

DISSERTATION

COMING HOME AFTER STUDYING ABROAD: HOW SAUDI FEMALE SCHOLARS RE-
ADAPT, RE-ADJUST, AND TRANSFER THEIR KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

COMING HOME AFTER STUDYING ABROAD: HOW SAUDI FEMALE SCHOLARS RE-ADAPT, RE-ADJUST, AND TRANSFER THEIR KNOWLEDGE

Studying in another country offers scholars exposure to new cultures and opportunities to learn ways to reform systems and increase knowledge in their countries. Upon returning home, repatriate scholars are expected to utilize what they have learned, which involves implementing or transferring their newly acquired knowledge to their employer institutions. However, repatriate scholars face colleagues who are resistant to change, and their home institutions lack the appropriate environment and tools to help them transfer their acquired knowledge successfully. This narrative study examined the stories and transformations of female assistant professors who travelled from Saudi Arabia to the United States or the United Kingdom to further their education. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the six participants and one follow-up email was sent. Four of the participants worked at public universities and two worked at private universities in Saudi Arabia. The data were analyzed using both thematic analysis and constant data comparative analysis. The results showed that all the participants went through reverse culture shock. Parents expressed their sorrow and concern for their children as they struggled to adjust. These are the recommendations based on the study's participants. Patience is the key to overcoming challenges. It takes time and a positive attitude to reach goals and to get new ideas implemented. Do not attempt to implement change at a fast pace because the fast pace overwhelms the students and alienates peers. Participants of the study also had an easier adjustment to their home culture when they chose an environment that was similar to the environment abroad.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad helps students experience the world first-hand (Warner, 2009). University administrators are encouraging more international exposure to higher education by providing students with the opportunity to study abroad (Hamza, 2010). Universities in developing countries routinely sponsor students to study abroad in order to develop expertise in various disciplines for the purpose of creating and informing growth and progress in their own educational systems upon return (Subramani, 2000).

Saudi Arabia is a developing country that is enhancing its educational system through the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, which currently has 142,628 students studying in universities around the world (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). In 2012, there were 23,973 Saudi students studying in the United Kingdom (UK) and 99,656 Saudi students studying in the United States of America (USA) (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). In the USA, 85,223 of the Saudi students were on scholarships and 14,433 were self-sponsored. Of the 99,656 Saudi students studying in the USA, 3,110 students were doctoral students. Of the 3,110 doctoral students, 1,977 students were male and 1,133 were female (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). The majority of doctoral students were sponsored through the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program, which is charged with the mission to sponsor qualified Saudis in the best universities around the world in order to bring back a high level of academic and professional people. The intent is that students will become competent individuals ready to work in universities, in governmental positions, or in the private sectors within Saudi Arabia (Alomar, 2010; Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2012).

Repatriate scholars are an important component of the “international knowledge system” (Altbach, 1989, p. 126). They represent a vital resource of valuable expertise, knowledge, and

new perspectives to their organizations back home (Altbach, 1989; Oddou, Osland, & Blakeney, 2008). However, when students initially move to a different country, the stress of adjusting to a new culture and the exposure to a new environment can be challenging and frustrating (Brown, 2008). Immediately upon arrival in a new culture, international students face pressures to assimilate (Adler, 1981; Subramani, 2000). They need to learn quickly to understand the “demands of daily living and adjust to a new system of communication and behavior”, which leaves most of the students feeling like outsiders and experiencing culture shock (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007, p. 13).

Upon completion of their studies, many of these students return to their home countries (Adler, 1981; Subramani, 2000), bringing back different perspectives, skills, ideas, discussions, and problem solving skills that can enhance institutions and educational systems in their home countries (Szkudlarek, 2010). The exposure to new cultures prompts introspection about their home cultures and encourages creative thought about ways to reform the home country’s educational systems (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007). Repatriates attempt to transfer what they have learned into practice (Al-Mehawes, 1984). In spite of the advantages of studying abroad, repatriates face difficulties during re-entry to their home countries.

During the process of re-entry, repatriates encounter difficulties and discomfort in re-adjusting and re-adapting to their home country (Adler, 1981; Arthur, 2003; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Subramani, 2000). They face a number of factors that “influence the distress experienced upon return, as well as psychological re-adjustment and overall satisfaction with the transition” (Szkudlarek, 2010, p. 5). One of these factors is the negative attitude of home-country individuals towards repatriates, which often results in institutional discrimination or resistance towards the newly gained knowledge that was acquired abroad (Szkudlarek, 2010). Because of

the resistance, repatriates encounter difficulty in making use of, or transferring this acquired knowledge (Oddou, Osland, & Blakeney, 2008). Additionally, repatriates often experience reverse culture shock and unforeseen barriers. Gaw (2000) stated, “Common problems reported in the literature, for at least some students, are academic problems, cultural identity conflicts, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties” (p. 84). Even though the re-entry experience differs from one individual to another, relevant literature states that almost every returnee experiences reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000).

Problem Statement

Studying in another country offers scholars exposure to new cultures and opportunities to learn ways to reform systems and increase knowledge in their countries. Repatriates bring back different perspectives, skills, and ideas that can enhance institutions and educational systems. Furthermore, they develop a deeper, more realistic understanding of their home countries and have the ability to stand outside the box and provide alternative solutions and better visions to their colleagues and institutions. Upon returning home, repatriate scholars are expected to utilize what they have learned, which involves implementing or transferring their newly acquired knowledge to their employer institutions. However, repatriate scholars face colleagues who are resistant to change, and their home institutions lack the appropriate environment and tools to help them transfer their acquired knowledge successfully.

Many studies have focused on re-entry experiences for corporate repatriates, knowledge management, spouses, students, missionaries, Peace Corps, third culture children, and returning immigrants, but no study has been done on how repatriates can re-adjust smoothly and easily into their work environments when returning to their home countries to teach (Antal, 2001; Adler, 1986; Cannon, 2000; Gaw, 2000; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Malewski, 2005; Raschio, 1987;

Storti, 2001). Returning repatriate scholars need tips, tools, methods, processes, and support that will help them overcome the challenges and barriers they face when attempting to perform such a transfer.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative study is to examine the stories and transformations of female assistant professors who travelled from Saudi Arabia to the USA or the UK to further their education. Male participants were excluded to honor Saudi Arabia's cultural norms in gender segregation. The study examined their stories to learn the challenges and obstacles these women faced while re-entering Saudi Arabia. The goal of the study is to develop an in-depth understanding of their stories and challenges. By understanding the stories of the participants, this study can then offer recommendations to universities, institutions, and families to help female assistant professors to re-adjust to their own cultures and help them benefit from their experiences and transformations. In addition, this study will lead to suggestions for how to help repatriate scholars implement the knowledge and skills they have learned abroad.

Theoretical Framework

In order to accomplish this purpose, this study will use qualitative methods from an adult learning perspective. Specifically, it uses the transformational learning theory presented by Mezirow (2000), which focuses on both the individual meaning and the social meaning of frames of reference. It was also informed by Tisdell's (2003) cultural-spiritual view of transformational learning that examines learners in different cultural contexts and situations.

Mezirow (2000) wrote that transformational learning is:

The process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable to change, and reflective so that they will prove more true or justified to guided action. (p. 8)

Transformational learning occurs when there is a change in one's behavior, attitude, perspectives, or cultural identity (Tisdell, 2003).

Transformational learning theory explains how adults incorporate new knowledge, perspectives, skills, or practices into their perception of the world as they engage in learning opportunities (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). According to Hamza (2010), "It reflects on the meaning of what they are learning, and they might engage in evaluating their familiar values, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions" (p. 52). Transformational learning occurs for participants and the researcher when participants reflect on the meaning of their experiences and when they examine the participants in different cultural contexts and situations. Mezirow's (2000) and Tisdell's (2003) transformational learning theories both help to explain the participants' experiences in another culture and their professional preparation for re-entering their home culture. The literature review discusses transformational learning in-depth in relation to reverse culture shock.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. (A) What are the transformational stories of Saudi women returning from studying abroad as assistant professors and seeking to implement their newly acquired knowledge? (B) To what extent did they experience transformation personally and professionally?
2. What challenges did these returning Saudi women face in attempting to implement their newly acquired knowledge?
3. What strategies helped the returning Saudi women overcome the barriers they faced?
4. What role does culture play in these stories?

Researcher's Perspective

I am a female from Saudi Arabia who was raised in a well-educated family where education was believed to be one of the more important aspects in one's life. I lived in Canada while my father was studying oncology. When he finished his education, our family returned to Saudi Arabia, and I watched him attempt to implement what he learned in Canada at the hospital where he worked in Saudi Arabia. I also observed several other family members who travelled abroad to learn, grow professionally, and flourish personally. They came back with different experiences and knowledge, eager to share and transfer with anyone who would listen. However, when they returned, they experienced reverse culture shock, faced barriers, and encountered resistance within themselves and others. Eventually, most of their new knowledge was *not* transferred because of cultural differences and resistance to change. The re-entry experiences were dreadful, and they felt lost, rejected, and demoralized. After observing those experiences, I asked myself how scholars re-entering their home countries could transfer their knowledge effectively and successfully to everyone's benefit.

Significance of the Study

Between the launch of the King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program in 2005 and the end of 2012, there were a total of 3,433 doctoral students studying in the USA, and a total of 3,513 doctoral students in the UK. For the most part, these students will go back to teach at universities in Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). The scholarship program is continuing through 2020, guaranteeing that the number of students studying abroad will increase.

Studying abroad and learning in a different culture and country is rewarding, yet challenging. According to many studies, most travelers, sojourners, and international students

experience reverse culture shock when re-entering their home culture (Adler, 1981; Altbach, 1989; Gaw, 2000; Hamza, 2010). Moreover, repatriate scholars tend to keep their experiences to themselves and do not share problems they encountered abroad; thus, new repatriates do not benefit from others' experiences (Bodycott & Walker, 2000). There is little data on the changes that repatriate scholars experience in their foreign assignments (Oddou et al., 2008).

To begin filling that gap in data, this study examined the stories of expatriate assistant professors with the intent of helping eliminate the emotions of distress and reverse culture shock for future repatriates by recommending tips and guidance to returning scholars. Potentially, it will be beneficial to students, to their families and friends, and to the institutions for which they will work.

Assumptions

In order to complete this research, the following assumptions were made about the data and the participants' memories. The data collected from the participants for this study was based on truths that were valid at the time of the data collection. It is also assumed that the participants provided repatriate experiences that will offer personal and professional benefits to the study.

Participants were asked to recall memories of their re-entry experiences and their re-adjustment to their home country, specifically, into the institution for which they are working at the time of the interview. It was assumed that their experiences are recallable and that participants provided honest and accurate data.

Delimitations

The data for this study was collected in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia and from women only. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant and one follow-up email was sent. The intent was to get a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and

stories with each interview. However, the participants were limited to women from the Western Region who had studied in the USA or the UK due to convenience. Therefore, the recommendations and suggestions that come out of this study would only be transferable to repatriate females from the Western Region and not to the other regions. This is particularly true in this case because the customs and living styles vary considerably among the different regions in Saudi Arabia. Repatriated scholars who study in countries other than the USA and the UK may also have different experiences, which could limit the transferability of this study and were not included.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the terms used will have the following definitions:

Culture is defined as an “acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior” (Spradley, 1980, p. 22). According to Herman (1996), culture offers a cognitive map, a uniform view of sets of mutual beliefs, values, and behaviors.

According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), culture:

Consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment of artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values (p. 27, as cited in Herman, 1996)

Culture consists of seven factors that can help to understand, interpret, and anticipate another culture: personal identity, power differential, attitude to change, notion of time, communication style, etiquette, and emotional expressions (Malewski, 2005).

Home is defined as a place where people were born or raised or a place where people speak their native language. Also, it can be defined as a place that consists of familiar places, familiar people, routines, and predictable patterns of interactions (Storti, 1990). Storti (1990) describes the concept of home:

It suggests a place and a life all set up and waiting for us; all we have to do is move in. But home isn't merely a place we inhabit; it's a lifestyle we construct (wherever we go), a pattern of routines, habits, and behaviors associated with certain people, places, and objects—all confined to a limited area or neighborhood. (p. 100)

Knowledge is “data and information...ideas, rules, procedures, intuition, experiences, and models that have been developed over time and that guide actions and decisions” (Kostova, Athanassiou, & Berdrow, 2004, p. 278). Knowledge comes from perceptions and experiences; it is one of the most valuable assets that organizations hold (Crowne, 2009). However, knowledge itself is not important until it can be shared within the organization (Kang, Rhee, & Kang, 2010).

Knowledge transfer is “an iterative [process] between senders and knowledge recipients” (Tang, Mu, & MacLachlan, 2010, p. 1,586). It is also the ability to appropriately apply and transfer the knowledge and skills learned in one setting to a different setting (Holton & Baldwin, 2003; Royer, 1979; Thomas, 2007). Transfer is a dynamic process where “the original knowledge can become transformed through the processes of socialization, articulation, internalization, and so forth” (Oddou et al., 2008, p. 184). Successfully transferring the knowledge is not a simple process because not all knowledge can be captured easily and because every individual and organization views or interprets the knowledge from a different perspective, depending on varied backgrounds, needs, and experiences (Holton & Baldwin, 2003; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005; Oddou et al., 2008).

Sojourners are travelers who were relocated to another country for less than one year (Shaheen, 2004).

Re-acculturation is the process of re-adjusting to one's home culture after living abroad for an extended amount of time (Martin, 1984).

Re-adjustment is the transitional period in which the repatriates experience problems and changes as they try to settle into their culture after their absence from Saudi Arabia.

Repatriates are people who have been overseas for more than one year, but less than ten years, and are now back in their home countries (Shaheen, 2004).

Reverse culture shock “is the process of re-adjusting, re-aculturating, and re-assimilating into one’s own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time” (Gaw, 2000, p. 83).

Tacit and Explicit Knowledge are the two types of knowledge that researchers have defined to be relevant and important to knowledge transfer (Crowne, 2009; Kang, Rhee & Kang, 2010; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). *Tacit knowledge* is “information that is highly context specific and contains a personal quality; it is gained through education, experience, or experimentation but it is hard to transfer” (Crowne, 2009, p. 135). Also, it cannot be learned from documents or drawn from experiences (Kang, 2010). On the other hand, *explicit knowledge* is gained through education and is easy to transfer and communicate. It is also known as declarative and objective knowledge (Crowne, 2009; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Tacit knowledge is considered more valuable than explicit knowledge. When new knowledge is created, it is strongly tacit, which is difficult to share and transfer. Therefore, it needs to be gradually transformed into codified and explicit knowledge so it is easier to share and transfer (Kang et al., 2010). Although tacit knowledge can be codified, it is hard for recipients to learn the knowledge because of its complexity and unfamiliarity. It is complex because it is composed of various interdependent components. Complex knowledge is difficult for recipients to understand and requires much effort to transfer (Crowne, 2009; Kang et al., 2010). Kang et al. (2010) said, “If some knowledge is strange and unfamiliar to recipient organizations, then they perceive the knowledge as difficult and so must exert more effort to successfully transfer the knowledge” (p. 8,157).

Summary

One of the ways Saudi Arabia is enhancing its educational system is by sending thousands of students and educators with full scholarships to developed countries, specifically the UK and USA. However, when educators with scholarships return home, they tend to face obstacles and challenges in re-adjusting safely to their culture and in implementing the knowledge and skills they have learned abroad (Cannon, 2000). This chapter contained an explanation of the purpose and importance of this narrative study. Next, transformational learning theory was described, which is the theoretical framework that informed this study. Then, the researcher's perspective, assumptions, delimitations, and definitions for this study were elaborated.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Since 2005, Saudi Arabia has been sending Saudi students to the best universities in various countries around the world on full scholarships via the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. The aims of the scholarship program are to promote a higher level of academic and professional standards, exchange scientific education and cultural expertise with various countries, establish professional work environments, and enhance the level of vocational professionalism (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). However, upon returning with their degrees, repatriate scholars experience difficulties re-adapting and re-adjusting to the culture. Returning repatriate scholars need tips, tools, methods, processes, and support to help them overcome the challenges and barriers they face when attempting to perform such a transfer. The purpose of this narrative study is to examine the stories and transformations of female associate professors who travelled from Saudi Arabia to the USA and UK to further their education.

In this chapter, the concepts and literature around Saudi repatriate scholars re-entering Saudi Arabia will be reviewed. While much has been written about Saudi Arabia and some of it is quite controversial, the lens for this study is Saudi women in higher education. Therefore, the review will follow a brief introduction on Saudi Arabia, Islam, Saudi culture, and education in Saudi Arabia. It will also review the literature on Saudi women in higher education, which is limited. Although some of the literature is several years old, it is still accurate.

Next, change will be described, how it may affect people's values, and how resistance goes with change. Then, change within the women's sphere in Saudi Arabia, change in higher education, and changes that repatriates face during their re-entry process will be addressed. The discussion will then move to the different studies on culture shock and reverse culture shock.

Many of these studies focused on re-entry experiences for corporate repatriates, knowledge management, spouses, students, missionaries, Peace Corps, third-culture children, and returning immigrants. However, scholars' re-entry experiences are not as extensively studied (Szkudlarek, 2010). Therefore, in this literature review, studies done in knowledge management and business-related re-entry experiences were considered. The chapter will be concluded by a description of transformational learning theory.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a relatively young country that was established in 1932 by King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud (AlMunajjed, 1997; Hamdan, 2005; Long, 2005; Pompea, 2002). The Kingdom is a monarchy ruled by the Al-Saud family with the assistance of a council of ministers (Baki, 2004). The country occupies about eighty percent of the Arabian Peninsula. As of 2003, the population of Saudi Arabia was 38 million people, almost all of whom were Arabs and Muslims (AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005). Arabic is the official language and Islam is the official religion (Long, 2005; Pompea, 2002). The Saudi law is derived from Islam (Alkhazim, 2003; AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005; Pompea, 2002).

Before the country's establishment, it was divided into different regions with different political systems and cultural differences (Long, 2005). Although the regions are now united under one political system with religious homogeneity, "each region had developed its own historical consciousness and cultural patterns long before the Kingdom was consolidated under the Al Saud" (Long, 2005, p. 5). The different regions are: (a) Najd, a province that is located in the center of the peninsula and contains the capital city Riyadh; (b) Al Hijaz, the western province that contains the two holy cities Mecca and Al-Madinah and also Jeddah, which is an

important seaport on the coast of the Red Sea; (c) Asir; (d) the Eastern Province; (e) the Northern Province; and (f) Najran (Long, 2005; Wilson, 2004).

The discovery of oil in 1938 was a major catalyst that transformed the kingdom in various respects by enabling the government to develop programs for improved transportation, telecommunication, electric power, water, and education (Pompea, 2002). The discovery of oil also accelerated the development of the economic, demographic, and social fabric of the country (Pharaon, 2004). For example, modern industry and technical businesses were nurtured, which increased the growth of the middle class (Long, 2005; Pharaon, 2004; Pompea, 2002). Since the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia has experienced rapid demographic changes (Pharaon, 2004). The population has increased; people are moving from small villages to the cities, and the major cities are growing exponentially (Pharaon, 2004; Pompea, 2002).

Introduction to Islam

Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam, and Makkah is where the Prophet Mohammed was born in 610 A.D. (AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005). The Quran and the Hadith—the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed—are the guides for all Muslims in all personal and business matters (AlMunajjid, 1997). The word *Islam* is derived from the Arabic word *salam* which translates as *peace* (Long, 2005). Islam as a religion is based on the Five Pillars of Islam: (a) *Shahada*, which means “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammed—Peace Be Upon Him—is his messenger; (b) *Salat*, the ritual of praying five times a day; (c) *Zakat*, giving of alms; (d) *Sawm*, fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan; and (e) Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah in the month of Duh al-Hijjah for whomever is capable physically and financially (Long, 2005; Pharaon, 2004).

It is almost impossible to distinguish between the impact of Islam as a religion and the culture within Saudi Arabia (Long, 2005, p. 18). Doumato (1999) said:

Because of the ideological relationship between religion and state, it is crucial that the monarchy appear to rule in partnership with the scholars designated by the rulers as being best able to interpret Islamic law, and to appear to engage them in forming public policy. (p. 577)

Saudi Arabian Culture

The extended family is an important structural unit of society that is embedded in the traditional Islamic social, economic, and political values (Long, 2005). Long (2005) said, “Virtually all Saudis consider themselves members of an extended family” (p. 35). Male gender dominancy remained resistant to change until the oil bloom (AlMunajjed, 1997; Le Renard, 2008). In general, men traditionally viewed their role as provider and protector, while women’s role was taking care of and managing the household and raising the children; however, this is slowly changing (AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005). Saudi women are becoming “more visible within national media and national state” (Le Renard, 2008, p. 617).

Gender segregation is a strict social norm. Doumato (2003) said, “Segregation of unrelated men from women is held as the highest social value and given the force of law in every aspect of public life” (p. 241). All schools are segregated, and men and women are not allowed to work in the same buildings, companies, or institutions (Doumato, 2003). Gender segregation restricts Saudi women from many outlets and activities, but at the same time, it allows them a measure of freedom (Le Renard, 2008). According to Le Renard (2008):

Many young women prefer to work in segregated spaces, for various reasons: to feel more “comfortable” and “relaxed,” according to their own words, as they are used to frequenting female spaces most of the time; not to have to wear their ‘abaya and niqab (face cover) all day long; for religious reasons; or because their family or husband prefers so. (p. 626)

Yet, many qualified young women are currently looking for jobs in unsegregated environments within Saudi Arabia (e.g.: companies, banks, and hospitals) and want to live an independent professional life like women in the West (Doumato, 2003; Le Renard, 2008). Unsegregated private institutes are not prohibited by Saudi law (Long, 2005).

Education in Saudi Arabia

The first public schools for boys were established in 1935 (AlMunajjed, 1997; Rugh, 2002). By 1935, the government had formed a standardized structure for schools: six years for elementary, three years for intermediate, three years for secondary, followed by four years of college (Rugh, 2002). In 1960, King Faisal funded education for girls—seven years behind his funding of schools for boys (AlMunajjed, 1997; Doumato, 2003). In the beginning, school education for girls was focused on teaching religion and domestic roles (Rugh, 2002). Nowadays, the curricula in girls' schools are almost the same as boys' schools. The few differences include focusing on home economics for girls and physical education for boys (Doumato, 2003). The first university for men was founded in Riyadh in 1975, and the first university for women opened in Riyadh in 1979 in the fields of art and commerce (Hamdan, 2005). Saudi education has grown rapidly ever since; for example, it contains “increasing geographic and subject diversification, more emphasis on science, vocational training and study in English, increasing privatization and some increase in study abroad” (Rugh, 2002, p. 44). By the year 2000, there were seven universities and 141 colleges (Rugh, 2002).

The status of women in education is changing, and among the sixteen Arab countries, Saudi Arabia's female enrollment ranks fourth in schools and sixth in higher education (Rugh, 2002). In 2000, 56 percent of all students in different levels of education were female (Doumato, 2003). The number of female students has continued to increase despite the fact that there has

not been an increase in employment for females (Doumato, 2003). Also, the Ministry of Higher Education is sending women abroad to further their studies (Hamdan, 2005). In the 1970's Saudi Arabia started sending only university faculty on scholarship abroad. However, in 2005 the King Abdullah Scholarship Program opened the scholarships to all disciplines and fields (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012).

For the past nine years, Saudi Arabia has been responding to national and global demands for improving higher education, with the intent of encouraging “political participation, promoting economic growth, increasing foreign-direct investments and expanding employment opportunities” (Al-Mubarak, 2011, p. 428). Since 2003, King Abdullah has emphasized education within Saudi Arabia and has tripled the education budget to fifteen billion dollars (Glowacki-Dudka & Treff, 2011). In 2006, the King launched the King Abdullah Sponsored Program to sponsor Saudi scholars studying in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, China, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, and India (Al-Mubarak, 2011).

Work Outside the Home for Saudi Women

Among the critical issues in Saudi Arabia is the issue of allowing women the freedom to work in different sectors of society (Bahry, 1982). The majority of working women are in the teaching sector (Bahry, 1982; Doumato, 2003; Le Renard, 2008; Pharaon, 2004). Saudi women still constitute a small portion of the labor force, despite the fact that in the late 1990's opportunities in employment, education, and civic activities began to emerge (Pharaon, 2004). Small achievements have been made in the health and education fields during this same time period (Doumato, 2003; Pharaon, 2004). Saudi women have entered other fields as well; for example, some have opened their own tailoring establishments or hair dressing salons, while others became employees in unsegregated companies and organizations (Bahry, 1982). The

opportunities for women vary throughout Saudi Arabia, with a broader range of acceptable activities in the large urban cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah, and Mekkah (Bahry, 1982). Women in Saudi Arabia are making a growing impact on the economy (Pharaon, 2004).

Opportunities for women have increased during the last fifty years, Le Renard (2008) said:

Both women's educational level and (daily) activities have completely changed over the last 50 years; at the same time, most of these activities have developed inside a 'female sphere' consisting of a mosaic of new female space where entry is forbidden to men. (p. 610)

These women's spheres include cultural circles, conferences, newspapers, and charity organizations (Doumato, 2003; Le Renard, 2008; Pharaon, 2004). Since 2004-2005, the government is recommending and promoting young women to work, creating female sections in government administration and private firms (Le Renard, 2008). While King Abdullah was the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, he stated that the government would not leave doors closed for women, as long as opening these doors and providing these opportunities would not involve any violation or conflict with Saudi religion or ethics (Doumato, 1999).

Despite the progress in employment, Saudi women face difficulties with transportation since they are not allowed to drive vehicles or ride bicycles (AlMunajjed, 1997; Bahry, 1982; Doumato, 2003; Pharaon, 2004). They are also not offered specializations in fields like engineering and geology because graduates of these fields would carry out work in public arenas where segregation would be impossible or completely non-practical (Bahry, 1982; Doumato, 2003; Pharaon, 2004). Furthermore, work outside the home for Saudi women does not come as a first priority; for most women, family and home come first (Bahry, 1982; Pharaon, 2004). Most importantly, women still exist as a large population of underutilized labor (Pharaon, 2004).

Saudi Women in Higher Education

When someone from the USA hears the phrase *higher education*, the keywords freedom of thought, liberty, identity formation, political activities, social networking, and professional development might come to mind. These concepts may be true in the West; however, in Saudi Arabia the concept of higher education is based on the development of the Saudi culture (Profanter, Cate, Maestri, & Piacentini, 2010). Therefore, girls are not allowed to study in fields like engineering, geology, and construction (AlMunajjed, 1997; Doumato, 2003; Pharaon, 2004; Profanter, et al., 2010). Furthermore, women do not receive the same quality of education as men. One example of why this is true is that over 34 percent of the male instructors hold a doctorate, while only three percent of the female instructors hold a doctorate (Hamdan, 2005; AlMunajjed, 1997). This is significant because due to gender segregation; only male instructors are allowed to teach male students and female instructors for female students.

For the same reason, all administrative and teaching staff at the girls' colleges and universities are female (Al-Bassam, 1984). There are eleven universities with women's sections (Glowacki-Dudka & Treff, 2011). Al-Bassam (1984) described the administrative structure, "Each college has a dean that is appointed by the president on recommendation of the vice-president for three years, and an assistant-dean appointed by the president on recommendation of the dean for two years. The deanship is renewable once" (p. 256). Subsequently, men and women do not meet in Saudi Arabian universities, and meetings are never held between male and female administrators. However, communication is sought through telephone conversations and official letters, making the system very bureaucratic and cumbersome (Al-Bassam, 1984; Doumato, 2003; Pharaon, 2004).

All Saudi universities are fully funded by the government, and there are no tuition fees, except for private universities (Alkhazim, 2003). The teaching staff in higher education are divided into five ranks, from lowest to highest these are: demonstrator, lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor (Al-Bassam, 1984). All universities and colleges for both men and women have a uniform set of regulations and policies. For example, they all have uniform policies in employment, salary, ranking, and promotions (Alkhazim, 2003). Women share libraries with men but are allowed to use the libraries only one day a week, during which time men are not allowed in the building (Hamdan, 2005; Roskey, 2006).

The culture within the women's colleges and universities in Saudi Arabia differs from the university culture in the West because people in Saudi Arabia interact and communicate differently (Glowacki-Dudka, Usman, & Treff, 2008). Communication in Saudi Arabia is high-context communication that involves formal talk and the use of indirect and ambiguous words (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2008; Storti, 2001). People are "expected to communicate in ways that maintain harmony in their in-groups" (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2008, p. 45). Motivation for behavior is driven by the effort to be acceptable within a group or society (Glowacki & Treff, 2011). Subordinates are required to be submissive when speaking to someone higher in rank. If a subordinate is assertive to someone higher, it is considered disloyal and inappropriate. Collaborative teamwork and sharing are not strong aspects, and subordinates expect structure with clear and explicit directions from authority (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2008). Shaming is perceived as an effective way to modify an individual's behavior (Glowacki & Treff, 2011). However, there is a big push for change within the Saudi women's sphere, particularly in higher education. Before discussing change in Saudi specifically, the review will now turn to change and how it may affect people's values.

Change

Change brings a variety of responses among individuals and can cause dissatisfaction, inconsistency, or intolerance, depending on the individual's current situation (Fullan, 2007).

Parsons (2007) noted:

Change is brought about by conditional adaptation and adjustment. Indicators of progress look different in situation[s] where the problems and solutions are clear than they do in complex systems that are continually adapting to their environments and to the actions of those within a system. (p. 409)

Sverdlik and Oreg (2009) noted there is a clear relationship between the values and support for change. According to Schwartz (1992), values are often defined as cognitive representations of motivational goals, which serve as guiding principles in people's lives. Values represent broad goals that influence the most basic ways in which people perceive their environments and that help them shape their behaviors over time (Sverdlik & Oreg, 2009). Differences in personal values explain the variety of individual responses toward any given situation. When change occurs, it threatens people's sense of independence, so they often react defensively. However, some people are more open to change and tend to cooperate because it presents opportunity for renewal or growth (Schwartz, 1992).

According to Sannino (2010), with change comes resistance, disapproval, and disagreement, but resistance *helps* change and works as an early form of agency. He stated, "A dichotomous view of resistance as either only positive or only negative is, however, fruitful as such for understanding the dynamic and the potential of resistance" (p. 839). He further stated, "The engagement in resistance consists in overcoming confrontational oppositions by participating in a collective effort to identify hidden phenomena which triggered the act of resistance itself" (Sannino, 2010, p. 843). Behind every resistance are conflicts and struggles. Yet, if interventionists spend more time understanding the contradictions of the practitioners and

in supporting them, then they can move beyond resistance and engage in the process of change (Sannino, 2010). Change can only be accepted and assimilated when the meaning, the reason for the change, is shared with individuals because understanding the meaning of the change fuels motivation (Fullan, 2007).

Change Within the Saudi Women's Sphere

The dynamic of women is reshaping Saudi Arabia today (AlMunajjed, 1997; Bahry, 1982; Doumato, 2003; Pharaon, 2004). Saudi women have become more aware of their own personalities, circumstances, and environment (Bahry, 1982). Change in Saudi Arabia always comes slowly, as there are many vested interests in the maintenance of the status quo (Rugh, 2002, p. 53). Despite this, it is believed that the pace of change in Saudi Arabia is about to dramatically escalate because the younger generations are eager for change and even fundamentalists are leaning towards change (Pharaon, 2004). One of the influences for this change is the return of repatriates who have lived abroad, who are influenced by the westernized cultures (AlMunajjed, 1997; Long, 2005). However, there is a lack in the literature of the changes occurring and on the impact of change.

Resistance to change in women's roles in Saudi Arabia does not stem from the sexual segregation within the country because there are unsegregated private organizations in Saudi; rather, it comes down to individual Saudi families. Some daughters will find support from their families for pursuing their education, degree, and career, while other families do not welcome change (Pharaon, 2004). Further, there is a change-willingness gap between women who have studied abroad and women who are participating in state institutions or who have received briefer education (Le Renard, 2008).

Change in Higher Education

Institutions of higher education are critical places for knowledge production, perpetuation, and dissemination (Stephens, Hernandez, Roman, Graham & Scholz, 2008). Repatriate scholars have an effect on institutions of higher education with their new knowledge

and the different perspectives they gained studying abroad. They create a bridge between two different cultures, bringing new skills and ideas (Altbach, 1989). However, resistance is often found from the repatriates' colleagues who did not travel abroad (Cannon, 2000).

The need for school reform programs is essential for supporting students and their growth. However, successful application is difficult (Assor et al., 2009). Baldwin and Baumann (2005) pointed out that academic programs need to evolve and change parallel to the changes in knowledge and professional practice, as well as societal changes. Education must adapt to students' interests and provide new approaches to teaching and learning that will prepare students for a dynamic future.

Despite the need for change, Saudi colleges and universities are resistant to it. Assor et al. (2009) stated, "One important reason for the failure of reforms is the insufficient attention to the complex and difficult internalization process that teachers must undergo to fully identify with the new ideas promoted by external change agents" (p. 235).

Teachers may have four different motivational responses when external change agents introduce new ideas. First, they may be motivated to the change, but they do not learn to apply new ideas or act upon them. Second, they may be externally motivated for certificates or rewards. Third, teachers learn to apply the new ideas; however, they are not invested in these ideas. Fourth, teachers who adapt to and understand the new ideas are also reflective of their identity and values. These teachers internalize and support new ideas by incorporating them into their teaching. To transfer new knowledge and new skills, change from and openness to individuals' ideas and attitudes needs to occur (Assor et al., 2009).

Changes that Repatriates Face

Individuals' experiencing re-entry face a wide range of psychological, social, and work related changes (Sussman, 1986, 2002). Repatriates "often return home holding different attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behaviors than they held at their departure" (Sussman, 1986, p. 244). They often face transformations during re-entry that involve many changes in perspectives and attitudes (Oddu, Osland, & Blakeney, 2008; Sussman, 2000). Further, they often find that the lives of family and friends have changed as well (Gaw, 2000; Sussman, 1986; 2002; Oddu et al., 2008). Frequently, repatriates maintain a freeze-frame image of home; upon returning they expect that family, friends, and places will be unchanged (Storti, 1990; Sussman, 1986). As a result, when they return home they do not feel that they belong. They return to their native country and must create a *new* home (Storti, 1990).

However, the effects of re-adjustment and re-adaptation differ from one individual to another (Gaw, 2000; Wolfe, 2005). Parson (2007) stated, "When we acknowledge that different people legitimately can view the same situation differently and different situations can be used concurrently, we begin to see that the situation may contain more complexity and opportunity than we expected" (p. 408). Therefore, the change and distress that one repatriate may face is not at the same level that another repatriate faces while re-entering (Gaw, 2000; Sussman, 2002; Wolfe, 2005).

Culture Shock

The choice of studying in another country is an important decision because many students are seeking ways to enhance their career and learning opportunities (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007, p. 37). However, when students move to a new culture, the pressures of family, adjusting to a new culture, and exposure to a new curriculum can be very challenging and

frustrating (Adler, 1975). Immediately upon arriving in a new culture, international students face pressures to assimilate. Upon moving to a new country, most students feel like outsiders and experience culture shock (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007). According to Adler (1975):

Culture Shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture, to a new cultural stimulus which has little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness, irritability, and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded. (p. 13)

Lysgaard (1955) described culture shock adjustment as a U-curve where the sojourners experience initial euphoria like honeymooners, then shock and depression, and finally resolution and adaptation (Gaw, 2000). Lysgaard's U-curve is shown in Figure 1.

Culture shock occurs when individuals are taken out of their usual environment and experience change and disorientation (Adler, 1975). The change makes them aware of the absence of their daily behaviors (Malewski, 2005). Many studies have been done on culture shock and how international students adjust (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Berry, 1994; Brown, 2008; Brown & Brown, 2009; Furnham & Bochner, 1896).

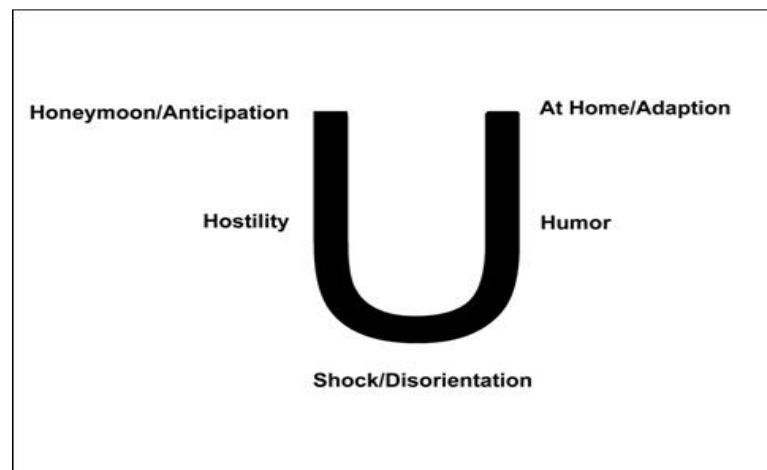


Figure 1. Lysgaard's U- curve diagram of culture shock adjustment.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) argued that international students face more adjustment problems at foreign universities than they would experience in their native universities. Berry

(1994) emphasized the importance of international students' abandonment of their original academic cultural norms and their replacement by the norms of the host culture. He stated that this assimilation is the only option open to students for academic success and high achievement.

According to Ballard and Clanchy (1997), international students start their studies in higher education with various assumptions shaped by their previous learning experiences, which is usually significantly different from the educational system in the new country. They argued that the greatest source of pressure for newcomers is their ability to understand and be understood. Moreover, Brown (2008) studied the role of stress on international students in relation to the requirements of a master's program in the UK. He argued that the academic requirements of the postgraduate program, the need for high English language proficiency, and the difference between the academic norms of the student's country and those of the UK would play a major impact on international students.

Brown and Brown (2009) examined international students through an ethnographic study to get an insider's perspective on how the students adjust. They claimed that international students who were removed from home, experienced freedom from family and cultural expectations and subsequently became independent, strong, assertive, and thoughtful (Brown & Brown, 2009).

Reverse Culture Shock

Upon re-entry to the home country, sojourners struggle with re-adapting and re-adjusting, and most of them experience reverse culture shock. Reverse culture shock is similar in definition to culture shock; however, it differs in the adjusting process and focuses on the difficulties of re-adjusting and re-adapting to the *home country*.

Reverse culture shock is “particularly insidious because it comes at a time that the returnees believe that life is finally going to go back to normal and they discover that there is actually no going back” (Malewski, 2005, p. 187). When returning home, repatriates expect “to return to an unchanged homeland as unchanged individuals,” so the adjustment may be more difficult because of their expectations (Gaw, 2000, p. 86). Individuals who know the repatriates expect them to settle in happily amongst family and friends and do not understand the returnee’s plight. Everyone assumes the returnees are fine and “this condition of homeless is perhaps the central characteristic of the experience of re-entry, and [the] confusion, anxiety and disappointment it arouses in us are the abiding emotion of this difficult period” (Storti, 1990, p. 100).

Reverse culture shock received attention in 1944 by Scheutz, who examined French veterans returning from Vietnam. Reverse culture shock was also critically studied in the 1950’s and 1960’s through qualitative methods. Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) were the first to describe culture shock, reverse culture shock, and the adjustments required (Gaw, 2000). Gaw (2000) defined reverse culture shock as “the process of re-adjusting, re-aculturating, and re-assimilating into one’s own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time” (p. 83). Uehara (1983) defined reverse culture shock as the “temporal psychological difficulties re-entries experience in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for some time” (p. 420).

According to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), the difference between reverse culture shock and culture shock is in the expectations. They stated that it is easier for sojourners entering a new culture because they are prepared to experience culture difficulties, thereby minimizing the effects of culture shock. However, when returning home, sojourners expect to return to an

unchanged homeland as unchanged individuals, so the adjustment may be more difficult (Gaw, 2000; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Searle & Ward, 1990).

Stages of Re-Entry

When Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extended Lysgaard's U-curve with a second U-curve shape to account for reverse culture shock, theoretically they introduced the W-curve shape, where sojourners are moving to a new culture, but this time it is home. The new shape includes both experiences of culture shock and reverse culture shock. First, excitement rises, then it is often followed by disappointment, anger, or despair that home is somehow different, and finally a sense of belonging when it feels comfortable again (Gaw, 2002). Figure 2 shows Oberg's and Gullahorn and Gullahorn's W-curve.



Figure 2. Modified version: *Resistance* and *Resistance at Home* were added to Oberg's and Gullahorn and Gullahorn's W-curve diagram of culture shock and reverse culture shock adjustment.

According to Oberg (1960) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), culture shock is experienced in five phases. First is the *honeymoon*, where the sojourners imagine living in a new country. This phase may not occur for all people. The second phase is *crisis and rejection*, where

they become aware of the cultural differences to a degree that they understand the need to adapt. The third phase is *resisting* the changes that are necessary to adapt to the new culture. Emotionally, this phase may lead to depression caused by denial. The fourth phase is *recovery*, where the sojourners start to balance their lives and views and start to feel better and more at ease emotionally. Then it is followed by the 5th place of *adjustment* to the new culture and its customs and norms. The next stage phase is *reverse culture shock*, where the sojourners return home after they have adapted and adjusted to the values and norms of the host country. During reverse culture shock, they go through a second U-curve dealing with the same stress, tensions, and sense of belonging to adapt to their home (Malewski, 2005).

Adler (1975) identified three coping models for returning travelers: the proactive, the re-socialized, and the alienated returnee. The proactive returnees understand that they and their home environment have changed. They learn to re-adjust to the society; from their experiences, they acknowledge personal growth. The re-socialized returnees choose to incorporate the new cultural norms from the foreign country into their old culture, but they do not go through much personal growth. Alienated returnees react negatively to their home environment and culture. They limit their personal and social interaction with society and usually feel stuck between the two cultures (Raschio, 1987).

Rhinesmith and Hoopes (1972) stated that the re-entering process “can be a positive experience and a growing experience if returning travelers are prepared to deal with the cognitive dissonance caused by the reconfirmation with home culture” (p. 157).

According to Raschio (1987), sojourners need “support and receptivity to help decrease the impact of reverse culture shock” when re-entering their homeland (p. 158). He also stated that they learn to be independent, create new interactions, and experience personal growth. He

then suggested that sojourners needed support programs consisting of two phases. The first phase would be a formal program for all re-entry students, while the second phase would specifically deal with each returnee, depending on their individual adjustment needs (Raschio, 1987).

Gaw (2000) found, “Common problems reported in the literature, for at least some, are academic problems, cultural identity conflicts, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties” (p. 84). Even though the experience differs from one individual to another, the theoretical literature stated that almost every returnee experiences reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000). Adler (1975) stated that for some re-entering sojourners it is less stressful to re-adjust and they are less aware of the differences between cultures, while others reject the values and lifestyle of their old culture. Brislin and VanBuren (1974) suggested that the individuals who have a *hard* time re-adjusting to their home culture might have had an *easier* time adjusting to a new culture or country (Stowe, 2004).

Gaw (2000) claimed that students who experienced a high-level of reverse culture shock were more likely to report that they experienced shyness and adjustment problems. However, their willingness to seek counseling was not related to their level of reverse culture shock. Brown and Graham (2009) asserted that all participating sojourners described themselves as more culturally aware, more independent, more confident, and more assertive. However, they had difficulties re-adjusting and were stuck between different cultures and values.

There appears to be an agreement that culture shock and reverse culture shock are not terminal; however, neither has a clear cure (Pascoe, 2000; Weaver, 2000b as cited in Stowe, 2004). Researchers hypothesized that it is the first-time returnees who experience the most difficulties (Stowe, 2004; Sussaman, 1986). Sussaman (1986) stated, “Subsequent entry and re-

entry transitions are frequently smoother and less stressful as one perfects adaption skills and strategies” (p. 242).

Malewski (2005) provided various suggestions to deal with reverse culture shock. She suggested that returnees should find people with similar experiences and share stories with them. In addition, she suggested seeking out people who are willing to listen and offer strategies for dealing with reverse culture shock. She also suggested that returnees should think of it as moving to a different new country where they will have to re-adapt and re-adjust, rather than thinking of it as returning to their home country.

Re-Entry Barriers

If organizations fail to provide the right conditions and environment for re-entering repatriates, the repatriates will face many barriers and challenges (Holton & Baldwin, 2003; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Repatriates may face additional barriers outside their organizations that can compound the negative effects and further hinder their re-entry process and knowledge transfer. Since knowledge transfer is not a simple process, it is to be expected that repatriates will face difficulties transferring their knowledge, especially since the new knowledge was acquired in a different culture and context. The most common barriers repatriates face while re-entering their organizations and cultures are summarized below.

Lack of communication. Organizational learning can only be achieved when there is a shared interpretation of knowledge and a common understanding between individuals (Antal, 2001). Repatriates return to their organizations with a wealth of knowledge, intending to share their newly gained experiences and knowledge (Adler, 1986; Cannon, 2000; Oddou et al., 2008). However, upon re-entry, repatriates are usually not provided with the appropriate environment that helps them share or transfer their knowledge (Crowne, 2009; Oddou et al., 2008).

The main barrier repatriates face is miscommunication with their colleagues.

Understandably, it can be difficult for the repatriate's co-workers to fully comprehend or relate to the knowledge that was acquired overseas since the co-workers did not experience or view the knowledge in that different context (Crowne, 2009; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005; Oddou et al., 2008). Misunderstandings and undecoded messages surface due to the lack of a shared mindset and to varied backgrounds between colleagues (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Oddou et al., 2008). These repercussions can also cause repatriates to grow increasingly hesitant to share their knowledge (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

Organizational climate. Transfer of knowledge can only be implemented in an appropriate climate and in a positive organizational environment (Holton & Baldwin, 2003; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Unfortunately, when repatriates begin to share their knowledge, they normally do not find the right transfer climate to assist them. In general, the studies reported repatriates found organizations in their host country more dedicated and focused on productivity than organizations in their home country (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). One of the biggest challenges is when repatriates come from conservative backgrounds, such as Saudi Arabia, where institutions and organizations are hierarchically structured, which makes sharing new ideas difficult (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000).

Repatriates find the new ideas are not recognized, valued, or harvested (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Oddou et al., 2008). Organizational politics can hinder the flow of the newly gained knowledge (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000). According to Antal (2001), individuals in higher positions fear they will lose power by showing they do not know something repatriates are sharing. Also, some repatriates are concerned that their knowledge would potentially serve their co-workers' careers more than their own careers and interests. Without an appropriate climate,

repatriates willingly choose *not* to share their newly gained knowledge, further hindering knowledge transfer (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

Lack of feedback and support. In order for knowledge transfer to be effective in organizations, the right tools have to be provided to capture that knowledge, and the right incentives have to be created to entice co-workers to learn (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005).

However, several studies reported that repatriates do not find support from their organizations after re-entering, nor do they feel that they could make use of their new knowledge in their organizations (Adler, 1981; Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Crowne, 2009; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Furthermore, they are rarely debriefed upon their return (Antal, 2001; Crowne, 2009). Organizations also lack social networks where repatriates can share with colleagues what they have learned and thereby effectively transfer their knowledge in informal settings (Cannon, 2000; Crowne, 2009).

Organizations need to rely on mechanisms such as feedback and debriefing to help repatriates share their newly gained knowledge and turn their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Antal, 2001; Crowne, 2009; Raschio, 1987). Also, debriefing makes the repatriates feel more valued and motivated to share their new knowledge (Crowne, 2009).

Reverse culture shock. Researchers agree that reverse culture shock is problematic. Common problems that repatriates face upon re-entry are: re-adjustment to social and cultural expectations, lack of support, identity conflicts, social withdrawal, depression, and anxiety (Adler, 1981; Cannon, 2000; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Gaw, 2000). Repatriates go through the stages of Figure 2. At first, excitement rises and then is often followed by disappointment, anger, or despair that home is somehow different. Finally, a sense of belonging grows when the returnee feels comfortable again (Gaw, 2002; Malewski, 2005; Storti, 1990). Many studies show

that their participants expressed feelings of discomfort and go through internal conflict and identity loss (Adler, 1981; Cannon, 2000; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Sussman, 2001). They also feel isolated and lonely and do not know where they belong (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Gaw, 2000). Repatriates can face negative emotions generated by jealousy, miscommunication problems, and disrespect from family, friends, and neighbors (Cannon, 2000). All these can hinder repatriates' willingness to share and transfer the knowledge within their organizations.

Transformational Learning

According to Mezirow (2000), transformational learning is:

The process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning schemes, habits of mind, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable to change, and reflective so that they will prove more true or justified to guided action. (p. 8)

Transformational learning occurs when there is a change in one's behavior, attitude, perspectives, or cultural identity (Tisdell, 2003). It explains how adults incorporate new knowledge, perspectives, skills, or practices into their perception of the world as they engage in learning opportunities (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Hamza (2010) said, "It reflects on the meaning of what they are learning, and they might engage in evaluating their familiar values, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions" (p. 52).

Transformational learning theory is grounded in human communication, where "learning is understood as the process of using prior interpretations to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experiences in order to guide future actions" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). It focuses on how one learns to negotiate and act on one's purposes, values, feelings, and meanings to gain control over one's life, decision-making, and social interactions. Transformational learning contains both individual and social dimensions that demand that individuals be aware of *how* they learned their knowledge and *how* they became aware of their

values. Once individuals understand how they learned, then it helps them become clear about their perspectives and values (Mezirow, 2000).

Scott (1997) said, “Many of our life events are traumatic and are triggers for transformation” (p. 41). Some adults prefer not to deal with transitions, for example, grieving the loss of a parent or close loved one, immigration from one culture to another, or the loss of a job. They are all impossible to avoid. They are all processes that involve both physical and emotional transformation (Tisdell, 2003). Therefore, “transformational learning is a way of problem solving by defining a problem or redefining or reframing the problem” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20).

Transformational learning occurs for participants when they reflect on the meaning of their experiences, and it occurs for the researcher when he or she examines participants in different cultural contexts and situations (Mezirow, 2000; Scott, 1997; Tisdell, 2003). Some of these experiences have to do with the understanding of identity and cultural background as Tisdell (2003) wrote, “Cultural understanding changes with increased contact with different people from other cultural groups and exposure to different ways that people organize their lives and social networks” (p. 163).

According to Merriam (2005), learning from life events can be developmental, which brings more meaning through experiences and different kinds of situations. For the experience to be transformative, people need to “do more than accommodate the change, solve the problem, or neutralize the stress” (Merriam, 2005, p. 9). Participants must be prepared to go into the suffering and chaos and continue to live and recognize that they will be *more* alive once they pass *through* the transformation. Merzirow (2000) said, “Taking action on reflective insights often involves overcoming situational, emotional, and informational constraints that may require

learning experiences in order to move forward” (p. 24). At the end, a person can come out with new attitudes and new perspectives (Taylor, 2008).

Summary

In this chapter, the literature related to the research topic for this study was reviewed. The literature was reviewed on Saudi Arabia, Saudi women, change in the Saudi women’s sphere, change in higher education, and change that repatriates face. This was followed by a discussion on culture shock, reverse culture shock, re-entry barriers, and transformational learning theory.

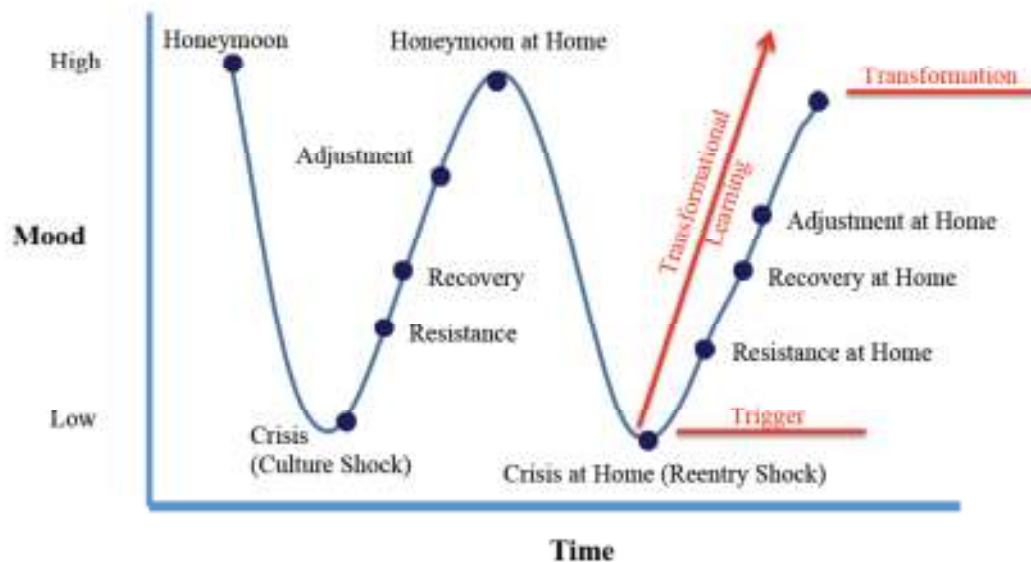


Figure 3. Modified version: *Resistance*, *Resistance at Home*, and *Transformational Learning* were added to Oberg’s and Gallahorn and Gallahorn’s W-curve diagram of culture shock and reverse culture shock adjustment.

This literature review informed the study by helping the researcher to understand how people react to change and how transformational learning theory relates to the stages of re-entry.

Figure 3 shows where culture shock and reverse culture shock are positioned within transformational learning theory. The published literature shows that as participants go through the stages of re-entry in the W-curve, they can expect to become aware of their own learning process through reflection on their personal, social, and cultural characteristics and values. This

is transformational learning theory. The literature also helped to see how returning Saudi female scholars might face challenges and barriers. It indicated that change in Saudi Arabia *is* occurring, albeit slowly, yet scholars returning to their homelands often find resistance from colleagues who did not travel abroad.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this narrative study was to examine the stories and transformations of female assistant professors who travelled from Saudi Arabia to the USA or UK to further their education, then returned home. The study examined the stories to learn the challenges and obstacles the women faced after re-entering Saudi Arabia. The goal was to develop an in-depth understanding of their stories and challenges. This chapter will contain a description of the constructivist paradigm, including the axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology for this study. In addition, the data collection and data analysis will be described.

Constructivist Paradigm

A paradigm consists of four concepts: axiology, epistemology, ontology, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Paradigms define the worldview from the researcher's perspective (Denzin, 2011). For the purpose of this research, the constructivist paradigm that focuses on "the production of reconstructed understanding of the social world" and builds on anti-foundational arguments was used (Denzin, 2011, p. 92). Anti-foundational is a "term used to denote a refusal to adopt any permanent" foundation or standards (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 273).

Research conducted through the constructivist paradigm "emphasizes the social constructions, or meaning-making and sense-making activities of participants in research settings, or the ways in which social actors focus not solely on objective 'realities' but what those objective realities mean for themselves and others" (Lincoln, 2001, p. 43). Researchers traditionally use the constructivist paradigm to gain understanding by interpreting the participant's perceptions through individual and collective reconstruction of knowledge (Lincoln,

Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Rodwell (1998) said, “Knowledge enhances the individual’s power to make informed choices that lead to effective change” (p. 7).

This study focused on understanding re-entry stories by interpreting experiences of female assistant professors who travelled to the USA and UK to further their education. The results of this study should provide recommendations that can be used by universities and institutions to help female assistant professors re-adjust to their own cultures and to help them benefit from their experiences and transformations.

Axiology

Axiology helps show the embedded ethics and values within a paradigm and answers the question: What is the nature of ethics? (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In constructivist research, scholars “focus on the ethics involved in the multilevel roles and relationships in the context of the inquiry in order to monitor research developments” (Rodwell, 1998, p. 220). It is also important for the scholar to keep in mind that nothing is ever certain in constructivist inquiry (Rodwell, 1998). Researchers pay constant attention to their consciousness and to the nature of the study from all dimensions through dialogue, consensus building, and negotiation of co-construction between the researcher and the participant (Rodwell, 1998). People who participate in a study should not be harmed or placed in harm’s way and should be respected; towards this end, each participant is given an informed consent form (Rodwell, 1998).

Informed consent forms were used in this study to establish axiology. I worked with each participant to reconstruct her experiences and co-construct her stories through a discussion in the second interview. We discussed potential findings for the study and brainstormed tips and recommendations to help re-entering scholars re-adapt and re-adjust to their cultures and

institutions. In addition, a research journal was maintained along with descriptive memos to track analytic notes and to help understand the realities of the participants and my own experience.

Ontology

Ontology refers to “the worldviews and assumptions in which researchers operate in their search for new knowledge” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 190). It answers the question “what is the nature of reality?” (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Ontologically, the constructivist paradigm states that “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content in the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990, p. 27). This means constructivists are relativists and construct knowledge through their experiences in life and their interactions with people and also through the meanings that have been developed socially and experientially by the researcher (Lincoln et al., 2011). The intent of constructivism is to create idiographic knowledge that is expressed through patterns of theory (Guba, 1990; Rodwell, 1998).

Research is a nonlinear process that involves the introduction of new information that cannot be created until the realities of the participants are constructed and understood (Rodwell, 1998). In this study, the realities from the perspectives of female Saudi assistant professors re-entering their home country were investigated. The exploration of these realities helped me understand and construct knowledge through the meanings that female Saudi assistant professors developed based on their experiences of re-entering, re-adapting, and re-adjusting to their institutions and cultures.

Epistemology

Epistemology refers to what can be known and how the researcher can come to know it (Lincoln et al., 2011; Rodwell, 1998). It defines the assumptions and the relationship between the

researcher and the participant (Lincoln et al., 2011). Researchers who are engaged in constructivism work towards interactive monism to recognize and utilize the teaching and learning, as well as the values that surfaced between the researcher and the participants during both the initial and the final research processes and products (Guba, 1990). Because the purpose of a constructivist study is to understand and interpret phenomena obtained from reconstruction of meaning to improve and inform practice, the meanings are discovered and co-created through social interactions between the researcher and the participants (Lincoln et al., 2011).

In this study, four of the participants were interviewed two times and two of the participants one time. The main intent of the initial interview was to build rapport and a relationship with the participant. The additional intent was to set the tone and to have the participant talk broadly about her experiences and stories. The next interview was focused on meanings and understanding these Saudi females' realities, which were constructed through social interactions between the participants and other people. Recommendations were elicited to help re-entering scholars re-adapt and re-adjust to their culture and institutions. The participants were sent the tips and recommendations that they suggested in a follow-up email. The intent was to see if they agreed with the list whole of recommendations and to select the most important tips.

The axiology, ontology, and epistemology of the constructivist paradigm closely align with the purpose of this study. The theoretical framework of transformational learning influences the constructivist paradigm. Because transformational learning focuses on how adults incorporate new knowledge, "it reflects on the meaning of what they learned and how they might use it to evaluate their familiar values, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions" (Hamza, 2010, p. 52). Transformational learning occurs for participants and for the researcher when participants

reflect on the meaning of their experiences and when they examine the participants in different cultural contexts and situations (Mezirow, 2000).

Methodology

Methodology is “the process of how we seek out new knowledge. [It defines] the principles of our inquiry and how inquiry should proceed” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 190). It describes the procedure and approaches for collecting and analyzing the data being studied (Maxwell, 1998). Constructivist researchers engage in socially constructed methods that “are designed to capture realities holistically, to discern meaning implicit in human activity” (Guba, 1990, p. 78). The goal is to reconstruct the world, not predict the real world nor transform it (Guba, 1990; Lincoln et al., 2011).

In this study, data was collected through the participants’ stories because people share knowledge through stories and experiences that are “recorded and transmitted in story form” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 8). The purpose of collecting stories was to study the participants’ lived experiences; this approach “construct[s] meaningful selves, identities, and realities” (Chase, 2011, p. 422). Stories tell us how people as “individuals and groups make sense of their experiences and construct meanings and selves” (Chase, 2003, p. 80). “Experience happens narratively” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Therefore, narrative inquiry was used as the methodology for this study.

Methods

Narrative inquiry examines how people, individually and in groups, make sense of their experiences and construct meanings from their experiences (Chase, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam, 2002). In addition, it interrogates intentions and actions to understand “*how* and *why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers” (Riessman, 2008, p.

11). Researchers use narrative inquiry to “gain a deeper understanding of the social resources (cultural, ideological, historical, and so forth) that they draw on, resist and transform as they tell” their participants’ stories (Chase, 2003, p. 81). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry is comprised of four directions: inward, outward, backward, and forward. Inward refers to internal feelings and emotion, outward refers to external conditions such as the environment, and backward and forward “refer to temporality—past, present, and future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

In this study, narrative analysis and personal experiences were used to collect repatriate female Saudi assistant professors’ experiences and stories to understand the challenges and obstacles repatriate scholars can experience while they re-adjust to their work environment. Specifically, thematic analysis was used to capture the analytical framework of moving inward, outward, backward, and forward as outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

Research Questions

As stated in Chapter 1, the following four questions guided this study:

1. (A) What are the transformational stories of Saudi women returning from studying abroad as assistant professors and seeking to implement their newly acquired knowledge? (B) To what extent did they experience transformation personally and professionally?
2. What challenges did these returning Saudi women face in attempting to implement their newly acquired knowledge?
3. What strategies helped the returning Saudi women overcome the barriers they faced?
4. What role does culture play in these stories?

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with one participant who fit the criteria of the study in order to test several aspects of the study. An additional goal of the pilot study was to ascertain any problems that might arise during the actual research study (Glesne, 2006). This pilot study was used to test the reliability and validity of the research questions and research design and to make adjustments if needed (Maxwell, 1998; Roberts, 2010). In the pilot study, I interviewed the participant and then transcribed, translated, and analyzed the interview.

I initially planned to have participants speak English throughout the entire interview. However, while conducting the pilot interview, it became clear that the participant was not able to articulate or express her emotions fully while sharing her stories in English, so I told her that she could use Arabic. The switch to her native language helped her feel more comfortable and at ease. In addition, it provided a more in-depth interview where the participant shared more information.

After the pilot interview, a follow-up interview was conducted with the participant on some of the challenges that she mentioned in the first interview; this was a pilot test of how the second interview might proceed. The participant was also asked for feedback on the interview questions and my interviewing skills. The participant thought the interview questions were suitable and clear for the purpose of the study. Moreover, she praised my interviewing skills, saying that she felt at ease throughout the interview, and appreciated that I gave her enough space to share her stories. She also liked how I shared some of my experiences because I was giving and not only getting information about her or her stories.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia, specifically with women. The first interview with each participant was conducted face-to-face and one-on-one in a location of her choosing and preference—a place where she felt safe and comfortable. The second interview was done via phone call because I was back in the USA.

Participants

The goal of qualitative research is to enrich and understand “the meaning of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants” (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). Therefore, purposeful sampling was used to emphasize an in-depth understanding that led to useful information where a great deal was learned about the participants’ experiences (Patton, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2005). Purposeful sampling also helped achieve representation of the individuals and their activities that were particularly relevant to the research (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Maxwell, 1998).

Participants were female individuals who were willing to talk about their experiences. They were assistant professors who earned their Ph.D. in the USA or UK and then returned to Saudi Arabia. The choice to focus only on women was made to avoid violating the moral and social boundaries in Saudi Arabia. Segregation of unrelated men and women is held as the highest social value and extends to every aspect of public life in Saudi Arabia, including the cultural settings in institutions, schools, and organizations. It would be as highly inappropriate for a female researcher to interview a male professor as it would be for a male researcher to interview a female professor (Doumato, 2003).

A few participants were recruited via telephone. Others were suggested by friends who were colleagues or students of the assistant professors. During initial telephone contact, the

participants were given a brief summary about the study. If the participants agreed to be interviewed, then an email was sent to them with the aim, purpose, and full description of the study.

The participants in this research were assistant professors who have been working in Saudi universities for three to nine years following their graduation. Three years seemed to be a logical choice for a minimum because I wanted to capture the stories and experiences of the repatriates after they had moved out of the reverse culture shock stage and had adjusted to their life setting and environment. I limited the period to a maximum of nine years because the country is developing and changing rapidly and because tremendous events have happened in the past decade in Saudi Arabia. I also wanted to capture the experiences within that period so the memories would be accurate and recent. The participant's experiences and stories should mirror the real world or uncover the truth; if not, they should at least present us with a glimpse of how she perceives the process of re-entry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through two in-depth interviews and one follow-up email per participant. All six of the participants were interviewed face-to-face for the first interview, and only four were interviewed via phone for the second interview. Two participants dropped out due to personal issues. Only three participants responded to the email follow-up. Each interview lasted a minimum of one and a half hours to allow the participants to articulate as much detail as possible and to produce accounts of sufficient depth and breadth (Seidman, 1991). The goal of the interviews was to “generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). In the interview process, I established a climate that allowed the participants to narrate their stories, so I deliberately set aside the controlled, fixed

method of interviewing. In addition, within the interview, I listened attentively and shared my experiences when I thought it would help the participants feel more comfortable and at ease or to get them to speak more about something they said. I focused on understanding the context of the experience, understanding what constructed the experience, and reflecting on the meaning of the experience from the participant's perspective (Seidman, 1991).

Most importantly, participants were allowed to conduct the interviews in English or Arabic based on the participant's preference; this was to make the participant comfortable and relaxed throughout the interviews. If participants had shared their stories in a language that they were not comfortable using, then a true picture of the experience being researched might not have been captured. The difficulty of expressing emotional stories or experiences in a language other than their mother tongue was considered.

The first interview consisted of two broad open-ended, grand tour questions to assist the interviewees and to explore their experiences (Spradley, 1980). Open-ended questions "produce a very rich sample of perceptions of a given behavior" (Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 76). The first interview focused on establishing a trusting, open relationship with the participants and on exploring the meaning behind the participants' experiences, rather than concentrating on the accuracy of recalling their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). I focused on building rapport with the participants and elucidating the area under research. To develop rapport and trust with the participants, I shared my stories and experiences of entering a different country and re-entering my country.

The questions for the first interview were:

- Can you please talk to me about your experience overseas and why you went there?

- Can you talk to me about your re-entry experience professionally and personally?

The participant's general description was followed up with probing questions; for example, "Can you remember a particular time...?" "Can you tell me what happened?" "Can you tell me why that particular time stands out?" By using the probing questions, more was learned about her experiences and invited "an extended account" (Riessman, 2008, p. 25).

The interviews were transcribed and translated. The purpose of transcribing "is to allow the detailed to-and-fro reading in the analysis of the qualitative data" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142). Transcription enabled a focus on the data to draw out relevant features and generate analytic focus (Gibson & Brown, 2009). A focused transcription was used that involved "generating a detailed outline of 'what was said or done' in a recording that emphasizes particular features of that behavior" (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p. 113). The transcription guide consisted of the pauses, rising and falling intonation, emphasis or stress, overlapping, and background noise, all of which helped in the analytic process.

A double translation was used to translate the interviews that were conducted in Arabic. Each translation involved at least two bilingual translators who worked individually on the translation process. The translations were then compared to ensure equivalent connotative meaning (Marin & Marin, 1991). I translated one of the versions and an experienced bilingual translator, who was knowledgeable about the research topic, translated the other version.

Afterwards, each of the first interviews was analyzed, looking briefly for the stories that were mentioned and the challenges the participants faced during their re-entry experiences. Then, the second interview was conducted, which followed up on the first interview and went into greater depth about the participants' re-adjustment experiences and stories. The interviews consisted of a give-and-take dialogue in which I guided the interviewees, following their threads

towards a full conversation on their re-entry and re-adjustment experiences. In the follow-up email, tips and recommendations that can be offered to newly repatriated and re-entering scholars were member-checked.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was used as the analytical approach where content was the focus (Riessman, 2008). It was also used to capture “the complexities of the meaning within a textual data set” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 11). Using thematic analysis, the data was coded inductively to find and describe explicit and implicit ideas within (Boyatzis, 1998; Guest et al. 2012). Inductive analysis is a process of coding the data “without trying to let it fit into a preexisting coding frame” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83).

After collecting the data, the transcripts were read several times to familiarize myself with them, and then the stories were extracted. After extracting the stories and reading them repeatedly, different themes became noticeable. Themes are “experiential structures making up the experience,” and it was necessary to search for themes from general to specific experiences (Langdrige, 2007, p. 123). The margins of the pages were used to note the emerging themes. After the themes were solidified, the interviews were inserted into NVivo and the stories were coded. NVivo is a computer program that supports the analysis of qualitative data (Gibson & Brown, 2009). After printing and looking at the themes, something did not make sense. I could not see the themes at a deeper level.

The interviews were reprinted without any coding. They were then hand-coded by dividing the data into three parts: participants’ experiences abroad, re-entry into their home universities, and re-entry into society. The data then started to make more sense. Major themes

and sub themes surfaced. Yet, some themes overlapped, and it was unclear if some of the larger themes needed to be split into smaller themes. Therefore, colored index cards were used to write each theme, sub-theme, and definition on a different colored index card. These became color codes to reanalyze the interviews. Analytic comments were written in the margins. Themes were listed on separate sheets of paper to separate the themes from analytic comments and to categorize them. Additionally, separate sheets of paper were used to label each interviewee's pseudonym and recorded the themes contained in her interviews in order to trace them back to the original source. After member-checking the potential themes with a colleague, it was still hard to organize the themes and subthemes and understand them at a deeper level. The process was growing increasingly frustrating.

The interviews were reinserted into NVivo, but this time, because the themes and subthemes were clearer than the first time, the process was easier. NVivo helped to list the themes and codes and see where they overlapped. The process was organized and the program helped to recheck the codes and themes and the relationship between them using queries (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Word searches were run for particular words within the interviews to find potential themes around the participants' expectations. See Appendix A for the list of themes and sub-themes in NVivo.

Constant data comparative analysis was used through taxonomies to understand the relationship between the organized categories for each participant (Spradley, 1980). This analysis helped to find patterns, make comparisons, and contrast categories for each participant (Guest et al., 2012). After looking back at the coded data, it was realized that the codes were already organized in a taxonomy format. Taxonomy is defined as "a set of categories organized on that basis of a signal semantic relationship" (Spradley, 1980, p. 112). The use of taxonomies

was an essential step. Without it, the relationships and meaning in the data likely would have remained unclear.

In addition, constant data comparative analysis enabled the development of matrices that helped to extract the tips and recommendations that participants suggested for newcomers. It also allowed comparison and contrast among the participants' responses. See Appendix B for the theme matrices.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is defined as “the exchange of favors and commitments, the building of a sense of mutual identification and feeling of community” (Glesne, 2006, p. 142). Because the participants agreed to have the interviews and to give their time, I offered to reciprocate by purchasing and mailing books up to a value of 60 dollars for each participant. Only one participant accepted the offer.

Validating the Findings: Ensuring Quality

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure their research is valid and ethical. Validity asks the question: “What is it about this inquiry which would render it transparently faithful enough to enable me to act upon its findings?” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 25). In other words, how do researchers know their work is both rigorous and meaningful?

“Qualitative researchers have tried, in recent years, to shift away from validity as a criterion of rigor”; instead, they tried to look at the usefulness and the purpose of transferring the findings to another context (Lincoln, 2001, p. 39). In the constructivist paradigm, “Validity is a construction of the development of consensus,” which is based on participant and inquirer (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 114). For the purpose of this research, various methods that align with

the constructivist paradigm were used to ensure rigor through crystallization, authenticity criteria, and trustworthiness.

Crystallization “provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (Richardson, 1997, p. 92). It enables us to shift from looking at something like a two-dimensional object to seeing into the concept like a three-dimensional crystal (Tobin & Begley, 2003). Crystals are “prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 54). In addition, crystals change over time, yet they are solid in their shapes and appear different from various angles (Lincoln et al., 2011). Crystallization helps researchers “to uncover assumptions and life-denying repressions” through discovering, seeing, telling, narrating, and re-presenting (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 122). To ensure crystallization, the data was analyzed using different approaches: thematic, constant comparative, and Nvivo. This helped to understand the deeper meaning of the assistant professors’ experiences and challenges, as well as look at the data from various angles to recognize the different perspectives and underlying meanings.

In addition to employing crystallization to ensure rigor, several authenticity principles were used: voice, ontological authenticity, and catalytic authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). Authenticity “involves the portrayal of research that reflects the meanings and experiences that are lived and perceived by the participants (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001, p. 530). It moves the researcher from “‘detached observer’ to ‘passionate participant’” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 45).

Voice refers to having the readers *hear* the research participants speak for themselves and allowing the readers to understand the full experiences of the participants (Lincoln & Guba,

2003). I provided thick, rich description and brought out the voices of the participants' through poetry.

Ontological authenticity refers to raising the level of awareness (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). It measures how much the participants become more aware of their own thinking (Lincoln, 2001). Ontological authenticity was established through interview questions, deep discussions about participants' experiences, and member checking, which provided the participants an opportunity to understand themselves better. It also helped draw many ideas and thoughts from participants that they did not know they possessed (Lincoln, 2001).

Catalytic authenticity refers to the ability to "promote action on the part of research participants" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 278). Lincoln (2001) said, "A validity judgment can be rendered on this criterion when stakeholders are moved to action by the research report, or by various portrayals of its content, findings, interpretations, or explanations" (p. 45). Catalytic authenticity was established by providing the participants with tools to help re-entry colleagues and to help engage in creating positive change.

To address trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1981) suggested that "four major concerns relating to trustworthiness have evolved" and must be demonstrated (p. 79). These concerns are truth value, applicability, consistency, and confirmability. Each are discussed below.

Truth value. Credibility addresses the concern about truth value (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Credibility is the researcher's ability to provide and report assurance of the logic and believability between the participants' views and the researcher's reconstruction and representation (Lincoln, 2001; Schwandt, 2001). Credibility was established by peer debriefing with a member of the committee to assess the insights from the findings, and I received external

reflection and member checks after the study by sharing final reports and findings with the participants to make certain their stories and thoughts were represented correctly.

Applicability. Transferability addresses the concern about applicability (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). It is the researcher's job to provide the readers with sufficient information to transfer the findings (Lincoln, 2001; Schwandt, 2001). To establish transferability, purposeful sampling was used to gain insights into the processes and challenges that re-entering female assistant professors face. These insights revealed suggestions and ideas on how to help repatriate female scholars to re-adapt and re-adjust smoothly into their cultures and institutions. In addition, thick and rich descriptions of the context and participants' experiences were developed since "judgments about the degree of fit or similarity may be made by others who may wish to apply all or part of the findings elsewhere" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 77).

Consistency. Dependability addresses the concern about consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Dependability is the researchers' ability to demonstrate and ensure the research process was reliable (Lincoln, 2001; Schwandt, 2001). To ensure dependability, an audit trail was established that would help an external auditor examine how the data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted (Guba, 1981). Because I am from and understand the culture of the participants, I was able to understand the participants' perspectives, which helped me with the data interpretation. However, to ensure my bias did not interfere with the data analysis, I maintained a research journal and stayed close to the data.

Confirmability. Confirmability addresses the concern about neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). It focuses on "the fact that the data and interpretations of inquiry were not merely figments of the inquirer's imagination" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 259). To establish confirmability, reflexivity was practiced by maintaining a dated research journal to reflect upon my subjectivity,

to monitor research insights, and to write analytic notes throughout the process of this study.

According to Stevens and Cooper (2009):

Dated journal entries allow writers to review previous thoughts and insights over time. Written reflections are more than a mirror of experience. Because perceptions and insights based on reflections can be distorted by prior knowledge and beliefs, writing these reflections down and reviewing them allows the journal writer to scrutinize assumptions and beliefs and glean a deeper understanding of the assumptions that underlie their decision making. (p. 29)

I also worked to maintain an attitude of empathetic neutrality, which means closeness, empathy, and understanding of the participants' experiences while still neutral enough to avoid misinterpreting and misrepresenting the data (Patton, 2003). Because I am from and understand the culture of the participants, I was able to understand the participants' perspectives, which helped to interpret the data.

Ethical Considerations

Since this is a culturally sensitive issue, the interview process was undertaken with care, precision, and sensitivity. Potentially, the participants might have encountered both benefits and risks by participating in this transformational learning study. Transformational learning can become emotional as participants reflect on their experiences and memories. It can also involve great challenge and trauma for some people, and discussing their experiences can make some of the participants feel uncomfortable (Merriam et al., 2007).

As the researcher, I tried to create an environment where the participant felt comfortable so that the interview was a pleasant experience. I did not insist that any of the participants speak about subjects that would cause them discomfort. I let them lead on what they willingly wanted to share. When participants were perceived to be feeling overwhelmed or uncomfortable, then they were asked if they needed to take a break or continue another day. It was also made clear that participants could leave the study whenever they wanted.

The participants might have gained the additional benefit of reflection while sharing their re-entry experiences. According to Dewey (1938), reflection is the “reconstruction and reorganization of experience which adds meaning to that experience” (p. 6). Stevens and Cooper (2009) said, “Reflection starts with discomfort during an experience and leads a person to a balanced state. It takes time and focus to reach clarity of thought” (p. 21). Therefore, by reflecting on their experiences, the participants might have been reflecting on the meaning of what they learned, as well as evaluating their values, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions (Hamza, 2010). It became clear that most of the participants’ stories had not been shared with anyone before the interviews. Therefore, I did my best to respect their stories and represent them in a proper way.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the participants was protected before, during, and after the study. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and that the research will be published in a dissertation. Identifying information was never collected and was not linked to any written research materials or recordings. The only link list that was made to match the participants’ names to the pseudonyms was saved and kept in a secure location. It will be destroyed three years after the study’s completion. Digital recordings will be kept on my computer in a secure file where only I know the password. Identifying information was removed from written transcripts and collected artifacts.

Informed Consent. Informed consent refers to the participants’ voluntary assent to be part of this research study and to how it will be used in the future (Christians, 2011). The participants were given an honest description of the procedures of the study and its risks and benefits, with consideration of the participants’ welfare and interests (Matsumoto & Jones,

2009). As the sole researcher, I obtained oral consent from the participants at the beginning of the first interview. The participants were given a cover letter within the standards of the Institutional Review Board of Colorado State University. The consent form was waived due to culture and ethical differences, so consent was taken orally and recorded at the beginning of the first interview.

Limitations

Using a small sample for this study can be a limitation. However, the nature of this study was qualitative, and the intent was not to generalize to a larger population of re-entry scholars but rather to use an intense sample to reflect and articulate the participants' experiences. Another limitation to this study was that, at times, I could sense they were giving socially desirable responses. Moreover, the participants provided a reduced level of self-disclosure during the interview because, culturally, they typically do not provide information or details of their lives to strangers. Furthermore, viewing the data and interpreting it from one theoretical framework can increase the limitations of this study because any chosen theoretical framework is limited in scope and depth (Creswell, 2009). In addition, "Memories are reconstructions of the past, not simply retrieval" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 143). Participants may not have recalled some of their past relevant experiences.

Summary

In this chapter, the constructivist paradigm was explored, including the axiology, ontology, and epistemology for this study. The constructivist paradigm focuses on social constructions or meaning-making of the participants' experiences. In addition, narrative inquiry was described as the methodology for this study because narrative inquiry looks at making sense and constructing meaning of the participants' experiences. Next, a description of the pilot study,

participants, setting, and data collection was provided. Then, the data analysis was explained.

Finally, the criteria for rigor in validating the findings, ethical considerations, confidentiality, and limitations of this study were described.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the stories and transformations of female assistant professors who travelled from Saudi Arabia to the USA or the UK to further their education, and then returned to Saudi Arabia. The goal was to develop an in-depth understanding of their stories and challenges. To accomplish this purpose, six participants were interviewed. Thematic and constant comparative analyses were found to be the most effective ways to tease out the themes and come to a clear understanding of the data. Initially, structural and performance analyses were believed to be necessary, but thematic analysis was found to be sufficient. In this chapter, the participants' stories are presented. This is followed by a discussion on how the themes and sub-themes were constructed, and then the analysis of the themes is revealed.

Participants' Stories

Riessman (2008) said that stories:

Can be described not only as narratives that have sequential and temporal ordering, but also as texts that include some kind of rupture or disturbance in the normal course of events, some kind of unexpected action that provokes a reaction and/or an adjustment. (p. 6)

In other words, stories are what people describe and tell about themselves and their lives. They are the means through which identities are interpreted and negotiated (Ewick & Silbey, 2003). Also, "Stories enact and construct, as they describe, the world as it is lived and is understood by the storyteller" (Ewick & Silbey, 2003, p. 1,341). From the participants' interviews, their stories were captured and a description of the participants' explanations of why they went abroad, what they thought of the re-adjustment process, and if they thought they had adjusted was recorded.

As part of the full picture of the participants' experiences, the participants' stories are presented in poems to describe the experiences of returning to the participants' home culture. The poems are written using the participants' own words, but the organization and arrangement of the quotes are my editing. According to Willis (2002), "Poetry can command direct attention and the intensity of its confrontation can generate a reciprocal intensity of response which is not always according to the agenda of the poem but may be in resistance or irritation" (p. 6). In addition, poems are slow, with pulses that tell a story (Willis, 2002). Poems focus on the language and presentation of ideas, but a poem "also stimulates and formulates the conception of ideas themselves" (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 31). The purpose was to "remain faithful to the essence of the text, experience, or phenomena being presented" (Furman, Lietz, & Langer, 2006, p. 27).

Because each participant is unique, her story differs from the others' stories. Four of the participants—Nahla, Esra, Noor, and Rafa—all work at public universities while the other two—Jana and Hala—work in private universities. Only one participant—Rafa—is not married. The other five are married and have children. Three of the participants studied in the UK—Noor, Rafa, and Jana—and two participants—Nahla, and Esra—studied in the USA. Hala earned her master's in the USA and her doctorate in the UK. Below, each participant's story of adjustment is presented.

Participant #1: Nahla

My husband got a scholarship
I went along
I had two very young children
For two years I did not study
I got accepted

When we came back
Reverse Culture Shock
I almost cried every month

My son was ten
My daughter was nine
My son is *still* struggling
My daughter is okay
I think it is harder for boys

I am a very practical and working person in nature
I stayed two years in the house
Two years were very miserable
I got a job
The first day
I cried, I almost never cry
They had no place for me

It took two months to adjust
I felt I was needed
If I had worked after I came back
I would not have felt the reverse culture shock

Now I am fine
I don't have friends
When we were younger, friends used to be everything
It's okay now
I have two children; they fill my life

I don't have difficulty communicating with others
I am not rigid
I accept everyone
But maybe relationships,
I don't think I need relationships outside my sphere

I was scared
But at the same time I had high hopes
I have high expectations
I believe *Allah* made me
So certain things can change
I tried changing things from the beginning
I tried to add new knowledge without affecting the culture
I did not add everything yet [she has not transferred all the new knowledge yet]
I am planning to do more in the future

Participant #2: Esra

I am married
I have three boys and a girl
My husband is supportive and understanding

I love teaching
I just became an associate professor
And an advisor for master's students

I am an employee here [means at her university]
We have to continue our education
I went to the States to get my Ph.D.
I decided to repeat my master's
I was on scholarship

After 9/11 we did not come back home to visit
We stayed four and a half years
It was a long period
Especially for the children

My husband and son left before me by six months
This rattled us
Made me depend on myself
Because of circumstances,
I was yearning to go back
I did not attend my graduation party
I was forced to leave one of the boys to finish his studies

I had a passion
I wanted to come back to practice [what she learned]
Before coming back to work,
I had a strong feeling towards this
To come back and pay back
We learned things
We have energy
We want to discharge it

The first day of work was difficult
I did not adjust myself to my country yet
I was away for five or six years
I did not prepare myself
I did not see what the changes in the university were

My adjustment was focused on my career
For me work was the most important thing
I prioritized my life
I abandoned my priorities towards the extended family

Five years have passed
I still try to convince myself
This might be denial

I am saying
I am better
But if you truly look at it
You find I am still away [meaning not connected with extended family]

I got a chance to be a leader
But then I say I do not have time for my family
There is a part of myself I need to work on
I want to be distinguished in work
I want to feel that I accomplished something
I do not know what to call it

Participant #3: Jana

I got married
After two years I had my first baby
I graduated from college

My husband was looking for opportunities to study abroad
We needed to think of the best time
The best time was when I finished my bachelor's degree
We wanted to have double the opportunities [both go to school]
I had the second child

We decided to go to England
We had many reasons
Because England was a more familiar place
I spent my earlier life in England
I wanted to go somewhere not far away from Saudi Arabia

I was accompanying him
So I had to wait till we went there
To get the scholarship

When my husband finished
We all came back
I was at the stage of finishing writing my dissertation

When I came back I was depressed
Sitting in the house
Plus a bit of culture shock at the beginning
My circumstances were difficult
I was pregnant
My father-in-law passed away
It was around 9/11
I did not finish my Ph.D.

I wish I could have finished before coming back

I figured out that society did not change
It was me who changed
We kept telling each other that
We changed in everything

At least twice a year I traveled to the UK
When I was prepared to finish my dissertation
Where I was free [had spare time]
I said to myself
“Why don’t I start working?”
I wanted to secure a job
I defended my dissertation
I passed
I had a job

Participant #4: Hala

I graduated high school
I was 17 years old
I got married
I moved to the United States to pursue my education
I studied my bachelor and master’s degrees there
I lived there for about eight years
During that time I had two boys

It is difficult when you leave the country at 17
You leave as a girl
You leave totally dependent on your family

Over there
You start feeling like you are becoming like an American
You start believing in things you did not believe before

Then I am back
As a lady not a girl
With all these new trends
I come back hoping to apply change

I worked four years
During my work experience
I started thinking about continuing my education
So I did it in London
Because London is closer
I had my little boys

I lived in London and did my courses
Then did my research from here

When I came back
It was not a culture shock
I knew London
It was not difficult
It was four years
I did not live there continuously

Not like the States
It was difficult for my children
They were born there
They grew up there

Listen, you are asking about shock
It was a shock going to the States and shock coming back
The shock going back was much bigger

I made a decision
Choosing to be part of a culture
So I can feel free
I found myself an environment
A similar environment
That I believe in [a private university]
That's why you don't find me working in a governmental institute

Participant #5: Noor

I lived in Britain for eight years
I enjoyed my life there as a student
As a mother
And as a wife
I enjoyed everything
I built so many relationships from so many cultures

I have three children
They were all with me
They enjoyed their time

I *did* want to come back
I was looking forward to coming back
Although I had a nice life there
I was attached to *here*
But my eldest son made it hard for me
He was not coping well

I did not have culture shock
In the Saudi adjustment
In the university
In the environment
And in people
I did not expect that people will change
I cannot call it shock
I have changed
I had culture shock when I went to UK
When I met other Saudis in the UK [implied difficulties mingling with Saudis from different regions]

As a person
I started immediately teaching
I did feel I had culture shock
I had a problem in changing lifestyles with my family

When you come here [Saudi Arabia]
It's a bigger family
More social commitments
No excuse
It's really hard
I realized I had to do something
I had to prioritize
So many people were angry [at her]

I am a very flexible person
I am lucky to have friends
I know friendship is everything
But I am lucky to have very unique friends
They can understand easily
And the support I get

Participant #6: Rafa

I was studying in the UK
It was an opportunity for me to complete my education
I am single
My father went with me
When I arranged everything
I ended up by myself

As a female in my twenties
It was a really horrible experience
I was not prepared
I have two older brothers
I used to depend on them

Before I came here [Saudi Arabia]
I was expecting it would be a rosy and marvelous place
I believed that I would just apply everything I learned
And the environment would be willing to accept me

It was culture shock
What I learned from skills and experience
There is no environment to apply it
This is a big, big challenge

It took time, it took time
I am so relaxed and patient
That's why I digested the shock
It took the best out of me
I feel I lost all my beliefs and hopes
I believe the obstacle I faced
Taught me new things, new spirit

It takes time, it takes time
Opportunity to open my eyes
My mind
Accept society and culture
Because I have been here and there
I can say I am a totally different person
Different person regarding everything

I studied a subject that was anonymous [not yet introduced in Saudi Arabia]
A lot has changed
People became aware of the education
I was lucky
I was the first one to get a Ph.D. in my field
So when I came back I was well-known
I did not have a problem to say to people, "listen"
Actually people were waiting for me
I was lucky

Making Sense of the Data

The process of making sense of the data started from inside, “From the meanings...encoded and expanded to the outward,” by focusing on the participants’ experiences and interpreting what they said (Riessman, 1993, p. 61). By coding the interviews, I constructed themes and sub-themes. The initial five major themes were: (a) reactions to environmental challenges, (b) reactions to personal changes, (c) transfer of knowledge, (d) re-entry of others, and (e) tips and recommendations. After finding the themes, it was realized that ‘environmental challenges’ was a very broad theme, so it was split into sub-themes. While working to understand the themes and sub-themes, all of the themes—except for tips and recommendations—were recognized to be reactions, and each participant had a different reaction towards the themes. Therefore, it was necessary to split each sub-theme into positive and negative reactions to enable understanding of how each participant handled her reactions.

To reach a deeper understanding of how each participant’s experiences related to the themes, taxonomies were formed to make relationships within each theme. Then, matrices were drawn to see how many participants agreed with each code and which codes were the most dominant. The process was very time-consuming and frustrating; however, the effort to unearth the patterns in the data eventually produced useful results. See Appendix A for matrices of each theme.

In the beginning of the analysis process, there was confusion about how to separate my conclusions and biases from the findings. By staying close to the data and by journaling findings, analytic notes, and emotions, I was able to place my own experiences into the background. Each week of the study, I met with my advisor to analyze and examine each theme carefully and thoroughly.

Data Analysis

As stated, the five major themes that I constructed from the interviews were: (a) reactions to environmental challenges, (b) reactions to personal changes, (c) transfer of knowledge, (d) re-entry of others, and (e) tips and recommendations. Each theme was split into negative and positive reactions except for the theme 'tips and recommendations.' 'Reactions to challenges' was the only theme that consisted of additional underlying sub-themes. Each theme and sub-theme is explained below.

Reactions to Environmental Challenges

During the process of re-entry, repatriates encounter difficulties and discomfort in re-adjusting and re-adapting to their home country (Adler, 1981; Arthur, 2003; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Subramani, 2000). They faced a number of challenges and obstacles. While analyzing the interviews, five different sub-themes were constructed describing the different challenges the participants faced re-entering Saudi Arabia.

Sense of belonging. One of the challenges of re-adapting to the participant's home culture was self-identification. In order to overcome this challenge, participants had to find ways to refit their lives into their home culture. The majority of participants found it hard to find a sense of belonging and to understand who they were when they first re-entered Saudi. Two of the participants attempted to go back to their old ways of living but were afraid to lose what they had learned. Nahla stated:

I mean you are used to things and when you come back, you try to go back to your old self, but you don't want to forget the new stuff you learned. You can't match these two, especially with social regulations. It was hard.

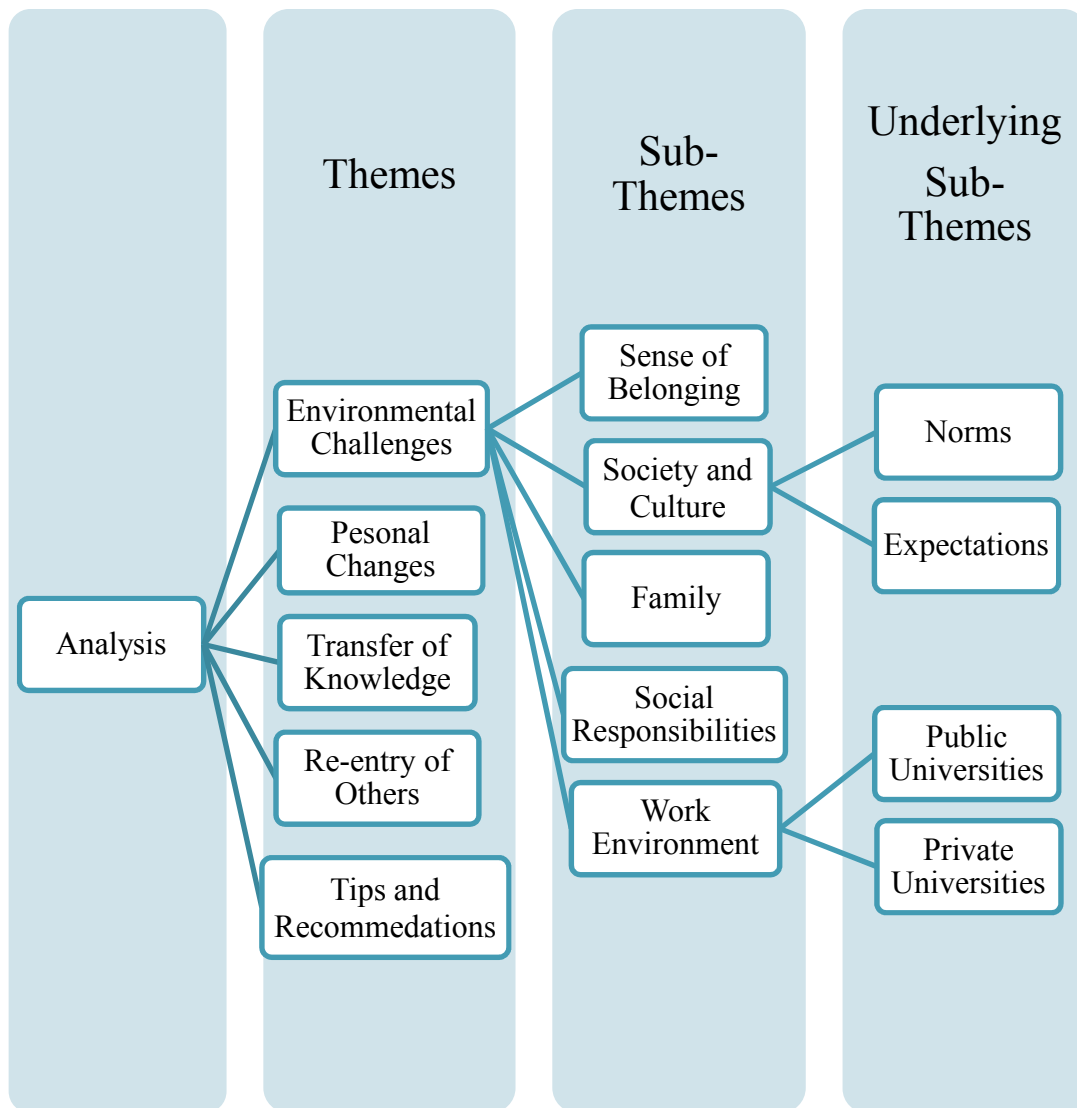


Figure 4. Model of Relationships between Themes, Sub-themes, and Underlying Sub-themes.

Jana expressed how she felt unbalanced and unsure about her future when she first returned to Saudi:

I was quite worried about what comes with re-entry because what comes with it are things you definitely don't expect or maybe you don't like, so the whole journey started again when we came back. I felt we had just finished a stage and now I started the next stage. But I also realized that there will be times where I don't know. I think it is part of the adaption process. You need some time to adjust. Time is a factor, definitely.

Only Noor felt good about her re-entry process to Saudi, and she was the only one who said, “I did want to come back. I was looking forward to coming back. Although I had a really nice life there, I was attached to here [Saudi Arabia].”

Esra found visualizing was a beneficial tool to help her adjust mentally:

I used to imagine how I would meet my family members at the airport, and what I would do when I went to their houses. I would visualize how I would go to the university and when I started teaching. How would I teach? I would visualize the future and what could happen mentally to me.

All six participants found a sense of belonging by focusing on work. It helped with their adjustment process, as Esra stated, “My adjustment was more focused on my career. Other people might have let community and families help them adjust and heal, but for me work was the most important.” Rafa raised a concern that by devoting herself to work, she was losing the balance of having a life outside of her professional work. She described it as “dangerous.” Yet, finding a job helped Nahla and Jana out of the depression of reverse culture shock. Jana said:

I felt I was getting suffocated. I really had to do something...because if I continued to be part of these circles [social gatherings], I would end up definitely with major depression. And I already started developing [depression], so that was the time when I definitely looked for a job. I think finding a job or working helped me to be somewhere in between what happened to me in England—the changes that happened to me—and what happened to my dear society—its values and its norms....Working is an opportunity that actually helps you get connected to people who are very similar in your values, as well as knowing who finished their Ph.D. or master’s. Surely knowing who is going through what you’ve gone through.

Both participants who worked in private universities found a sense of belonging by working in a diverse culture that was similar to the culture they lived in abroad. Hala said:

I lived in a continuous struggle in changing, adapting, and getting accommodated. I reached a point where I made a decision to choose a part of the culture that can fit with my beliefs. I can feel free. That’s why you don’t find me working in a government institution. You will not find me working or dealing with bureaucracy. I found myself an environment, or a similar environment, that I came from or that I believe in.

Society and Culture. This is a complex sub-theme. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) culture defined as consistency of “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment of artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values” (p. 27, as cited in Herman, 1996). Spradley (1980) defined it as “acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior” (p. 22) that offers a cognitive map, a uniform view of sets of mutual beliefs, values, and behaviors (Herman, 1996). This sub-theme is further broken down to the underlying sub-themes within culture and society. The first element is how the participants viewed norms when re-entering their native land and the second element is the participants’ expectations while re-entering.

Norms. When the participants returned to Saudi, they found certain norms of society and culture frustrating, even though these were norms that the participants lived by before going abroad. These norms were; punctuality and time management, transportation, and how people depend on others. These are further elaborated below. There were also a few norms that only one participant mentioned, two examples are that there is no respect for privacy and that society views a Ph.D. as the end of the educational road. Jana explained the dominant view of Saudi society regarding a doctorate, “You finished your Ph.D. That’s it. You’re a Doctor. You can enjoy your life now.”

Four of the participants expressed their frustration and disappointment about how people back home are moving away from traditional culture, religion, and customs. Nahla said, “I am disappointed that our customs and habits are changing. This really disappoints me, and I feel we are paying tremendous taxes [metaphorically speaking] and we are not even noticing it.” Esra felt that society was:

deteriorating morally and behaviorally. I thought that they would be both at the same level. When it advances architecturally and technologically, then it would advance morally and behaviorally. But I did not find them moving together in the same direction or in the same percentage.

Punctuality and time management do not hold much importance in the Saudi culture, although not being punctual is looked down upon in Islam. This highlights one of the differences between Saudi culture and the Islamic religion. The majority of the Saudi population does not stick to a scheduled time for any social event. Jana illustrated that people live “*Alla’ albaraka*,” meaning they have no clear plan or clear agenda for life. They do not manage their time wisely and, as Jana said, “Have no management in anything.” Nahla expressed her frustration about punctuality when she stated:

The only thing that shocks me is there is no punctuality even with social obligations. When someone invites you and tells you “come at eight,” they don’t really mean eight. So when you show up on time, at eight, they don’t come to greet you. They look at you frustrated, “why did you come at eight, you’re early.” But they said eight, so I went at eight. The host then tells me, “I said eight so people would come at ten.” So either you change your promptness or you just isolate yourself from others, and that’s what I am doing when someone invites me. I don’t go because I can’t go out every Thursday night and stay out all night till three in the morning, although my daughter is used to this and wants to go out every Thursday and stay out till three or four in the morning.

The majority of the Saudi population is middle to upper class, and it is common to find helpers in houses. The population depends on the help. However, three of the participants agreed that, as Nahla said, “Our problem here [in Saudi] is that we are extremely spoiled.” Jana further explained:

We came back and we saw how much people are dependent on others. What comes with it is this comfort, but there is also the waste of resources, energy, and effort. The whole concept of not doing it yourself becomes annoying. I think people are normally lazy, they need something to make them work and to move. I think the lifestyle here helps you to be even lazier than you are, because you don’t have to take care of the house. You can sit and relax and just enjoy your time.

Hala also found it annoying how people depend on the help. It frustrated her more that people look at her in a weird way because she is independent, as if they are asking, “Why aren’t you using the helpers?”

Transportation is another norm that provoked three of the participants. Because the law in Saudi Arabia prohibits women from driving, females need to be accompanied by male guardians or drivers if they want to venture out of the house (Long, 2005; Pharaon, 2004). When the participants lived abroad, they drove cars and did not have to depend on their husbands. Even the participants who did not learn to drive used public transportation. So, it was hard for them to come back and adjust to the situation. Nahla elaborated, “I stayed there ten years, independent, and suddenly I am back here. Sometimes the driver is not here to take me, and then what do I do? It’s a waste of time and I can’t do anything.” Jana also explained her frustration:

You can’t just live without a driver; this is one of the frustrations every time I want to go out. I wish we had the proper transportation system, so I don’t need a driver. If they don’t want women to drive, I am okay with that, but just please build a proper transportation system which we can use and rely on whenever we need.

Only two of the participants mentioned norms that they were happy to see when returning to the Saudi culture. They both agreed that females are very pampered and they missed being pampered. Jana mentioned how happy she was to hear the call for prayer and to enjoy the traditions during the month of Ramadan:

It was very wonderful to come back and hear the *a’dan* [call for prayer]. It was very wonderful to see how Ramadan is practiced, and is still practiced with harmony and family gatherings...which I loved and I wanted to continue to see.

Expectations. According to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963, as cited in Gaw, 2000), the difference between reverse culture shock and culture shock is the expectation. They stated that it is easier for repatriates entering a new culture because they are prepared to experience cultural difficulties, thereby minimizing the effects of culture shock. However, when returning home,

repatriates expect “to return to an unchanged homeland as unchanged individuals,” so the adjustment may be more difficult (Gaw, 2000, p. 86). This is exactly what happened to the participants in this study. Five of the participants had high hopes and expectations that when they returned home, they would be able to implement what they had learned and that their adjustment process would be easy. As Jana stated, “I think my frustrations came as a result of the high expectations that I had.” Rafa came back and found that Saudi was not as rosy as she remembered it:

Before I came here, I was expecting Saudi to be a rosy and marvelous place. I believed that everything I learned and I gained from experience and skills, I will just apply it and the environment will be waiting to accept me and challenge me... This is a challenging situation for most of the newcomers.

Although three of the participants were familiar with the idea of reverse culture shock, they still experienced it. Esra claimed that having realistic expectations can help returnees adjust better to their countries and institutions back home:

If we come with expectations and we find that there is a gap in our expectations,—our expectations were high and what we experienced was low—maybe we have to train ourselves and be more realistic in our standards and expectations. Of course, this can be done if we are connected with our home culture in one way or another. So our self-expectations maybe can help us with the re-adjustment.

Noor was the only participant who did not have any expectations when she returned to Saudi. She suspected that everyone and everything were the same and did not have high expectations about her students. Because of this, she was the only participant who claimed that she did not have reverse culture shock.

Family. All of the participants, except for Rafa, are married and have children. All five married participants found it very challenging for their children to re-adjust and re-adapt to the culture. Culturally, the family unit is extremely important in Saudi Arabia, and there is a strong connection between parents and children (Long, 2005). This strong bond lasts even after the

children become adults and move away from home. Upon returning, all participants found it hard for their children to re-adjust. Esra commented:

My children had difficulty adjusting. It took time, effort, and money to compensate, and it affected me at work and at home. I tried my best to help them. I cannot say that I succeeded, but I can say that I tried to compensate what they went through.

Three of the five participants emphasized how hard it was for their eldest sons to re-adjust, and they blamed themselves for their children's suffering. This made them feel guilty for causing conflict in their children's lives. Nahla said:

When I came back, my son was ten and my daughter was nine. He is still struggling, but my daughter is fine, but he is still struggling. I think it is harder for boys... but my son is still struggling, and he still has no friends, and he is in college now. But I always blame myself, because I was supposed to come back with him, and his father stayed and finished so he could live normally.

Hala also said:

It was difficult for my children, especially for my eldest one. He was born there and he went to school there and he grew up there. So when we came back, he always remembered our house, backyard, and neighbor children. As soon as he finished high school, he said, "I am going back home!" I was like, "What? This is home; this is home." But he said, "I know, but I want to go," and he went back and he is there now... He tells me, "I am not coming back"... I am struggling with him.

The participants lived abroad for a long period of time. Upon returning, their children were teased and made fun of because they did not have a good grasp of the Arabic language.

Nahla said:

My son was shocked that people laughed at him when he tried to talk in Arabic. You know how it is here; we are supportive in a sarcastic way. Everyone laughed at him, so he only talks to a limited number of people. Even now his Arabic is not that good...but he got used to the idea that if he spoke, people will laugh. He does not want friends and doesn't want relationships with family members.

Hala said:

When he came back, my son did not have the Arabic language and everybody made fun of him. His father wanted to put him in an international school, but I told him, "No, he goes in an Arabic school," so he learns the Arabic and religion.

From what the participants reported, there was a direct correlation between the age of the child and the difficulty of re-adjusting. The older the children were when the re-entry happened, the more difficult it was for them to adjust and also for the parents to help them adjust. Additionally, the parents had to invest more money and time to help their oldest children with the re-entry process.

Each participant had at least one challenge that she faced that none of the other participants experienced. For example, Noor believed that she was able to spend more time with her children by raising them abroad than she would have in Saudi Arabia. She feels she has lost control of them now that they are in Saudi because she has less time to spend with her children. Also, her children now interact with a much larger group of people who all influence the children's beliefs and behavior.

Despite the challenges the participants faced, Esra's re-entry was a bit easier because of her supportive husband. He did not study when they were abroad, so he took care of the children. When they returned to Saudi, she did not have to cook and was able to focus on her work. She explained, "He understands...I think we are both on the same page. Our priority in life is raising the children. It does not matter what we eat." She was the exception, and the extraordinary support from her husband made her life so much easier.

Reactions to challenges in the work environment. Saudi Arabia is a conservative country by nature (Long, 2005). Conservatism in a culture makes it very difficult for new ideas to be recognized and welcomed (Antal, 2001). When re-entering, all six participants expressed a feeling of responsibility, even obligation, to give back to their country. It is common that repatriates returning home feel a natural responsibility to contribute in a learning organization (Antal, 2001). Out of the six participants, four of the participants work in public universities.

Noor, Esra, and Rafa were sent on scholarships from the universities where they work. Nahla started to work two years after returning to Saudi. Each participant faced different obstacles or challenges and had a range of negative reactions towards the university's environment. Jana and Hala chose to work in private universities where the environment was, according to Hala, "similar to the environment abroad."

Public university. Participants had a range of reactions towards the challenges they faced in their work environments. Nahla was frustrated with the lack of student respect. Even though a colleague advised her otherwise, "I told my students to not call me Doctor. Just call me by my first name." She did not understand why she was advised to keep her formal title "until one of the students and one of the administrative [personnel] treated me with disrespect. So, I understood *the word* Doctor is what gives us respect." Nahla also faced difficulty trying to change one of the books for a course. She explained:

In the beginning, I did face difficulty because I told them I want to change one of the books. They started a revolution against me, from the department head to the entire staff, Saudi or not. I tried to explain why I wanted to change the book...the book was changed and the revolution calmed down, but not until after a long fight and after I faced extreme difficulty.

According to Sussman (2001), unprepared repatriates will experience more distress than those who are prepared. Esra was not pleased with the lack of punctuality of colleagues and students. She also thought the workshop provided for returnees was weak:

The university has a program that welcomes the returnees, but it's weak. It is for sojourners who have been abroad for a year, not like me—five years. The program does not explain the system well, nor does it introduce the new things that have happened.

Rafa did not know how to deal with jealous colleagues and realized the learning environment abroad was different from her work environment in Saudi. She was not able to apply the skills and experiences she learned abroad. She felt it was "a big, big challenge for all

newcomers.” She also found it frustrating that there was “a lot of change, but it was superficial...change but without reform.”

Nahla and Rafa agreed that public universities have a very competitive atmosphere and Rafa said, “Giving constructive feedback is not okay. It is not really grasped here.” They also realized their universities lacked the concept of teamwork. Nahla said:

We have a problem in the work environment. Competition is everywhere, and you hear them say, “I will do this so I am noticed” or “I won’t share this information because she will use it after me”...there is no teamwork.

They were also disturbed by the hierarchical system. According to Antal (2001), “In large organizations with hierarchical structures, it is difficult for knowledge to flow through the layers and for individuals to initiate organizational changes” (p. 15).

Rafa and Esra both commented on the difficulty of having a leadership position after re-entering. Esra was annoyed at the way they appointed her to the leadership position. She was even more frustrated that they did not give her the message face-to-face but did it through an email:

I was surprised when I found an email that said, “Congratulations on your new leadership position in clothing and design.” That was not my field, but under the same department. I thought that they sent it by mistake, so I deleted it... the next day someone told me, “Congratulations!” I was like congratulations for what? She said for the leadership position.

Rafa was the participant who faced the most challenges in her work environment, and she was also the only one who painted a rosy perspective of Saudi in her head before re-entering. By contrast, Noor was the only participant who did not have any negative reaction towards challenges in her work environment. However, she did agree with the other three participants who work in public universities that having a positive attitude at work and an optimistic view toward peers made facing challenges easier. In addition, all four of the participants agreed that

patience is the key to conveying their ideas to their colleagues and getting ideas implemented.

Jana said:

You come back and find you are the only one throwing ideas. Then you realize they *have* ideas but they have experience of when to *share* their ideas... So, I learned when you present the idea, it has to be presented in a proper way. Don't give the whole idea, but don't oversimplify it. It needs wisdom and smartness and it needs to be well-presented, according to the situation. These were skills that I needed to build... the most important thing is, you need to be open. Don't get frustrated. Let them digest the idea this semester. Then, next semester submit a proposal, because you want to build the idea from bottom to top.

Private university. Upon returning to Saudi, both Hala and Jana decided to work in private universities where the environment of the institution is multi-cultural, diverse, and similar to their learning environment. Hala said:

In the private sector you get things done quickly... it is all about teamwork. The work structure here is different than the public sector. There is teamwork with open communication. It brings in new minds and brings in new brains where we learn from one another. We learn in a circle.

Jana explained why she chose the private sector:

I chose to work in a private institute... because public institutes for me were the complete opposite of the environment that I lived in back in the UK. For me, the private institute comes in the middle and it is a multi-cultural environment and it does not have the homogeneity that the public institutes have. I lived in that environment for five years, so it was normal for me to be shocked with the ways of Saudi society. That's why I lean towards the private institute. The private sector is giving me the resources that I need, and maybe I didn't suffer from re-adjusting because I didn't try to come back to the real culture. So I don't consider this private sector a good representation of the Saudi culture.

Jana added that there were fewer students, the teaching was higher quality, and more extra-curricular activities were available for the girls than would be available in public universities. However, Jana was troubled because she works in a private university. She said, "Basically, I divided between my work life and society... I don't want to say that I don't want to join society or I don't like it. It's just a way of adjusting."

Social responsibilities. In Saudi culture, it is normal to attend every wedding, engagement, birth, and funeral in the extended family, out to four or five generations. Plus, there are religious gatherings, such as Eid and Ramadan, as well as visiting the grandparents almost every weekend. Five of the participants found social commitments very overwhelming upon re-entry, to the point that they had to restrict or reduce their social engagements.

Jana said that social engagements could not be “a life task or a life goal.” Rafa became stressed and ill from trying to keep up with her old social lifestyle and also work full-time. She decided she had to change and chose to only make phone calls instead of attending every single event. Esra had to prioritize and focus on the most important people in her life, letting go of all events with extended family. Below are several examples of how the participants dealt with social obligations. Jana said:

I think being active in this Saudi culture means that you are *so* socially engaged—you go to weddings, you visit people, you call people. You do all this, which is very interesting, but it cannot be a life task or a life goal.

Noor said:

When we came here, we were dealing with a bigger family with more things to do and more social commitments. It was really hard. You have no excuse to *not* attend gatherings, and you have to commit to your social responsibilities. When I was in the UK, I was committed to my family, but when I came back, I focused on social commitments. After the first six or seven months, I realized I had to change. I stopped accepting invitations. So many people were angry at me, but I was happy to restructure my relationships. I had priorities, first my family, then my extended family and closest friends. I was satisfied with giving phone calls instead of attending ceremonies because my health was compromised at that time. It was really hard, but *alhamdulillah* [thanks to Allah] after six or seven months I managed to redefine my life and work.

Esra said:

I used to prioritize. The most important people for me are my husband, children, my mom, brothers, and sisters and their children. Then the others probably I would see them in *Eid* and etc. My priority list was rigid. People would always tell me, “Let’s go out and do this or that.” I would tell them, “I am busy.” So, my adjustment was more focused on my career.

When the participants went abroad, their purpose was to continue their education, so they focused on their studies. The environments they created for themselves were centered on education. Most of their friends from their own cultures were also there in pursuit of education. Returning to their countries, they began to socialize with a variety of people who had different goals in life. When the participants went to social events, not all the people were as highly educated as themselves, and three of the participants felt that people were shallow. Nahla said the following:

Let me tell you, when we first returned to Saudi, we were happy. I went to {names a city} because I was invited for dinner. I was in a different world. They seemed so shallow to me. All they said was, “Did you see what she was wearing?” I was so shocked at this person or that person, and I could not believe that these were the people with whom I spent most of my time before I went abroad. I was looking at them as if they were from a different planet until one of them told me, “I bet you’re saying that we are so shallow.” I told her honestly, “Yes.” The problem was that I could not hide my emotions. Then suddenly, they shifted topics and started talking about paintings and art, trying to pretend that they were educated. I don't believe talking about art is a good way to show you are educated. At the end, they went back to gossiping, so it was very hard. I don't have friends now—except my colleagues at work—but friends? No. I do have two of my old friends who are from college. I communicate with them. I still talk to my friends in America—not the Americans, forget it, they are not long-term friendships—the Arabs are.

Reactions to Personal Changes

When going abroad, repatriates develop a greater understanding of self and obtain a broadened global perspective (Hamza, 2010). They also experience change in their personal and professional lives (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Hamza, 2010). The majority of the participants found it difficult to find a sense of belonging, yet all six of the participants were pleased with the ways they changed. They were exposed to new cultures that prompted introspection about their home cultures and encouraged creative thought about ways they can help reform their countries’ educational systems (Singaravelu & Pope, 2007). The participants were especially positive

regarding the changes in their way of thinking and how the changes helped them gain more experience in life, as well as understand themselves better through self-reflection. Rafa described her personal changes this way:

I am a totally different person regarding everything. My beliefs have been sharpened, everything has been changed, so it helped me develop—not just my skills and knowledge—but actually myself, understanding myself well and understanding others I work with. These are things that I can't just learn by reading a book, but I could learn by participating and living in different situations and being part of a team. Then I came back here, and I'm still learning new things. The most important thing here is how to survive. I mean how to keep your dreams alive and how to apply the experiences that you had abroad with few resources and a lot of resistance.

Jana said:

Honestly speaking, I cannot tell you that I came back to the way I was before leaving. Like I told you, living abroad and learning abroad creates a big paradigm shift in the way you think. It makes you view things from a larger, better perspective. It changes totally. Also another factor, as you become older you gain more experiences...I feel that each day I stay here longer [in Saudi] I am changing and I am gaining more experience in a positive way.

The experience of studying abroad also helped three of the participants acknowledge and realize that the change happened to *them*, not to *society*. Jana said:

So the change has happened to us, and we have to realize that. Some people believe that the society became crazy. They say, "Look how uneducated they are," but if you come to reality you find that they are the same. They have not changed, but what happened was that we took a few steps ahead, so now they seem uneducated to us...What I figured out is that the society didn't change; it was me who changed.

However, after living more than five years abroad, Esra believed that change happened to both her and to society, causing a dynamic of change:

I came back fully changed. There are two dynamics that have changed, and I need to adjust to it. It is not like I left for a short period. No. Society has changed and I have changed, and you want to put the buzzers together in a coherent way, of course.

Participants also described the positive skills they gained. Four of the six said their experiences abroad helped them develop their interpersonal skills and helped them realize their

responsibility of giving back to their country. Three of the participants learned to depend on themselves and became more accepting of others and less judgmental. Nahla became more motivated in life and stopped giving up on herself. Rafa discovered the researcher in herself, while Hala learned to say “No” to people.

Transfer of Knowledge

Upon completion of their studies, many scholars return to their home countries (Adler, 1981; Subramani, 2000), bringing back different perspectives, skills, ideas, discussions, and problem-solving skills that can enhance institutions and educational systems in their home countries (Szkudlarek, 2010).

During their experiences abroad, the participants in this study were exposed to new knowledge and new skills (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005). Hala and Jana worked in private universities when they returned. They both described the universities as very open minded and diverse, so they did not have difficulty applying what they learned during their studies abroad. Both participants declared that they transferred their knowledge through modeling. Jana stated:

I think we can teach others by being role models. I think just by being in the classroom with my students, showing them that I am a Saudi woman, who has a big family and a job. This by itself is teaching them something. I am teaching them that “yes, you can also go ahead and do it.”

However, the other four participants who worked in a public university—Nahla, Esra, Noor, and Rafa—were all very eager to implement and practice what they learned abroad. Esra explained, “Everything and every time I learned something, I used to think how will I transfer it? I would say to myself this idea is nice and I could use it back home.” Nahla recommended that returning scholars should “think twice” before transferring their newly acquired knowledge and ask themselves if this knowledge will offend their culture or religion.

All four participants returned home with a constructivist teaching style and tried new things they learned from their experiences abroad. For example, Nahla treated her students as she was treated abroad, “I treat my students exactly how my professors used to treat me in the United States. I am like a godmother for some.” Esra used the course syllabus in “very interactive ways.” She stated, “The course syllabus here is given the first day and is never seen the rest of the semester...students put it in their files...never see it again...I used it in very effective ways throughout the semester.” She mentioned that she became more aware of her students’ needs, “I paid more attention throughout the semester on how to train them.”

The participants all agreed that exams are not a practical way of assessing learning, and they do not believe in using exams. Noor stated, “I did not give them any exam. I do not believe in exams.” Nahla added, “I don’t believe in exams. I hate exams, and I don’t think that they test for anything except memorization.” Esra explained, “I believe *without* exams we can get a better education, and my students can gain and accomplish better from their work...we take charts and analyze them and I give open book exams.” They also agreed that the more they taught, the more experienced they became. Esra stated, “I have been teaching here for four and a half years. I am sure that I have grown professionally and gained more experience.”

Since knowledge transfer is not a simple process, it is to be expected that the participants faced difficulties transferring their knowledge, especially since the new knowledge was acquired in a different culture and context. Each participant had at least one challenge that she faced that none of the other participants experienced. For example, Esra came back wanting to apply everything in the first semester, which overwhelmed her and her students. Rafa found it very hard to get the students involved while transferring her knowledge and described the students as spoiled:

Here the system is different. I tried to help the students. The new generations are very ambitious. They really want to learn a lot, but they want it the easy way. The new generation is a gifted generation, but it is spoiled.

Nahla was annoyed that the use of the Arabic language is fading and there are not enough Arabic resources. She explained, “There are not enough sources; your students don’t have the English language. When they want to write a research, you find their research projects are very shallow, because they don’t have enough sources to cite.” She was also frustrated that she was assigned to teach courses that are not in her specialization. Nahla noted:

I am not a weeper, but the first day of work I cried...they made me cry...did not have a place for me. I got the job but without a description of what to do. They left me in the corridor all alone, and then they gave me three courses with no background whatsoever ... “You’re going to teach these three courses and deal with it.”

Re-entry of Others

Five of the participants contributed to this theme. Rafa did not talk about anyone else’s re-entry with her. As the participants were describing their re-entry processes during the interviews, the other five participants described the adjustment of other repatriates besides themselves. Only Nahla talked about this subject in a positive way; she commented that scholars who studied abroad become more developed because of their experiences. She said:

There is a difference between the people who stayed here and between the people who have lived abroad. They came back different. You see the difference in their personalities...there is something different about them; their way of thinking is different. They approach topics in a different way...I think they become more subjective when judging and they look at things with different perspectives and angles, not just from their perspective but from the society’s perspective.

However, four of the participants were disturbed by how other repatriates re-entered Saudi Arabia because they frequently came back rejecting their culture. Jana reported:

There are people who come back to their country and reject everything and disguise who they really are. They reject their culture and want to live the culture they lived abroad. They want to be like the people of the country they studied in we saw samples of our

family and people who rejected adapting and to this day they still have not adapted or adjusted. They refuse it.

Hala explained that there are three types of personalities for people when re-entering:

Some people are extremists; they go and come back hating anything that has to do with their culture. There are people who are in the middle and they learn from here and from there; they are flexible. Some come back very aggressive, rigid, and stubborn. Definitely, it depends on the person. Definitely.

Jana explained her perspective about why people reject their culture and country after coming back:

I believe that the people who come back and have problems re-adjusting already had problems and issues before they went abroad. These issues did not just appear, but they just surfaced. So the problem of not feeling that they belong to this country was in them all along. I believe this problem was there for a long time, but going abroad made it increase and surface.

Esra gave her perspective of why people come back, acting like they have not changed:

I am predicting that they were committed to the policies of the country they lived in abroad. When they come back, they lose everything they learned about punctuality, environmental awareness, or being independent...they go back to their old habits...when they come back, they don't find a clear policy and regulations. This frustrates them... in general, when the youth come back...and don't find regulations, it depresses them...or it could be they have a negative reaction. I am living in faculty housing and all who live here are professors who lived abroad and who were respectful... when they were abroad, they behaved differently than how they are behaving now.

Tips and Recommendations

During the interview process, the participants were asked to suggest tips and recommendations that would help new scholars in their re-entry process. The tips and recommendations were categorized into two groups: before returning to Saudi Arabia and after re-entry. A complete list of the tips and recommendations are contained in Table 1.

The first group was comprised of tips and recommendations to be done *before* returning to Saudi Arabia. Three participants agreed that before returning, a scholar should firmly keep

hold of her values and beliefs and also should work to strengthen her intra-personal skills. Two participants agreed that returning scholars can help their children adjust more easily by building social connections and staying connected with family and friends in Saudi Arabia. They also suggested returning scholars should have family discussions regarding what to expect in Saudi Arabia.

The second group contained tips and recommendations *after* re-entry. All the participants agreed that it is important to come home with a positive attitude. Five participants agreed that patience is the key to success. Four participants agreed on the following: a scholar should give back to her country and society, repatriates should give themselves time to adjust, and a scholar should start by changing herself and not judge peoples' reactions but accept others.

Three participants agreed upon the following tips and recommendations: do not criticize or blame society for the things that they do not like, always model the behavior she wants to see in others, do not reject the culture but accept that Saudi Arabia is your home country, and remember that nothing is perfect, so do not expect everything to be rosy in Saudi Arabia.

Two participants noted that returning scholars should take a moment and observe how much they have grown and changed. They should focus on good and beautiful things in the Saudi culture, remember that not everything learned abroad is right, and finally, find any job upon coming back, even if it is not a prestigious one.

Several tips were recommended by only a single participant, these included: keep in mind that a scholar will not find the same learning environment back home, adjustment has many dimensions, try out ideas before implementing them, listen and learn from previous returnees, visualize what you want to accomplish, and do not to take a leadership position upon r if you want to pursue research.

Table 1: Tips and Recommendations for Re-entering Scholars.

	Tips and Recommendations	Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Before Coming Back	Stay in contact with your institute back home. Stay updated with what is new and has changed. Stay in contact with your advisor.		✓					1
	One way to help your children’s adjustment is by allowing them to build social connections and stay connected with family and friends while you are abroad.		✓	✓				2
	Have a family discussion with your children on how to adjust and what they might expect to happen.		✓					1
	Keep hold of your values and belief.	✓		✓	✓			3
	Work on your intra-personal skills.		✓				✓	3
Upon Re-entry	Come back with a positive attitude.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
	Remember you were sent on a noble mission to get educated, and when you come back you need to give back to your country and society.		✓	✓	✓	✓		4
	Give or allow yourself some time to adjust and understand the environment around you	✓	✓			✓	✓	4
	Take a moment to see how much you have grown and how you have changed.			✓			✓	2
	Don’t come back and criticize what you don’t like. Don’t blame society.	✓			✓	✓		3
	Patience is the key to success.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
	Start by changing yourself.	✓		✓	✓	✓		4
	Not everything you learned abroad is right and, not everyone has to think the way you think.	✓				✓		2

Model the behavior you want to see in others.		✓	✓	✓			3
See the good things in your culture, and do not forget about our beautiful culture.			✓	✓			2
Do not reject your culture. You need to believe and accept that Saudi Arabia is your home country.				✓	✓	✓	3
Try not to judge people's reactions but accept others.			✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Keep in mind that you will not find the same learning environment back home.						✓	1
Keep in mind adjustment has many dimensions; family, work, social responsibilities, society, and culture.		✓					1
Find any job when you come back it; does not have to be a prestigious one.				✓	✓		2
Remember nothing is perfect, not even your life abroad. So do not expect Saudi Arabia to be so rosy.		✓			✓	✓	3
Try your ideas before implementing them.	✓						1
Listen and learn from stories of other returnees.		✓					1
Visualize what you want to accomplish.		✓					1
If you want to pursue research do not take a leadership position once you come back.						✓	1

After the tips and recommendations were extracted from the interviews, a survey was emailed to the participants to identify how many participants agreed with these tips and recommendations. See Appendix B for the survey. Unfortunately, only three of the participants responded to the survey—Nahla, Esra, and Rafa.

Esra and Nahla agreed with all the tips and recommendations. Nahla added, “Find any job when you come back,” or you will be depressed. Rafa agreed with most of the tips but did not express an opinion on the following: take a moment to see how much you have grown, not everything you learned abroad is right, model the behavior you want to see in others. Rafa commented on the tips about children, saying, “It is hard to tell them how to adjust when you don’t know how you will adjust for yourself.”

Summary

In this chapter, the participants’ stories were presented using poetry created from the participants’ own words to remain faithful to the essence of the participants’ experiences. I addressed how I made sense of the data and discussed how the themes, sub-themes, and underlying sub-themes were constructed. Then, the analysis of the themes was revealed, followed by the results of the tips and recommendations survey.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Studying in another country offers scholars exposure to new cultures and opportunities to learn ways to reform systems and increase knowledge in their countries. Repatriates bring back different perspectives, skills, and ideas that can enhance institutions and educational systems. Upon returning home, repatriate scholars are expected to utilize what they have learned, which involves implementing or transferring their newly acquired knowledge to their employer institutions. However, they often face colleagues who are resistant to change, and their home institutions may lack the appropriate environment and tools to help them transfer acquired knowledge successfully. Returning repatriate scholars need tips, tools, methods, processes, and support that will help them overcome the challenges and barriers they face when attempting to perform such a transfer. According to Hala, this study helps to fill this gap because she believes that the Saudi government is not preparing people for their journeys. She stated:

The government is sending students with no preparation and receiving them back with no preparation. To prepare the student who is being shocked and thrown into a strange culture and then thrown back into her own culture is very hard.

The purpose of this narrative study was to examine in-depth the stories, transformations, and challenges of female assistant professors who travelled from Saudi Arabia to the USA or the UK to further their education. Five major themes were constructed from interviewing six of these women: (a) reactions to environmental challenges, (b) personal changes, (c) transfer of knowledge, (d) re-entry of others, and (e) tips and recommendations.

In this chapter, the findings and these themes will be discussed, including reverse culture shock and transformational learning through the participants' stories. Then, recommendations for future studies will be offered.

Major Findings

All the participants went through reverse culture shock. However, the level of the shock and the recovery differed from one person to the other. Esra, Hala, and Rafa faced the most extreme reverse culture shock. A number of factors contributed to this result. Esra stayed abroad for five years without coming home even once. Hala and Rafa both went overseas at a very young age. Rafa came back having very high expectations that Saudi would be “a very rosy and marvelous place.” When Esra and Rafa came back, both were shocked to find the opposite of what they expected. Hala never talked about whether she had expectations. Therefore, it appears that the higher the expectations that the participants had of coming back to “a rosy and marvelous place,” the more they were disappointed. However, when they had no expectations or expected that people would not change, the re-adjustment was easier and faster. While this may not mean that repatriates should expect the worst or nothing, they should temper their expectations and not think everything will be perfect.

All five married participants expressed their sorrow and concern for their children and how much difficulty their children had adjusting. Nahla and Hala both said that their eldest sons suffered the most out of all their children and that these young men are still suffering. It is apparent that the eldest child is the one who suffers the most, especially if that child was born and raised abroad. The older the children were when they returned, the more difficult it was for them to adjust to their home culture, a finding also reprinted by Storti, (2003). It was a coincidence that four of the participants’ eldest children were boys. Though the literature did not support or refute this, three of the four participants whose eldest children were boys believed that it is harder for boys to re-adjust than it is for girls. Noor’s children were the exception because they were all very young during the re-entry process, so they did not experience any major re-

adjustment challenges. Although the participants did not give suggestions or explanations of how they got over the challenges and obstacles, they did say that they put in large amounts of time, money, and effort to help their children. They also said that it is better to talk to your children *before* returning about possible obstacles and challenges that they might face when re-entering.

When attempting to implement the knowledge they learned abroad into their teaching at their home universities, each participant had a different kind of challenge. The exceptions were Noor and Hala, who said they did *not* face any difficulties. They consciously chose to work in private universities where the environment was multi-cultural and decision-making happened quickly, not like the public universities that are based on hierarchal policies. Perhaps this is why they did not feel any resistance to implementing what they had learned. The participants who worked in public universities experienced a lack of: (a) teamwork, (b) diversity of learning and teaching styles, (c) open communication, and (d) constructive peer feedback. However, the participants did not say whether or not they found solutions to these challenges.

Each participant transformed, but each one at her own pace and time. They all said that the re-adjustment process required time, patience, and a positive attitude to reach aims and goals and to get new ideas implemented. They also said that repatriate scholars have to know *when* and *how* to introduce an idea. The best method seems to be slowly present the idea, wait a little while, give more information about it, wait again, submit a proposal, and then wait for it to happen. All the participants said that focusing on work was the cure for reverse culture shock and allowed them to re-adjust and re-adapt.

Culture shock and Transformational Learning

Revisiting the figure of transformational learning theory with reverse culture shock presented at the end of Chapter 2, it was clear that these participants did go through the stages of

re-entry that were presented by Oberg (1960) and Gallahorn and Gallahorn (1963). Analysis of the data shows that the participants' experiences matched the theories reshown in Figure 5. However, the level of the shock and the recovery differed from one person to the other (Gaw, 2000). This section will use the participants' stories to point out these stages of re-entry. How much each participant transformed cannot be determined with certainty, but this will be discussed later.



Figure 5. Modified version: *Resistance*, *Resistance at Home*, and *Transformational Learning* were added to Oberg's and Gallahorn and Gallahorn's W-curve diagram of culture shock and reverse culture shock adjustment.

The participants split into three groups. The first group consisted of one participant, Esra, who went through all the re-entry stages in her re-adjustment process. The second group consisted of four participants—Nahla, Hala, Jana, and Rafa—who went through reverse culture shock but did not talk about their resistance and recovery stages. They only talked about adjustment through work. The third group consisted of one participant, Noor, who felt that she did not face reverse culture shock and simply re-adjusted back home. However, later in her interview, she did say that she faced a “change in lifestyle,” which could be considered reverse

culture shock because a change in lifestyle automatically comes with challenges where she would have to either resist or adapt.

Esra is the best example among the participants of someone who went through all the stages of re-entry. Due to the events of 9/11, she remained in the USA for five years without visiting Saudi, which she previously did annually. When she was close to completing her degree, she started visualizing how she would meet her family at the airport and how she would teach at the university. This was the honeymoon stage, where she imagined going home. When she arrived home, she found that things were not the same as they used to be. The cities were more developed architecturally. The way of living had changed, people had moved more towards technology, and everyone was using cell phones. At that point, she went into shock. The shock triggered her to start reflecting about herself and the society. In the beginning, she resisted the idea of everyone having a cell phone. After a time, she noticed that *everybody* used cell phones to communicate, even the drivers and the household help. She used email as her source of communication with her peers, but they did not read emails. She only used a landline phone, but no one else used them anymore. This made her start evaluating the way she communicated with her peers. When she started recovering from the reverse culture shock, she realized that if she wanted to communicate effectively with her peers, she would have to use the same method they used to communicate with others. She also realized the benefits of having a smart phone. After much reflection, she accepted the idea and bought one. According to Gallahorn and Gallahorn (1963), she had reached adjustment at home.

Nahla did not go through a honeymoon stage. When she re-entered Saudi, she went through reverse culture shock. At the first social gathering she attended, she realized how shallow the people were that she used to hang out with, which took her into the shock stage. She

stayed in her house for two years without socializing, which was the resistance stage. She was also likely doing a lot of self-reflection. Two years after returning home, she found a job. She felt the job helped her adjust, and she started recovering until she reached the adjustment stage. Nahla stated that she changed as a person. She felt *needed* when working, despite the challenges she faced. She became motivated and stopped giving up on herself.

Jana was yearning to return home, which is the honeymoon stage. When she came back, she also went through reverse culture shock. She was still attached to the culture abroad because she had not finished her dissertation. In Saudi, when Jana was almost done writing the dissertation, she decided that she wanted to work. She chose to work in a private university instead of a public university. When she worked at the private university, she was in an environment similar to the UK, but when she would leave work at the end of every day, she would remember that she was still in Saudi and had to deal with the Saudi society. Here, she was in the rejection and resistance stage. As she worked at the university, she started moving into the recovery stage. When she was at work, she felt she was a changed person, who could apply all that she had learned abroad. After work, she still had to deal with society. Jana realized *she* was the one who had changed, not society.

Hala did not go through the honeymoon stage where she was yearning to go back, but she did face reverse culture shock. She came back and had difficulty adjusting into the Saudi culture. She expressed her difficulty when she described how people would look at her when she went grocery shopping. Hala explained, “People stared at me as if I was stranger just because I was pushing my own cart and putting my stuff into the car. They were saying, ‘Why isn’t she using the help.’” She began to create a distance between herself and society. She created her own environment with her family and worked in a private university that was similar to her

environment abroad. When she attempted to transfer, or even share, her knowledge, she found that people would make fun of her and say, “She is showing off just because she came from America.” She learned that the best way to transfer her knowledge was through modeling the behavior she wanted to see in others.

Noor went through the honeymoon stage. She was the only participant who was attached to Saudi Arabia and stated clearly that she did *not* have reverse culture shock. She explained that she adjusted easily to Saudi because she did not expect people or the culture to change. The only problem that she faced was the change in her lifestyle. In the UK, her life included only her immediate family and her studies, but when she went back to Saudi, her life expanded to include extended family and work. She tried to adapt to the Saudi lifestyle, but she became highly stressed and physically ill. Then, she realized that something had to change, so she stopped going to social events. This is reverse culture shock, though not at the same level or length of time as the other participants experienced.

At first, Noor did not resist going to the social events and reverted to the way she had lived before going abroad. However, with time, she realized that the social whirlwind was harming her and she shifted into the resistance stage. She moved into the recovery stage by changing her behavior to focus on work and her immediate family, and adjusted slowly. She did not begin reverse culture shock at her re-entry to Saudi, but rather it happened as she was picking up her former life and re-adjusting.

Rafa went through the honeymoon stage, wanting to come back and apply what she learned abroad. She came back thinking, “Everything is rosy and marvelous,” but she soon faced reverse culture shock instead. She faced the exact problem that Storti (1990) and Sussman (1986) reported. They each wrote that repatriates often maintain a freeze-frame image of home; upon

returning they expect that family, friends, and places will be unchanged. Rafa did not talk about her resistance and recovery stages. Instead, she simply talked about her adjustment stage. With time, Rafa adjusted:

I'm so relaxed and patient. That's why I digested the shock and tried to get the best out of it. I found that I lost all my beliefs and hopes that I was dreaming of and fighting for. Because I believe the obstacles that I faced taught me new things and taught me to see things in another perspective.

I felt that Rafa was not telling me everything. Though to some extent, I had that feeling with *all* the participants, Rafa shied away from talking about shock or distress and was the only one who tried to sound like a very successful person where everything was wonderful. During the interviews, Rafa rarely mentioned social responsibilities or family. Her discussion of her re-entry experience was primarily focused on work. She is also the only participant who is not married, does not have children, and does not have any responsibility for anyone other than herself.

All six participants reported and confirmed that they had changed, and self-reflection was evident throughout their process. They even acknowledged and were aware of many of the changes that happened to them. Transformational learning occurs when there is a change in one's behavior, attitude, perspectives, or cultural identity (Tisdell, 2003). It explains how adults incorporate new knowledge, perspectives, skills, or practices into their perception of the world as they engage in learning opportunities (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). According to Hamza (2010) said, "It reflects on the meaning of what they are learning, and they might engage in evaluating their familiar values, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions" (p. 52). It is evident that all the participants transformed, but it is also clear that they all transformed at different levels and that the transformational process started at different phases of re-entry.

The question remains, are they still in the process of transforming? Personally, I believe that it is one thing to *say* that you have transformed, and it is another thing to actually *see* the transformation. I may not have the right to judge whether or not the participants transformed, but I do believe that they are all still in the process of transforming. For instance, most of the participants are still seeking a balance between social life and work. Some of them might have already reached transformation, but I still have to ask if this process ever ends. It was not clear in the interviews. Longitudinal research would be necessary to delve deeper and to better understand the transformational learning process.

Repatriates often face challenges during re-entry that require many adaptations to their perspectives and attitudes (Oddu, Osland, & Blakeney, 2008; Sussman, 2000). Further, they routinely find that the lives of family and friends have changed, just as their own lives have changed (Gaw, 2000; Sussman, 1986; 2002; Oddu et al., 2008). The longer the time that repatriates stay in a host country, the greater the re-entry shock (Gaw, 2000). The younger the repatriates are when they first travel abroad, the greater the chance of re-entry shock (Storti, 2003). Also, according to Storti (2003), “The more familiar the returnee is with changes in the home culture/company, the easier the reentry” (p. 63). However, the effects of re-adjustment and re-adaptation differ from one individual to another (Gaw, 2000; Wolfe, 2005). Parson (2007) stated, “When we acknowledge that different people legitimately can view the same situation differently and different situations can be used concurrently, we begin to see that the situation may contain more complexity and opportunity than we expected” (Parson, 2007, p. 408). Therefore, the change and distress that one repatriate may face is not at the same level that another repatriate faces while re-entering (Gaw, 2000; Sussman, 2002; Wolfe, 2005). Among these participants, those who had high expectations went through a large cultural shock, and as a

result, they needed more time to adjust, recover, and cope with the obstacles and challenges. On the other hand, returnees who had low expectations went through less cultural shock, and as a result, they did not have to spend a lot of time or effort in adjustment. See Figure 6.

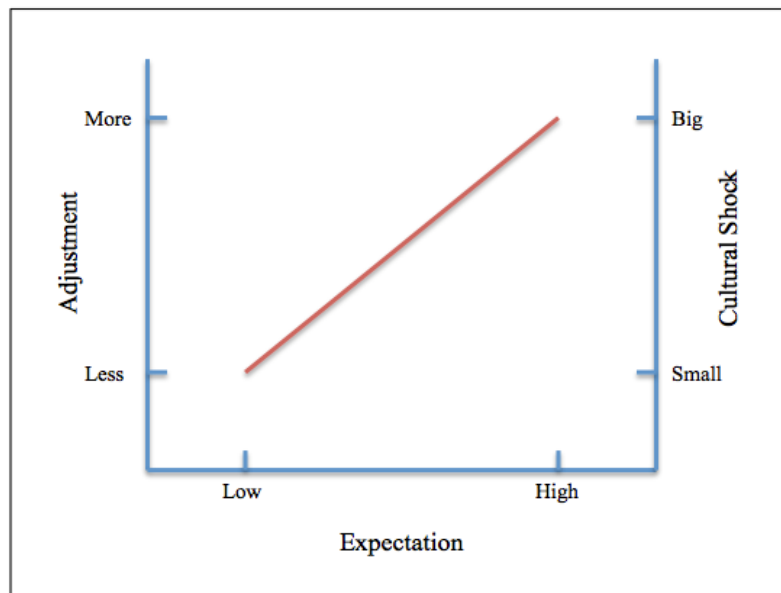


Figure 6. Level of expectation, adjustment, and reverse culture shock.

Four of the participants talked about the honeymoon stage, where they were yearning to go back home. The majority of the participants did not express very much about the resistance and recovery stages, but they all described their adjustment period. Since they did not talk about all the stages, this cannot be verified. In the second interviews, the participants repeated almost the same stories but would not go deeper. They seemed to have limits to what they wanted to reveal, and no amount of probing would coax them to share more. Two participants seemed to share more of their stories over the phone, but the other two still would not open up. Perhaps this is because some people prefer to speak on the phone, rather than in person. For the participants who had established internal boundaries about how much they were willing to share, additional interviews would probably not unearth a deeper understanding.

For all of the participants, having a job and focusing on attaining their work goals was a cure for reverse culture shock. The participants chose to focus on work rather than resume the social lives they had known in the past that no longer nourished their souls. One of the participants stated that if a repatriate does *not* find a job, she will be depressed. Perhaps underneath the surface, they were healing by focusing on their work and were coming to terms with the re-entry process by making choices that were more in tune with the evolved women they had become.

Facing and Overcoming Challenges

Adler (1975) identified three coping models for returning travelers: (a) the proactive, (b) the re-socialized, and (c) the alienated returnee. Proactive returnees understand that they and their home environment have changed. They learn to re-adjust to the society. They acknowledge personal growth from their experiences. The re-socialized returnees choose to incorporate the new cultural norms from the foreign country into their old culture, but they do not go through much personal growth. Alienated returnees react negatively to their home environment and culture. They limit their personal and social interaction with society and usually feel stuck between the two cultures (Raschio, 1987).

The research participants were not an exact fit for Adler's (1975) coping models. It was evident that *all* of the participants showed personal growth and acknowledged their personal growth. This could be because the participants were all well-educated.

Nahla was a combination of the alienated and re-socialized coping models because she limited her interaction with society and she incorporated the new cultural norms within her teaching. Rafa was also a combination of the alienated and re-socialized coping models for

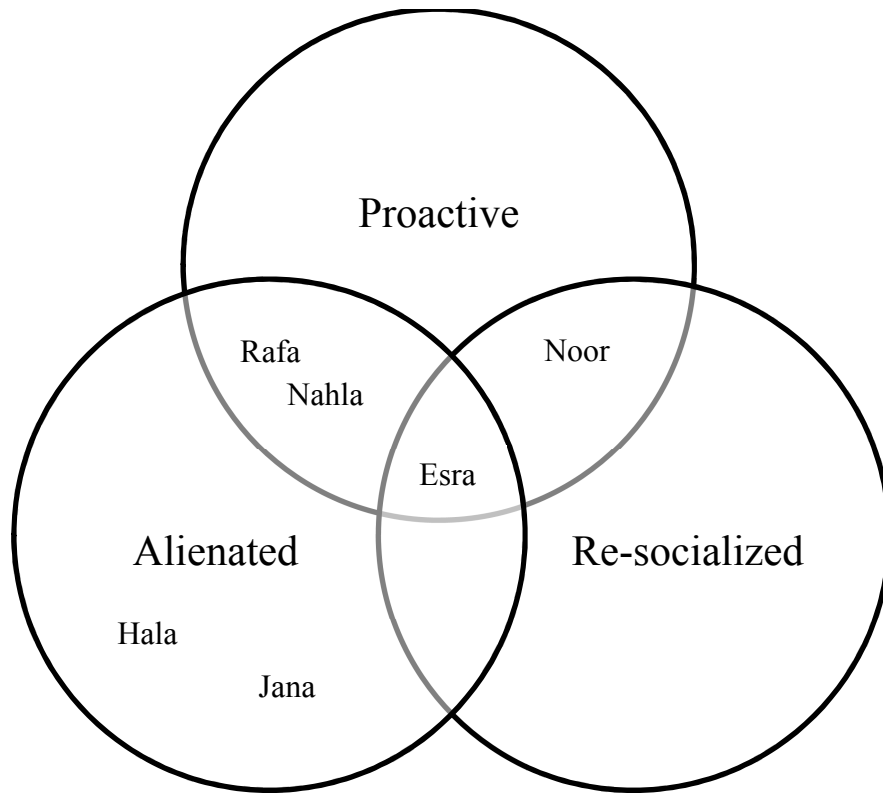


Figure 7: This figure shows how the research participants fit within Adler's (1975) Coping Models.

different reasons. She incorporated the new cultural norms into her teaching and work environment. Rafa was alienated because she had no time for a social life, and as an unmarried woman, she had different priorities than married Saudi females. Esra was a combination of all three of the coping models because: she understood that both she and her home environment changed, she incorporated the new cultural norms into her teaching, and she chose to no longer socialize with extended family and society. Noor was a combination of the proactive and re-socialized coping models. She learned to re-adjust to society and she incorporated her new cultural norms into her teaching. Jana and Hala are the only two participants who fit a single coping model. They both fit the alienated model of returnees because: they negatively reacted to their home environment and culture; when they decided to find jobs, they chose to work in

private universities; and they limited their social interaction with society because they felt stuck between the two cultures. See Figure 7.

First, the participants faced the challenge of going to study in another culture where there were alternate approaches to teaching, some of which were new to the participants. Then, once they returned home, they faced the challenge of implementing changes in Saudi. For example, they moved away from exams and required the students to create projects. Another example was moving away from traditional learning towards constructivist learning. To complicate matters, there was resistance from colleagues, deans, and students. Several studies have reported that repatriates do not find support from their organizations after re-entering (Adler, 1981; Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Crowne, 2009; Lazarova & Tarique, 2005); this was true of the participants in this study who worked in public universities. As an instructor, bringing something new into a lecture is challenging, whether that means bringing in new material or a new process (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000; Oddou et al., 2008).

The four participants who worked at public universities mentioned that they experienced resistance from colleagues who did not travel abroad. According to Cannon (2000), this is common. Their colleagues were not open to learning new ideas and attitudes, which is necessary for the transfer of new knowledge and new skills to occur (Assor et al., 2009). When repatriates come from conservative backgrounds where institutions are hierarchically structured, one of the biggest challenges is sharing new ideas (Antal, 2001; Cannon, 2000). The participants who worked at public universities were working in conservative, hierarchically structured environments. In their first year home, the participants noticed that they had the urge to apply *everything* they learned. With time and experience, and by listening to their students, they

recognized that their teaching would be more effective if they calmed down and reduced the pace of learning, as well as the quantity of new material the students were required to learn.

The participants who worked in private universities did not mention how they implemented or transferred their knowledge, except for modeling what they learned abroad. Perhaps they did not encounter any difficulties or did not feel any resistance to applying what they learned abroad, so they did not experience a challenge.

I feel that all six of the participants focused on their reactions to environmental challenges rather than how they implemented their newly acquired knowledge at work because the environmental challenges were more painful and complicated. If I had had more time to interview the six participants, I still do not believe that any of the women would have revealed additional information. I felt all of them reached the point where they were not willing to go deeper since they either circled around the same information or they chose to not participate in a second interview.

When the participants came back, they had to deal with emotional challenges that were difficult. The returning participants moved from the honeymoon stage into crying, depression, uncertainty about their future, and feeling lost and unbalanced. Returning was hard for them because many were impatient, wanted to see faster change, and were frustrated. With time and self-reflection, they began to develop a sense of belonging to the culture again.

The strategies that helped all the participants deal with the emotional challenges they faced were: (a) finding a job or focusing on their work; (b) restricting their social lives; (c) re-evaluating their priorities; and (d) putting time, money, and energy towards helping their children. Also, being patient, being flexible, having a positive attitude, and accepting society helped smooth their process of re-entry.

Each participant had her own way of dealing with the emotional challenges. For example, Esra used a coping strategy to visualize her adjustment, which lessened the impact of reverse culture shock. She also acknowledged that both *she* and *society* had changed. Nahla discovered that being needed at work helped her adjustment process, and she also learned to not give up on herself and to believe in herself. Noor did not expect people to change, which lessened the impact of reverse culture shock. Rafa had to let go of all her personal hopes and dreams. Jana kept reminding herself that *she* was the one who changed, not society. Both Jana and Hala chose private universities where they could have an environment similar to the foreign culture where they had studied.

Reflecting on Findings

During the initial stages of studying the literature and then conducting the pilot study, I realized that the transformational learning theory would assist me in understanding the participants' stories. By having the W-curve and the transformational learning theory side-by-side, I could see the participants' stories from a broader perspective and develop deeper insights about their re-entry processes. The combination of transformational learning theory and the W-curve also helped me make more sense of the themes and sub-themes. I was surprised to discover that Adler's three coping models would help me identify each participant's personal growth and how they chose to re-adjust to their culture. It was not until the final stages of writing the dissertation that I noticed—while re-reading my literature review—that Adler's coping models showed me *how* my participants could re-adjust to Saudi Arabia.

Implications for Action

The King Abdullah Scholarship Program has been extended for another five years (Ministry of Education, 2012). With an ever-increasing number of students on scholarship from

Saudi Arabia to foreign countries, these students need support implementing and transferring their knowledge to benefit the country. The Ministry of Saudi could help the future of the country by providing classes and support groups for repatriates in the honeymoon stage to minimize reverse culture shock and maximize the benefit of the funds that are being invested in these scholars. A simple first step would be to provide recommendations and tips for repatriates.

Recommendations for Further Research

All but two of the sources located during the literature review on transformational learning and reverse culture shock were conducted from a western perspective, so there was a possibility that the literature might not apply to Middle Eastern cultures. However, the literature on reverse culture shock was found to be pertinent to this research. Although the literature on transformational learning was useful, it was unclear from the data whether these participants reached transformation. Longitudinal research needs to be done to see whether transformational learning fits within Middle Eastern cultures and traditions.

The people in this study were all highly educated and many of them were aware in advance that they were facing reverse culture shock, but they did not have sufficient skills to help themselves. To reach broader conclusions, additional research would be needed on a full range of both educated and uneducated people. The model combining transformational learning and reverse culture shock appears to work well for these six participants. Is that because they are educated and articulate? It remains to be seen if this model works for less educated people or for blue-collar workers.

Further research should be done with male participants to see if the results are different or if new findings surface. The study would likely have had different results if it were done only with unmarried participants. This too could be interesting further research. Surprisingly, nothing

in the literature talked about the stress that social responsibilities and social gatherings can have on returning scholars. Additional research could focus on social gatherings in the Middle Eastern cultures for both men and women.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all the participants went through reverse culture shock. All five married participants expressed their sorrow and concern for their children and how much difficulty the children had as they adjusted. When attempting to implement the knowledge they learned abroad into their teaching at their home universities, each participant had a different kind of challenge.

Analyzing the data, the following new material was found that was not in any of the literature. All participants agreed that patience is the key to overcoming challenges. They also agreed that it takes time and a positive attitude to reach aims and goals and to get new ideas implemented. The majority of the participants recommended that repatriates should not attempt to implement change at a fast pace because the fast pace overwhelms the students and alienates peers. Participants of the study had an easier adjustment to their home culture when they chose an environment that was similar to the environment abroad, which allowed for teamwork, diversity of learning and teaching styles, open communication, and constructive peer feedback.

By understanding the stories of the participants, this study offers recommendations to universities, institutions, and families to help female assistant professors re-adjust to their own cultures and help them benefit from their experiences and transformations. In addition, this study provides suggestions for how to help repatriate scholars implement the knowledge and skills they have learned abroad and ease their re-entry.

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APPENDIX A: MATRICES

Table 2: The Participants' Reactions to the Family Sub-theme within the Environmental Challenges Theme.

Reactions to Environmental Challenges Family		Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Considering their children and thinking of the timing when to go back			✓				1
	When they go back they will go back to an easier lifestyle			✓				1
	Understanding your children			✓		✓		2
	Supportive husband		✓					1
	New international schools that have facilities like abroad that children can relate to	✓						1
Negative	Lack of family connectedness	✓						1
	Guilt for spending most of her time at work and not enough with husband and family		✓			✓		2
	The eldest son made it very hard for her and she blamed herself for the children's suffering	✓			✓	✓		3
	Did not visit Saudi Arabia annually		✓					1
	Hard for their children to re-adjust	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		5
	Not having the Arabic language so other children made fun of her children	✓		✓		✓		3

Table 3: The Participants' Reactions to the Sense of Belonging Sub-theme within the Environmental Challenges Theme.

Reactions to Environmental Challenges Sense of Belonging		Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Attached to the Saudi culture					✓		1
	Felt I was needed	✓						1
	Visualizing your goals		✓					1
	Finding a similar culture (private university)			✓	✓			2
Negative	Feel unbalanced and not sure about the future			✓				1
	Trying to find your old self	✓		✓				2
	Focusing on work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6

Table 4: The Participants' Reactions to the Society and Culture Sub-theme within the Environmental Challenges Theme.

	Reactions to Environmental Challenges Society and Culture	Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Females are pampered	✓		✓				2
	Ramadan and call for prayer			✓				1
	No expectations					✓		1
Negative	Moving away from culture, customs, and religion	✓	✓	✓			✓	4
	Transportation no system; driving	✓		✓			✓	3
	People are spoiled, lazy, & depend on others	✓		✓		✓		3
	No organization and not punctual	✓		✓	✓			3
	Culture shock	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5
	No privacy				✓			1
	See PhD as the end of the road			✓				1
	Increase in architectural changes		✓					1
	High expectations	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	5

Table 5: The Participants' Reactions to the Social Responsibilities Sub-theme within the Environmental Challenges Theme.

	Reactions to Environmental Challenges Social Responsibilities	Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Negative	Feeling people are shallow	✓		✓	✓			3
	Too many social commitments, avoid, and priorities		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5

Table 6: The Participants’ Reactions to the Public University Underlying Sub-theme within the Environmental Challenges Theme.

	Reactions to Environmental Challenges Public University	Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Workshop for returnees		✓					1
	A positive attitude makes it easier to deal with peers and makes it an easier environment	✓				✓		2
Negative	Taking a leadership position		✓				✓	2
	How to deal with peers		✓					1
	Competitive environment, no team environment	✓					✓	2
	No preparation for returnees		✓					1
	Social obligations		✓				✓	2
	Different environment than learning environment						✓	1
	Culture does not take feedback well	✓					✓	2
	Trying to change textbooks	✓						1
	Jealousy						✓	1
	Superficial change						✓	1
	Students’ respect	✓						1
	The system	✓					✓	2

	Having a rosy perspective							✓	1
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Table 7: The Participants' Reactions to the Private University Underlying Sub-theme within the Environmental Challenges Theme.

Reactions to Environmental Challenges Private University		Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Things done quickly							2
	Fewer students, better, quality & extra-curricular activity							1
	Multi-cultural environment and diverse			✓	✓			2
Negative	Private colleges are new and they are in a transitional stage			✓				1
	Dividing between life and work			✓				1

Table 8: The Participants' Reactions to the Theme of Personal Changes.

	Reactions to Personal Changes	Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Time management							1
	Being dependent				✓		✓	3
	Acknowledging the change in me		✓	✓			✓	3
	Change in way of thinking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
	More experience in life	✓			✓	✓	✓	1
	See the researcher in me						✓	1
	Being responsible for others and giving back				✓		✓	4
	Having the ability to say no and setting priorities				✓	✓		3
	Not taking, thinks personally, not having high expectations					✓		1
	Accepting others				✓	✓	✓	3
	More motivated in life and not giving up	✓						1
	Better interpersonal skills				✓		✓	4
	Dynamic of change		✓					1

Table 9: The Participants' Reactions to the Theme of Re-entry of Others.

	Reactions to Re-entry of Others	Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Becoming more developed because of their experience abroad	✓						1
	Creating a support system, helping others		✓				✓	2
Negative	Rejecting their culture, students come back brain-washed	✓		✓	✓			3
	Not having the same policies when you go back home		✓					1
	No preparation before re-entering				✓			1
	People responded differently to re-entry				✓			1

Table 10: The Participants' Reactions to the Theme of Transfer of Knowledge.

Reactions to Teaching in Saudi Arabia Transfer of Knowledge		Participant						Total Agreed
		#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	
Positive	Treated her student like she was treated abroad							1
	Teaching with constructivist style (new style, syllabus, office hours)	✓	✓			✓	✓	4
	Different way of evaluating (no exams)	✓	✓			✓		3
	Eager to practice what they have learned		✓			✓		2
	Thinks before she teaches	✓						1
	Transferring through modeling			✓	✓			2
	Became more aware of students needs		✓					1
	The more you teach the more experience you get	✓	✓			✓		3
Negative	Wanting to apply everything in the first semester		✓					1
	Not enough Arabic resources and Arabic is fading	✓						1
	Peer evaluation very rare	✓						1
	Teachers return with a different perspective and can confuse the students	✓						1
	People think you are showing off					✓		1
	Students are spoiled and does not talk much about her teaching						✓	1
	Failure in education is by bring a different culture with in your culture	✓						1
	When you return, your assigned courses might not be your specialization	✓						1

APPENDIX B: MEMBER CHECK SURVEY

Dear participants,

I would really appreciate it if you can take the time to give me your input. In the table below you will find all the tips and recommendations that you or other participants have suggested, and the number of participants who suggested them. I would really appreciate it if you would take the time, read each recommendation, see if you agree with it, if you do please mark the box and add a comment if applicable.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

	Tips and Recommendations	Number of participants who agreed	Do you agree?	Comments
Before Coming Back	Stay in contact with your institute back home. Stay updated with what is new and has changed. Stay in contact with your advisor.	1		
	One way to help your children's adjustment is by allowing them to build social connections and stay connected with family and friends while you are abroad.	2		
	Have a family discussion with your children on how to adjust and what they might expect to happen.	1		
	Keep hold of your values and belief.	3		
	Work on your intra-personal skills.	2		
Upon Re-entry	Come back with a positive attitude.	6		
	Remember you were sent on a noble mission to get educated, and when you come back you need to give back to your country and society.	4		
	Give or allow yourself some time to adjust and understand the environment around you.	4		
	Take a moment to see how much you have grown and how you have changed.	2		

Don't come back and criticize what you don't like. Don't blame society.	3		
Patience is the key to success.	5		
Start by changing yourself.	4		
Not everything you learned abroad is right and, not everyone has to think the way you think.	2		
Model the behavior you want to see in others.	3		
See the good things in your culture, and do not forget about our beautiful culture.	2		
Do not reject your culture. You need to believe and accept that Saudi Arabia is your home country.	3		
Try not to judge people's reactions but accept others.	4		
Keep in mind that you will not find the same learning environment back home.	1		
Keep in mind adjustment has many dimensions; family, work, social responsibilities, society, and culture.	1		
Find any job when you come back it; does not have to be a prestigious one.	2		
Remember nothing is perfect, not even your life abroad. So do not expect Saudi Arabia to be so rosy.	3		
Try your ideas before implementing them.	1		
Listen and learn from stories of other returnees.	1		
Visualize what you want to accomplish.	1		
If you want to pursue research do not take a leadership position once you come back.	1		