you will be assigned a pseudonym, to maintain the anonymity of your data. The interviews will be transcribed and I will keep a separate list with the names of participants and the corresponding pseudonym. The research team will have access to the information collected during this study. Any background information you provide will be used to describe the interview participants as a group. A digital voice recorder will be used during our interviews. The use of a digital voice recorder is to ensure the correct transcription and analysis of the interview data, and in no way will your confidentiality be jeopardized. After the interviews are transcribed the tapes will then be destroyed based on Oxford Brookes University policy of Data Protection Act (DPA) Compliance, which is ten years. All of the information on tapes, notes, and forms will be placed in a locked and secure location at all times. All of the information collected from you will be confidential. No information specific to you will be reported. The research team will present data in aggregate form only.

Who is monitoring this study?

This study has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about this project, please contact ethics@brookes.ac.uk. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any other questions about this study. Contact details can be found on the top of this letter.

What should I do next?

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. If you agree to take part in the study please [sign and return the attached consent form to me]. If you do not wish to take part you need take no further action.

Yours faithfully,

Appendix A-2 Participant information sheet (Study Two)

Principal Investigator: Adil Al Ghamdi
Department of Psychology, Health and Professional Development
Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane, Oxford OX3 0BP Email: 14086249@brookes.ac.uk
Director of Studies: Professor Guida de Abreu Email: gabreu@brookes.ac.uk
Second Supervisor: Dr Clare Rathbone Email: crathbone@brookes.ac.uk
Second Supervisor: Dr Mark Burgess Email: mark.burgess@brookes.ac.uk

Dear Participant,

You have been invited to participate in a research programme titled, Saudi students' experiences in the UK from a Dialogical Self perspective. This project will form part of the requirements of my doctoral degree in Psychology funded by Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau in London. This letter will explain the purpose of this research and will go over the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research programme. Please read this information carefully, and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

The purpose of this research is to study the experiences of studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian students. It investigates the identity negotiations between being a Saudi student in the UK and being affiliated with one's country of origin. A hoped-for outcome of this research is to provide information that will be of particular interest to Saudi students, Saudi Arabia governmental and industry leaders who sponsor students for study abroad, and the UK institutions hosting Saudi students.

Who can participate in this study?

Students from Saudi Arabia studying at a UK university in the South-East of England between 18-40 years are invited to take part. Additionally, I ask that, you meet the following criteria: (a) have Saudi Arabia as your birthplace and, (b) have studied in the UK in a higher education degree for at least a semester at the time of interview.

Where will this study take place?

Interviews will take place in a convenient booked room at the university where you are studying, or in quiet public places such as libraries that are convenient to you.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

If you volunteer to be a participant, you will be asked to take part in one individual interview. Before the interview, you will be asked to sign the informed consent document and then fill out a background demographic information form. The interview will last for forty-five minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

Participation in the study involves: 1) completing one form before the initial interview begins. This form is a background demographic information form; 2) involves participating in an interview. The goal will be to complete the interview in a booked room at the university where you are studying, or public places such as libraries. The interviews will last for an hour and you will be asked questions how moving to the UK may impact on how you make sense of yourself as a Saudi person. The researcher will digitally voice record interviews to ensure accuracy of the data.

What language will be used during the interview?

English will be the language that will be used during the interview as you have been studying for a UK university degree for at least a semester. However, I am happy to explain the procedure and study details in Arabic if you would find this more comfortable.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. No one apart from the researcher will know what you have said in the interview. I will not discuss the content of the interview with anyone in a way that will identify you. As I am only speaking to a small number of people in total you need to be aware that you or someone who knows you might recognise something you say when the study is written up. However, in any written work using quotes from the interview every effort will be made to ensure that individuals are not likely to be identified by their comments.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

I anticipate minimal risk to you while participating in this research. However, if discussing your experiences makes you feel uncomfortable then you have the option to end the interview process at any time and to choose not to continue. I can also recommend support services to you, at your request.

What if you want to withdraw from the study?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw / withdraw your data at any time and without having to give an explanation.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

One of the ways that you may benefit from the study is by having the opportunity to reflect on and share your experience studying in the UK. The information provided by you will be used to contribute to the research literature on cross cultural education and international student adjustment, as well as increase the understanding of helping professionals concerning the experiences of Saudi Arabian international students in the UK. You may obtain a summary of the findings by providing your email address on the attached consent form.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

If you take part, you will be assigned a pseudonym, to maintain the anonymity of your data. The interviews will be transcribed and I will keep a separate list with the names of participants and the corresponding pseudonym. The research team will have access to the information collected during this study. Any background information you provide will be used to describe the interview participants as a group. A digital voice recorder will be used during our interviews. The use of a digital voice recorder is to ensure the correct transcription and analysis of the interview data, and in no way will your confidentiality be jeopardized. After the interviews are transcribed the tapes will then be destroyed and the transcripts will be stored based on Oxford Brookes University policy of Data Protection Act DPA Compliance. All of the information on tapes, notes, and forms will be placed in a locked and secure location at all times. All of the information collected from you will be confidential. No information specific to you will be reported. The research team will present data in aggregate form only.

Who is monitoring this study?

This study has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about this project, please contact ethics@brookes.ac.uk. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any other questions about this study. Contact details can be found on the top of this letter.

What should I do next?

Thank you for taking time to read this letter. If you agree to take part in the study please [sign and return the attached consent form to me / click on this link to provide your email address]. If you do not wish to take part you need take no further action.

Yours faithfully

Appendix B Participant consent form

Full title of Project: Saudi students' experiences in the UK from an Acculturation perspective.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher: Adil Al Ghamdi, Principal Investigator,
Department of Psychology, Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane, Oxford OX3 0BP

Phone: +44 (0) 1865 483776 email: 14086249@brookes.ac.uk

Name, position and contact of Supervision Team:

Director of Studies: Professor Guida de Abreu email: gabreu@brookes.ac.uk

Second Supervisor: Dr Mark Burgess email: mark.burgess@brookes.ac.uk

Second Supervisor: Dr Clare Rathbone email: crathbone@brookes.ac.uk

Please initial

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my agreement for my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw them, without giving reason, up to the point when data processing begins.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

I agree that my responses may be audio recorded (and recordings destroyed as soon as transcribed).

☐

I understand that my data will not be guaranteed confidentiality and it may be possible that others will know what I have reported.

☐

I agree that data from the interview gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research.

☐

I would like to receive a summary of the findings of this project via email.

My email address: _____

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix C Demographic Data Sheet

Please complete this background demographic information by filling in the requested information below. If there are any questions that you would rather not answer, please feel free to miss them out.

1. Age:.....years
2. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
3. Country of Birth:.....
4. Home Country:.....
5. Education: High School ☐ Bachelor ☐ Master ☐
6. Program of Study:.....
7. Semester in Program of Study:.....
8. Length of time studying in the UK:.....
9. Marital Status:
Married, spouse with you ☐ Married, spouse not with you ☐ Divorced ☐
Unmarried ☐
10. How many children currently live with you in the UK?
11. How would you describe the area in Saudi Arabia from where you came?
Rural ☐ Village or Town ☐ Small city (under 100,000) ☐ Large city ☐
12. When did you come to the UK to begin studying (Month, Year)?
13. What type of type of scholarship do you have?
King Abdullah Scholarship Programme ☐ Saudi Government Scholarship ☐
Other ☐ If other scholarship, what.....
14. Before coming to the UK, did you ever live in any other country other than home country?
Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, what countries?.....

Appendix D-1 Interview schedule (Study One)

Interview Questions

Research Title: Saudi students' experiences in the UK from an Acculturation perspective.

Date of Interview: _____
Time of Interview: _____
Location: _____
Pseudonym: _____
Length of time studying in the UK: _____

Hello, _____, this is Adil Al Ghamdi. As arranged, we are meeting today to discuss your experience as a Saudi Arabian international student who is studying in the UK. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Saudi Arabian international students studying in the UK.

Thank you for consenting to participate in this research programme. During this interview I will be asking a series of open-ended questions about your experiences in the UK and how those experiences have impacted your life. The interview will be recorded so the study can be as accurate as possible.

Before we begin, do you have any questions that need to be clarified?
(If yes, then clarify questions, if no, "Then shall we begin?")

- SS1: 1. Could you please tell me your story of moving to and studying in the UK?
2. Could you please tell me what is the meaning of being a Saudi person in the UK for you?
3. Could you please tell me about your motivations of studying abroad?

SS2: Follow up questions will be asked to clarified the narrative:

1. Could you please tell me about the perceptions you had about the UK before entering studies in the UK?
2. After arriving, could you please share your experiences of living and studying and in the UK?
3. Could you please tell me about your experiences of moving to live in the UK?
 - What have the challenges been?
 - What do you do when faced with challenges?
 - What strategies have been helpful in the transition?
4. Could you please tell me about your experiences of moving to study in the UK?
 - What have the challenges been?
 - What do you do when faced with challenges?
 - What strategies have been helpful in the transition?

5. Could you please tell me about support you have while in the UK?
 - Who gives you the most support?
 - How are you able to keep in contact with family and friends from Saudi Arabia?
 - What are your relationships like with other Saudi students?
 - What are your relationships like with other international students?
 - How would you describe your interaction with British students?
 - How have your supports impacted your adjustment to the UK?
6. Could you please share how your perceptions about the UK may have changed during your stay in the UK?
7. Could you please describe how your cross-cultural study experiences in the UK may have impacted your personal beliefs and values?
8. Could you please describe your other experiences in the UK that may have impacted your identity and self understanding as Saudi Arabian student?

General Probes:

At various times during the interviews, the following probes will be used when deemed appropriate and necessary to elicit a more detailed and rich description of the Saudi student's experiences:

- Tell me more about that experience.
- What was it like for you to experience that?
- Explain how that impacted you.
- What happened exactly?
- Can you give me an example of that?
- Can you say more about that?
- What does that mean for you?
- Anything else you would like to add?
- How did that affect you?

Appendix D-2 Interview schedule (Study Two)

Interview Questions

Study 2 Title: Saudi students' experiences in the UK from a Dialogical Self perspective.

Date of Interview: _____
Time of Interview: _____
Location: _____
Pseudonym: _____
Length of time studying in the UK: _____

Hello, _____, I am Adil Al Ghamdi. As arranged, we are meeting today to discuss your experience as a Saudi Arabian international student who is studying in the UK. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Saudi Arabian international students studying in the UK.

Thank you for consenting to participate in this research. During this interview I will be asking a series of open-ended questions about your experiences in the UK and how those experiences have impacted your life, meaning of self, and identity. The interview will be recorded so the study can be as accurate as possible.

Before we begin, do you have any questions that need to be clarified?
(If yes, then clarify questions, if no, then shall we begin?)

SS1. Unstructured Narrative question

I am interested in how moving to the UK may impact on how you make sense of yourself as a Saudi person. Could you please tell me your story of being a Saudi in the UK and, in particular, experiences and feelings relating to how this may have impacted your understanding of who you are as a person?

SS2. Semi-structured interview questions

Questions about being a Saudi person before moving to the UK:

1. Before moving to the UK you probably expected to face challenges in regard to navigating in an unfamiliar culture, if so, how did you prepare yourself to cope with those challenges?
2. What is the meaning of being a Saudi person for you before moving to the UK? And how did you feel about that?
 - Do you feel there are different ways of being a Saudi for you or just one meaning?
 - Do you feel there are any contradictory ways of being a Saudi?

Questions about being a Saudi person living in the UK:

3. What are the first memories of arriving in the UK and how do you feel they impacted on your sense of self?
4. How do you think experiencing the UK culture has changed your sense of self so far?
5. Do you sometimes change the way you act or think to be more like those around you, and how? Do you have examples? How does that make you feel?
6. Do you feel you are a representative of Saudi culture or that you should be? If so, how do you do that? Can you give examples?
7. Tell me about your self-appearance, how do you look and dress, the same as you do in Saudi Arabia or differently? Can you give examples? And how do you feel in these situations?
 - Did you start to dress differently in any way since you have been in the UK? And how this has altered your understanding of who you are? If so, explain why you do that?
8. Tell me which kind of food do you usually eat; Saudi traditional food or UK food? Do you feel your Saudi traditional food is a part of you?
 - Did you start to eat different foods since you have been in the UK? And how this has altered your understanding of who you are? If so, explain why you do that?
9. If you have a companion living with you, how do you perceive him impacting on your sense of self in the new culture? Can you give examples?
10. Do you feel you have developed as a Saudi person over time in the UK? In what ways? Can you give examples?

Questions about others views of being a Saudi in the UK:

11. How do you think others in the UK look at you as a Saudi? Do you have any examples? How do you feel about that?
12. How do you interact with others in the UK whether Saudi or non-Saudi? Can you give examples? How do you feel about that?
 - What are the most marked ways in which your behaviour differs from that at home in Saudi?
13. How do you interact with the opposite gender whether Saudi or non-Saudi? How do you feel about that? Can you give examples? Can you contrast this with the way you would act at home in Saudi?

Questions about others views from Saudi culture:

14. How do you think others at home look at you as a Saudi person? How do you feel about that?
15. To what extent do you feel there are aspects of who you are now that seem incompatible with who you used to be?

General Probes:

At various times during the interviews, the following probes will be used when deemed appropriate and necessary to elicit a more detailed and rich description of the Saudi student's experiences:

- Tell me more about that experience.
- What was it like for you to experience that?
- Explain how that impacted you.
- What happened exactly?
- Can you give me an example of that?
- Can you say more about that?
- What does that mean for you?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- How did that affect you?

Appendix E-1 Email Recruitment Script (Study One)

I am a research student (doctoral student) at the Department of Psychology at Oxford Brookes University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research program designed to explore the lived experiences of Saudi Arabian international students who are studying in the UK. The purpose of this research programme is to study the experiences of moving to and studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian students. It investigates the experiences that Saudi international students report as challenges. In addition, the research programme looks at coping strategies that Saudi international students use when they face challenges and the perceived consequences of using different coping strategies. This research programme may be an opportunity for you to help add to knowledge and understanding about Saudi Arabian international students' experiences studying in the UK and provide information that may be helpful to other Saudi Arabian international students.

The researcher is looking for potential participants who meet all of the following criteria:

- Saudi Arabian international students studying at a UK university in the South-East of England.
- Saudi Arabian international students between 18-40 years who have Saudi Arabia as his/her birthplace.
- Saudi Arabian international students who have studied in the UK in a higher education degree for at least a semester at the time of interview.

Participation will involve completing a background demographic data form, and participating in a tape-recorded interview that will be conducted at a time convenient for you. The results of the study may enhance the knowledge and understanding of the experience of Saudi Arabian international students who study in the UK.

All data collected through the background demographic data form and interview will be kept confidential.

If you are aged 18-40 years interested in learning more about participating, please contact me, Adil Al Ghamdi, by email at 14086249@brookes.ac.uk and provide your name and phone number to receive additional information. I will contact you by email to send more information and the criteria for participation.

During the initial emails you will not be asked for any specific information and no information will be recorded. Individuals, who, after learning about the study, express continued interest in participating in the research, will be scheduled for their interview and be sent an informed consent document that explains the project. The informed consent will be reviewed, and any questions answered, before participation in the research programme.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Adil All Ghamdi,
Department of Psychology, Health and Professional Development
Oxford Brookes University
Phone: +44 (0) 1865 483776 email: 14086249@brookes.ac.uk

Appendix E-2 Email Recruitment Script (Study Two)

I am a research student (doctoral student) at the Department of Psychology, Health and Professional Development at Oxford Brookes University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research program designed to explore the lived experiences of Saudi Arabian international students who are studying in the UK. The purpose of this research is to study the experiences of studying in the UK for Saudi Arabian students. It investigates the negotiations between being a Saudi student in the UK and being affiliated with one's country of origin. This research programme may be an opportunity for you to help add to knowledge and understanding about Saudi Arabian international students' experiences studying in the UK and provide information that may be helpful to other Saudi Arabian international students.

The researcher is looking for potential participants who meet all of the following criteria:

- Saudi Arabian international students studying at a UK university in the South-East of England.
- Saudi Arabian international students between 18-40 years who have Saudi Arabia as his/her birthplace.
- Saudi Arabian international students who have studied in the UK in a higher education degree for at least a semester at the time of interview.

Participation will involve completing a background demographic data form, and participating in a tape-recorded interview that will be conducted at a time convenient for you. The results of the study may enhance the knowledge and understanding of the experience of Saudi Arabian international students who study in the UK.

All data collected through the background demographic data form and interview will be kept confidential.

If you are aged 18-40 years interested in learning more about participating, please contact me, Adil Al Ghamdi, by email at 14086249@brookes.ac.uk and provide your name and phone number to receive additional information. I will contact you by email to send more information and the criteria for participation.

During the initial emails you will not be asked for any specific information and no information will be recorded. Individuals, who, after learning about the study, express continued interest in participating in the research, will be scheduled for their interview and be sent an informed consent document that explains the project. The informed consent will be reviewed, and any questions answered, before participation in the research programme.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Adil All Ghamdi,
Department of Psychology, Health and Professional Development
Oxford Brookes University
Phone: +44 (0) 1865 483776 Email: 14086249@brookes.ac.uk

Appendix F-1 Analyses Framework (Study One)

Example of Procedure for Coding processes

Interview Transcribe and comments (5) Initial stage (initial Exploratory comments)	
Original transcript	Initial Exploratory comments
AAA: Ok, so it's 3/11/2015 and this is AAA speaking to P5. AAA: (SS1): 1. I will start with the question "Tell me your story of moving to live and study in the UK." You can start from Saudi Arabia. From the time you decided to study abroad. P5.: Okay. I was planning to study abroad for a long time and maybe before four years I applied for the scholarship, and I had the scholarship to go to Canada to continue my Master's degree, but then I had some family issues that I had to cancel my scholarship and I couldn't be able to delay, or to just delay it three month or six month, so it has been cancelled. And then I was still thinking about this <u>idea</u>, but I had some family, as I say, some family issues, so it was difficult for me to travel. And then for one year I apply again to study and I had the acceptance from Oxford Brooke's to study in PhD program. <u>So</u> I quitted my work and I came here in January 2015. That's all. So exactly after I got divorced, I return back to my dream, and I think it's the time now to have the scholarship again. Because I cancelled my scholarship when I get married. So after I get divorced immediately I talk to my father, I told him I want to go back to study, and then when I apply to the scholarship I... it wasn't easy for me because, you know, for their rules I was above the age and I was also above the graduation years because it should not be more than five years if you want to apply for a Master's degree. Or, if you want to apply for a PhD degree, you should have a <u>Master's degree</u>, so it was a little bit complicated. I thought that I am having a higher <u>diploma</u>, but they didn't equivalent it as a Master. They just wanted a <u>Master's degree</u>. <u>So</u> I came in April 2013 with my friend <u>Samia</u>, just to see the UK – how was the environment, how was the situation here, and if it's going to be easy for me to adapt and be more comfortable in this society. So I came in April and I visit Brookes, and I met my supervisors, Dr. Herr and Dr. Katherine, and I explain everything to her, and I was ready for that because I took the IELTS exam and I had the score that they are looking for, so we had informing meeting and they was giving me informal acceptance that you are welcome to take part here and we have an empty place for a PhD student. So when I go back home I applied for formal acceptance and I applied online and I talked to my father regarding my financial status and if he's ready and willing to support me in the study and he was totally supportive, so I just continue in the process and I sent for them statement, my certificate, and my IELTS score, and everything, and everything was very easy. It's like a <u>signs</u> from God "You can go and everything is ready for you." I thought I would have some things, with the acceptance from Brookes, I had a governmental job and study. And it was very difficult for me to choose between a governmental job and studying abroad, but we have to keep in mind that I resign from my work so if I came <u>here</u>, I would lose everything and I would just start a new way in my life. <u>So</u> I choose to come here. It was of course a very stressing, stress... time, and period, because I had to go through a lot of process, like the visa, it wasn't easy at all. And it was very stressful if I would have visa, and the problem of that, it was also a problem for me that if my father would continue supporting me, if I would have any problem with the ministry. Before I came here with three months and I was totally prepared and I was planning and drawing a very nice line for my life, some of the ministry of higher education called me and told me my acceptance, your offer, is not accepted. You are not allowed to go there, even if you are studying on your own resources. And I told	I was planning to study abroad for a long time, before four years I applied for the scholarship, and I had the scholarship to go to Canada to continue my Master's degree, but I had some family issues that I had to cancel my scholarship. After I got divorced, I return back to my dream because I cancelled my scholarship when I got married. <u>So</u> after I get divorced immediately, I told my father I want to go back to study. I came in April 2013 just to see the UK, and I visited Brookes to <u>met</u> my supervisors, and I got the acceptance to take a place for a PhD. I talked to my father regarding my financial status and if he's ready and willing to support me and he was totally supportive, so I just continue in the process. I had a job, it was very difficult to choose between a the job and studying abroad, but we have to keep in mind that I resign from my work so if I came here I'd lose everything and I'd just start a new way in my life. I chose to come. It was stress time, because I had to go through a lot of process, like the visa, it wasn't easy at all. And it was very stressful if I would have visa. I was drawing a nice line for my life, but the ministry of education told me I'm not allowed to go there, even if c Planning to study abroad for a long time, but I had to cancel it due to family issues. c After I got divorced, I return back to my dream of study. c After I got divorced, I told my father I want to go back to study. (Family involved to make the decision) c I came in April 2013 just to see the <u>UK</u>, and visited Brookes to meet my supervisors. c My father was ready and willing to support me financially. c It was difficult to choose between <u>a the</u> job and studying abroad. (Leave benefits behind) c It was stress time, to get visa. c The ministry of education didn't allow me to study abroad even if I'm studying on my own resources.

them they give me the acceptance as a PhD student, that means I'm qualified to continue as a PhD student. They tried a lot, and I tried to contact them. A lot of e-mails. Telephone numbers. But they didn't accept. Anyway, I decided to go in my way, and either the ways they <u>accepting</u> my studies or they didn't accept it, I would just go for it. And that's what I did. I came here and it was really difficult at the beginning.	you are studying on your own resources. I tried to contact them. Anyway, I decided to go in my way, and either the ways they <u>accepting</u> my studies or they didn't accept it, I would just go for it.	
I came with my father. He spent with me like two weeks and it was kind of a very strange feelings that I'm not, I don't know if I'm a student or just a tourist just here for a visiting. But after he <u>left</u> I really was shocked, now I am alone, I am responsible for everything, I am starting a new life, I am away from my family, I am away from everything, I just have to adapt myself for this new situation. <u>So</u> it's really very difficult. I will never forget Chat up Writing course after I arrived, that I attended as a first course, and I cried that day because I completely didn't understand anything of what she <u>says</u> . And it was really very bad because I used to work in the hospital [8:53] for seven years, or six years, seven and a half, and we used to speak English all the time. <u>So</u> when I came here even Good Morning and How are you? It was really very difficult for me to say. And even when they are asking me it was really difficult. And I can remember my first five meetings I couldn't understand anything and when I am going out alone, my friends are asking me "So, what did you agree with your supervisor?" And I completely didn't understand anything that they say. But by the time I think after I became confident asking, "Sorry, I didn't understand what you say, can you repeat that?" and all the time it's up and down, sometimes you have this feeling, am I doing the right thing? It was a right decision, or am I doing the wrong thing? Sometimes you feel that you are very strong, that everything's fine, things like this, and sometimes you think that you are very weak.	I came here and it was really difficult at the beginning. I came with my father. He spent with me like two weeks and it was kind of a very strange feelings that I don't know if I'm a student or just a tourist just here for a visiting. But after he <u>left</u> I was shocked, now I'm alone, I'm responsible for everything, I am starting a new life, I'm away from my family, I just have to adapt myself for this new situation, it's very difficult. I will never forget Chat up Writing course as a first course, I cried that day because I completely didn't understand anything. It was bad because I used to work in the hospital for years, and we used to speak English. <u>So</u> when I came here even Good Morning and How are you? It was difficult for me to say. And even when they are asking me it was really difficult, first five meetings I couldn't understand anything. But by the time, I became confident asking, "Sorry, I didn't understand, can you repeat that?" and all the time it's up and down. I was afraid that they would be judgmental based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or as a Saudi. I didn't face any situation that I feel that they are judging <u>me</u> or I feel I'm the wrong person in the right place. Here I have to be more responsible, because I'm responsible for everything. The rent, water bills, I'm trying to be a man and a woman at the same time. Even with the communication in the daily basis with people, for example, in the markets, or coffee shops, even here at the university, your character	C At the beginning, I came with my father. He spent with me like two weeks, it was difficult.
		C After he <u>left</u> I shocked, now I'm alone, I'm starting a new life, I'm away from my family, I just have to adapt myself for this new situation.
		C I will never forget Chat up <u>Writing</u> course, I cried that day because I completely didn't understand anything.
		C Even Good Morning and How are you? It was difficult for me to say. And even when they are asking me it was really difficult.
		C By the time, I became confident asking, "I didn't <u>understand?</u> " all the time it's up and down.
		C I was afraid they might judge me based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or a Saudi.
		C I didn't face any situation that I feel they are judging <u>me</u> or I feel I'm the wrong person in the right place.
		C Here I'm responsible for everything.
		C MY character should be - I will not say totally different, but I'll not deal with a UK person as you deal with a Saudi.

A.A.A: Can you give me an example on this point, because it's very interesting dealing with a Saudi person is different, even a Saudi male, is different – P5.: It's not about the gender, as a person, because, I mean, if I were I think even with the language barriers, so if I were in Saudi Arabia, I can't contact more confidence, and more easily with the people, I can make some jokes, and that's fine. But if I deal with some UK person, I am not sure about his reaction. Maybe he will not accept my way of talking. That's what I mean. So, um, the flexibility and ease in dealing with, you feel more comfortable, dealing with a Saudi, because you can, in general, understand what is going on in his mind, or what he is thinking about, or if he accept your way. But with a UK person you can be a little afraid, not sure, what he is thinking. Even about the regulation, or the system in general. How to ride the bus, how to stand in a queue, how to order something. No one would disagree that in our country that, there is not that much of system in dealing with a daily basis, like, like a governmental thing, or even when you are at the work, or anything. So here's everything about the system, everything about the queue, everything about the regulation, so you should be very careful about these things. So of course in some way I'm here... I am here not exactly as I am there. A.A.A: Okay. Can I just, before continue, can I ask you where did you study English? P5.: I didn't study English as a course, but I was in a private school, so we started to study English at the earliest ages. As I said, I was speaking English most of the time in the hospital. A.A.A: Okay, but you didn't study specific course of English? P5.: No. In the UK, no. A.A.A: Okay, what was your exactly, your job, in Saudi Arabia? P5.: I was working as a clinical dietician. A.A.A: Okay, you talked about the difference between the familiar English that you used to every day in Saudi Arabia, and here but what you mean exactly in this point? [17:04] P5.: I mean two things. The first, the accent is totally different, because in Saudi Arabia we use a more American accent, and here the British accent is very difficult for us to understand it, or for me, specific. Because for me they are speaking more faster and some letters they don't pronounce it, as the r, or the t, so it is very difficult to hear what they are saying. And second in Saudi Arabia we are speaking English, but our main language is Arabic, so when I am speaking with the nurses, speaking English, they are learning some Arabic words, so they are speaking half-English, half-Arabic, so you almost feel safe, that they could rescue you at the end if you didn't understand. But here they don't understand anything so if you didn't get what they were saying you're stuck, you have to find a way to get out. A.A.A: How was it? Is it fine now, after ten month, staying here, do you feel any improvement? P5.: It's very sad to say now: not that much, because I'm spending more time with the Saudi people. So even in our office we are most of the time speaking Arabic. So... But I can see that getting better... better understanding and better daily talking, chatting, like "How are you? Good morning." Communication skills. A.A.A: Okay. We all face this problem. P5.: At least I can say, I can survive with MY English; it's not that bad if. A.A.A: (SS1): 3. Okay. You mentioned your motivation after getting divorced and	should be – I will not say totally different, but you will not deal with a UK person as you deal with a Saudi, because some cultures would make the thing that accepted there would not be accepted here.] If I were in Saudi Arabia, I can contact more confidence, and more easily with the people. I can make some jokes but if I deal with a UK person I'm not sure about his reaction. Maybe he will not accept my way of talking.] With a UK person you can be a little afraid, not sure, what he is thinking. Even about the regulation. How to ride the bus, how to stand in a queue, No one would disagree that in our country, there is not that much of system in dealing with a daily basis, like a governmental thing. Here's everything about the system, everything about regulations, so you should be careful about these things. So, I am here not exactly as I'm there.] I didn't study English as a course, but I was in a private school, so we started to study English at the earliest ages. I was speaking English most of the time in the hospital.] [The accent is totally different, in Saudi Arabia we use a more American accent, and here British accent is difficult for me to understand it. They speak fast so it is difficult to hear what they are saying.] It's sad to say now: not that much, because I'm spending more time with the Saudi people. But I can see that getting better, understanding and better daily talking, like Communication skills. At least I can survive with my English.]	C If I were in Saudi Arabia, I can contact more confidence, and easily with the people but if I deal with a UK person I'm not sure about his reaction. C Here's everything about the system, everything about regulations, so you should be careful about these things. I am here not exactly as I'm there. C I didn't study English as a course, but I was in a private school, I started to study English at an earliest ages. C British accent is difficult for me to understand it. C My English don't improve that much but at least I can survive with my English.

you want to continue studying, you want to reach your dreams. I just want to focus more here on your decisions. So, can you tell me more about your motivation to study abroad? P5.: While my six years in the hospital, I improved in my skills and in my knowledge, but I didn't improve as a job title, or as a... as a person that have ambitious. So, my work didn't meet my ambitious and improved me. <u>So, I think that the only choice that I had to resign and move on to continue my education. That was the first reason. The second reason was I was working in a medical field. At some point, you feel that your Bachelor is not enough, and you should continue on to a higher education. Because I should be always updated and always improving and up to date.</u> A.A.A: Okay. What else do you want to mention in motivations or studying abroad that can, that's, motivation can be done in Saudi Arabia. <u>But, I think so. But why did you choose to study abroad?</u> P5.: Yeah, because, our field, there is no choice, at least in my city in SA we don't have higher education in nutrition. That's the first. And the second, still, we have this concept, this is a fact, that studying abroad is <u>more stronger</u> than studying abroad in Saudi Arabia, because the education here is more accurate, motivated. A.A.A: Do you believe in this point? P5.: Yes, I do feel it, because I have studied five years as a Bachelor degree, and it was totally –it's very shame to say that, but I didn't benefit only to have a certificate as a Bachelor, because, I can say, 100% I'm sure about it, that all my knowledge I gained by work experience, not by studying. And I also had higher diploma, it was two years, from year as a module, and one year as an internship. And the modules <u>wasn't</u> that much stronger, we couldn't make, because we have very good people and very good experiences, more than ten <u>years experience</u>, so they can give us... but I think that the environment doesn't help them to give us more and more. A.A.A: What about choosing the UK? P5.: First, three reasons. The first one, that it's very <u>near from</u> Saudi Arabia, because I think that I have the concept that I have to be as near as I can to my family. <u>So, Canada, Australia, and US were excluded. The second reason because I feel that British society is more conservative society and close to my home culture.</u> And third it's very safe here. And the third, the third that I was very afraid from alienation. A.A.A: Being away from the family. Leaving the family behind. P5.: Yes. The feeling exactly of being away from the family. A.A.A: Okay. P5.: Also, having my friend here make it easier for me to choose Oxford in specific. A.A.A: (SS2): 1. Okay can tell me about the impressions you have about the UK before studying in the UK? You said something about your Hijab and your faith, so your impression, your point of view before getting to the UK, what did you thought about the UK before coming here? P5.: I don't know from where to start. Okay, everything comes in two parts. The first point that I thought it would be a very bright, and very nice, and everything would be easy, and I wasn't realistic in that because when I came the fact that being away from my family and being responsible of everything by your own is not easy at all. This is the first thing. The second, I was afraid. A.A.A: Let me just focus on more your thought before the UK, so. P5.: The second thing. So, the first thing was I thought it would be very easy. Okay? And it would be very bright. I was very afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim. First of all, before, not accepted as a Saudi. A.A.A: This is your character. You are wearing your Hijab now. That is the same Hijab as in Saudi Arabia? P5.: Yes. The third thing –	While my 6 years in the hospital, I improved my <u>skills</u> but I didn't improve as a job title, or as a person that have ambitious. My work didn't meet my ambitious, the only choice I had was to continue my education. Also, I was working in a medical <u>field</u>, so I feel that my Bachelor is not enough. I should be always updated and improving. [There is no choice; we don't have PhD in nutrition. And studying abroad is <u>more stronger</u> than studying in Saudi Arabia.] I have studied five years as a <u>Bachelor</u> degree, but I didn't benefit. I can say that all my knowledge I gained by work experience. And I also had higher diploma and the modules wasn't that much. It's very <u>near from</u> Saudi Arabia, because I have to be as near as I can to my family. Also, I feel British society is conservative society and close to my home culture. And it's very safe here, <u>The third</u> that I was very afraid from alienation] [The feeling of being away from the family. Also, having my friend here make it easier for me to choose Oxford in specific] I thought it would be a very bright, and very nice, and everything would be easy, and I wasn't realistic in that because being away from my family and being responsible of everything by your own is not easy at all. I was very afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim. First of all, before, not accepted as a Saudi.]	c My work didn't meet my ambitious, I had to continue my education. I should be always updated and improving c We don't have PhD in nutrition. And studying abroad is stronger than studying in Saudi Arabia. c I chose the UK because It's near Saudi Arabia, and I feel British society is close to my home culture and safe. c I feel I'm being away from my family but having my friend here make it easier for me to choose Oxford in specific. c I thought everything would be <u>easy</u>, but being away from my family and being responsible of everything is not easy at all. c I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi.

A.A.A: Why did you think Hijab is, would be a problem for you here? [25:19] P5: Because before I came here there was a lot of stories that they can. I think 'Nahid Almanea' murder was before I came here. Before I came here. A.A.A: Yeah, it was July 2014. P5: Also beside the gender image of Muslims, so no one has denied that. A.A.A: Okay, that's fine. P5: So, this is my expectation. But it doesn't mean the reality. What find me right now. A.A.A: About the Hijab? 26:35 P5: Yeah. A.A.A: So you, you did get this point from media, from story that you heard, from – P5: Yeah, it was from media. Because, to be honest, all the people that I know, they are studying abroad, if it's UK, or, other countries, it's not specific, they were saying they did not face any problems regarding the Hijab, but I was really attached and influence by what happening in the media, what they're saying in the media. A.A.A: Okay, what else? What another thought that you cared about before coming? P5: Racism is under the Hijab only, it's not under... yeah. I didn't have a bad image or a negative expectation about UK in general. I was just very afraid and terrified from failure in general, that's all. A.A.A: Okay, sometimes, my questions not just about general, not just in bad way, negative points, just what do you think about these things? P5: when I got here, I felt that UK education system in general will open many doors and will change me totally, this was one of my expectations, it will change improve me mentality and personality, I will go back to my country completely different person. I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. If I had a chance to do a PhD in my country, I'll choose to come and study here because I was excited to start the journey more than just study. 29:00 A.A.A: Okay, what else? P5: So, I didn't – in fact, I didn't have big expectation. I'm coming for a goal and I literally was just afraid from two things. I wasn't afraid from the country. I was afraid only about Hijab and I was afraid about get failed in my educational way. A.A.A: ok, What about food? Did you thought about? P5: Ah, no. A.A.A: Not at all? P5: People was always thinking, uh, talking about the weather and food, and it's very difficult, but I don't think it's a big problem I don't think it's a major problem. A.A.A: For you? P5: Yeah, I don't think it's a problem to think about it.		C I was influenced by media even Saudis how is studying abroad saying they did not face any problems with Hijab. C I was afraid and terrified from failure and racism under Hijab. C I felt UK education system will open many doors and will change me and improve my mentality and personality C I will go back to my country completely different person. C I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. C If I had a chance to study in my country, I'll choose to come and study here. C In the beginning I was feeling shock, lost, confused. C I was coming every day and going home back, and crying, because I don't understand what's going on.
A.A.A: (SS2): 2. Okay, can you please share your experience of living and studying in the UK? P5: I think it's, uh, it will be based on personality of each person, so in my personality I usually don't react fast. I try to understand the situation, and then my reaction appears. So, in the beginning when I came, I was like, um, you know the feeling that you're not understanding what's going on and you're still shocked, lost, it was totally a feeling of lost. And, uh, the feeling that you're not sure if you're doing the right or the wrong thing. That you're not very sure where you are now. You're not sure what should I do next? You're not sure how your life will be alone. It was, I can say, for two months I was in this cycle of feelings and it's all, like, confused feelings and I don't understand. And what it makes you, at the same time, like paralyzed, that you are not able to do and to be effective in the university, so I was coming every day but just going home, back, and crying, because I don't understand what's going on. So, I spent like this for maybe, to be honest, I think	It was from media. All the people that I know, they are studying abroad; they were saying they did not face any problems regarding the Hijab, but I was influenced by what happening in the media Racism is under the Hijab only, it's. I didn't have a negative expectation about UK in general. I was just afraid and terrified from failure. When I got here I felt UK education system will open many doors and will change me and improve my mentality and personality. I will go back to my country completely different person. I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. If I had a chance to do a PhD in my country, I'll choose to come and study here because I was excited to start the journey more than just study. In the beginning I was feeling that I do not understand what's going on and I'm still shocked, lost, it was totally a feeling of lost. For two months I was in this cycle of feelings of confusion and I don't understand. I was coming every day but just going home, back, and crying, because I	

Initial Exploratory comments and Emergent themes (Interview 5)
Second stage (Developing emergent themes)

Initial Exploratory comments	Emergent themes
1. Planning to study abroad for a long time, but I had to cancel it due to family issues. c 2. After I got divorced, I return back to my dream of study. a 3. After I get divorced, I told my father I want to go back to study. (Family involved to make the decision) c 4. I came in April 2013 just to see the <u>UK</u> and visited Brookes to meet my supervisors. c 5. My father was ready and willing to support me financially. m 6. It was difficult to choose between the job and studying abroad. (Leave benefits behind) c 7. It was stress time, to get visa. f 8. The ministry of education didn't allow me to study abroad even if I'm studying on my own resources. f 9. At the beginning, I came with my father. He spent with me like two weeks, it was difficult. c and m 10. After he <u>left</u> I shocked, now I'm alone, I'm starting a new life, I'm away from my family, I have to adapt. <u>Find it</u> 11. I will never forget Chat up Writing <u>course</u>. I cried that day because I completely didn't understand anything. e and g 12. Even "Good Morning" and "How are you"? It was difficult for me to say. And even when they are asking me it was really difficult. e and l 13. By the time, I became confident asking, "I didn't understand?" all the time it's up and down. l 14. I was afraid they might judge me based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or a Saudi. b + i 15. I didn't face any situation that I feel they are judging <u>me</u> or I feel I'm the wrong person in the right place. l 16. Here I'm responsible for everything. O1 17. My character should be – I will not say totally different, but I'll not deal with a UK person as you deal with a Saudi. l and n 18. If I were in Saudi Arabia, I can contact more confidence, and easily with the people but if I deal with a UK <u>person</u> I'm not sure about his reaction. n 19. Here's everything about the system, everything about regulations, so you should be careful about these things. I am here not exactly as I'm there. l 20. I didn't study English as a course, but I was in a private school, I started to study English at an <u>earliest ages</u>. e 21. British accent is difficult for <u>me</u> to understand it. e 22. My English don't improve that much but at least I can survive with my English. e	a. Motivations to study abroad: (2,23,24,34) b. Anticipations (14,25,28,29,30,31) c. Structures and Planning (1,3,6,9,48) d. Homesickness (10,35,36,45,69,79,80) e. Language: (11,20,21,22,37,42,56) f. Personal Challenges (7,8,10,27,37,38,47,49,50,62,82) g. Academic Challenges: (11,36,40,43,60,61) h. Discrimination (None) i. Issue of representing home culture and religion (14,28,29,30) j. Gender Issues: Sup themes: - Interaction with Saudi Males: (None) - Challenge of being a Saudi female abroad: (45,46) k. Family Challenges and dynamic change (None) l. Cultural differences and Adaptation (13,15,17,19,37,39,44,47,58,59,62,65,66,68,78,81) m. Social and emotional support (5,9,26,41,48,51,52,53,54,55,57,76) n. Changes and awareness of self (17,18,31,32,46,63,74,75,77,81) o. <u>Self improvement</u>

23. My work didn't meet my ambitious, I had to continue my education. I should be always updated and improving. a 24. We don't have PhD in nutrition. And studying abroad is stronger than studying in Saudi Arabia. a 25. I chose the UK because it's near Saudi Arabia, and I feel British society is close to my home culture and safe. b 26. I feel I'm being away from my family but having my friend here make it easier for me to choose Oxford in specific. M+q 27. I thought everything would be <u>easy</u> but being away from my family and being responsible of everything is not easy at all. E+q 28. I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi. b and i 29. I was influenced by media even Saudis how is studying abroad saying they did not face any problems with Hijab. B and i 30. I was afraid and terrified from failure and racism under Hijab. B and i 31. I felt UK education system would open many doors and will change me and improve my mentality and personality. B +n 32. I will go back to my country completely different person. N and o 33. I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. o 34. If I had a chance to study in my country, I'll choose to come and study here. a 35. In the beginning I was feeling shock, lost, confused. d 36. I was coming every day and going home back, and crying, because I don't understand what's going on. D and g 37. The first six months it was difficult, difficult to understand in English, to communicate with people. E + I +f 38. It's not just academic lost, I'm having issue as a researcher, and student to communicate with my supervisor, and as a person in the daily time. f 39. I have to deal with different people from different cultures; it was difficult for me in the beginning. I 40. The induction was good, but when you feel lost, you need someone to stay with <u>you</u> but no one say this to me. g 41. It makes it easy when you have colleagues who are starting before <u>you</u> so you are trying to figure out from them. m 42. It's difficult when you have something to ask about it, or you do not understand but the language bar you from. E 43. I had problem in my project, besides feeling lost all the time, my project wasn't helping me. g 44. Being a research student is easier than being	Sup-themes: - Learning and self improvement (32,33,64,71,72,73,74,75,77) -(Learning and social improvement (16,63,70,81) p. Gain skills (67) q. Longing for the family (new theme) (26,27,69,78,79,80)

Emergent themes	Initial Exploratory comments
a. Motivations to study abroad: (2,23,24,34)	2. After I got divorced, I return back to my dream of study. A 23. My work didn't meet my ambitious, I had to continue my education. I should be always updated and improving. A 24. We don't have PhD in nutrition. And studying abroad is stronger than studying in Saudi Arabia. A 34. If I had a chance to study in my country, I'll choose to come and study here. a
b. Anticipations (14,25,28,29,30,31)	14. I was afraid they might judge me based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or a Saudi. b + i 25. I chose the UK because it's near Saudi Arabia, and I feel British society is close to my home culture and safe. B 28. I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi. b and i 29. I was influenced by media even Saudis how is studying abroad saying they did not face any problems with Hijab. B and i 30. I was afraid and terrified from failure and racism under Hijab. B and i 31. I felt UK education system would open many doors and will change me and improve my mentality and personality. B + n
c. Structures and Planning (1,3,6,9,48)	1. Planning to study abroad for a long time, but I had to cancel it due to family issues. C 3. After I get divorced, I told my father I want to go back to study. (Family involved to make the decision) c 6. It was difficult to choose between the job and studying abroad. (Leave benefits behind) c 9. At the beginning, I came with my father. He spent with me like two weeks, it was difficult. c and m 48. The first accommodation was with my friend, I was lucky that I had the place. C+m
d. Homesickness (10,35,36,45,69,79,80)	10. After he left, I shocked, now I'm alone, I'm starting a new life, I'm away from my family, I have to adapt. F+d+a 35. In the beginning I was feeling shock, lost, confused. D 36. I was coming every day and going home back, and crying, because I don't understand what's going on. D and g 45. It is difficult being lonely, and to be responsible for things you were never responsible about. D and j2 69. When I'm crying in the office and miss my family, they don't understand that much. D+a 79. This month I was homesick and crying and yesterday when I talk to my family and I hang up the phone I feel that, I don't want to go there, I want to stay here. D+a 80. I was terrified and I can remember that night of my flight I couldn't sleep because I really didn't want to come here back. I felt there safer with family. D+a
e. Language: (11,20,21,22,37,42,56)	11. I will never forget Chat up Writing course. I cried that day because I completely didn't understand anything. e and g 20. I didn't study English as a course, but I was in a private school, I started to study English at an earliest ages. E 21. British accent is difficult for m to understand it. E 22. My English don't improve that much but at least I can survive with my English. e 37. The first six months it was difficult, difficult to understand in English, to communicate with people. E + i + f 42. It's difficult when you have something to ask about it, or you do not understand but the language bar you from. E

	56. Saudis are my family here but part of my goals <u>are</u> to improve my English and meet a new people. e
f. Personal Challenges (7,8,10,27,37,38,47,49,50,62,82)	7. It was stress time, to get visa. F 8. The ministry of education didn't allow me to study abroad even if I'm studying on my own resources. F 10. After he <u>left</u> , I shocked, now I'm alone, I'm starting a new life, I'm away from my family, I have to adapt. <u>F+D+G</u> 27. I thought everything would be <u>easy</u> , <u>but</u> being away from my family and being responsible of everything is not easy at all. <u>F+G</u> 37. The first six months it was difficult, difficult to understand in English, to communicate with people. E + I + f 38. It's not just academic lost, I'm having issue as a researcher, and student to communicate with my supervisor, and as a person in the daily time. F 47. Stop and ride the bus was challenge, small things <u>was</u> taking me a lot of stress and effort to do. f+i 49. But the contract <u>ended</u> , and we tried to find another flat and it wasn't easy at all because everything is expensive. F 50. We have to find a flat near the university and is in secure area. It was really stressful. I can remember that day I couldn't sleep for two days. F 62. It is really expensive here; money is never an issue for us in Saudi Arabia. F+I 82. I have a problem with the Saudi Ministry of Education regarding my program. f
g. Academic Challenges: (11,36,40,43,60,61)	11. I will never forget Chat up Writing <u>course</u> . I cried that day because I completely didn't understand anything. e and g 36. I was coming every day and going home back, and crying, because I don't understand what's going on. D and g 40. The induction was good, but when you feel lost, you need someone to stay with <u>you</u> but no one say this to me. G 43. I had problem in my project, besides feeling lost all the time, my project wasn't helping me. G 60. I find research is more exciting than studying modules. G 61. I find the UK academic is better than the expectation that I wish for. g
h. Discrimination (None)	None
i. Issue of representing home culture and religion (14,28,29,30)	14. I was afraid they might judge me based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or a Saudi. b + i 28. I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi. b and i 29. I was influenced by media even Saudis how is studying abroad saying they did not face any problems with Hijab. B and i 30. I was afraid and terrified from failure and racism under Hijab. B and i
j. Gender Issues: Sup themes: - Interaction with Saudi Males: (None) - Challenge of being a Saudi female abroad: (45,46)	45. It is difficult being lonely, and to be responsible for things you were never responsible about. D and j2 46. It's challenge for me to be responsible of everything, British people think I'm spoilt girl but these things we are not used to do. n+j2
k. Family Challenges and dynamic change None	None
l. Cultural differences and Adaptation (13,15,17,19,37,39,44,47,58,59,62,65,66,68,78,81)	13. By the time, I became confident asking, "I didn't understand?" all the time it's up and down. l

Primary themes and related subthemes and sample quotes

Table a. Motivations to study abroad: Subthemes and Sample Quotes

P1.	Self-improvement	This journey started by the desire of continuing study a higher education degree abroad.
	Career improvement	I had motivations from my work and friends to push me to study master to upgrade in my work to get good offers in work. Friends finished degree in the UK get good positions. I want to expand my knowledge in engineering and share it to fill some gap in knowledge.
	Knowledge and skills improvement	I'm trying to get a PhD offer because I feel I have the abilities, tools and skills to continue. I learned the processes and technics.
	Self-improvement	This desire came from comparison between the quality of students who graduated from Saudi universities and abroad; I see big difference the big gap between them. People who studied abroad have good mentality in sciences and the develop things faster, not just in the field but also in their life; this is encourage me to study abroad and face problems and solve them. These problems will make me different person and different mentality; get back to S.A with huge benefits.
P2.	Knowledge and skills improvement	What made me came here I think English, knowledge, and experiences that I will get here.
	Career improvement	When I got a <u>master</u> degree from here that will improve my career position in my work in Saudi Arabia.
P3.	Experiencing of new culture	Need for change environment. My life not enough, want to see another life. The goal isn't just education but <u>also experience</u> another life.
	Self-improvement	The aim is not just the education to be honest, I care about education and improve <u>my self</u> , but I think there is another part of the world that necessary for me to discover, in this part, I was think for long time.
P4.	Career improvement	I decide to complete my PhD because my dream is to have an academic job so it would be very easy after I finish my PhD.
	Experiencing of new culture	My dream to spend this time out of Saudi Arabia is to have the greater opportunity to meet the other people with extremely different cultures, was also one of my dreams. We didn't have this opportunity in S.A it is like closed culture.
	Knowledge and skills improvement	Motivation, Internal desire, 100%. I really want to know, and we would never know everything. And we don't have PhD in <u>nutrition</u> in S.A, but If we have the program, of course, I will do it in SA.
	Career improvement	There are another <u>motivations</u> , when I will finish my PhD, I will earn more money and position. I am looking for a position.
P5	Career improvement	While my 6 years in the hospital, I improved my <u>skills</u> but I didn't improve as a job title, or as a person that have

	Knowledge and skills improvement Self-improvement	ambitious. My work didn't meet my ambitious, the only choice I had was to continue my education. Also, I was working in a medical <u>field</u> so I feel that my Bachelor is not enough. I should be always updated and improved. In my field, there is no choice; at least in my city in SA we don't have higher education in nutrition. That's the first. And the second, still, we have this concept, this is a fact, that studying abroad is <u>more stronger</u> than studying abroad in Saudi Arabia, because the education here is more accurate, motivated. I felt that UK education system will open many doors and will change my totally, it will change and improve my mentality and personality, I will go back to my country completely different person. I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. If I had a chance to do a PhD in my country, I'll choose to come and study here because I was excited to start the <u>journey more than just study</u>.
P6	Knowledge and skills improvement Career improvement Career improvement Experiencing of new culture	Develop our knowledge in our studying, it was really good opportunity to go outside. I decided to go because otherwise I would lose my job. <u>So</u> I had difficult time with my parents to convince them I would go outside. I think this is one of my motivations to go to be a doctor. To have like the salary then, and to maybe take my son, stay alone, with my life...Getting a better salary and good position. First thing, I'm going outside of my country, I was just thinking about having good time.
P7	Self-improvement Knowledge and skills improvement	After working 3 years I started to think to move to the UK, to study and improve my English. My parents and grandparents graduated from UK universities and, some of my relatives are now lecturers in Saudi universities and that encouraged me to do so. When I was in the last year in the bachelor, I was thinking to travel around to learn new things.
P8	Career improvement Knowledge and skills improvement	After I graduated, the next semester they told me 'volunteer,' work as a volunteer in a university. <u>So</u> I volunteered for one semester. The second semester I stay at home, I change my mind for scholarship – I can't stay doing nothing. I was a student in the university then I became an assistant teacher in the same university, I am not a student anymore, I am a teaching assistant, so in this situation I have to study nutrition, there's not available in my city. <u>So</u> I have to go to other place to study.

Table b. Anticipations: Subthemes and Sample Quotes

P1.	Positive attitude toward study abroad	I have to study abroad and share what is the latest research and modern software in my field, my field is related to technology and I have to keep updated. This is the reason behind this desire, try to be better, my language will be stronger, many benefits from studying abroad. I learn a lot about life, people, social society, and nature.
	Expecting to face challenges	I expected some difficulties will face us as a family, my wife is always covering her body including her face due to her religion beliefs, so we expected that we will face some problems like racism against hijab and some people will try to harm us in different ways because of my wife just wearing hijab, and as we expected that before we came my wife designed some scarfs and hijab that might be more acceptable here in the UK, she expected that will face some annoying people against this.
	Worries of keeping Hijab	
	Collecting information about the UK before	I think as I collected info about the UK before getting here that helped me to build my perceptions about life and study here, I can say everything was like I expected, I expected the study will be hard here and it was, I thank it was harder than my expectation, to be honest, no more change in my beliefs about society here because that I got that information before from friends, especially things related to the religion, or my wife hijab.
P2.	Collecting information about the UK before	I thought about many scenarios and how I can face them, may be in the internet I could find some information that can help me to solve any problem I may face.
	Expecting to face challenges	This is life, you find a lot of challenges but because it is foreign country, different people, I think that was difficult time for me. There was one day, it was horrible, after arriving, I have a booking for five days. In the sixth day, I didn't find any hotel.
P3.	Expecting to face challenges	I was crying every night before travel because dealing with life there. My nephew wasn't responsible enough. It was difficult time. Studying abroad will be challenge in the language and academia, Are people here better than us in academia? Are they smarter than us? I had these questions before.
P4.	Collecting information about the UK before	I was always asking everybody visited UK, are you wearing hijab there? Only before coming, because it really was very fast. What UK people think about hijab, I was afraid wearing a hijab. Is it acceptable, is it not <u>acceptable</u> . I expect the people to be nice. I didn't expect them to be racist, but I was always afraid wearing hijab. I was asking about working hour. What time is it, is it allowed, or not.
	Worries of keeping Hijab	
	Collecting information about the UK before	The first time I came here was for vacation just to explore the country and everything, and I spent one month. Then after that, with six <u>months</u> I came to start my English language course.
	Expecting to face challenges	I didn't think it would be this expensive, I thought the education level was much higher than ours. I did expect

		larger houses. I thought that the education would be very difficult. Getting the degree will be very difficult.
P5	Worries of keeping Hijab Collecting information about the UK before Positive attitude toward study abroad Worries of keeping Hijab	I was very afraid before I came here. I was very afraid that they would be judgmental based on my Hijab, or as a Muslim, or as a Saudi, that we are the rich people, that we don't have the talent to think or to study, and that we are just stupid people. I have visited this city before starting my program by eight months to discover the city and the university. The UK education system in general will open many doors and will change me totally, this was one of my expectations, it will change improve my mentality and personality. I thought this journey would improve my personality more than gain knowledge in my field. If I had a chance to do a PhD in my country, I'll choose to come and study here because I was excited to start the journey more than just study. I was afraid from the Hijab and from not being accepted as a Muslim and Saudi. I was influenced by media even Saudis how is studying abroad saying they did not face any problems with Hijab. I was afraid and terrified from failure and racism under Hijab.
P6	Worries of keeping Hijab Positive attitude toward study abroad Collecting information about the UK before Worries of keeping Hijab	I was thinking of leaving my full hijab, at the airport I was wearing my Hijab and everything, but when I just came here, <u>it</u> didn't work at all. It wasn't a really easy decision to make to go here to the UK to complete my study, as I finish <u>master</u> degree in Saudi Arabia, but I think, to develop my knowledge in my studies, it was really good opportunity to go outside. ... my sister got an experience studying here in the UK so she just <u>finished</u>. I think, 2011, she just finish her PhD in the UK... I just start collecting information from her about everything. How can do that, what about sitting in the first place, maybe, what I need to do. What I need to take it with me in, before, I travel. Most important: food, and Arabic coffee. Because most important thing to me in my bag. And I think, my first, I need dates, food, some kind of food, so, yeah, I think that, I have some information because she was here so wasn't that I don't know anything. Maybe I was worried about Hijab more than what I faced.
P7	Expecting to face challenges Collecting information about the UK before	I thought, it'll be expensive, and when I arrived here it was expensive. Especially Oxford is very expensive similar to London. Before I arrived here, I read a lot in the internet, I tried to find people who had experience to give me advices.... I had a feedback from people who studied in the UK... Some people told me British are friendly and kind... Some of them told me I have to start talking to British because they are never going to start talking to you. Some of them told British don't like to exchange culture with others. After I gather information about people, I found completely messy, because some of them have different points than

	Collecting information about the UK before	other. However, I decided to go for, to move there for three or two months for a holiday, in summer. I just try to see by myself, and, who I should believe? Before I ~~traveled~~ to study. Because it would be very difficult for me if I move directly from one culture to other culture to study. <u>So</u> I prefer to travel to, like, three months, four months, to learn some other traditional culture, and after that, back to my home country, and after that, starting to move to other country, to study. I decided to go there for 2 or 3 months for a summer holiday. I just try to see by myself.
P8	Positive attitude toward study abroad Collecting information about the UK before Worries of keeping Hijab	I was very happy to be in the <u>UK</u>, but you know when I started reading about this city, but there's not much information about it on the Internet in 2013, 2012. Okay, I know this is old city, very old, but you know, I didn't know about life here. There is no much information on the Internet. This is like one problem for me. I like to collect information, just like sit and read. I thought absolutely about hijab, it would be like I'm going to have a problem with my Hijab.

Appendix F-2 Analyses Framework (Study Two)

Example of Procedure for Coding processes

Interview Transcribe and comments (7)
Initial stage (identifying I-positions)

Original transcript	Voice	I-positions
Researcher: Hello P7, I am Adil Al Ghamdi, as arranged we are meeting today to discuss your experiences as a Saudi Arabian international student who is studying in the U.K. Before we begin do you have any questions that need to be clarified? P7: No thank you. Researcher: So shall we begin? P7: Yes please. Researcher: Tell me your story of being a Saudi in the UK, and in particular experiences and feeling related to how this may have impact your understanding of who you are as a person. P7: Well, living UK now for two years, almost two years. A lot of things have changed personality wise, character wise. Moving from a conservative community to an open community that of course will make a big impact on my character. So, coming to the UK from that society was a big shock. If you want to say education wise first, studying with man and woman at the same classroom, that wasn't something we normally do in Saudi Arabia. The way how I look at woman and I kind of have barriers and I'm shy to have conversations and just basic talks. So after two years now, this all done, I'm treating people professionally no matter whether you're a man or a woman. And there are other impacts as well. But we will see the other questions. Researcher: Okay. Before moving to the UK, you probably expected to face challenges in regarding to navigating in an unfamiliar culture, like UK culture. If so, how did you prepare yourself to face those challenges? P7: So I think the only way to prepare yourself before you come to UK is by reading a lot and watching movies and try to see what's the main characteristics of this society that you're going to. That certainly will help a lot in preparing yourself before you have the big shock and move into that land. So watching movie I'd say. Asking friends who have been there, about their experiences. What should I do, what should I don't do? Researcher: What was the main challenge you thought about it at that time? Did	Well, living in the UK now for two years, almost two years. A lot of things have changed personality wise, character wise. Moving from a conservative community to an open community that of course will make a big impact on my character. So, coming to the UK from that society was a big shock. If you want to say education wise first, studying with man and woman at the same classroom, that wasn't something we normally do in Saudi Arabia. The way how I look at woman and I kind of have barriers and I'm shy to have conversations and just basic talks. So after two years now, this all done, I'm treating people professionally no matter whether you're a man or a woman.	1. I- as a need to change (restructure self) 2. I- as a Saudi male interacting positively with females. (Tension)

1

you have anything that you thought about it? P7: Yes. To be honest, I was really worried about the accommodation challenge as a student with a family. Researcher: Oh, I see. P7: That was the conclusion from every single person I have asked about their experiences about the UK. So they were just pointing at one thing, accommodation would be challenging, yeah. I prepared myself before I did that. I downloaded the corrected apps, did some research before I got here. Researcher: What is the meaning of being a Saudi person for you before moving to the UK, and how did you feel about that? P7: Before coming here, a Saudi person is a conservative person. I'm Muslim for sure, but some ... it's really difficult to explain, but I'll try my best. A Saudi person is really conservative on his community or her community. And coming from a region where there is only one religion, same people all around the country. Same mentality, same culture, that is not good for when you move out of this region. You feel like you are in a comfortable zone when you are there. But the moment you get out of there, it's gone. You feel like you're lost. You're going from one planet to a different planet. Researcher: Oh, I see. P7: Things are changing now, thanks god, in a good way to prepare people to face the rest of the world. So being a Saudi is just you're isolated. You're isolated from the rest of the world. Researcher: Okay, Do you feel there are different ways of being Saudi for you, or just one meaning? P7: Yes. Yes. I think it all depends on how you grow up and the environment you lived in? the small family. your parents, your siblings, extended family, cousins. What kind of family you got? If you're lucky enough. You've got an open minded one in a good way. And you will be more open to the world, you will be well-educated. You will not judge people based on their appearances and all sort of things that I used to do Saudi Arabia. However, saying that, there are some families I have seen in Saudi Arabia where they're totally different. When you're asking to define what a Saudi means to you, I defined myself basically. But, that doesn't mean the whole country live in the	A Saudi person is a conservative person. I'm Muslim for sure, but some ... it's really difficult to explain, but I'll try my best. A Saudi person is really conservative on his community or her community. And coming from a region where there is only one religion, same people all around the country. Same mentality, same culture, that is not good for when you move out of this region. You feel like you are in a comfortable zone when you are there. But the moment you get out of there, it's gone. You feel like you're lost. You're going from one planet to a different planet. So being a Saudi is just you're isolated. You're isolated from the rest of the world.	3. I- as a Saudi. (Tension) 4. I- as a Saudi. (Tension)

2

same way I lived. There are other people where they're open minded, and their parents ... not their parents, the small community they're living in is totally different than where I lived in. So, you see them competing. They are competing UK students here for example. Researcher: Okay, Do you feel there are any contradictory or opposite way of being a Saudi? P7: No. Researcher: Okay. P7: No, no. Researcher: Okay. What are the first memories of arriving in the UK, and how did you feel they impact on your understanding of self? P7: I came in January. So it was freaking cold. And, coming from a warm area to here was just a big moment that I will never forget. Having children, your wife, they're all shivering and it was freezing. That night was freezing. And coming from London, from Heathrow to Oxford that way with the car, with the taxi, it's all dark. That's how exactly it felt, going to an old hotel that cost me 150 pound a night was all new things that I am facing. It's good in a way. It's good to prepare you for- Researcher: To face more difficulties. Prepare yourself for next- P7: Yeah, exactly. That part- Researcher: You feel it's hard, it will be hard. P7: Yes. Researcher: Not just for you, for the whole family. P7: that was the feeling. When I got there and waking up the other morning, going around Oxford, seeing the historical buildings, the only thing come to my mind, how much you have to prepared. You have to be prepared in many ways. Not only in school but also life. Life here is really difficult compared to very wide streets, big houses. 11:41, wealthy country. You have a driveway, you have a home maid. So moving from there to here, absolutely it's a big change. Researcher: What about school? Did you face any- P7: In school, yes, yeah. I studied in Saudi Arabia. I studied in the US as well. And this is my third experience. Comparing the UK style to Saudi, it's really different. I did not try post graduate studies in Saudi	When I got there and waking up the other morning, going around (city), seeing the historical buildings, the only thing come to my mind, how much you have to prepared. You have to be prepared in many ways. Not only in school but also life. Life here is really difficult compared to very wide streets, big houses. So moving from there to here, absolutely it's a big change.	5. I- as a need to change. (Tension)

3

P7: Being alone, in a sense. I have my family, for sure. But, for example, I am in this lab, I am the only guy who speaks Arabic in this lab. I know nobody in (city). P7: And same thing in (city). I moved to (city), but still have no time to make connection with people and have a chat during the weekend. So the free time we have, I'll spend it with my family basically. And most of the time, I am in front of the desktop or facing my rig trying to run some experiments. So that thing it's really boring, boring as hell. But, the good side of it, it changed me a lot. It made me mature. I thought about myself a million times during these two years. I have time to sit with myself and speak to myself and see where is my strengths, where is my weakness, and how to develop myself basically. Where in a community like a Saudi Arabia you don't have that opportunity. You don't have it. That's for granted, because it's a very busy life. The moment you wake up until you go to bed, you don't own yourself. Your parents want you, your friends want you. So, having that free time with yourself, it's really beneficial in a way you will know yourself way better after you finish your schedule. Researcher: Can we call this independence in some way? P7: Yes, of course, part of it. Part of it. P7: coming from a Saudi culture, your friends, your extended family, your cousins, that's what it means family. We never looked at the small family. Researcher: Sure. We call our parents family. P7: But in Saudi Arabia, it's totally the opposite. So a family to me, let's let me talk about myself, because I don't to generalize. A family to me is my cousin, my blood basically. Researcher: Extended family. P7: Yeah, extended. It is my really family. So coming to the UK and being isolated from the busy life and having time with yourself and with your kids and family as well, your wife and kids, they're taking- Researcher: The majority of that. P7: They're taking ... All your free time goes to them. So, it's very good. I'm looking at this from the positive side that my children-	And most of the time, I am in front of the desktop or facing my rig trying to run some experiments. So that thing it's really boring, boring as hell. But, the good side of it, it changed me a lot. It made me mature. I thought about myself a million times during these two years. I have time to sit with myself and speak to myself and see where is my strengths, where is my weakness, and how to develop myself basically. Where in a community like a Saudi Arabia you don't have that opportunity. You don't have it. That's for granted, because it's a very busy life. The moment you wake up until you go to bed, you don't own yourself. Your parents want you, your friends want you. So, having that free time with yourself, it's really beneficial in a way you will know yourself way better after you finish your schedule.	7. I- as independent. I- as having time to think myself. 8- I- as from a family oriented person to a solitary person and independent. (Tension)

5

Identification of I-positions (first phase):

I-positions	Emergent I-positions
1. I- as a need to change. a 2. I- as a Saudi male interacting positively with females. (Tension) a 3. I- as a Saudi. (Tension) b 4. I- as a Saudi. (Tension) b 5. I- as a need to change. (Tension) a 6. I- as independent. a 7. I- as independent. a 7. I- as having time to think myself. a 8- I- as from a family oriented person to a solitary person and independent. (Tension) a 8. I- as independent. a 9. I- as look and dress different than Saudi culture. a 10. I- as look and dress different than Saudi culture. a 11. I- as eating only Saudi food. b 12. I- as eating only Saudi food. b 13. I- as independent. a 14. I- as how I see people look at me. a 15. I- as how I see people look at me. a 15. I- as representing Saudi culture. b 16. I- as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender. (Tension) a 17. I- as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender. a 18. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension) a 19. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension) a 20. I- as how I see people look at me at home. b 21. I- as how I see people look at me at home. b 22. I- as independent. a 22. I- as having time to think myself. a 23. I- as independent. a	a. I as Saudi person in the UK (1,2,5,6,7,8,9,10,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,22,23) b. I- as Saudi Arabian national identity (3,4,11,12,15,20,21) c. Identity negotiation processes among positions ()

Identification of I-positions (second phase):

meta I-positions	Sub-themes (voices)
I as Saudi person in the UK: 1. I- as a need to change. 2. I- as a Saudi male interacting positively with females. (Tension) 5. I- as a need to change. (Tension) 6. I- as independent. 7. I- as independent. 7. I- as having time to think myself. 8- I- as from a family oriented person to a solitary person and independent. (Tension) 8. I- as independent. 9. I- as look and dress different than Saudi culture. 10. I- as look and dress different than Saudi culture. 13. I- as independent. 14. I- as how I see people look at me. 15. I- as how I see people look at me. 16. I- as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender. (Tension) 17. I- as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender. 18. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension) 19. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension) 22. I- as independent. 22. I- as having time to think myself. 23. I- as independent.	a. I- as improved myself in the UK. (7,22) b. I- as an open-minded in the UK. () c. I- as having my voice heard. () d. I- as having freedom and independence. (6,7,8,13,22,23) g. I- as a Saudi male interacting opposite gender. (2,16,17) k. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension) (18,19) l. I- as a need of change. (1,5) l. I- as look and dress different than Saudi culture. (9,10) n. I- as how I see people look at me. (14,15)
I- as Saudi Arabian national identity: 3. I- as a Saudi. (Tension) 4. I- as a Saudi. (Tension) 11. I- as eating only Saudi food. 12. I- as eating only Saudi food. 15. I- as representing Saudi culture. 20. I- as how I see people look at me at home. 21. I- as how I see people look at me at home.	a. I as holding my national identity. (3,4) b. I- as multiple meanings of being Saudi. () c. I- as maintaining Saudi culture. (11,12) d. I- as representing Saudi culture. (tension) (16) f. I- as how I see others look at me at home. (20,21)
Identity negotiation processes among positions	2. I- as a Saudi male interacting positively with females. (Tension) 3. I- as a Saudi. (Tension) 4. I- as a Saudi. (Tension)

	5. I- as a need to change. (Tension) 8- I- as from a family oriented person to a solitary person and independent. (Tension) 16. I- as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender. (Tension) 18. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension) 19. I- as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension)

Identification of I-positions across participants

meta I-positions	Sub-themes (voices)	Repetition across participants											
		P1f	P2f	P3f	P4m	P5m	P6f	P7m	P8f	P9m	P10f	P11m	N.
I- as a Saudi person in the UK	1. I-as improved myself in the UK	1,2,4, 22,	2,3,13, 17	2,5,16,17	6,21,22 ,23	14	18	7	18,25	6,9,16	2,3,5	10	11
	2. I- as an open-minded in the UK.	23			9,10	20,21	19			14		21,26	6
	3. I- as having freedom, independence and my voice heard.	5,6	5,12,14	11,21, 34			1,2,3, 38	7,8,13	8,10,11 , 25,26		3,4,8, 25		7
	4. I-as interacting within a multicultural context	23,37		22	2 ,38	3	5		2,21	2,13	19	20,32	9
	5. I- as different.		10,16, 27			23			4		1,18	19	5
	6. I-as UK different meaning of Muslim		4,	14	4					4,5,9		2,11	5
	7. I-as acting similar to people around me.	24,25	20				21		12	32			5
	8. I- as a Saudi interacting with opposite gender.	36	32, 33			24	20	2,16,17	22,23			33	7
	9. I- as a Saudi person interacting normally with non-Saudi but having difficulties interacting with the Saudi other gender.		32,33	35	40,41, 42		33,34, 35,36	18,19		4,27,28	20	34	8
	10. I- as a need of change.	39	15,16,	13,18,38	5	4,5,15, 16	13,14, 15,16, 17,22	1	1	1,31, 32		9	10
	11. I- as look and dress different than Saudi culture.	10,12, 13, 28	22	15,25,26	30	18	24,25	9,10	7,14		10,12	24	10
	12. I- as how I see people in the UK look at me.	14,33	28	9,32,33	7,34,35	22,23	30,31	14,15	5,19, 20	24	11,17	29,30, 31	11
	13. I-a as having uncertainty of the U.K society.	20,21			1,13,18 ,19, 20				3	7,10,11, 12	6	1	6
I- as Saudi Arabian national identity	1. I- as holding my national identity.	15,16, 17,18,	8 ,30	8,10	3,12	8	9,10	3,4	6,17			12,15	9
	2. I- as maintaining Saudi culture.	39		9,18,19,20	31	7,19	12	11,12		21,22	21,13	3,4, 25	8
	3. I- as representative of Saudi culture.	27	11,21	23,24	27,28, 29	27	23		13,17	19,20, 25	9	7,14,22	10
	4. I- as how others look at me at home.	7,38	34	36,37	43,44	25,26	37	20,21	24	17,18, 29,30	23,24	35,36	11
Identity negotiation processes among positions	I- as past sense of self vs. present sense of self. (tension)		3								1,3		
	I-as UK different meaning of a Muslim (Tension)		4	14								2	
	I-as behaving different than people around me. (Tension)		16										
	I- as a need to change (Tension)			13,18,38	5	4,6	14,15, 16,17	5					
	I-as acting similar to people around me. (tension)						21,22, 32			31			
	I-as interacting normally with Saudis but lowering my beliefs to interact with people in the UK. (Tension)						32						
	I -as a Saudi coming from negative culture to positive UK culture. (tension)		19								5		
	I-as UK different meaning of look and dress (Tension)		22	15, 25			24,26						
	I- as maintaining Saudi culture (Tension)											3,4,5	
	I- as a representative of Saudi culture. (Tension)				27	27, 28	23				9		
	I- as an arising identity of being a Saudi person. (Tension)			10	3				17				

	I-as a Saudi. (Tension)							3,4					
	I-as a Saudi female with interacting Saudi opposite gender. (Tension)		32,33										
	I-as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender.							2,16					
	I-as a Saudi female interacting normally with non-Saudi males but having difficulties interaction with Saudi males. (Tension)			35							20		
	I-as having difficulty interacting with Saudi females. (Tension)				40,41, 42			18,19		4,27,28		34	
	I-as uncertainty of being in the UK. (Tension)	20,21			14,18, 19, 20, 13				2, 3		6	1	
	I-as independent (Tension)	5,6				12	2,3	8	10, 26				
	I-as having a male companion limited my mobility. (Tension)	30, 31											
	I-as hiding my Muslim identity against the potential risk. (Tension)	10,11											
	I-as how I see people in the UK look at me, and my Hijab. (Tension)	14									11		
	I-as how I see people in the UK look at me (Tension)								5			30,31	
	I-as how people look at me at home. (Tension)								24	18,29, 30			
	I-as questioning things around me and back home. (Tension)											10, 28	
	I-as UK different meaning of education in the UK. (Tension)							9					

Participants' biographical information, topic areas of tensions:

	Age	Programme of study	Length of time in UK	Expressed Tensions codes	Topic areas of tensions
P1f	31	Ph.D.	2 years	20,21	I-as uncertainty of being in the UK Vs. Enjoy new life
				5,6	I-as Independent Vs. Family orientation back home.
				30, 31	I-as having a male companion Vs. Limited mobility
				10,11	I-as hiding my Muslim identity Vs. Potential risk
				14	I-as how I see people in the UK look at me Vs. My look with Hijab
P2f	30	Ph.D.	3 years	3	I-as past sense of self Vs. present sense of self.
				4	I-as UK different meaning of Muslim Vs. Saudi meaning of Muslim
				16	I-as as different than people around me Vs. painful change
				19	I-as a Saudi coming from negative culture Vs. positive UK culture
				22	I-as UK different meaning of look and dress Vs. Saudi meaning of look and dress
				32,33	I-as a Saudi female interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender
P3f	33	Ph.D.	7 years	14	I-as UK different meaning of Muslim Vs. Saudi meaning of Muslim
				13,18,38	I-as a need to change Vs. Maintaining home culture
				15, 25	I-as UK different meaning of look and dress Vs. Saudi meaning of look and dress
				10	I-as an arising identity of being a Saudi Vs. uncertainty of being a Saudi after coming to the UK.
				35	I-as a Saudi female interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender
P4m	25	Bachelor	5 years	5	I-as a need to change Vs. Feel stranger back home
				27	I-as a representative of Saudi culture Vs. Receiving criticisms
				3	I-as an arising identity of being a Saudi Vs. losing home culture practices
				40,41, 42	I-as a Saudi male interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender
				13, 14,18, 19, 20,	I-as uncertainty of being in the UK Vs. Excitement of new life in the UK
P5m	31	Ph.D.	1 years	4,6	I-as a need to change Vs. Being isolated.
				27, 28	I-as a representative of Saudi culture Vs. Receiving criticisms
				12	I-as independent study style in the UK Vs. Home study style

P6f	30	Ph.D.	4 years	12, 14,15, 16,17	I-as a need to change Vs. Being isolated and unaccepted	
				21,22, 32	I-as acting similar to people around me Vs. being isolated	
				32	I-as a Saudi female interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender	
				24,26	I-as UK different meaning of look and dress Vs. Saudi meaning of look and dress	
				23	I-as a representative of Saudi culture Vs. not fitting in the UK culture	
				2,3	I-as independent Vs. Family orientation back home	
P7m	30	Ph.D.	2 years	5	I-as a need to change Vs. feelings of not fitting in	
				3,4	I-as a Saudi Vs. feel lost and isolated from the rest of the world	
				2,16	I-as a Saudi male interacting with opposite gender Vs. lack of communication	
				18,19	I-as a Saudi male interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender	
				8	I-as independent Vs. Loneliness	
				17	I-as an arising identity of being a Saudi Vs. Questioning national identity	
P8f	33	Ph.D.	4 years	2, 3	I-as uncertainty of being in the UK Vs. Achieving educational goals	
				10,26	I-as independent Vs. Family and society orientation back home	
				5	I-as how I see people in the UK look at me	
				24	I-as how people look at me at home.	
				9	I-as UK different meaning of education in the UK	
				31,32	I-as acting similar to people around me Vs. Not adapt with the new environment	
P9m	30	Ph.D.	10 years	4,27,28	I-as a Saudi male interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender	
				18,29, 30	I-as how people look at me at home.	
				1,3	I-as past sense of self Vs. present sense of self	
P10f	35	MSc	2 years	5	I-as a Saudi coming from negative culture Vs. positive UK culture	
				9	I-as a representative of Saudi culture	
				20	I-as a Saudi female interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender	
				6	I-as uncertainty of being in the UK Vs. Enjoy new life	
				11	I-as how I see people in the UK look at me	
				3	I-as UK different meaning of Muslim Vs. Saudi meaning of Muslim	
P11m	28	MSc	1 years	3,4,5	I-as maintaining Saudi culture	
				34	I-as a Saudi male interacting with Saudi opposite gender Vs. UK opposite gender	
				1	I-as uncertainty of being in the UK	
				30,31	I-as how I see people in the UK look at me	
				10, 28	I-as questioning things around me and back home.	

I-positions and related voices' quotes: I- as a Saudi person in the UK

Table a: I-position and related voices' quotes:

	I-as improved myself in the UK
P1	1. I think since I start living by my own here in UK I discovered how much I can be a responsible person, so you might know that you are a responsible person but when you are in the situation you can be sure 100% that you are responsible because I wasn't like responsible only about my studying but I was responsible as well about my flat about my accommodation and that include everything. Including if I had any problems with the <u>neighbour</u> if I had any problem with the machines in the house, if I had problems with the bills and the companies, and then even responsibility of taking care of myself because I am living by my own, so I have to take care of my health about my financial status about my safety and about everything. 2. I found in myself that I know that I am a very strong person. I can handle a lot, but I have been in a very bad situation and I think if I was less strong or I was a bit weak I think I was like taking my things back home because I have been in a very bad situation either in academic situation like a very, the fear of failing or the disappointed and the frustrating that things are not going well. And then or in the other way the start in being alone in like a very <u>alone</u>. I do not want to say like difficult community but living alone and I have to face everything by my own and there is no mum or dad even, there is no support, so I have to be 100% depending in yourself, 4. I become more stronger the view of the life become more mature maybe and the third thing that become more responsible and even I was I become more trustworthy from my family. 22. I believed in myself my abilities, one of the mean things I really learned here to believe in yourself and there <u>is</u> nothings called that you can't do.
P2	2. While I was in Saudi Arabia, I did not have this broad understanding, but by coming to the UK, by actually making mistakes and learning from those mistakes, I learn a lot. I think my understanding of myself has changed a lot in the UK. I mean, I can say before coming to the UK I did not know exactly who I am, but after I came to the UK, I learned so much about myself. It's not that I ... it's because in the UK there are many things to explore and try. In Saudi Arabia, I worked as a teacher, as an assistant, teacher assistant at the Saudi University. 3. I learned so much during that experience, I learnt so much about myself. But I don't have so many things to try in Saudi Arabia, apart from going to school and then getting back But, by being in the UK, by interacting with the Muslim community, and people from different countries. I learned so much, yes. 13. I would say I think this experience has had the most impact in my life because it has changed so much about myself, especially in terms of <u>self love</u> or <u>self respect</u>.
P3	2. If I want to tell you about the benefits that I have from my living here in the UK, maybe I can say this scholarship make me refined myself again, my view about myself, Goals, hobbies, and priorities in my life. 5. Also, the benefits from being here in the UK, I realized that I'm really good, for example, in making relationship, making public relationship, and <u>also</u> I discovered myself as a good a tourist guide and I can do logistics support to groups. I can't say it's 100% positive experience. It has ups and downs. 16. I think before, I was like a disable from practicing normal life, really, I mean this, I was disabled to examine the life around me. But when I come here, I know that what I am good at, what I'm not good at.
P4	6. When I look back to 2013 I can see myself as very close minded, I wouldn't see anything else that my parents or my community wouldn't be agreeing to so I would always say "we're not familiar with it, we don't do that back home. Well, my parents, my community, my friends, never done that. Why do people do that?" I've noticed a lot of <u>behaviour</u> changing coming to me when I came to the U.K., at (city) especially, when you come to the bus and you see people queuing before the bus arriving, this was like, why would people do that? <u>There's</u> rules that are not obvious, but people do have rules to respect the space of each other.

	21. I remember I applied to a UK university. I'd like to study here. I find a life that I kicked out myself from the circle of being spoiled to the circle of being responsible. 22. I felt everything that I had was necessarily was so stupid, like so spoiled, you don't need that thing anymore, why would you need that thing? Especially when you come here and the Easts people turn into eighteen or nineteen, they literally going to go work everywhere. 23. I mean, as I said previously, it changed me a lot, I think it change even my actions to things, my action to the situation and problem, issues, my judgmental to people, it changed the way that I think, how should it be, and the way that I see other people how should it be. 723=260
P5	14. Being like social. I think is really important here like ... The social activities like some of them like is mandatory and some of them are like optional we as like in our culture most of the ... We do have like kind of formal things but, is the formal is not like for social just formal things. But, here like in the department I have some social things, for the whole department, for the lab itself there's like social things for the college itself, for the friends itself so, this kind of things is help me to develop like a social skill which is important for the life itself not just for the person or for the study itself.
P6	18. I was thought I'm coming here only for education, I don't want to change anything. Just for school but no they change me in a very different ways like <u>in</u> a very good way. Knowing other people, they change my thoughts, my knowledge of, for example, other religions for other people, their behaviour. Sometimes we understand things wrongly because of, for example we know them from movies only but when I came here, I learn more better.
P7	7. And most of the time, I am in front of the desktop or facing my rig trying to run some experiments. So that thing it's really boring, boring as hell. But, the good side of it, it changed me a lot. It made me mature. I thought about myself a million times during these two years. I have time to sit with myself and speak to myself and see where is <u>my strengths</u>, where is my weakness, and how to develop myself basically.
P8	18. being independent. Being decision making in terms of all life decisions that you do in your daily life. Solving problems, if something, because you are here alone. This all goes back to being <u>independent</u> I guess. 25. I think it goes back to the independent part. Of course, yes, before coming here I was very reliant on the family, on the support that we have in Saudi Arabia from my parents, my siblings, my whole community. Since living here for too long, I feel I can do things normally or easily that I wouldn't know how to do it before. For example, taking care of the house, the bills, traveling from one place to the other, driving.
P9	6. I feel like ... I wouldn't say what I was doing was wrong or what I was practicing was wrong, but I say it's a different perspective. Now, I feel I'm a better person, than I was before Britain. 9. being religious or more religious before coming here, it wasn't a choice. It was how the community is. you just move ahead with the same, through the same direction that the community goes through. When I came here, I changed a lot of things, because I had the chance to develop my own <u>perspective</u>. I don't see that contradicts with what I was before. I think so. I'm not completely different person. I'm still the same person, but I'm more advanced person, I think. In my ways of thinking, <u>analysing</u> things, critical way of thinking. It's a development, rather than a change. 16. I feel like I'm more comfortable now, as a person. More confident in myself, in my abilities. I passed these 10 years of experience in the UK and in every year, there is a challenging task to do. Whether, it's academic tasks or life tasks and I was able to pass all those difficulties, so if I passed them all, I should be able to pass any other difficulties in the future. 579= 216
P10	2. Actually, for me before moving, especially a female, I was dependent. I was like a person from, you can say, second degree citizen. And I have to take somewhat decisions for everything I want to make. I was not sure of what I want to do or what I want to say, even. 3. after coming here, I've become something different. I have to take decisions. It was so difficult in the beginning, because I'm not used to. I feel like I want someone to decide, because I'm not used to doing that before. But by being with friends it is giving me some confidence, and also the life here gives you the opportunity and this confidence that you must be like that to continue living here.

	5. Because of the culture, and the dominance of men there. <u>So</u> they don't give you chance to do that. And they feel humiliated if they let you do it, because they feel like we can do everything for you. And they have to do everything. But for me it was like, I want to have decisions. <u>So</u> I didn't find any contradictory here. I found myself here. I feel more relaxed about these things that I used to feel complexity in my country. But now it is not a complexity anymore.
P11	10. I always try to question things I don't believe in. I learned this in the U.K., because you see a different culture. I start questioning the things that I used to believe in, and then I say what are the things that you believe that's good or bad or there's a base for it. Evaluate what I believe in. What is the logic behind it? And when I looked for example, I mentioned earlier about hijab, there's one point five million Muslims and I would say just maybe thirty to forty million of them wear niqab so, we cannot just generalize that we are much more Muslim than the other Muslims. And there is some logic behind <u>it</u> so I have ... And then I looked for other scholars from different countries to see the logic behind it and I came to realize that the idea of what is the logic behind hijab and then I came to the conclusion.

Table b: I-position and related voices' quotes:

	I- as an open-minded in the UK.
P1	23. I think it gave me the feeling that I can deal with different people so whenever there the background of them. And I discover new things in my personality that I am not a judgement of person at all because I like I dealt with a very different people from different background with a different thinking way that I thought that disagree with them but I was always like respecting them.
P2	None
P3	None
P4	9. it took time for me to change my personality and my point of view of judgements and how should I judge people, and also accepting the other opinion of people. Sometime because I'm a believer, I'm Muslim, so sometimes Atheist will come talk to me about how God exists, why God exists, and that kind of question I cannot ask in Saudi Arabia, or I cannot ask community that believes in the same thing because to be honest, the community of Saudi Arabia and most of gulf countries we're very closed community, we don't have a lot of international people around us, we don't have a lot of people, we don't have mixed cultures, we have the same culture. 10. when I came here, they have mixed cultures, they have a lot of different, there is no similarity, you probably can't find difference in one family, probably can find the mother is Christian, the son will be Atheist, and it's different. Everyone has their own personality; however, the problem with accepting the other opinion, I remember until now I had a lot of discussions with people but in the beginning I was so arrogant to where I was like, "no, I am the truth and I am the right one, and you're doing the mistake, and we have to fix that." I think also with getting older as well, not even living in U.K. but living in U.K. did affect that but also getting older and giving thoughts to things and seeing that you cannot say that you're always right, you cannot say that you're always doing the right thing and what you have done in your country or what you have done in your society is the correct thing and other people are false.
P5	20. I have been living like for long time and I don't meet Saudis which is like ... I thought like is impossible in the beginning. But, after like I get used to and that thing is like something different. Because when social with people from different backgrounds you know like they ..., the differences and the topics that you discuss the ideas, even like the angles that you think about many topics. Those kind of things like yes to develop. Would that have an impact on me as Saudi? I wouldn't answer this until like go back or like I get another Saudi group to see like how different ... I mean before and after this kind of experience. 21. Politic things. Or like religious things sometimes we have like one school that we follow like we think that's the most. But, here like after living some people like it's become normal for you to accept whatever they think, whatever they thought is just not a personal things. <u>But</u>, which is like interesting like I mean like ... When we have like a discussion about religious for example religion for example. Sometimes we have the idea that they are like facing this about this religion because they just want to make it looks not good but, after the time I think like just discuss because we need to discuss and to see like opinions and differences- just to see more ... Just we have discussion to see from different angles nothing more than that.
P6	19. I have to be more open to the other culture before I judge them. become more, more open open-minded. Open-minded to accept any people before I judge if they are good or they are bad like to have more details from them. They change me also in thinking and everywhere in every

	culture there are a good and bad person. Before I just thought all of them are bad because they drink so they do bad things.
P7	None
P8	None
P9	14. before coming here, I was more ... I didn't like the idea of talking with homosexuals, for example but now I feel more comfortable. For example: Having a gay classmate is easier for me to understand him, but before that no, because we don't have a society which gays can communicate with you and tell you they are gay. They cannot show it but in here, from the first day. Especially, Brighton is full of gays and lesbians. You see them every day, kissing in the street. Men kissing each other, women kissing each other. The first time, you don't like it, but by the time you communicate with them. You talk to them, some of them are ... They work in my school of English and I found they are normal people. It's their choice, so I accepted them.
P10	None
P11	21. I think one of the things that I've learned a lot here is how to be open to new ideas. How to respect differences. I think it's in our human DNA to always to be ... I think that's engraved in our brains is that we don't like new things or changes, but when I come here, I see people, different cultures, different opinions about the topic and what I learned a lot is to how can you accept being criticized. How my opinion can be criticized and yet you don't take it personal. It's in my environment where I exchange ideas. I think this is something we really miss back home. 26. having accepted into the university being open mind. Appreciating and encouraging diversity and be for instance is something that I think we need to do back home, and I need to do with every interaction that I have instead of looking at the people that they are different to us or they are different <u>mind set</u> different. Different ways of looking at things. I should appreciate that instead of just attacking them, more looking, judge them.

Table c: I-position and related voices' quotes:

	I- as having freedom, independence and my voice heard
P1	5. Life there in Saudi really busy life, and I was like ok I need to go back to oxford it's really too much for me because I was living in a very quiet and it's depends just on M.J alone if she wants to sleep she can sleep now if she wants to put like a loud music she can put a loud music, and if she want to go out she can do that whatever she wants but now you have to take the permission from your dad and your mother and so funny because before <u>amoo</u>, before I come to here like one week I wanted to visit my sister and after <u>Magrab Slahh</u> so we were having our lunch and then I took my bag it's like I am in oxford and I am leaving to my sister house and then when father called me where are you going and I said to my sister and he said no one will go after 7:30 pm and I said OK it's still <u>Magrab</u> and he said no it is not Ramadan you will not go out now HHHH and then I looked to him and I said ok I will not insist ok you do not want me to go I will not go and I went to my room but I was really upset because you lift me here alone and I am used to go whenever I want and I go back home whenever I want and I can go out with my friends and I come back like 12 and 11 and you are not there with me and you are already give me the trust so why when I am there with you in the same house you are starting to tell me to go or no to go but,.... <u>yaa</u>, this is one of the bad things that I think it's been impacting me as personality and I get like adopt with the situation that I am handling everything by my won and for three years I am used that I do not have anyone behind me telling me to go or not to go or to do this or not to do this, so it's one of the things that I am worried about from now that when I go back home and settle up in Saudi I will have to go in this situation. 6. freedom here, freedoms of what I can do and whatever I want to do. It makes me feel very happy very satisfied in here and its totally the opposite there it makes me feel very mm very controlled and there is something which is really funny but one of the <u>thing</u> that I think I really get used about the weather here. 817= 467
P2	5. I thought maybe I, too, need to become an independent thinker, not because I come from Saudi <u>Arabia</u>. I have to agree with my government all the time. So, I can be, and this is one of the major things that has changed in my personality. Being an independent thinker, when you have an issue, or anything you want to deal with, you have to evaluate it, and then you have to come up with your own point of view, or your own understanding. You can't just disagree with your own government, or your own culture, and you have to respect the point of view others, even though if they are Muslims, they can have different point of view.