

DISSERTATION

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RE-ENTRY
ADJUSTMENT OF FULBRIGHT FLTA ALUMNI FROM NORTH AFRICA AND SOUTH
ASIA

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George Marquis

School of Education

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Doctoral Committee:

Advisor: Linda Kuk

Alexandra Berensek

Louise Jennings

Susan Lynham

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ABSTRACT

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF RE-ENTRY ADJUSTMENT OF FULBRIGHT FLTA ALUMNI FROM NORTH AFRICA AND SOUTH ASIA

Sojourners returning to their home countries after working or studying in the United States may face challenges in the re-entry adjustment process. Traditionally, much research on the experience of re-entry adjustment has been survey-based, with researcher-crafted questions not allowing for in-depth and nuanced perspectives of the sojourners. Drawing on in-depth, qualitative interviews from nine North African and South Asian alumni of a Fulbright's Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTA) program, this study employed interpretative phenomenological analysis to capture descriptions of participants' lived experience of re-entry adjustment. Interpretative analysis of unique individual lives combined the situated perspectives of both the participants and researcher. While the in-depth interviews revealed unique lived experiences, careful analysis also revealed four superordinate phenomenological themes of re-entry adjustment: *Confidence and a Sense of Empowerment; Comparisons of the Home and Host Countries, Heightened Critical Sensitivity, and Adopting a Re-entry Style*. The themes offer a clearer picture of the challenges of returning to areas of the world that are quite different in terms of culture and development from the United States. Descriptions of lived experience were infused with strong feelings and emotions that sometimes typified a process of grieving over separation and loss. Data revealed that the participants struggled to make sense of their current home environment and questioned whether returning home was the correct decision. However,

data also revealed participants' strong sense of obligation to family and desires of participants to build on their experiences in the United States and achieve impact. Participants described their desire to transfer knowledge, skills, and new perspectives to their home countries, but expected some resistance. The findings suggest that alumni would benefit from opportunities to discuss their re-entry adjustment challenges in a more supportive home culture environment.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

- *Fulbright FLTA alumnus/a* - an FLTA alumnus/a was defined as someone who has spent 9-11 months as a Fulbright grantee in the United States in a non-degree program at a partnering institution of higher education and returned to his/her home country. The Fulbright FLTA alumnus/a has at least a Bachelor's degree earned prior to time in the US.
- *Developing country* - the World Bank (Adams, 2003) classified the six countries in my study as developing. The International Monetary Fund (2016) classified all countries in my study as developing except India, which it classified as a newly industrialized country because of certain macroeconomic-level improvements that it had made that the other countries in my study had not. However, in terms of purchasing power parity, India fell within the range of 4-14 units (International Monetary Fund, 2016), a range that included the five other countries. At the time of this study, India actually had one of the world's lowest per capita incomes because of the size of its population.
- *Re-entry Adjustment* - defined in this study as a process of coming to terms with living once again in one's home country after having spent almost one full year in the United States. Re-entry adjustment does not necessarily involve shock although this is sometimes the case (La Brack, 1985).
- *North Africa* – delimited in this study to the countries of Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. In addition to geography, the populations of these three countries share similar histories, religion, and language. While Algeria and Libya are also part of North Africa, no participants from these two countries were included in my study.

- *South Asia* – delimited in this study as the countries of India and Pakistan. Arguments for similar world views among the two populations were detailed by Tewari, Inman & Sandhu (2003). India and Pakistan were historically one country, known as the British Indian Empire, until 1947. The two main languages (Hindi in India and Urdu in Pakistan) are mutually intelligible, deriving from the same origin (Sanskrit).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Returning to one's home country after spending time abroad can be unexpectedly challenging. Returnees' expectations may not be in line with reality. An element of surprise at the naïve expectations of others that the returnee is the same person as s/he was before traveling abroad or the returnee's naïve expectation that home culture stood still while s/he was abroad may make the re-entry experience more stressful than anticipated. Feelings of confusion or disorientation can be compounded by feelings of separation from the host culture. While there are many types of sojourners, ranging from students to missionaries to employees of multinationals, to some extent all experience some form of cultural dissonance or culture shock. What may differ is the specific context of re-entry, and therefore, there is no simple advice that assists all sojourners with re-entry adjustment.

For foreign Fulbright alumni returning from programs in the United States to two areas of the developing world, North Africa and South Asia, unique challenges to re-entry adjustment in the home countries await. As professional teachers with newly acquired skills, returning alumni may find that their home countries lack classroom equipment, adequate laboratories, IT infrastructure, or other facilities necessary to enable them to carry out their plans to share their knowledge and skills with their fellow students and peers. They may also discover that they are returning to more hierarchical work relationships, with less empowerment to make decisions and reduced access to superiors in the workplace.

On a personal level, foreign Fulbright alumni may have experienced cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal shifts. For example, they may have adjusted to different concepts of

personal space, ways of greeting, dress codes, and other aspects of culture, and now may find it challenging to return to behaving within the accepted cultural norms of their home country. Such changes may be recognized and not welcomed by others at home, including not only family members and friends, but supervisors and other workplace colleagues. Alumni may encounter a lack of empathy when trying to explain their struggles with re-entry adjustment because the struggles are neither anticipated nor understood by others. The lack of an empathic response to the alumni's struggles can exacerbate the alumni's feelings of separation and loss, thinking about the experience that they left in the United States.

Achieving financial independence upon return to the home country might provide these alumni with the ability to maintain a degree of personal freedom that they had grown accustomed to in the United States. However, cultural norms that discourage young professionals from moving away from their families, coupled with difficulty finding stable employment in the home country for government-sector teachers or researchers may not allow alumni to live independently. Unemployment rates in North Africa and South Asia typically exceed 10% and may be double or triple that rate for females (World Bank, 2014). Thus, for many alumni from these countries, returning home means readjusting to a less independent lifestyle.

On a more personal level, many foreign Fulbright alumni have returned home after having had a positive and transformative experience in the United States. Separating themselves from the experience in the United States is a process accompanied by emotion, and arguably the process can be seen in terms of psychological grieving process associated with separation and loss.

From the perspective of the sponsors of the Fulbright program, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), and its implementation manager, the

Institute of International Education (IIE), the cost of supporting the Fulbright program is only justified if alumni return to their home country and create impact. Alumni can create impact at home by promoting mutual understanding between their home countries and the United States (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2016) sharing their acquired knowledge with their home countries (Carnegie Mellon University, 2016), or working to solve complex problems for their home countries (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2017). Alumni can achieve these goals as educators, diplomats, civil service employees, or in other positions of influence. However, to do this effectively, alumni need to settle and readjust psychologically, coming to terms with the fact that their one-year experience in the United States has ended.

To date, the Fulbright program has not marshalled resources to systematically research the problem or propose ways of assisting alumni from North Africa and South Asia with the process of re-entry adjustment to the home country. Funders and managers of the program have not commissioned research into the lived experiences of re-entry adjustment of alumni from the developing world, and I believe that there exists a great need to make sense of these lived experiences in order to assist these alumni with regaining their footing in their home country.

In order to encourage returning Fulbright alumni to focus on creating impact in their home country and avoid the incentive to remain in or immediately return to the United States, the U.S. government employs a different tactic: imposing on all Fulbright alumni, as J-1 visa holders, a two-year physical presence requirement in their home country upon completion of the Fulbright program in the United States. This requirement is referred to legally as the J-1 two-year foreign residence requirement 212(e) for exchange visitors and is a section of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

In spite of the two-year physical presence requirement, a number of Fulbright alumni leave their home country within the two-year required residency period. This is clear both from anecdotal remarks from officials involved in the Fulbright program and also from social media postings. Fulbright program officials have reported to me that “Country X has a better [physical presence] compliance rate than country Y” or “about 10% of returnees to a certain North African country don’t complete the residency requirement” (anonymous, personal communication). A lack of compliance by some alumni is also evidenced from social media postings. With more than 1,500 Fulbright alumni as Facebook friends, I have read postings from alumni who relocated in other countries within a year of having returned home. In addition to returning to the United States to complete a degree program, some alumni have relocated to the Arab Gulf to work, or to France, the U.K., or Canada to study.

There is an absence of data to suggest variables associated with non-compliance with the two-year residency requirement from developing countries. However, what is known is that the countries of North Africa and South Asia have push factors that may encourage ambitious Fulbright alumni from modest backgrounds to relocate. These countries have low average wages (International Monetary Fund, 2016) relative to those of OECD and Middle Eastern OPEC countries, which are the two most common areas that labor migrants and students from the Middle East and North Africa select as destinations (International Monetary Fund, 2016). These countries in North Africa and South Asia also have youth bulges and high youth unemployment.

An additional motivation for leaving the home country may be related to the difficulty of re-entry adjustment to the home culture if it is seen as an impediment to social mobility or personal expression. As will be detailed in Chapter Two of this proposal, a substantial body of research has found that many sojourners, upon returning home, faced challenges on one or more

of three levels: affective, behavioral, or cognitive (Szkudlarek, 2010). For those returning to North Africa and South Asia after spending a year in the United States, the challenge to readjust may be exacerbated by the greater relative cultural distance between the United States and these two areas of the developing world (Hofstede, 2001). The choice by Fulbright alumni to leave their home country for whatever purpose is a loss on investment to the Fulbright program.

In spite of the factors that make it attractive to leave the home country once again, a significant number of alumni from North Africa and South Asia do make an effort to resettle for the long term in the home country. Their goals as alumni may have changed as a result of their experience in the United States or remained as they were before they spent time in the United States. Alumni that were tenured government teaching employees before traveling to the United States have a strong incentive to return to their previous jobs. Some alumni are community-service focused with a strong incentive to serve the underprivileged. Some who come from underdeveloped areas remain strongly attached to these areas and want to resettle there, even if salaries are low and infrastructure is wanting. A sense of obligation to support other family members may play a role in determining where these alumni resettle.

For those alumni who do decide to resettle in their home countries, there is an absence of data to understand whether the realities that they face upon their return make it more difficult for them to readjust and pursue their plans. Surveys administered by the managers of the Fulbright program are broad-brush, and lack methodological rigor. Rather than design surveys that consider variations in the meaning of concepts and questions by culture, survey designers use one set of questions for all alumni, regardless of culture, and survey administrators do not ask whether sets of answers from different cultures are equivalent and comparable. Surveys have traditionally used an etic as opposed to an emic approach, and thus the questions are designed by

cultural outsiders, and may not be asking the most important or relevant questions to alumni from a specific culture. Cross-cultural surveys may have greater difficulty controlling bias because of several factors: (1) it is more difficult to control for meaning of items, constructs, and phenomena across cultures; and (2) values accorded to terms can differ. What might be a normal question to ask someone in a nuclear family might not be appropriate for a member of extended family (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997).

What is needed is a more ideographic and inductive approach to collecting data on alumni, one that does not presume that experiences among returning alumni are generalizable across cultures, and one that recognizes that the alumni have their own stories to tell, ones that cannot be captured by asking a predetermined set of questions.

Statement of the Problem

While there is recognition by researchers of the re-entry challenges faced by students and professionals returning to their home countries after living in the United States, there is almost no re-entry adjustment research that focuses on the emotional process of readjustment from the perspective of the persons experiencing the emotion. La Brack (2006) mentioned *degree of home country contrast* as a factor in re-entry adjustment but did not describe how those experiencing this contrast experience the process of re-entry adjustment. Emotions and other feelings are arguably highly personal at both the affective and cognitive levels, and therefore it seems inappropriate to use deductive and nomothetic methods of questioning to capture these affects.

There is an unstated assumption by many researchers that reality for a Fulbright alumnus/a would fall within a range of possibilities that would be covered by a predetermined set of responses to questions designed by others. Another assumption is that there is a representational validity to survey responses. However, this would ignore two possibilities: (1)

that language in surveys means different things to different survey takers, and (2) that there are roles for embodiment and embeddedness in cognition. In other words, a potential problem lies in relying unconditionally and solely on survey results because it ignores the possible interpretative nature of the survey taker, the role of situatedness, and the constraints of the environment on the survey taker. A third assumption is that from a fixed script of limited questions with closed responses, a holistic composite can be drawn of a respondent's experience. This denies the possibility that each lived experience is unique.

At a minimum, Fulbright needs to collect data that focus on understanding alumni from their own perspectives, using less structured approaches to questioning. It also needs to place more importance, albeit impractical, on the value of idiographic (single-person) cases, because, I believe, a deeper and more holistic capturing of an individual's narrative description is needed. A more intense probing into the particular case of an individual may redress the preoccupation with "actuarial predictions" (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 179) common to nomothetic empirical work. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach, such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), could better capture descriptions of lived experience of re-entry adjustment, which could be used to supplement other data and inform policy.

Theoretical Framework

The impetus for this study originated from a combination of factors. My theoretical framework is based on Maxwell's (2008) formula for creating frameworks and is a combination of three components: (1) my assumptions, or biases, based on my experience (2) relevant theory from the current body of literature, and (3) my pilot study. As justification for including my assumptions in my framework, I believe that it is folly to ignore what I already know about the issues in my chosen study. I have facilitated pre-departure and re-entry sessions for returning

students and alumni for many years. I have lived and worked in the regions of interest to my study, and I am, myself, an expatriate who has struggled significantly with issues of re-entry culture shock. I became interested in the subject of re-entry adjustment because of my own challenges with readjusting to life in the United States after living in the developing world for many years. During my brief stints at transitioning back to living in the United States, I spent days grieving the loss of the life I had left overseas. Although I returned to the United States on two occasions, in 1993 and 1997, with the intention of resettling permanently, I spent no more than one year in the United States each time before deciding to move back overseas.

After being asked many times by residents in developing countries why I would choose to live a country less developed than the United States, I began to sense differences in how reality was perceived. My lived experience as a foreigner in the developing world was not the same as that of the indigenous peoples in those countries. I had constructed an understanding of life abroad that was clearly not an objective reality or “truth,” but shaped by my previous experience growing up in a different world, with different assumptions. If my understanding of reality was constructed from my own beliefs, I asked, how could any research instrument, such as a survey, claim to capture data that would provide a complete reality? Furthermore, would any instrument designed to measure re-entry adjustment to the developed world be adequate to measure re-entry adjustment to the developing world if one could not assume the experiences to be equivalent?

The second component of my framework incorporates existing theory and research, much of which will be reviewed in Chapter 2 of this study. The three theoretical models that I will use to frame my study are from different traditions. The first is a psychoanalytic model of grief and bereavement, first proposed by Bowlby (1980) in 1969, and then expanded in 1982 by Worden

(2008), and then Doka (1989). This theory was originally applied to culture shock in a foreign environment, but I find it a useful model for re-entry adjustment, and it has been used as a framework by others (Selby, et al., 2009; Soeterik, 1998), and is empirically supported by Butcher's (2002) study of East Asian students. Based on my experience, I would argue that many returnees to the developing world treat the return to their home country as a significant loss. Worden's (2008) stages of grief, represented by a U-curve similar to a readjustment U-curve, predict a lengthy but ultimately successful readjustment from the loss. I would argue that daily reminders of what sojourners returned to and what they left behind can prolong and exacerbate the grieving period. Their experience in the United States has galvanized their sense of resistance to conditions in their home countries that previously went unchallenged, and their reactions can be partially understood within the grieving process model. In addition, when the alumni express symptoms of grief to those around them but do not find sympathetic responses, their sense of frustration and anger can intensify.

Another component to my theoretical framework draws from work on values differences in the area of social psychology (Hofstede 2001; Merton, 1938). Merton's interest in explaining high rates of deviance from institutionalized norms for achieving goals in the United States can be seen as a starting point for later work by Hofstede (2001), which produced strong empirical support for the obvious assumption that cultures have different norms and values. Hofstede's (2001) contribution was to demonstrate that these values are socially reinforced in personal and work spaces.

Data collected by Hofstede and others (ITIM, 2016), employed a "values survey module" (VSM)¹ and factor analysis to produce cultural values scores for countries from all regions of the

¹ Described by Hofstede on his private website, geertHofstede.com, the VSM is a set of questions that other cross-cultural researchers can use to compare Hofstede's own cultural dimension scores across different groups.

world. The greater the distance in the numerical scores for a certain cultural dimension between two countries, the greater theoretical distance for that dimension between those countries.

Selected data for countries relevant to my study are displayed in Table 1.1. For my purposes, Hofstede's (2001) findings provide a basis upon which I identified two regions of the world, North Africa and South Asia, as the focus of my study.

As shown in Table 1, the countries from which my selected participants were drawn scored higher in the cultural dimensions of power distance, and lower in individualism, and indulgence than the United States. With the exception of India, the selected countries also scored higher in uncertainty avoidance.

Table 1.1

Cultural dimensions scores for the countries from which the participants were drawn, as compared to the United States

| | <u>Power Distance</u> | <u>Individualism</u> | <u>Uncertainty Avoidance</u> | <u>Indulgence</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Morocco | 70 | 46 | 68 | 25 |
| Tunisia ² | 80 | 38 | 68 | - |
| India | 77 | 48 | 40 | 26 |
| Pakistan | 55 | 14 | 70 | 0 |
| Egypt | 70 | 25 | 80 | 4 |
| United States | 40 | 91 | 46 | 68 |

Note: Adapted from <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/> (2018).

However, before one is tempted to assume that all individuals from countries whose scores suggest a preference for a certain cultural behavior, it is important to consider that Hofstede (2001) cautioned that his data were national-level/group scores and not individual scores, and that to infer data about individuals from the data he had gathered about the group was an ecological fallacy. To address the questions about individuals belonging to national-level groups, Triandis (1994) pioneered research at the individual level. He defined individuals as

² Scores taken from Basabe et al. (2002). A score for indulgence was not available, but can be assumed to be similar to that for Morocco (25) because of a common history and culture.

mainly *allocentric* or *idiocentric*, with allocentrism being correlated with collectivism, and idiocentrism being correlated with individualism. According to Triandis (1994), an allocentric individual was more likely to have affiliative tendencies, fear rejection from an in-group, and be less assertive of one's own difference. Since Triandis (1994), other researchers have corroborated these findings (Yamaguchi, Kuhlman & Sugimori, 1995).

In the context of Fulbright FLTA alumni, values that Hofstede's (2001) extracted from the data on dimensions, would suggest the following behaviors: group norms in countries with high *power distance* scores would show a preference for deference toward persons of perceived higher rank or age. Although alumni would instinctively know how to communicate with their superiors in the home culture, they may have become accustomed to a more approachable and informal style used in the United States. They may face challenges attempting to introduce change into a system where change is normally top-down.

Theoretically, the notions of privacy and personal space would also be defined quite differently from how they are understood in a culture that highly values individualism, such as the United States. Group norms in more collectivist societies should place greater value on not withholding personal information from family members and place less value on safeguarding the privacy of individuals from members of their in-group. Alumni from cultures with low scores on the individualism dimension would, in theory, have been introduced in the United States to a much stronger concern with privacy and space, and may have adjusted to these more individualistic concerns, thereby facing another re-entry adjustment challenge.

The higher *uncertainty avoidance* scores from North African and South Asian countries (relative to the United States) would suggest group preferences for avoiding risk taking, which could translate as preferences to stay within comfort zones, and an intolerance of unorthodox

ideas (Hofstede, 2001). Higher uncertainty avoidance is associated with a greater value for highly normative and ritualistic behavior (Jones & Davis, 2000).

Low *indulgence* scores would imply strict codes of behavior that restrain Fulbright FLTA alumni from cultures characterized by low indulgence and make it difficult for those with minority perspectives or traits to express themselves freely. All the countries in my study registered very low scores for the dimension of indulgence relative to that of the United States, as shown in Table 1.1. (Hofstede, 2001). Those alumni who deviate from social norms will have found greater freedom to express themselves as individuals in the United States and will now have returned to societies that prefer restraint and social conformity.

However, in addition to the caveat against imputing group norms to the individual, as stated above, it is also problematic to think of all individuals from a collectivist culture necessarily sharing the same personal traits for group affinity. D'Iribarne (2014) cautioned against "underestim[ing] the autonomy of actors." Swidler (1986) argued that rather than see all the actions of individuals as shaped by culture, we should attempt to view culture as a "toolkit" that contains multiple strategies of action limited only by the perimeters of a broad cultural portfolio. Thus, Swidler (1986) argued, culture constrains but does not define. There are individual, emic outcomes well as predictable etic outcomes. The arguments of both Swidler (1986) and D'Iribarne (1996) leave open the possibility that my participants' cultural values and behavior might not be predicted by Hofstede's (2001) scores, but that their societies in general will exhibit the behaviors characteristic of the dimensions defined by Hofstede (2001).

For those Fulbright FLTA alumni that return home, my framework would assume that many will have been influenced by the exposure to new attitudes and behaviors while in the United States, and some will likely have assimilated to the U.S. culture in a way that will lead to

return culture shock (Sussman, 2002) in the home country. Many grantees return home with a raised consciousness of how things are done differently in the United States, and there can be an increased criticality of home country behaviors if the grantee has decided that the behaviors observed in the United States are preferable.

Another component of my framework incorporates the work of Pusch, Lynch, Pilbeam, and O'Connor (1998), who, albeit with little empirical support, theorized four transition styles that returning sojourners assumed upon returning home after a sojourn. These patterns ranged from what the authors termed *detached* and *free-spirit*, representing those who wished to maintain and sometimes emphasize their differences from others in their home culture, to *reassimilated*, implying that nothing abroad had had any impact on them, which is in effect, a statement of rejection of the overseas experience, to *healthy integration*, which denotes achieving a balance that incorporated both old and new behaviors and attitudes without feelings of internal conflict. Pusch et al. (2008) did not address the myriad cultural, economic, and political factors that could add to the ease with which a returning sojourner might readjust to the home environment.

Others more recently have addressed these issues. Alandejani (2013), in her study of Saudi Arabian women who had completed PhDs in the United States, argued that her participants faced resistance upon return to their home countries because of Saudi society's role expectations for them as women. As mentioned earlier, Hofstede (2001) found that Middle Eastern and South Asian cultural dimensions tended to be quite different from those of the United States. House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta (2004), replicating Hofstede's (2001) work, also concluded that the cultures of the countries of the Middle East and South Asia have greater power distance, lower individualism, generally higher uncertainty avoidance (with the exception of India), higher

in-group collectivism, and higher institutional collectivism. In-group collectivism places greater importance, for example, on extended family relationships, and loyalty to members of an in-group, such as a family or tribe takes precedence over laws that pertain to all citizens.

Institutional collectivism is concerned with an equal distribution of resources among all members of a society. Data from Hofstede (2001) placed all the countries involved in my study as being higher in terms of both in-group and institutional collectivism than the United States, which was higher in the unilateral opposite trait of individualism.

Preferences by sojourners from culturally distant societies for U.S. cultural norms such as individualism, low power distance, or lack of restraint as a result of a behavioral shift from having lived in the United States may therefore have greater difficulty readjusting to the home culture environment. As a corollary, returning Fulbright alumni to North Africa and South Asia may encounter resistance in both the professional and personal spheres in the home country. This was a theme that emerged from my pilot study of Fulbright alumni in 2015. Some participants became discouraged after returning home at their inability to apply newly acquired skills or knowledge in the workplace, being told that their ideas were culturally inappropriate or too advanced for the surroundings (Anonymous, personal communication, March 12, 2015). This discouragement could lead some to consider leaving their home country on another sojourn.

It is generally assumed in the literature that there are three dimensions to re-entry adjustment: affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Szkudarlek, 2010), and my own position is no exception. However, findings in the literature do not lead me in any direction with regard to fixed recommendations. I do not use existing research as a basis upon which to test a hypothesis because this would be incommensurate with my chosen methodology. However, I do think that existing research identifies re-entry adjustment as a phenomenon worthy of study. It assumes, as

I do, that there is some reaction to returning home after being abroad, and that this reaction can be stressful. I also believe that my study can be framed in terms of La Brack's (2006) findings as to why re-entry adjustment can be difficult. It also sheds light on the variables and dimensions that have been examined around the subject of re-entry adjustment.

As I will discuss in Chapter 5, my findings could be framed in terms of the prevailing theories of re-entry adjustment, but prior to analyzing my data I had no expectations for that to be the case. Because I was interested in descriptions of lived experience, the whys of the experience were not of direct interest. Many of my former students have provided their own amateur explanations of why they have experienced re-entry adjustment difficulties, but I have not used these reasons to frame my own study.

Another contribution to my framework is from the theory of embedded embodied cognitivism, or EEC (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993), highly influenced by Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sartre (1956), both of whom argued that no experience could be realized without understanding the body's relation to it. EEC called for a paradigm shift away from traditional cognitivism. Known to some as both an anti-cognitivist and a post-cognitivist, Merleau-Ponty (1962) presented his argument that behavior is influenced by not only the brain, but also the body and the world. The world is not a stage but rather an actor. *Embodiment* refers to the notion that one's physical state directly impacts one's cognitive processes. In the vernacular, it is the theory underpinning the belief of a sound mind in a sound body. *Embeddedness*, or *situatedness*, refers to the interplay of the body and the world, and the constraints that the interplay has on behavior. This understanding influenced my research questions in that I was interested in hearing the descriptions of feeling and sensing emotions, and descriptions of what my participants perceived were stimuli for these conscious emotions. In phenomenological terms, I was

interested in the objects of concerns, or the objects of the participants' consciousness, which is always intentional and away from the self.

A fourth element of my framework is my own exploratory pilot study, conducted the year prior to my dissertation research. One lesson learned from my pilot study was the need to narrow the setting of my study to an area or areas characterized by similar cultural dimensions if I was to attempt to find a homogeneous group of participants to describe a phenomenon. My pilot study employed participants from areas as diverse as Western Europe, Japan, Argentina, and sub-Saharan Africa. The people I studied had quite different understandings of re-entry adjustment, and their concerns were not comparable. They ranged from the superficial to the existential. As a result, I theorized that re-entry adjustment was highly contextual and social, and that homogeneity of people under study was essential to produce a meaningful definition of re-entry adjustment for a specific cultural group. Groups from the Middle East and South Asia share, according to Hofstede (2001) and House et al., (2004) similar preferences for in-group collectivism, normativity, and resistance to change, which as my findings will show, are referenced in the narratives of readjustment, and evoke feelings of frustration and anger among returning Fulbrighters.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that detailed, contextualized constructions of the lived experiences of the participants in my study will serve to better define the affective, behavioral, and cognitive components of re-entry adjustment of FLTA alumni from North Africa and South Asia, two areas of the developing world that have been the object of considerable research interest by economists, political scientists, and sociologists interested in issues of education, migration,

political stability, employment, and civil society. This study should resonate with readers who have studied these populations.

In particular, by focusing on the lived experience of re-entry adjustment, I hope to draw attention to the possible need for counseling and advising support for Fulbright alumni from this region, so that the transition to re-adjustment on all levels: affective, behavioral, and cognitive is made easier.

Research Questions

In line with phenomenological approaches, there were two broad queries that allowed the discussion to flow freely, directed by the participants:

Q1: What is the lived experience of re-entry adjustment of Fulbright FLTA alumni from North Africa and South Asia?

Q2: What are the emotions and responses to these emotions that are associated with re-entry adjustment?

Assumptions

In terms of participant rapport, I assumed that my participants would willingly share their stories with me. I left open the possibility of discontinuing with a participant if I felt that we could not establish a rapport that allowed for a comfortable and open discussion. I also assumed that participants would be honest in the descriptions of their intentions with regard to remaining in their home countries at least for the duration of the two-year residency requirement.

In terms of populations, I assumed sufficient cultural homogeneity among the five home cultures so that descriptions of the phenomenon would be within a finite and comparable framework with regard to similarity and variation. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014)

Delimitations

This study was limited to returning Fulbright FLTA alumni who had resided in the home country at the time of the interviews for at least one year but not more than three years since returning from the United States. The study did not include alumni who had left their home country after remaining there for at least one year, or who had indicated that they were planning to leave before completing the two-year residency requirement.

The areas from which participants were recruited were limited to North Africa and South Asia. In those two areas, only participants from the following countries were asked to participate in the study: Egypt, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Algeria, and Tunisia. In the end, no one from Algeria was able to participate, thus delimiting participant scope to five countries. In order to ensure that my participants qualified for the study in terms of duration of resettlement in their home countries, I limited invitation to participate in the study to Fulbright FLTA alumni from only three cohorts: AY 2103-14, AY 2104-15, and AY 2105-16. (AY= academic year.)

Researcher's Perspective

Because of my familiarity with the regions of my study, and particularly my awareness of the socioeconomic and political realities of these countries, I had expected that the number of Fulbright alumni from these countries who did not observe the two-year residency requirement upon return home would be higher than it is. I had asked myself why talented alumni with the ability to be accepted into a graduate program in Europe or the United States, or seek employment in a better paying Gulf country, would choose not to do so.

Before conducting this study, I had pondered the existence of strong internal pull factors in the cases of those individuals who stayed in their home country upon return. One of these factors was the stronger collectivist sense of the self as part of an in-group (Gelfand, Triandis, &

Chan, 1996), such as a family or neighborhood. Several of my personal experiences with persons from the research countries of focus illustrated a strong sense of their obligation to family, particularly parents, which could impact such decisions such as the choice to remain in close proximity to their families in spite of economic push factors that would encourage separation. Finally, I argued that decisions to resettle in countries that experience high rates of unemployment and/or low wages (Lambic, 2015; U.S. Department of State; 2015), might suggest that those who stayed were highly adaptive to the lower standard of living in their countries.

My own experience as an expatriate who had tried unsuccessfully to return to my home country on a permanent basis had left me with several other assumptions about my participants prior to the completion of this study. I believed that my participants' first year home would be the most challenging to manage, and that the degree of struggle would be positively correlated with the strength of the relationships that were established in the United States. This belief was not only supported by the literature (Brislin & Van Buren, 1974; Sussman, 2001) but based on my own experience of being unable to resettle in my home country in two previous attempts, one in 1992, and a second in 1997. In both cases my personal relationships that I had established in foreign countries were deeper and more fulfilling than the relationships I had in the United States, where I felt my networks were weak. Because my participants had not spent as long away from their home country as I had, I did not think that they would encounter re-entry adjustment challenges as great as my own, but I did believe that economic factors would exacerbate the re-entry process. I also assumed some behavioral adjustment challenges because of the greater freedom and decreased power distance that the alumni would likely have experienced in the United States. I also believed that the stronger collectivist natures of the cultures of my

participants relative to my own would result in stronger feelings of separation guilt by the participants when they were far away from their families.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review of the literature will introduce and discuss the existing body of research relevant to understanding the multifaceted phenomenon of returning and readjusting to one's home country after sojourning in a culturally dissimilar environment. In doing so, I will follow the lead of Martin (1984), Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001), and Szkudlarek (2010) all of whom used an organizing theoretical framework that groups an acculturation process according to three categories: affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Szkudlarek, 2010)

In addition to reviewing literature on the process of re-entry adjustment, I will also, in line with Szkudlarek (2010) and Ward et al. (2001), review studies that address specific situational variables and characteristics of sojourners or *repatriates*, as corporate employees are called when they have been relocated abroad for work-related reasons and then repatriated by their employers. Because the types of sojourners (students, workplace professionals, missionaries, diplomats, spouses and children, etc.) are identified where they are the focus of studies on situational variables, I will not devote a separate section to types of sojourners. It is sufficient to say that what distinguishes types of sojourners are their motivations and goals for sojourning (Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique & Biirgi, 2001) and whether the return home allows these goals to be leveraged (Adler, 1981).

I will also review research on the role of societal culture (Hofstede, 2001) in personal goal attainment. Identifying a country's cultural tendencies with regard to such constructs as individualistic behavior, respect for authority, and tolerance of ambiguity have been the subject of considerable research (Hofstede, 2001). Research on culture dimensions has suggested that

these dimensions can affect boss-subordinate relationships (Hofstede, 2001; Kakar, 1977), familial relationships (Fowers & Richardson, 1996; Hofstede, 2001; Verma & Triandis, 1999), employment stability (Hofstede, 2001; Tang & Koveos, 2008); sense of self efficacy with regard to controlling external forces (Hofstede, 2001); levels of societal corruption (DiRienzo, Das, Cort, & Burbridge, 2007) the teaching process (Hofstede, 2001) and pride in one's nation (Gudykunst, 1988).

Following this, I will review the research on push and pull factors related to brain drain and migration, as the participants in my proposed study come from countries that experience brain drain and comparatively high rates of migration of tertiary-educated citizens.

Re-entry Adjustment Literature

Re-entry studies were not commonly thought of as areas of research interest until the early 1980s. La Brack (1985) argued that originally returning home was not recognized as a struggle; after all, it was home. Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall (1992) found that companies who sent employees on overseas assignments did not initially consider the repatriation of employees to require attention. By 1999, in spite of a turnover rate among U.S. corporate managers who had worked overseas being twice that of those who had not (Gregersen & Black, 1999), only 15% of repatriated employees in the U.S. had received any repatriation training (MacDonald and Arthur, 2003).

There has also been proportionally less research on the re-entry process of students and professionals from more traditional, collectivist, and hierarchical cultures, such as those from the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia, with the exception of Japan. This is unfortunate in light of a brain drain phenomenon (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Roh, 2013; Ward et al., 2001; Ziguras & Gribble, 2015) associated with many of these countries. Another shortcoming is that

there are very few qualitative studies that provide in-depth descriptions of the experience of returning home (Alandejani, 2013; Le, 2014).

The literature on acculturation studies, including re-entry research, originally defined a *sojourner* as a person who moved to a foreign country but chose isolation from the dominant community and did not assimilate (Siu, 1952). That definition has been modified to refer to those who travel abroad for an extended period with the intention to return home after achieving a specific goal (Ward et al. 2001). Sojourners have been studied quite extensively (Siu, 1952 Adler, 1981; Black, et al., 1992; Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Caligiuri & Cascio, 1999; Church, 1982; Cox, 2004; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; La Brack, 1985; Martin, 1984; and Yoshida et al., 2002). However, prior to the 1980s, little empirical research was generated on the home culture re-entry process for sojourners (Sussman, 1986). La Brack (1985) stated that early research focused on the individual, and accounts tended to be anecdotal. By the early 1980, Austin (1983) had compiled a list of 350 studies on questions related to the reentry process in a comprehensive annotated bibliography that focused extensively on returning missionaries.

Studies in the earliest days of re-entry research were primarily concerned with identifying challenges facing returning Americans as they attempted to readapt to life in the United States. Challenges were sometimes tied to traumatic events in the overseas experience (Flack, Kimble, Campbell, Hopper, Peterca, and Heller, 2014). In the 1990s, corporate repatriates returning from overseas assignments became a new focus of interest. Concerns focused on the phenomenon of higher numbers of resignations by managers that had worked abroad than those who had not (Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 1998), the peculiarity of repatriation adjustment as compared to relocating abroad or being relocated domestically (Feldman & Tompson, 1993), and factors related to successful spouse repatriation (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Theories of Re-entry Adjustment

Affective Dimensions. Research focusing on the affective component of re-entry adjustment studies the paradigm of stress, coping, and adjustment (Merrill & Pusch, 2007) and is most thoroughly addressed by Ward, et al. (2001) who attribute to Oberg (1960) the metaphor “buzzing confusion” (p. 271) to describe the emotions that one feels, predictably, upon entering an unfamiliar setting, but unpredictably upon reentering a formerly familiar setting. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) attempted to create a model of affective adjustment by extending Lysgaard’s (1956) U-curve hypothesis. Lysgaard (1956) had observed that phases of adjustment of Norwegian Fulbright students in the U.S. followed an adjustment-crisis-adjustment pattern. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) hypothesized that a similar cycle of adjustment occurred upon returning home. They stressed that the only difference between culture shock and reverse culture shock was that the latter was not planned or anticipated.

The U-curve (Lysgaard, 1956) and W-curve (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963) models of cultural adjustment remain popular in the 21st century as predictive explanations in cultural orientation training programs even though they do not stand up to empirical testing (Black and Mendenhall, 1991) mainly because adjustment has been operationalized inconsistently and statistical tests to determine significance have not been performed with regularity by supporters of the models. In spite of weak empirical support, a considerable number of organizations and institutions have incorporated have based their cross-cultural training for students and employees on expectations from the models (Berardo, 2006).

Attachment loss is an affect that has been closely associated with sadness and depression (Bowlby, 1980). Doka (1989) argued that disenfranchised grief intensified the grieving process and the known responses to grieving, such loneliness, homesickness, and anger. Jordan and

Neimeyer (2003) stated that empathic failure was a sign that grief had been left untreated for too long. This would imply that early recognition and treatment for grief and bereavement is preferred. In fact, Jordan and Neimeyer (2003) found that interventions delivered earlier in the grieving process were more effective than later. Two years was the mean time identified by Jordan and Neimeyer (2003).

However, Jordan and Neimeyer (2003) also cautioned against over-reliance on the efficacy of formal bereavement interventions based on an exhaustive review of the research on mourning intervention efficacy. The researchers found unacceptably low levels of “scientifically demonstrated efficacy” (p. 771) regarding bereavement counseling for mourners. While Jordan and Neimeyer reviewed only studies involving individuals mourning the death of a loved one, what remains of value is the recognition that a particular subgroup of persons struggling with grief may be at a greater risk of not functioning productively during the grieving process.

Butcher (2002) found that East Asian students returning from New Zealand experienced *disenfranchised grief*, or grief as the result of having lost something that others did not know or understand (Doka, 1989). Grief came from both the loss of the experience of being in New Zealand as well as the mismatch between expectations upon return home and the reality of being home. The loss was somewhat intensified because others failed to empathize, and that in turn, didn’t allow the grievers to grieve in a normal way.

More recently, studies have questioned the universality of emotional responses, particularly across cultures and with regard to gender and age. Previous studies (Blanchin & Angrilli, 2011) had compared emotional responses to stimuli by gender but in culturally homogeneous populations. Others (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2011) established that in *tighter* cultures, such as those of the Middle East and South Asia, there is greater adherence to social norms, such

as gender roles in emotional expression. Gong, Wong, and Wang (2018) examined emotional response differences by gender for both Chinese and German samples. They found females to have greater emotional reactions to both positive and negative pictorial stimuli among Chinese but not Germans, and for responses by gender to vary according to age.

Behavioral Dimensions. Black et al. (1992) hypothesized that the needed behavioral control could be assisted by cognitive control and that success in adapting to a foreign culture correlated positively with success in readapting to the home culture upon return. However, Brabant, Palmer, and Gramling (1990) concluded the opposite. In a study of 96 international students from four separate regions of the world, Brabant et al. (1990) found that there was there was a negative correlation between success in adapting to life in the U.S. and ease of reentering the home culture. Brabant et al. (1990) hypothesized that this was not a refutation of behavioral theory but rather the result of these sojourners' more clearly sensing changes in their friends from home, which made it more difficult to reestablish friendships.

Cognitive Dimensions. The Expectations Model (Szkudlarek, 2010) also referred to as the Expectations-Experience Model (Rogers & Ward, 1993) and the Expectations-Violations Theory (Martin, 1984) hypothesizes that the accuracy of a sojourner's prior expectations of what he or she will encounter upon re-entry will be correlated with adjustment. Although Adler (1981) in an oft-cited paper, concluded that re-entry into a home culture was more difficult than the initial adjustment to a foreign culture, the literature on the Expectations Model among returning sojourners is not as extensive as expected and also more theoretical and speculative than empirical (Adler, 1981).

On a cognitive level, Adler (1981) and Sussman (1986) argued that because repatriation difficulties were unexpected, research into the predictors of the re-entry experience was less

common than research on cross-cultural interaction and adjustment. An additional explanation, provided by Black et al. (1992) and La Brack (1985), was that researchers had felt that little would be gained from researching the match between expectations and the reality of the homecoming experience. The findings of Black et al. (1992) and Sussman (1986) strongly suggested that repatriation and host country adaptation were two cognitively distinct and different processes with a common attribute: both processes were associated with increased levels of stress, anxiety, and confusion.

Two competing hypotheses have emerged in the expectation-experience literature. Weissman and Furnham's (1987) study, which compared expectations and experiences of American sojourners in the United Kingdom, came to the conclusion that realistic expectations facilitate adaptation. Complementarily, Black et al. (1992) concluded that fewer expectations prior to returning home resulted in fewer adjustment problems. For others who tested the hypothesis empirically, realistic expectations either did (Black et al., 1992; MacDonald & Arthur, 2003; Martin, Bradford & Rohrlach, 1996) or did not (Rogers & Ward, 1993) mitigate re-entry adjustment difficulty.

Raschio (1987) was one of the first to draw attention to the cognitive challenges facing returnees because of a mismatch between their expectations and reality. Raschio (1987) concluded that coping with cultural dissonance was positively correlated with successful re-entry adjustment. Success is defined by Raschio (1987) as contentedness with the home country environment. Martin et al. (1996) strengthened findings in this area when they conducted a longitudinal, pre-test post-test study of 248 U.S. students from a point in time prior to departure for study abroad to their return. Both Martin et al. (1996) and Rogers and Ward (1993) found

that the difficulty of the reality of re-entry was more important than the direction of the relationship between expectations and reality.

Along with Searle and Ward (1990), Martin et al. (1996), and Rogers and Ward (1993) found that expectations could be violated without causing psychological distress among returning sojourners. This was in contrast to the findings of Black et al. (1992). Hammer, Hart, and Rogan (1998) argued prematurely that the debate had been settled in favor of Black et al.'s (1992) findings and stressed that further research was necessary to identify the most salient expectations for returning sojourners.

The major shortcoming in this area of research is a lack of longitudinal studies that would compare pre-departure expectations with post-return adjustment. Rogers and Ward (1993) suggested this was because of the methodological challenge of being able to collect data from participants before and after traveling from one culture to another. Harzing (1996) in a review of studies using international mail surveys as part of their design, reported a pattern of very low response rates, Hood and Schieffer (1983: as cited in Brabant et al., 1990) reported difficulties tracking down returning sojourners and Hull (1987) complained of the time involved in overseas mailings.

Further research into the role of expectations in preparing for smoother transitions of corporate employees is needed. According to Black (1998: as cited in Cave, 2014), U.S. companies lose 25% of their repatriated employees within one year. Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1987) found that only 35% of repatriated managerial staff at U.S. firms were satisfied with their repatriation process. Gregersen and Stroh (1997) conducted a similar study of Finnish professional expatriates upon their return to Finland. Their results also concluded that re-entry adjustment support was needed both for the repatriated employees and their spouses. Cave

(2014) suggested that firms had a responsibility to help repatriated employees. Black et al. (1992), Cave (2014), and Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1987) recommended providing pre-departure training and counseling to increase the ability of returnees to correctly anticipate challenges to returning home.

In the area of student services, several studies have looked at the willingness of students experiencing re-entry adjustment difficulties to seek counseling (Gaw, 2000; Gim, Atkinson & Whiteley, 1990). Studies have found no correlation between self-reported adjustment problems and seeking out assistance from counseling. Because of the variety of re-entry environments (e.g., returning to a home campus vs. returning to a home country) and the different ways in which cultures seek emotional or psychological support, more research is needed to on the types of support systems that are effective, their availability, and their use.

Re-entry Behavior Styles

Pusch (2008) theorized that returning sojourners could be categorized by one of four re-entry adjustment styles, ranging from healthy biculturalism to one of two less desirable styles: complete rejection of the foreign culture or rejection of the home culture. Pusch's (2008) theory is unusually similar to Berry's (1980) multidimensional (2x2) model for sociocultural acculturation. In Berry's (1980) model, the intersection of the extent to which a sojourner maintained or retained the native culture while abroad and the extent to which elements of the host culture were adopted resulted in one of four strategies: "assimilation, separation/rejection, integration, and marginali[z]ation" (Klemens & Bikos, 2009, p. 724). The weakness of both Berry's (1980) and Pusch's (2008) models with regard to returning sojourners is the lack of empirical support. Bernardo and La Brack (2007) reminded readers of several constraints when attempting to test returning sojourners. First, returning sojourners who self-report may be in a

temporary state of psychological distress. They also may not want to admit their true feelings on paper, particularly if their feelings toward their home country are negative. Second, although it may be useful as a self-awareness tool, Pusch et al.'s (1998) re-entry modes do little to identify why someone may wish to reintegrate and someone else may not.

Acquired Competencies

Several studies have looked at aspects of personality that positively affect global management capabilities upon return from overseas assignments. Morley, Cerdin, Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou (2010) attempted to operationalize a definition of intercultural competence and determined that it consisted of three components: self-management, relationship management, and perception management. Each of these components had multiple dimensions. Using cautious language, Morley et al. (2010) suggested that the constructs were predictive of global leadership competencies. Furuya, Stevens, Bird, Oddou, and Mendenhall (2009) in a study on repatriated Japanese managers found that the Stevens, Oddou, Furuya, Bird, & Mendenhall (2006) framework was predictive of positive global leadership outcomes, greater transfer of competencies, and improved job performance upon return to the home country workplace.

Personal Attribute Variables

Age. The majority of studies reviewed (Black & Gergersen, 1991; Cox, 2004; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Uehara, 1986) found that younger ages were more highly correlated with re-entry difficulties. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) looked at younger and older student grantees, Black and Gergersen (1991) at corporate managers and their families, and Rohrlich and Martin (1991) and Uehara (1986) at U.S. college-aged students. Sussman (2001), in her theory of cultural identity, proposed that the more successfully one adapted to life

abroad, the more difficulty one would have with the return home. Hypothesizing that younger sojourners, especially children, would absorb more of the foreign culture, and experience greater identity transformations, Cox (2004) concluded that they would have more difficulties than adults upon return to the home culture.

Marital Status. While there has been a substantial amount of investigation into the role that marital status plays on expatriate adjustment (Alshammari, 2012; Van Oudenhoven, Ward, & Masgoret, 2006), particularly for working professionals, there has been much less research on the supportive role that a spouse or partner plays in the re-entry process, something that is suggested as an active source of support by Huffman's (1989) findings. Huffman found a correlation between marital status and re-entry adjustment difficulty. Single participants in her study reported greater feelings of depression and loss than married participants. Cox (2004), building on Sussman's (2002) theory of cultural identity, found that because single sojourners tended to form deeper relationships with a host culture while abroad, they would have more difficulty readjusting to their home culture upon return from an assignment abroad.

Gender. Brabant et al. (1990) concluded that gender was the most important variable affecting re-entry adjustment. While several studies have attempted to test the influence of gender on study abroad and expatriate experiences (Flack et al., 2014; Kimble, Flack, & Burbridge, 2013; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Manese, Sedlaceck, & Leong, 1988), there is a thinner body of research on gender and re-entry (Brabant et al., 1990; Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Rohrllich & Martin, 1991). In addition, the extent of cultural distance (Triandis, 2004) between host and home culture, which may play a role in how females readjust to their home environments, has not been tested as a possible mediating variable.

Rohrlich and Martin (1991) interviewed 240 U.S. study abroad students, of which approximately 75% were female. Although females reported greater challenges while abroad, they were more satisfied after returning home than were males. Conversely, Cox (2004) concluded that returning American females had to deal with greater expectations from their families with regard to handling certain domestic responsibilities now that they had returned. Huffman (1989) found significant differences in re-entry adjustment styles between married male and married female missionaries but did not look at levels or types of challenges faced.

International studies provide more interesting results. Alandejani (2013) found that Saudi women who returned from the U.S. after completing their doctorates faced difficulties from their society's expectations of them as women. Independence and self-authorship, which had served them in the U.S., did not fit into the female gender expectations of the Saudi culture. Gama and Pedersen (1977), one of the first teams to look at gender and re-entry, interviewed Brazilian students returning from the United States. They determined that females had more difficulty than males dealing with bureaucratic red tape and value conflicts with their families. Unfortunately, the small sample number of females (n=9) prevented them from generalizing the findings. Davis (1973) found that Turkish females were more dissatisfied than males with re-entry adjustment services offered after returning home.

It is difficult but not impossible to attempt to draw conclusions about re-entry adjustment from studies that examined the relationship of gender to the expatriate or study abroad experience. Flack et al. (2014) and Kimble et al. (2013) studied the effect of sexual assault victimization during study abroad and post-traumatic stress, implying that factors related to the experience while abroad would affect re-entry adjustment. However, their studies were limited by small sample sizes, type of institution, and self-reported data. Mallinckrodt & Leong (1992)

focused on spousal relationships, childrearing, and housing among international students and found that females were more affected by these variables. This may have had an effect on the females' attitudes toward returning home, but more research is needed. Mallinckrodt and Leong's (1992) study raised the question of the relationship between re-entry adjustment, gender and expected roles, viz. wife and mother, as opposed to husband and father, or single as opposed to married. Significantly, Martin and Harrell (as cited in Penke, 2016) found that married females and single females experienced different re-entry adjustment challenges although further research with larger and more diverse female populations is also needed in this area. One interesting observation is that in participant samples that separated participants by gender, there was a tendency for the number of females to be greater than the number of males in the studies of students, but to be lower than the number of males in the studies of corporate repatriates. This would raise the question of gender inclusiveness with regard to opportunities for females to travel to overseas posts with their companies. In fact, several studies (Harris and Brewster, 1999; Vance, 2005) concluded that this was a possible explanation for limited research on expatriate adjustment and success by gender.

Religion. Fewer studies have looked at the influence of religion on repatriation. A possible explanation for this is that researchers have traditionally overlooked religion as a formative aspect of identity (Peek, 2005), although this may be a Western perspective. Studies that have isolated religion as a variable have looked both at international students from different religious and ethnic regions of the world (Brabant, et al. 1990; Martin & Harrell (as cited Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson, & James-Hughes, 2003) or conducted qualitative studies of participants from a single religious background or repatriated missionary families (Bikos et al., 2009; Klemens and Bikos, 2009). One noticeable difference between the research on problems

associated with re-entry and religion is that missionaries have had considerably more contact with the host culture on the average by the nature of their profession. Austin, (1983) devoted a chapter of his annotated bibliography to missionaries and the re-entry research, much of which focuses on the adjustment process of missionary children who had spent considerable time in the field. Interestingly, most sources indicated that the adjustment process was similar to that of non-missionaries. No sources addressed the issue of cultural identity. Fleming (as cited in Austin, 1983) found that American missionary children who had been schooled in India experienced a broadening of their religious beliefs upon return to the U.S. Gotaas (as cited in Austin, 1983) reported that only about 15% of active missionaries discontinued active foreign missionary service after a period of six years, and their return home could be seen as a failure by the missionary community.

Socioeconomic Status. Socioeconomic status as a predictor of re-entry adjustment has received little interest from researchers. This may be because there is less variation among the socioeconomic statuses of sojourners than in the larger population. In fact, Brabant et al. (1990) stated that there were so few members of the lower socioeconomic class in their study of international students that it was impossible to draw any conclusions about re-entry based on class. However, the research on brain drain provides more insight. Carrington & Detragiache (1999) found that the highest percentage of migrants from most countries had a tertiary education. This would imply that the most well-educated sojourners have a greater incentive to migrate after returning home, perhaps because they have better opportunities for social mobility outside their own countries. More research in this area is needed.

In the body of research on corporate repatriates, Black & Gregersen (1991) and Gregersen & Stroh (1997) looked at several variables that might impact re-entry adjustment, one

of which was social status. Socioeconomic status was significantly correlated with adjustment ease, particularly for corporate spouses. In both countries, socioeconomic status had increased for expatriates as a result of employment perquisites, such as free housing, free private schooling for children, and free country-club memberships while abroad. These perquisites were discontinued as a result of the repatriation, and findings suggested that their absence was positively correlated with adjustment stress. The lack of focus on socioeconomic status as a variable affecting re-entry adjustment among international students, particularly in societies whose cultures provide fewer opportunities for social mobility indicates a need for further research.

Personality and Skill Traits. In a study of Japanese students, Furukawa (1997) found that certain personality traits such as “neuroticism, emotion-oriented coping, and concurrently measured social support” (p. 263) significantly predicted re-entry adjustment difficulties. Bridges (as cited in MacDonald, 2003) cited a need among returning sojourners to be self-directed. Adler (1981) cited seeking information and asking questions, and MacDonald and Arthur (2003) cited flexibility and the ability to handle frustration. However, comparative studies to control for the effects of other variables, such as nationality, economic opportunity, cultural distance, and age are lacking.

Situational Attribute Variables

Length of sojourn. The seminal study in this subarea is that of Brislin and Van Buren (1974) who found that the longer the stay in the host culture, the more difficult the re-entry adjustment. This is a distinct, but parallel finding to Sussman (2001), who found that more successfully one adapted to life abroad, the more difficulty one had with the return home. Because of a dearth of research in this area, it is unclear whether the longer stays in the host

culture are the result of the sojourners desire not to return to the home culture, i.e., a self-imposed exile, or the result of the sojourner's affinity for aspects of the host culture, such as respect for diversity, freedom of expression, freedom to worship, or other "rights" less-available to the sojourner in the home culture. If research could strongly suggest that the latter were the case, it would raise the question of whether the findings of Sussman (2001) and Brislin and Van Buren (1974) have been misleading. Again, this is an area of research in need of further study.

Multiple sojourner experiences. More than half a century ago, Santos (1959) compared foreign students from seven geographic areas: Latin America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, South Asia, Central Africa, and North Africa, and found that those who had traveled before adjusted more easily in the United States than others. However, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) were the first to ask about the influence of previous intercultural experience on re-entry. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) concluded that the more extensive the previous foreign experiences were, the less the expected re-entry adjustment. Martin and Harrell (as cited in Penke, 2016) also concluded that previous experiences facilitated re-entry adjustment. Cox (2004), however, did not establish a significant correlation between ease of repatriation and prior intercultural experience.

The literature on the effect of intercultural experience on re-entry adjustment is divided and overlaps with the literature on re-entry expectations. Because more experience sojourning would lead to more accurate expectations for re-entry challenges, the findings in both areas should be complementary. Finally, Sussman's (2002) finding that greater identification with a host culture would lead to more re-entry difficulties should relate to findings from research on multiple intercultural experiences.

Cultural distance. Ward et al. (2001), in their theory of sociocultural adjustment, argued that the ease of intercultural interaction is determined by the cultural similarities of the participants in the interaction. Galchenko and Van de Vijver (2007) concluded that cultural distance played a role in psychological adjustment among Asian and African exchange students in Russia, but the study did not look at re-entry adjustment in the home environment. Pritchard (2011) asked the question in her study of Asian students relocating to their home countries. While Pritchard (2011) did not find much evidence of psychological trauma, she did find that tensions had emerged related to the five areas of cultural dimensions researched by Hofstede (2001). For example, the preference for individualism that Taiwanese students experienced in the United States created a tension for them when they returned to their more collectivist culture because in some aspects, they had become more accustomed to making decisions based on individual rather than collective interests. These findings support Sussman (2001), who suggested that greater adaptation to the host culture resulted in greater difficulty readapting to the home culture.

Another hypothesis in this subarea is that those whose values differ most greatly from the values of the host culture would be predicted to have the most difficulty readapting to their home culture. Kidder (1992) found that returning Japanese sojourners had an unusually challenging time, as indicated by the research summarized in the section of this chapter about attitudes of home country individuals. Interestingly, Kidder (1992) did not find that returning Japanese students were negative about their home country, Japan, or the Japanese. The problem was how other Japanese viewed them. Some mentioned having been bullied for not acting Japanese. On the other hand, Şahin (1990), studying returning Turkish students, found that Turkish students held negative feelings about their home country upon return. The studies of Şahin (1990) and

Kidder (1992) illustrate the different sociological and psychological challenges that returning students may have and which may be related to the differences between their home country and the one in which they previously lived.

More recent studies (Alandejani, 2013; Butcher, 2002; Epaminonda, 2014; La Brack, 2006) detailed the challenges that international students faced upon their return home as a result of having absorbed some values that their cultures could not accommodate. Cultural *tightness* is a term first used by Pelto (1968) to refer to the extent to which a culture allowed alternative channels of behavior expression and the degree of tolerance for *aberrant* or *deviant* behavior, neither of which should be seen as intrinsically negative. Gelfand, Nishii, and Raver (2006) classified Saudi Arabia as a tight culture, meaning that it had low tolerance for behavior perceived as non-conformist or untraditional. Alandejani's (2013) findings indicated that the Saudi Arabian women who had returned to Saudi Arabia after completing graduate degrees in the United States faced considerable challenges from their social and professional networks, who expected them not to have acquired any greater independence or self-authorship while abroad. Epaminonda (2014) looked at the experiences of Cypriot students who had absorbed some of the lower "power distance" values of the U.S and the U.K. during their studies, but who had now returned to the more authoritarian culture of Cyprus. Epaminonda (2014) found that the students struggled with re-entry adjustment but that support structures to assist them were non-existent, partly because their struggle was neither anticipated nor viewed with empathy. Butcher (2002) studied East Asian international students returning to their countries of origin and referred to their experience of re-acculturation as a grieving process. Le (2014) looked at the challenges faced by returning Vietnamese students and found that their being away from Vietnam had impacted both career opportunities and personal relationships. Significantly, Le (2014) did not

see the acquired traits of self-reliance, independence, and self-confidence as positive for Vietnamese. She and her participants saw them as liabilities in the framework of Vietnamese society.

Communication with home country individuals while abroad. This area of research has been only superficially covered. Adler (1981) argued that for repatriation of employees to proceed more smoothly, their companies should communicate with them frequently while they are abroad. Brabant, et al. (1990) concurred with Adler (1981). Frequency of visits home by Brazilian students while studying in the U.S. correlated significantly and positively with reduced difficulties in re-entry adjustment. With the introduction of technologies that allow real time video communication over the internet, studies are needed that look at the influence of this type of communication on re-entry adjustment.

Reactions of home country individuals toward returning sojourners. A number of studies (Kidder, 1992; Sasagawa, Toyoda and Sakano, 2006; Yoshida et al. 2002, Yoshida et al. 2003) focus on the case of Japan and the difficulty for returning Japanese of being singled out because of their observed or inferred behavioral or affective changes. Kanno (2000) explained this as the returnees' appearing to violate group norms of Japanese culture, or "*nihonjinron*, an ideology that emphasi[z]es Japan's homogeneity and uniqueness" (p. 2). Triandis (2004) rationalized this as an effect of introducing values of a "loose" culture, such as the that of the United States, into a "tight" culture, such as Japan, one with more rigid expectations of "normal" behavior, and higher expectations of conformity to group norms and values.

There is empirical support for Triandis's (2004) theory. Kidder (1992) found that Japanese students returning from abroad felt ostracized because of behaviors or physical appearance that their classmates identified as un-Japanese. Kidder (1992) reported that strong

pressure was exerted on these students to blend in. Minoura (1988 as cited in Yoshida et al., 2002) concurred with Kidder's (1992) findings, particularly with respect to problems among returnees. Characteristics in returning students that were frowned upon included a more direct way of stating opinions and a more individualistic frame of reference. Ebuchi (1988 as cited in Yoshida et al., 2002) reported that Japanese elementary school returnees who would not conform were bullied. Kanno (2000), in her study of bilingual Japanese students who had returned from Canada to Japan, found that those who could not use honorific language (*keigo*) correctly with seniors were criticized as being arrogant. In all cases, the pressure to conform to Japanese norms was powerful. Those who could not were very conscious of themselves because they were seen as a source of disharmony to the social and educational systems (Enloe & Lewin, 1987).

Economic and political factors in the home country. The relative lack of economic opportunity in Brazil was a source of frustration for the returning Brazilian students in Gama and Pedersen's (1977) study. Findings suggested that students from developing countries might face greater challenges readjusting to their home culture than those whose economic standards of living were closer to that of the United States or another developed country.

Another interesting subarea of study, one that has not received much attention, focuses on the influence from sojourning on personal networks at home. In cultures such as the Chinese, Indian, and Brazilian, personal networks are essential to successful deal making in business. Going abroad can result in the weakening or loss of networks, which can take years to rebuild (Dodwell-Groves, 2013).

Brain drain. This term is defined as "the migration of people endowed with a high level of human capital" (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2001, p. 276). In many cases, well-educated migrants were once recipients of government or international scholarships, which resulted in

their sojourns abroad. These sojourners then decided not to reestablish themselves in their home country because they could find sustainable or lucrative employment, use their newly acquired skills, or because they had grown or changed in a way that caused them to feel out of place in their own country. These migrants left their home countries in order to find a “better standard of living and quality of life, higher salaries, access to advanced technology and more stable political conditions in [another country.]” A brain drain deprives the home country of the benefits of its citizens’ knowledge and skills acquired abroad and translates into slower development rates in poorer countries (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008; Dodani & LaPorte, 2005). Docquier, Lohest, and Marfouk (2007) found that migration to OECD countries was greatest in countries small in size that are close in proximity to the OECD and who may share a colonial past or a cultural similarity, such as language, with OECD countries (Carr, Inkson & Thorn, 2005). Francophone North African countries (e.g., Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) fit this profile.

Internal imbalances in the distribution of highly qualified professionals also exist. Dussault and Franceschini (2006) in a study of health workers in Vietnam found that poor working conditions and lower salaries encouraged migration from rural to urban areas of the country. A counter problem is that highly skilled university graduates in developing countries, where there is an imbalance of infrastructure, with rural areas being much less developed, do not want to serve in rural areas. As a result, some national universities in North Africa that do not charge tuition require their graduates in education and medicine to intern or take up residence in rural schools and hospitals for a temporary period.

Cheng and Yang (1998) argued that socio-economic inequality between two countries is the primary determinant of migration from poorer to wealthier countries. Cheng and Yang (1998) concluded that educational exchanges between countries encouraged migration. Studying abroad

allowed student sojourners the opportunity to build networks abroad and search for employment. For returning sojourners who have built networks in the host country, it is much easier to return to the host country for a second sojourn. The argument that economic, not cultural factors were driving some to migrate or return was made by Dodwell-Groves (2013), who stated that once economic conditions in China began to improve, it resulted in a greater willingness of Chinese students studying abroad to return home to settle permanently.

Roh (2013), found that country of origin, country of origin unemployment rates, and desired field of employment were highly correlated with the decision by foreign students to return home or remain in the U.S. after completing a PhD. Other variables that showed a positive relationship with returning home were the importance of family and personal ties, major of study, and the desire for academic freedom. Roh (2013) also found that in those countries where academic freedom was not protected, there was a greater motivation for PhD graduates not to return. China and India had the highest percentages of students not returning home, and Brazil and Mexico, the lowest. With regard to major, graduates in fields with global utilization, such as technology, were more likely to remain in the U.S.

An interesting finding by Roh (2013), and one worthy of more study, is that those PhD students in fields with benefits to the local economy, such as agriculture or education, were more likely to return home. Those in scientific or technical fields who might find it difficult to apply their skills in a less developed home country, were more likely not to return home. As Ward et al. (2001) pointed out, students returning to developing countries are frequently unable to apply their highly advanced technological and scientific knowledge and skills either because of a lack of resources or a clash with local sensitivities. This aligns with Murase's (as cited in Austin,

1983) findings among returning Japanese students that there was some “non-transferability of experience from one cultural environment to another” (p. 62).

Culture as a Variable Affecting Re-entry Adjustment

Characterization of cultures has been studied from different foci and disciplinary perspectives. The interest in culture as an area of research has been strong in two areas: psychoanalysis and social psychology. Cross-cultural research has provided a means to confirm universal application of theory (McCrae, 2002). This research has been primarily, but not exclusively, in the areas of personality (McCrae, 2002; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Northouse, 2010) and language (Chomsky, 2007). Approaching cross-cultural research from the opposite perspective, Hofstede (2001), Markus & Kitayama (1991), and Triandis (2001, 2004) argued that theories generated in one culture may be meaningless in another. Their research suggested that construals of self and others, such as independence and interdependence, influence the “nature of individual experience” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 224). These construals seem to be culturally dependent. Regardless of the direction of the research, the strongest interest in the findings has come from international business (Shenkar, 2001). Interest from professionals in international education is arguably second (Ward et al., 2001). However, research that looks at a specific culture as having an impact on re-entry adjustment is greatly lacking.

Discussions of national cultures and societal values assume that there is, in fact, empirically substantiated research that individuals of a certain identifiable group, such as those who reside within a certain national boundary, will necessarily share cultural values, and that these may distinguish these individuals from other identifiable groups. If this were not the case, there would be no basis for discussing cultural adjustment and re-entry adjustment among sojourners. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders (1990) and Schwartz (1999) argued that shared

cultural norms exist in societies as a result of the forces of integration in nations with a long history. In countries such as the former Yugoslavia, India, or Israel, where there exist multiple ethnicities or religions, these differences may play a role in values formation, such that different ethnic groups vary somewhat in their cultural values, and there is less homogeneity across the society (Schwartz, 1999). However, multi-ethnic societies may still share common cultural norms that distinguish them from other societies because all members of a nation may share common experiences associated with norms (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000).

Aspects of culture have been posited as dimensions (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1999; Triandis, 1994; 2004) and measurements of these dimensions or indices have been converted into cultural distance scores (Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2007) or values scores (Schwartz, 1994).

Importantly, both approaches seek to compare units at the levels of national culture rather than the individual level. This is significant because it indicates that further research is needed to move from the country-unit of analysis to a smaller community-unit or individual-unit of analysis (Berry, 1994). Schwartz (1999) attempted to study culture at the individual-unit level by creating a values inventory (SVI) that would identify common values among people.

Schwartz (1994) administered his questionnaire, of which there were 97 samples, in 44 countries to 25,863 participants. Schwartz (1994) focused on two main groups of participants: public school teachers and university students. Schwartz (1994) concluded that in all societies, values are prioritized in approximately the same way. In most countries, according to Schwartz (1994) benevolence is the most prized value, and power is the least prized value. Smith and Schwartz's (1997) study added evidence to the hypothesis that values existed both at the individual and national levels. Schwartz and Sagie (2000) operationalized an index for values consensus across cultures and tested the hypothesis that levels of socioeconomic development and level of

political democratization both influenced and were influenced by societal values. Their findings suggested that greater socioeconomic development was associated with increased levels of values consensus, while greater democratization was associated with decreased values consensus.

Cultural distance has been argued as a factor negatively associated with post-sojourn re-entry adjustment (Galchenko & Van de Vijver, 2007; Triandis, 2004; Ward et al., 2001). However, to talk meaningfully about cultural distance, the construct needs to be operationalized in a way that allows it to be measured across cultures for purposes of placing cultures in a relationship of cultural proximity or distance. The four most commonly cited ways of measuring cultural distance in the literature according to a meta-analysis by Ng et al. (2007) were Kogut and Singh's (1988) cultural index, based on Hofstede (2001); self-rating scales, such as those of Rao and Schmidt (1995: as cited in Rao, Schmidt & Murray, 1995); Ronen and Shenkar's (1985) nine cultural clusters, cited by House et al. (2004) as the most influential source for House et al.'s (2004) own methodology; and West and Graham's (2004) measurement of cultural distance based on language differences.

Many researchers have attempted to define differences among cultures using binary dimensions. The anthropologist Edward Hall (1976) used methods of communication as the basis for dividing cultures. Hall's (1976) main category of distinction was whether a culture was high-context, in which language could be quite indirect and information mainly implied, or low-context, in which information was much more explicitly presented. Hall (1976) also argued that one essential difference among cultures was the extent to which they were either individualistic or collectivistic cultures. Triandis (2004) referred to the individualism-collectivism dimension as "the most important in studying cultural differences" (p. 90). Other dimensions posited were

power distance (Hofstede, 2001), restraint and indulgence (Minkov, 2009), and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001).

Khatri (2009) argued that within a specific dimension, individuals may vary. This would mean that even though a national culture might be labeled highly individualistic or collectivistic, there was room for individual variation. This hypothesis was supported by Triandis (2001), who argued that not all individuals in a certain culture shared the characteristics of that culture. He theorized that people in each culture “sample” (p. 909) from both sides of a dimensional spectrum according to the situation. Hofstede (2001) also delimited the definition of societal norms as value systems “shared by a majority in the middle classes in a society” (loc 3397). He did not claim that everyone in a society reflected the norms of the majority.

Motivated by Hofstede’s (2001) cultural comparisons at the national level, Triandis (2004) attempted to study cultural variation at the individual level. Focusing on the aspect of individualism and collectivism, Triandis (2004) defined individuals in societies as *idiocentric* and *allocentric*, with the term *idiocentric* applied to those members of society who exhibited the opposite of the predicted cultural behavior based on the dimensions associated with that culture and *allocentric* to those conforming to the expected behavior. For example, a highly individualistically minded person in a collectivistic society would be termed idiocentric. Triandis (2004) suggested that allocentrics in collectivist cultures number between 30 and 100 percent, while allocentrics in individualist cultures number between 0 and 30 percent. According to Triandis (2004), an idiocentric in a collectivist culture might be pushed to travel abroad due to unmanageable feelings of pressure to conform to the home culture.

Triandis (2001) also argued that results of a study varied according to the units of analysis. He posited that when cultures are compared, it is easier to refer to cultures in terms of a

single dimension (e.g., individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures). However, when looking at individuals within a culture, i.e., when individuals are the units of analysis, Triandis (2001) found that both sides of the dimension were much more nuanced. For instance, individualism became re-operationalized as several different factors, such as competition, self-reliance, and hedonism.

Hofstede (2001) posited the existence of four cultural dimensions,³ along which any culture would vary. His goal was to describe or predict the mental hardwiring of someone from a specific organization in a specific culture. The research for his findings was conducted between 1978 and 1983, using IBM employees from 53 countries as his participants. Hofstede's (2001) method was to administer questionnaires that could be analyzed statistically. The four dimensions that he identified, and which were statistically independent of one another were the following: power-distance; collectivism vs. individualism, femininity vs. masculinity, uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001). Many of Hofstede's findings had been externally validated by previous studies (Adelman and Morris, 1967; Gregg & Banks, 1965; Hofstede, 2011; Lynn & Hampson, 1975). Later collaboration with Michael Bond from the Chinese University of Hong Kong produced a fifth dimension: long-term orientation (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). This was theorized as the result of a study composed by Chinese researchers with a "deliberate Chinese mental bias" (Hofstede, 2001). A sixth dimension, restraint vs. indulgence was added by Hofstede (2010: as cited in Minkov & Hofstede, 2012) as a result of his work with Minkov (2009).

Parsons and Shils (1951) had suggested that *affectivity* was one of five main pattern variables that determined human action. Affectivity was defined as *needing gratification* and

³ Later five, and then six dimensions, culminating in his 6D model ©

opposed to affective neutrality, which was defined as *restraint of impulses*. Restrained cultures are characterized by an external locus of control, stricter sexual norms, and less importance given to freedoms of speech and expression (Hofstede, 2001). Indulgent societies are characterized by opposite values. Asia and the Muslim world were labeled by Hofstede (2001) as restrained.

Power distance. Hofstede (2001) adopted the term “power distance” from Mulder (1971). Mulder (as cited in Khatri, 2009) stated that power distance was the “degree of inequality in power between a less powerful individual and a more powerful other, in which individual and other belong to the same [organization or social unit]” (p. 2). Hofstede operationalized power distance in several ways, one being how a society dealt with human inequality. High power distance cultures are more comfortable with social inequality and the use of behaviors to indicate power relationships and hierarchical structures (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1994). A second way of measuring power distance was to measure responses to questions involving power relationships in organizations. The extent to which subordinates obeyed leaders unquestioningly and the extent to which employees or members of a society believed power should be concentrated at the top were measures of power distance (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004). Hofstede argued that power distance affected boss-subordinate relationships. Using findings from surveys administered to corporate employees, he suggested that the greater the amount of power distance in an organization, the more subordinates depended on their superiors. Power distance is also associated with levels of formality in addressing others, with higher power distance cultures showing greater use of honorifics and titles to address others of higher status or rank (Hwa-Froelich & Vigil, 2004).

Within his discussions of power distance, Hofstede (2001) also dichotomized societies as either *elitist* or *pluralist*. He distinguished them by their level of status consistency, with elitist

societies having less social mobility. The Fulbright program operates with an implicit notion that social mobility is achievable, and in many cases, merit-based. Hofstede's (2001) findings would indicate that in elitist societies, middle groups may require more than appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes to move upward in status.

House et al. (2004), based on a worldwide sample, concluded that power distance was the "least desirable, but the most prominent, feature of social practices in countries around the world" (loc 14008). Mulder (1971) found that the assumption that participatory approaches to decision making decreased the differences in power between the more and less powerful in an organization were unfounded and that in some cases, the differences were exacerbated by greater participation of the less-powerful in decision making.

Individualism and collectivism. Triandis, as cited in Hurteau (2006) argued that in collectivist societies, individual goals are subordinated to those of the larger group, whether that be a family, a tribe, a village, or an organization. Cooperation with members of the in-group is seen as essential. In-groups might be an extended family, people who share a language dialect, or members of the same religion, when it acts as a form of social cohesion. This would perhaps imply that needs of alumni's families in collectivist societies might override the alumni's own needs, impacting the decision-making process of re-entry adjustment. Triandis, as cited in Hurteau (2006) described collectivists as seeing the world as "divided into ingroups and outgroups" (p. 206), whereas individualists behave someone more evenly toward both groups. This seems in parallel to Hofstede's (2001) categorizing of societies as either elitist or pluralist. If a society were both collectivist and elitist, it would follow that returning alumni from the United States would succeed in leveraging their newly acquired knowledge and skills only to the

extent that they had close personal relationships with their superiors, and not because of their contributions to the organization or society.

Hofstede (2001) conducted research to measure national differences in individualism among IBM employees from 50 countries and three regions. As hypothesized, the United States' employees' actual individualism scores were highest of all countries and regions studied, with a weighted score of 91/100. Arab countries were roughly midrange, with a score of 38/100, meaning that they were more collectivist than individualist in their responses to the questions in the survey. Pakistan was the only South Asian country included in the study, with a score of 14/100, meaning that its employees' responses were highly collectivist in terms of values.

Hofstede (2001) found a correlation between the two dimensions of individualism and power distance, ($r = -.68^{***}$; $p < .001$). Arab countries were plotted on a quadrant of low to high power distance and collectivism – individualism and their scores implied high power distance and high collectivism. The United States was in the extreme opposite quadrant of low power distance and high individualism.

Hofstede (2001) in his description of the tenets of Confucianism, mentioned the need for individuals to restrain themselves or, in other words, “to overcome their individuality” (loc 11398) in order to preserve the harmony in the family that is so important to collectivist societies. If strongly individualistic behavior results in loss of family dignity, thus tarnishing the family name, it may be preferable for the individual to leave the family and move elsewhere out of sight of the community.

Clustering of countries according to cultural dimensions. Hofstede (2001) created a dendrogram of country clusters characterized by 12 branches: Arabic speaking countries were combined with some eastern and southeastern European countries (Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey)

in addition to Spain, Argentina, and Brazil. South Asian countries, such as Pakistan, were combined with some Southeast and East Asian countries (Thailand, Taiwan, Indonesia) and East and West Africa. One characteristic of the Southeast and East Asian countries that were lumped with Pakistan and Iran is that they were not former British or American colonies. Those that were, e.g., Hong Kong, Singapore, India, were lumped separately but together⁴ (Hofstede, 2001). Research conducted by Hofstede (2001) and more extensively by House et al. (2004) has strongly suggested that a Middle East cluster including North Africa and parts of West Asia and a second cluster, South Asia, including Pakistan and western India, but also Indonesia, display cultural dimensions that are quite distinct from those found to exist in an Anglo culture cluster, which includes the United States. The differences are most pronounced in the following areas: individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, and indulgence vs. restraint (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004).

Hofstede's (2001)⁵ work has been both supported (Eysenck, 1981; Kim, U. E., Triandis, H. C., Kâğıtçıbaşı, Ç. E., Choi, S. E., & Yoon, G. E., 1994); and criticized (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997; Ng et al., 2007; Tang & Koveos, 2008; Wu, 2006). Criticisms cited by Hofstede (2001) himself related to the excessive dependence on surveys to measure cultural difference, the association of nationhood with culture, the association of organizational culture with national culture; the use of obsolete IBM data, and the limited number of dimensions. Hofstede (2001) addressed the arguments, but his work remains controversial. Ng et al. (2006) found that Schwartz's (1994) cultural values framework offered advantages over Hofstede

⁴ Hofstede's research was completed before the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, or the turnover of Hong Kong to China. The first edition of Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences* was in 1980.

⁵ Hofstede first published this work in 1980.

(2001) in terms of comprehensiveness, more recent data, and a more diverse sampling population.

More recently, Fernandez et al. (1997), Tang & Koveos (2008) & Wu (2006) attempted to both update Hofstede's (2001) data and argue that cultural values are not incapable of shifting over time, particularly as contact between nations increases. Both Fernandez et al. (1997) and Wu (2006) found significant shifts in the scores for several of the cultural dimensions. They argued that changes in the workplace with regard to the role of women had negatively affected masculinity scores, and changes in how countries viewed themselves economically had positively affected uncertainty avoidance scores. Wu (2006) argued that democratization trends had negatively affected power distance scores. Tang & Koveos (2008) saw globalization as a factor in bringing scores between certain countries closer, which explained their finding that differences in management norms between such national business cultures as the Chinese and the American have decreased, possibly because of the international education that many Chinese graduate students now receive outside of China.

However, the differences in scores between Hofstede (2001) and the researchers who repeated his study 25-30 years later must be viewed with some caution. Hofstede's (2001) studies were not faithfully replicated by the later researchers. Sample sizes were smaller, dimensions were sometimes operationalized differently, and participants came from different occupations. The final factor was used by Wu (2006) to explain such differences as her lower score for individualism relative to Hofstede's (2001) in the United States. Wu (2006) suggested that her participants, who were all employees of universities would likely be less individualistic than Hofstede's manager participants because of their choice of occupation.

Schwartz (1999) clustered 40 countries according to values types. He located countries relevant for my own study (e.g. Islamic nations and India) as being high in hierarchy and conservatism and low in intellectual and affective autonomy and harmony. These findings seem to suggest a relationship to Hofstede's (2001) findings regarding national cultural dimensions. High power distance is positively associated with hierarchy and conservatism. Collectivism is positively associated with hierarchy.

Discussion

In this review of the literature, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive review of the research that focuses on issues surrounding re-entry adjustment. The research can be broadly categorized into research that focuses on people, processes, practice and variables associated with re-entry adjustment. Appendix A at the end of this dissertation provides a conceptual map that categorizes the research in the area of re-entry adjustment in the categories listed above.

The map helps us to visualize the focal points of the research and their trajectories over the past sixty years. It can be concluded from the substantial research on sojourners as individual types that regardless of category, all sojourners have experienced re-entry challenges. However, the challenges differ based on their expectations of what awaits in the home culture and the reality of their home culture life, the behavioral changes that have taken place in the host culture, and the extent of perceived loss or separation the sojourner feels as a result of having left the host culture.

I have endeavored in the review to draw attention to those areas lacking in empirical support, such as some of the more popular theories related to re-entry transition, support for returning sojourners, and re-entry styles. I have also highlighted areas in need of more attention, such as research that looks at re-entry adjustment of students from developing countries, and

readjustment of students from cultures with an arguably greater cultural distance from that of the United States. The few studies that have addressed these less commonly studied areas have either been descriptive qualitative studies or quantitative studies that have not been replicated. Their findings indicate that the availability of professional opportunities and acceptance by the home country of non-conforming behaviors may be influential in the decision of the returning sojourner to remain in the home country and contribute to human capacity building, or leave the home country again, taking their talent and skills to another country.

One area that has been noticeably neglected in the literature is in category of practice. There is an absence of research into the approaches or effectiveness of mental health and well-being support for returning sojourners. This may be because of expectations that returning sojourners do not need assistance readjusting to their home country culture, or because it is difficult to empathize with those who struggle to adjust to a home environment. However, as the current study will highlight, the struggles evidenced in the descriptions of emotions experienced in re-entry adjustment speak to a need for more research in the area of mental health and well-being support for returning sojourners.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Research Approach and Rationale

I chose to conduct an interpretative hermeneutic phenomenological (IPA) study. As an approach to qualitative research developed within psychology (Smith, 2017), IPA is designed to examine individual experiences through understanding cognitions, such as beliefs and attitudes (Willig, 2008). It attempts to illuminate how cognitions appear to individuals (Eatough & Smith, 2006). Conceptually, IPA is a blend of the phenomenological, the hermeneutic, and the idiographic. It is the result of an evolutionary process that begins with the philosophy of Husserl (1999) and his concern with an examination of experience that is not encumbered by theory or researcher bias (Smith, 2017), and is refined, modified, and given more life by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Various arguments have been made for citing other influences, such as Gadamer (Tuffour, 2017).

In this chapter I will describe my rationale for the choice of IPA as an approach to research and provide a detailed description of the approach. I will then outline the methods I chose for my study, consistent with the IPA approach. Finally, I will overview the methods of selecting and interviewing my participants, and the strategies employed to analyze the collected data and demonstrate how the data were coded and themes extracted.

My motivations for the use of IPA were several: First IPA embraces my belief that the world is experienced by those who reside in it, and that persons are beings in the world. The world is not separate from us as persons in a Cartesian way. Merleau-Ponty (1962) referred to a person's knowing himself or herself only within the context of the world. This belief implies a subjective knowledge that can be conveyed by those who experience it through thoughts and

feelings. IPA focuses on subjective experience because it does not hold that there is an objective standard for external experiences such as pain, or grief, but rather only a subjective experience shaped by the complex combination of beliefs, prior exposures, and impressions with which the person encounters the experience (Willig, 2008). Because previous studies of re-entry adjustment have primarily used deductive approaches to collecting data, designed according to researchers' perspectives and thus adding an unnecessary layer of mediation, I wanted to use an approach that would remove assumptions of what questions to ask participants, and instead, place the participant in his or her world, allowing participants more freedom to share the experience of re-entry adjustment, the "what it is like to live [this experience] in a particular moment or situation (Willig, 2008, p. 67). This experience would encompass the wishes, feelings, emotions, and beliefs of the participants in a way that other approaches did not. These sentient expressions would then be linked to behaviors and actions that would further illuminate the re-entry adjustment experience.

Second, IPA is idiographic, focusing on the individual case, one at a time. It does not focus solely on similarities between cases but celebrates where those cases diverge in experience. Because I believe in the uniqueness and personal subjectivity of lived experience, I was also searching for an approach that looks at what lived experience is like for particular persons. The flexibility of IPA allows it to work cross-case, but only after each case has been thoroughly and reflectively analyzed at the individual level.

Third, IPA operationalizes a hermeneutic phenomenology (Eatough & Smith, 2008) and makes it accessible to the field of education (Van Manen, 1997). I was interested to find that IPA recognizes the assumptions that a researcher brings to the research and accepts that these can be used to facilitate understanding rather than obscure or bias it (Willig, 2008). I was also searching

for a highly personal and caring approach to discovering the lived experiences of participants, many of whom I had known previously and cared about.

Criticisms of IPA point to its tendency to over-rely on the reliability of participants to successfully use language to convey meaning rather than merely provide opinions (Tuffour, 2017) or talk about experience (Willig, 2008). While language is a medium for describing experiences may be criticized, I also believe that emotions, such as sadness and grief, go beyond language acts. Emotions to me are personal and felt within, with or without language to express them. In videotaping participants as they describe experienced, some evidence of what the experience is like to them seems to come from the gestalt of their words, expressions, and tone (see Table 3.8 for an explanation of how speech and accompanying emotions were transcribed in the study.) IPA bridges discursive psychology and social cognitivism with the value it places on how lived experience is perceived and known (Eatough & Smith, 2008). But IPA does not reduce lived experience to the language in which it is conveyed. It also links the mind to the body and draws attention to how we use our bodies to convey meaning to others (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

The Origins of IPA

Phenomenology

To the novice, phenomenology can be confusing because it is both a branch of philosophy as well as a qualitative approach to research. In addition, there are several different epistemological and methodological varieties of phenomenology, varying from the transcendental to the hermeneutic to the existential. Phenomenology has no orthodox methodology (Giorgi, 2006), but there has been some criticism (Giorgi, 2006) of researchers who use phenomenology while being unfaithful to the principles of the discipline in their approach.

In psychology, two recognized approaches for research are descriptive phenomenology and interpretative phenomenology (Willig, 2008). Descriptive phenomenology draws methodological inspiration from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, and interpretative phenomenology draws from the field of hermeneutics and is particularly influenced by Heidegger (1996). One main distinction is the place of interpretation in both approaches. Descriptive phenomenologists separate description from interpretation; interpretative phenomenologists see interpretation as part of the process of making sense of experience, both by the participant and the researcher (Willig, 2008; Smith, 2017). IPA's approach incorporates the latter strategy.

Regardless of approach, the goal of any phenomenological study is to make the implicit explicit, and to capture the "essence" or "essential structures" (Sanders, 1982, p. 354) of experience, which would not appear to the researcher through normal observation. Phenomenology is most appropriate for capturing *intense* experiences, which are described or explored, rather than explained (Merriam, 2009). This explains its particular popularity as an approach in psychology, particularly health psychology (Smith, 2011). However, as Smith (2017) points out, it is also used in areas beyond psychology, such as education and management.

Phenomenology focuses on the contact point where the subject of the experience (the being) meets the object of experience (the consciousness). While each individual has unique experiences, perhaps due to the different perspectives by which each individual sees them, phenomenology posits that the various individual accounts of an object of study can be reduced to a common set of phenomena, or elements (a core, or essence) that are shared by all examples

of the object and can be verified by all who have described experiencing the object (Husserl, 1999).

Being conscious of an object or experience contributes to its meaning (Giorgi, 1997). However, that should not be construed to mean that the subject and object are, in their natural state, in separate worlds. Heidegger's (1996) concept of *Dasein* or "there-being" tells us that we are always located somewhere within a meaningful context. Humans don't take up relationships with objects. The objects are already in our world. As a phenomenological researcher, I did not see my participants as "passive perceivers of an objective reality" (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 88) but as able to describe the experience of home country readjustment as they have actively formulated it in their minds, interpreting it in a way that is meaningful to them.

Even though there are different philosophical arguments for adopting phenomenology (Creswell, 2013), researchers who use phenomenological methods do share, in addition to their interests in accounts of lived experiences, the belief that experiences evolve from consciousness, and that descriptions, rather than explanations or analyses of experiences, are valid research aims (Moustakas 1994). For the purposes of this study, *consciousness* refers to an awareness of the experience of readjusting to a home environment after having studied abroad. The home environment is arguably different in terms of societal norms, cultural values, and economic opportunity, and the term "readjustment" implies a past, present, and future dimension to the experience.

Consciousness also refers to how this experience makes sense to those who experience it. Prior to embarking on this study, I assumed that the process of returning to a developing country with a less developed infrastructure, less personal space, and more rigid societal norms in comparison to the United States would be an intense experience. My goal in this study was to

illuminate how the feelings and attitudes related to the experience appear to my participants. I valued the chance to engage in a productive dialogue with my participants in order to encourage them to adequately articulate their thoughts and concerns.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) identified four qualities that he said were essential to all phenomenological schools: description, reduction, essences, and intentionality. *Description* is, as a term, self-defining, but to phenomenologists it is the way in which the description is arrived that is important. According to Giorgi (2006) descriptions must be intuited, non-empirical, and not make reality claims. In this sense, the methodology of phenomenology, like discourse analysis, is a radical departure from the methodology of social cognition, which assumes that verbal data from questionnaires and scales reflect the cognitive activity of the respondents (Smith, 1996). In phenomenology, the researcher and the participants are both situated, contextual beings. From the standpoint of IPA, the interpretations are based on the “always-already” (Larkin & Thompson, 2011) immersion of the researchers and participants in their own worlds. Thus, the researcher can get close to the world of the participant, but never completely or directly (Smith, 1996). It also means that each participant describes from a unique position as a person in a specific context. This justifies the idiographic-centric approach to data collection in IPA.

Practically speaking, *reduction* is a phenomenological method of gaining understanding of a phenomenon that is accomplished by freeing oneself from cultural context (Dowling, 2007) or placing our usual understandings in abeyance (Crotty, 1998, p. 80). There is some confusion in the literature as to whether the term *epoché* is synonymous with reduction (Bevan, 2014) or one step in a multi-step reduction process (Willig, 2008) that also involves imaginative variation (Dowling, 2007). In *epoché*, the researcher attempts to suspend judgment (Willig, 2008) or adopt

a position of open-mindedness (Smith, 1996) or reflection (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). In Husserl's (1999) mind, epoché assumes that the researcher is circumscribed and limited by culture, which has set boundaries and governs how we impart meaning to things (Crotty, 1998). If we are able, through conscious practice, to assume another attitude, in which we *intentionalize* our thoughts, we can redirect our thinking toward the object of consciousness (Shinebourne, 2011). If we succeed, we can, in Husserl (1999)'s mind, describe the essential elements of an experience with intersubjective verifiability. Phenomenological reduction assists us in understanding what makes the experience what we believe it is (Willig, 2008). In terms of research questions, phenomenological reduction requires us to ask about "what" of the experience.

In contrast to the "what," *imaginative variation* directs us to ask "how" the experience is realized. It is more concerned with discovering the structural elements that either constitute or are otherwise present with the experience. As a researcher, when a participant seems to associate certain cognitions, such as feelings or attitudes, with home country readjustment, I attempted to reveal these more completely through *imaginative variation* (Willig, 2008). According to Moustakas (1994) this is accomplished by the "utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from different perspectives" (pp 97-98). Any perspective, according to Moustakas (1994) is "permitted to enter into consciousness" (p. 98). The textural *what* and the structural *how*, when combined, can help an adequate description of the phenomenon's essence to appear to the researcher.

In Husserlian (1999) phenomenology, the mental world and the outer world are one, not dual. *Intentionality* tells us that consciousness is always consciousness of something and that we act on something because we are conscious of it. We use intentionality to reach out or direct

ourselves toward the object of our interest, which Husserl (1999) referred to as the *noema*. The object of interest cannot be described as separate from the subject that perceives it (Crotty, 1998). In terms of my research, it may not have occurred to my participants to intentionally think about re-entry adjustment, and their perspectives of re-entry adjustment when thinking about their experience may be seen differently, for example, as burdensome, liberating, smothering, reassuring. Each of these feelings would be to Husserl (1999) a particular *interest*. A participant can intentionalize by looking at readjustment with a particular interest, predictably one that would differ from one participant to another. For IPA, intentionality requires researchers to remind themselves that as we are one with the world we cannot be described apart from this world (Crotty, 1998). I had to frequently consider the worlds of my participants. My intimate knowledge of their countries and my ability to visualize the situations they described assisted me in making sense of their descriptions.

It was necessary for me as well to be able to identify core elements of the phenomenon of re-entry adjustment. These core elements are what phenomenologists refer to as the *essence* of the phenomenon. Husserl (1999) referred to the process of arriving at the essence as *eidetic reduction*. Husserl (1999) defines *eidos* as essential form (p. 326), and says that the *eidos* must be present in all the forms of the phenomena. For example, if one participant describes re-entry adjustment as a feeling of *being misunderstood*, but another rejects that description (or I interpret rejection of that description), *being misunderstood* is not an essential characteristic of re-entry adjustment. The process of performing eidetic reduction normally involves imaginative variation, which, as explained above, involves modifying or removing certain descriptors of a phenomenon to see whether they are essential to the description of the phenomenon. Larkin, Eatough, &

Osborn (2011) describe this in practical terms as asking a set of “What if...?” (p. 323) questions about the phenomenon.

Although IPA is indebted to Husserlian transcendental phenomenology in that it focuses principally on human experience (Giorgi, 2006), IPA does not posit that a researcher can transcend his or her assumptions or values in order to gain unfiltered access to the participant’s personal world. Therefore, it does not view the participant as providing the researcher an objective description of the thing experienced based on the participant’s own reflection and interpretation (Bevan, 2014). The researcher practicing IPA accepts that all description offered by participants is interpreted through the researcher’s own position of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1996), meaning through the researcher’s own situated experience. Thus, both the participant and the researcher are central to creating meaning. The participant must adequately voice thoughts and concerns, and the researcher must reflect on these thoughts and analyze them. Epistemologically, IPA is aligned with the school of hermeneutic phenomenology.

Hermeneutics

As a core foundational component of IPA, hermeneutics refers to the principles of interpretation. The notion of hermeneutics arose with relation to understanding written, particularly religious texts (Grondin, 1994; Patton, 2002) and it seems logical that its modern application to lived experience owes much to the work of Schleiermacher (1998), an 18th-century biblical scholar and philosopher. Schleiermacher (1998) defined hermeneutics as both the “art of understanding another person’s utterance correctly (p.5), by which we can presume he was thinking mainly in terms of texts, many of which he translated from other languages, and “the art of communicating someone else’s utterance to a third person” (p.5). In the 20th century, hermeneutics was transformed under the influence of Heidegger (1996) and Gadamer (2004) to

the status of a philosophy in the sense that it was elevated from a focus on epistemological and methodological forms to ontological concerns. In Ricoeur's (1981) words, it was transformed from an "epistemology of interpretation" to an "ontology of understanding" (p. 18). Rather than argue as Husserl (1999) that presuppositions were problematic and that one should consciously attempt to bracket them, Heidegger (1996) believed that all understanding happened through interpretation. Both he and Gadamer (2004) saw a circularity in understanding although each described it slightly differently. Both descriptions have implications for the IPA method.

Heidegger (1996) saw a reciprocal text-context or text-author relationship. Although this is metaphorically described as a circle, it is a term that Heidegger (1996) himself rejected (Grondin, 2002). Heidegger (1996) saw that a work could only be understood with reference to its author, which implied understanding the context in which the author wrote. This parallels Crotty's (1998) observations that a participant cannot be separated from the phenomenon it describes, nor from the context in which the participant exists. For Heidegger (1996) the process was forward moving. The observer constantly reassesses understanding of parts in light of a priori assumptions, or "wholes." One moves from having pre-assumptions of meaning (the parts) to adjusting meaning as the pre-assumptions are tested in light of what is produced (the whole).

Gadamer (2004) reimagined the circle foregrounding the importance of language and making references to returning to the past for understanding. Gadamer (2004) felt that one's previous and present experiences were always present in co-constructing meaning and that meanings were mediated linguistically. In Gadamer's (2004) interpretation, a researcher benefits from reflective writing or note taking while reading and returning to the notes later on in interpreting meaning. The method of interpretation of transcripts employed by a researcher within the IPA approach is highly influenced by the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Heidegger.

Gadamer (2004) also argued that our means of understanding is through *logos*. Logos is similar to Heidegger's (1996) *language*. Applying this to the interview setting, it can be assumed that there is a shared acceptance of meaning between the interlocutors. However, when there are assumptions to what meanings are conveyed by words, particularly since my participants were using English as a second or third language, different understandings of a word are quite possible. I was keenly aware of this pitfall as I listened to my participants tell their stories. Where I was uncertain of their choice of language, I asked them to restate, recast, or clarify.

The philosophical underpinnings of the IPA method impacted my approach to interviewing, coding, interpreting, and analyzing. I saw my participants as placed in a world that was already populated with objects and the semantic mechanisms that accompany them (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Second, I viewed the interview as a bridge helping me to understand the interviewee. Third, knowing the context in which the interviewee describes an experience helped me to negotiate the meaning of that experience.

I also realized that it was impossible for me to gain direct access to the life-world of my participants. Being persons in context, my participants are related to their worlds; thus, I had to consider that their descriptions and perspectives were intersubjective: affected by and predicated upon their relationships to their unique inner worlds and objects within those worlds. I therefore did not assume anything at face value but rather used this belief in intersubjectivity and my deep sense of cultural awareness to interpret their narratives. At the same time, I was aware of my pre-suppositions or my "baggage," and the sometimes-sensitive nature of the interview and the dialogue between the participant and me (Willig, 2008).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) extended the limits of IPA both as a belief system and a research method. In the words of Murray and Holmes (2014), Merleau-Ponty "correct[ed] a lacuna" in

IPA by addressing the role of *place* or location in the shaping of a participant's identity and the affirmation of the body as sensitive to its surroundings (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Merleau-Ponty (1962) saw language as a manifestation, a revelation, a psychic link, and a "revelation of [a person's] being" (p. 196) rather than an instrument or means of communication. This translated methodologically into the need for me, as the researcher, to notice how my participants used such linguistic and paralinguistic devices as words, gestures, silence, pauses, and metaphors. It was a primary justification for videotaping interviews and transcribing verbatim, replete with false starts and fillers. At the same time, I remained aware that they were speaking in a language other than their mother tongue.

Idiography

IPA is idiographically oriented as its focus is on description and understanding of specific individuals in specific situations (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). This should not be seen as a call to avoid generalizations, but rather to be attuned to both convergence and divergence (Smith, 2011). As will be shown in this study, participants shared experiences but exemplified the same themes of re-entry adjustment in different ways. Because IPA has a person-in-context (Larkin & Thompson, 2011) focus, texts, or transcripts are analyzed one by one and only compared in the later stages of analysis. In my study, in line with the principles of IPA, cases were analyzed individually and themes were extracted without deductive reference to other cases. Cross-case reduction of themes was only performed after all individual cases had been reviewed and coded.

Participants

My method was flexible in keeping with the eclecticism of IPA. IPA calls for semi-structured interviewing that is non-directive and open-ended. In line with goals of phenomenology, I gave voice to concerns; in lines with hermeneutics, I "contextualize[d] and

ma[d]e sense of these claims” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 102). My interview schedule questions, shown in Table 3.2, provided some consistency of questioning across cases, but also encouraged elaboration of thoughts generated by the participant and to encourage additional sense-making.

Population and Sampling

To recruit participants, I used the email databases of Fulbright FLTA alumni from Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, India, and Pakistan for the years 2013-2016. In this way, no one in the database was excluded from the recruitment process. I had a response rate of approximately 15%, with the highest response rate from India, and the lowest from Egypt. Those who expressed interest were sent a consent form, which they either signed and returned, or responded to orally. Participants were shortlisted based on their qualifications as alumni and from their responses to a questionnaire. No one from Algeria was shortlisted, and thus I did not include Algeria in the study. Those shortlisted were selected based on availability for interviews and their agreement to interview in a way that allowed me to record the interview both visually and aurally.

In his description of the IPA method, Smith (2004) advised that IPA interviews must be “detailed and nuanced, “which required the number of participants to remain small. Smith (2004) stated that the norm in IPA studies ranged from five to ten participants at most. I selected nine qualified participants from a shortlist of 15. Those shortlisted whom were not chosen were kept as alternates. After completing the nine interviews, I informed all those who were shortlisted that the study had been completed and their participation was no longer needed.

Two factors, both outlined by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) influenced my sampling selection strategy. First, I was looking for a population of Fulbright FLTA alumni that is homogenous with regard to socioeconomic background, level of education, age, region of origin, and amount of time having resided in the home country after returning from the United States.

Unlike my pilot study, in which the degree of variation among my participants was so great that in some cases I was unable to extract common themes of the phenomenon, this restricted selection strategy greatly narrowed the differences in terms of culture and level of economic development among the nations of the participants in order to better guarantee that readjustment experiences of the participants were comparable and common themes could be conceptualized.

Pragmatic considerations were a second factor. I learned from my pilot study that while there was a large population that had experienced the phenomenon, there were very few willing to discuss it. It was also difficult to obtain a gender-balanced sample from selected countries. I sensed that a lack of stated benefits to the participants from participating in the study was a disincentive, and that for some, a lack of internet access prevented some from participating. Thus, in this study, to add an incentive, I offered modest monetary compensation for participants' time and effort. Because my approach required me to be "in the moment," meaning being attentive to linguistic structures, physical gestures, and eye contact, I rejected as participants those who could not agree to interview in a way that allowed me to record the interview both visually and aurally.

My strategy therefore proceeded as follows: Upon obtaining an IRB exemption for my study, I sent out an advertisement for participation to all alumni in my database from each of the six countries delimited in my study. I limited the alumni to those who returned to their home countries in the summers of 2013, 2014, and 2015. I did not use participants who were in my pilot study. Once I begin to receive expressions of interest, I sent out a consent form (See Appendix 4). I provided the option of recorded oral consent. Upon receipt of the signed consent form or recorded oral voice message, I sent those potential participants a questionnaire that asked them to provide the following information: gender, age, country, host institution in the United

States, year of their Fulbright grant, level of development of their home area (rural, urban), religion, marital status, education, and employment status. I also asked them to state whether they had returned to the same employment as before their Fulbright grant or to a different situation. I also asked them whether their current roles included caring for or financially supporting others in the home country, such as parents or siblings. Finally, I asked them about their near-term future plans. I indicated that a submission of the questionnaire was a requirement for total participation in the study. Once I had collected the questionnaires, I identified those who would be best able to participate in the study. Out of 18 who fit all the criteria for participation in the study, I selected nine based on a first come first served basis. However, I also attempted to balance genders and numbers from each country. Table 3.1 below briefly describes each of the selected participants, using their self-selected pseudonyms.

Table 3.1

Participant Background Information

| <u>Participant</u> | <u>Gender</u> | <u>Country</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Institution in the US</u> | <u>Year in the US</u> | <u>Highest degree obtained</u> | <u>Working in same type of job as before Fulbright</u> | <u>Married</u> | <u>Providing support</u> |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|---|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| Farhan | Male | Pakistan | 30 | East Coast (private, US top 10 ranking) | 2015-16 | BA, Planning to pursue an MA | Yes, but at a different place | Yes | Yes – wife and two children |
| Misbah | Male | India | 28 | West Coast (public) | 2015-16 | MA Currently pursuing a PhD | Full-time student; unemployed | No | No |
| Maryam | Female | Pakistan | 27 | West Coast (public, US top 10 ranking) | 2015-16 | MA | No | No | Yes – both parents and siblings |
| Nariman | Female | Egypt | 27 | Midwest (public) | 2013-14 | BA | No | No | Yes- mother and one brother |
| Soliman | Male | Egypt | 34 | South (public) | 2014-15 | BA | No | No | 2013-14 |
| Mahdi | Male | Morocco | 30 | West Coast (public) | 2013-14 | MA | No | No | MA Planning to pursue a PhD |
| Laith | Male | Morocco | 29 | West public land grant university | 2014-15 | MA Currently pursuing a PhD | No | No | No |
| Asma | Female | Tunisia | 30 | Southeast (private) | 2013-14 | MA Planning to pursue a PhD | No | No | Yes – both parents, and partial care of other siblings |
| Salma | Female | Tunisia | 27 | Eastern central South (public) | 2015-16 | MA | No | No | No |

In two cases, participants selected for the study dropped out before participating in the interview and were replaced. Unlike in my pilot study, I did not need to resort to snowballing to find participants from a particular country. The response rates in each country were adequate. India had the highest response rate to my call for participants, and Egypt, the lowest.

Saturation is cited in many studies as an indication of when to conclude that the number of participants interviewed is sufficient (Fusch & Ness, 2015). However, Fusch & Ness also pointed out that saturation is not about the number of participants, but rather the quality (richness) and quantity (thickness) of the data in a qualitative study. Because of the idiographic nature of IPA, I felt it in some ways, saturation was an incommensurate concern. However, my study did address the four saturation goodness criteria that Fusch & Ness (2015) mentioned: (1) the study reached a stage where no new data were emerging, and thus (2) no new themes were emerging. It logically followed that (3) there was no new coding. Finally, (4) the study can be replicated.

Finally, each participant chose his or her own pseudonym. My only requirement was that the pseudonym be culturally credible, meaning that I wanted a name that would be recognized as one common to the home culture. In the data analysis and in Table 3.1, pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants.

Measures

Instrumentation and Materials

I employed semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews. All interviews were conducted via Skype® or Zoom®. Thus, I was able to see my participants and observe their facial expressions and other paralanguage while describing their re-entry adjustment experience. I was also able to record the audio transcript, using a Skype plug-in called Ecamm®. As I had

mentioned in my overview of the philosophical underpinnings of the research method, both verbatim transcriptions and observation of body language and facial expressions are necessary to the analysis. I did not need to exclude anyone from the study as a result of a lack of technology, internet access or an unwillingness to be videotaped.

In-depth, semi-structured, interviews were my preferred method of data collection because they best allowed participants to offer a “rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences” (Smith, et al., 2009, LOC 1186). Since an intimate account of a participant’s experience was desired, loosely structured interviews were the most logical choice of data collection methods because other methods, such as tightly structured interviews or questionnaires, could have prevented the discovery of data outside of the researcher’s imagination, denied the *always-already-a-person-in-a-context* nature of participants, and thus greatly restricted the variation in stories among the participants. In the sensitive and sometimes threatening environment for personal expression in authoritarian and traditional cultures, focus groups might also have been intimidating for some. Obtaining “rich” data was the objective, and to allow participants to speak “freely and reflectively” (Smith, et al., 2009, LOC 1186) and voice concerns (Smith, et al. 2009) one on one interviews seemed the most justifiable method to use. Finally, my participants did not have other sources of data in their possession that I might have drawn on to supplement the interviews, such as diaries or journals.

I conducted interviews with nine participants, (5M, 4F). The first interview with each participant lasted 75 to 90 minutes. Follow-up interviews varied in length, depending upon the extent of gap-filling or additional questions prompted by an initial line-by-line analysis. Also, since the initial interviews attempted to reveal what mattered to participants, the follow-up

interviews more precisely focused on the meanings attached to what mattered for participants (Larkin & Thompson, 2012).

The audio and video portions were recorded with the participants' consent. The mp4 files were transcribed verbatim. No one other than I conducted interviews. Follow-up interviews were partly conducted by video, and partly by written correspondence, using a secure platform (Box).

At the start of each interview, I clarified the aims of the study and the interviewee's right to stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. I had already obtained written or oral informed consent from all the interviewees. Each interview initially included some time that helped to set the conditions for the rest of the interview. The interview process did not follow a specific format although I created an interview schedule (see Table 3.2). Often the participant took the conversation in unexpected directions, which I allowed.

IPA requires a verbatim transcription of the interview and therefore dialogues were recorded with consent. All questions were open-ended, and exploratory, not explanatory. A distinguishing factor of IPA is that it focuses on descriptions and eschews explanations. I used an interview schedule (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith et al, 2009) to probe into areas I wished to investigate, such as experiences, what mattered at the moment, associated feelings and emotions, and how those feelings and emotions were being handled. The interview schedule is displayed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Two-category Interview Schedule

| | Lived Experience | Objects or Content of Thought (the noema, in phenomenological terms) and the act of judging it, liking it, what it means (the noesis, in phenomenological terms) |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Describe [x] | How did you feel when [x] happened? |
| 2 | Describe [x] before [y] as opposed to after [y] | What do you consciously associate with that feeling? |
| 3 | Can you give an example? Could you elaborate on that? | What are the outcomes for you of thinking about [x] |
| 4 | Describe encounters with [x] | How did you end up doing [something]...going [somewhere] |
| 5 | Describe reactions to [x] | How does it feel to be [bothered by, dislike, enjoy] [x]? |

My interview was guided by the schedule but not bound by it. Because I wanted to enter into the worlds of my participants, I had to allow my participants to introduce issues that I was not aware of. Once participants had introduced content into the interviews, I was able to use the interview schedule to draw out richer, thicker descriptions of the content.

I also did not always follow the same order of questioning. This is because I did not want to interrupt the flow of the interview, nor curb the enthusiasm of an interviewee who was particularly focused on a certain issue or concern.

Because the interviewees had met me before, some of them wanted to begin the interview by catching up and letting me know what had changed about them since I last saw them. For example, Mahdi wanted to first tell me about his problems with PhD applications. Because I wanted to establish rapport and have the interviewees settle comfortably into the interviews, I allowed this to happen.

Finally, some interviewees did not always understand the questions I asked when I attempted to ask them in a non-leading way. Occasionally some of my re-phrasing created a more leading question. For example, “What do you think about?” sometimes elicited a question,

such as “What do you mean?” rather than a response. This required me sometimes to ask more specific questions, such as “What did you think about upon arriving back home – while still at the airport?”

Researcher Epoché. To prepare for interviewing, I first needed to reflect on my own experiences of attempts at readjustment and how my experience might have shared or contrasting aspects with those of the participants. My initial assumption was that I would find familiar much of what my participants described as their experience returning home. I had lived outside my home country, the United States, since the 1980s with the exception of two years. I had attempted to return home and readjust to my home culture twice, once in 1993 and again in 1997. Each attempt lasted less than one year. The experience of failing to resettle in my land of birth instilled an empathy in me for those who fail and made me more curious about those who succeed. I remained aware of “personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions (Merriam, 2009, p. 25) during my data collection and analysis phases. IPA accepts that I would not be able to withhold judgment, (Quest, 2014) and that it would inexorably be part of my interpretation. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 4, my assumption that my experience would somewhat mirror that of my participants was mostly incorrect. Using IPA allowed me to find unique lived experienced colored by social and historical processes different from my own.

Interviewing. In keeping with the principles of IPA, questions attempted to elicit descriptions, not explanations. While it was not always a straightforward task, I attempted to *elicit* through my questioning and avoided structuring so as not to be constrained with what to ask. I allowed the participant to take the conversation in many directions and through many time periods, as long as it remained focused on attempting to describe the phenomenon. On many occasions, participants wished to draw on previous experiences that they had had in the United

States in order to explain their feelings at the time of returning home. This need to explain the present by referring to the past draws attention to Sartre's (1956) argument that individuals have a past that exists to influence the present.

First-tier Questioning. The first part of my approach involves contextualization and is grounded in Husserl's (1999)'s concepts of natural attitude and lifeworld. My goal was to ask the participant to describe lived experience of re-entry adjustment in many different contexts and forms. Once the participant began talking, my major role was as an interested explorer, using probing and imaginative variation to tease out meanings of cognitions.

Second-tier questioning. Smith et al. (2009) advocated a second type of questioning that is theory-driven and occurs at the interpretive stage. I employed a style of secondary questioning in the form of comment questions in the side bars of the transcripts as I read through them one by one. Follow up questions related mostly to feelings and emotions. As I read through the transcripts, I found myself wondering about the feelings or emotions that accompanied the descriptions of experiences. I also wondered where these feelings were located in the minds of bodies of the participants, and whether they could answer those questions. For example, I occasionally asked, "What emotion were you feeling as you experienced this situation?" I also attempted to elicit consciousness of the place of emotions in a certain instance, whether interpreted as in the mind or the body or both.

Interview strategies. As IPA necessarily has an idiographic focus, and the individual case study receives primary consideration, I did not structure interviews in order to attempt to find connections between participants. In general, I showed interest in what each participant had to say, and from my neutral responses, made it clear that I did not have an "agenda." As much as was possible, I attempted to 'come around the hermeneutic circle' (Smith et al., 2009, LOC

1368) to the participant's side. By this I mean that rather than insert my opinion or offer an explanation, I simply tried to make sense of the participants making sense of their experience.

Ethical Concerns. Since my starting point was beneficence, and therefore avoidance of harm, prior to drafting an IRB protocol, I evaluated to what extent discussing political or other sensitive issues might constitute "harm" for any of my potential participants. I obtained informed consent on two levels: for the interview and the data analysis, since verbatim extracts were used (Smith et al., 2009). Although recommended by Smith et al. (2009) that I show the participants both the schedule and the topics to be covered in advance, I shared only the topics with them. This was because I did not want the discussion to be constrained by the participant's conscious awareness of possible questions, nor did I want the participants to think that there was an agenda.

Raw data were only seen by me and my "team," which consisted of one other person, a native English-speaking transcriber living in Mexico. Anonymity could not be offered by definition since I was interviewing, but names of participants and other identifying data were not used in the write-up considering the participants' possible discomfort with speaking negatively about those in positions of power or those who could be shamed by what was divulged. One of the participants said that she was fine with having her real name used; however, for all participants I used pseudonyms chosen by participants and removed other identifiers such as names of institutions, home locations or places of employment in order to minimize risk or embarrassment to them. Confidentiality of use of findings and privacy of data were also observed.

Pilot Study

According to Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham (2001), there are two main reasons for carrying out a pilot study. The first is as a trial run for the major study and the second

is to test the research instruments. My primary motivation in carrying out a pilot study in 2015 was the former; I did not intend to use an instrument that needed to be deemed reliable or feasible. However, the pilot study did help me to understand the logistical challenges of emailing, obtaining consent, scheduling, and interviewing participants, as well as transcribing their descriptions. I made mistakes in the pilot study, such as trying to identify themes among non-homogeneous groups, but I avoided these mistakes in the dissertation study.

Other lessons learned from my pilot study included the need to narrow the setting of the study to an area or areas characterized by similar cultural dimensions. Those in the Middle East and South Asia share common authoritarian and elitist leadership and clear power-distance (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004), which as my findings will show, are mentioned in narratives of readjustment.

In addition, the pilot study allowed me to hone my interviewing skills and from repeated interviewing, understand how best to establish rapport with the participant before probing more deeply into personal areas. I also developed the technique of approaching questions sideways rather than directly. By this I mean that I developed the technique of opening up a discussion that led to the participant's perspective on the area of inquiry, but which never seemed forced. At times, I was not sure that the participants understood the importance of the value of the information that they were providing, but I felt my approach was producing more genuine, less self-conscious answers, and that it better allowed the participants to take me as the listener to "the thing itself," a goal of phenomenological reduction.

Transcription of Data

Data were sent in mp4 format to my trusted transcriber using Box, a secure method of sending personal data, and which is used by the Institute of International Education in New York

for transferring Fulbright applicant personal data. Only the transcriber, the participants, and I had access to Box. The transcriber worked with me on my pilot study and signed a confidentiality agreement for both the pilot and this study.

Table 3.3 displays the transcription system that we, the transcriber and I, used to capture the words and accompanying intonations, pauses and indications of emotion, such as laughter or excitement.

Table 3.3

Video Transcription Notes^a

| <u>Data</u> | <u>Method of Handling</u> |
|--|--|
| names | recorded as pseudonyms in parentheses; two-initial references used, (e.g. SD, GM) |
| sound effects (e.g., background noise, such as ringing phones, other voices, traffic, coughing, or laughing) | placed in square brackets |
| emphasis | ALL CAPS |
| gaps ^b | placed the word [silence] in brackets |
| pauses ^c | used ellipsis (...) |
| fillers (ah, um, huh, ahhhh) | written as heard |
| mis-hearings | captured in transcription |
| false starts | captured in transcription |
| non-native speech (ungrammatical or inappropriate word choice) | left alone in the transcript; but (sic) added in the data analysis |
| mispronunciations | verified with interviewee; correction ascertained and written as what was intended |
| foreign words | italicized and transliterated in Roman alphabet using the system designed by mylanguages.org; later on, words then written in the native language and verified in the audit check with interviewees ^d |
| unintelligible sounds | red colored font used by transcriber; interviewer then sent question to interviewees along with recorded interview and interviewees listened to themselves and clarified what they had said. |

^aAdapted from the Described and Captioned Media Program accessed on the Colorado State University website: accessproject.colostate.edu.

^bGaps= silences that occur meaning units; between completed voiced thoughts (Sacks, Schelegloff & Jefferson, as cited in Hepburn & Bolden, 2013).

^cPauses= silences within a meaning unit (Sacks, Schelegloff & Jefferson, as cited in Hepburn & Bolden, 2013).

^dWhen foreign words were used in a language that is not written with the Roman alphabet (such as Urdu or Arabic), a Roman transliteration system was used in order to make the transcript accessible to the English-speaking reader. Words were italicized to show their foreign origin. The following URLs contain the transliteration systems:

http://mylanguages.org/urdu_alphabet.php.

http://mylanguages.org/arabic_alphabet.php.

Data Analysis

I followed Willig's (2008) four-stage process of IPA data analysis and added Smith et al.'s (2009) final stage of gestalt.

Stage One

I read and reread the transcribed texts, making only first-impression notes. Data were analyzed closely, line by line (see Table 3.3). This is known in the literature as identifying significant statements (Smith et al., 2009).

Stage Two

I identified and labeled themes (see Table 3.4). This is known as clustering (Smith et al., 2009). I also provided an explanation as to how I arrived at the themes.

Stage Three

I attempted to introduce structure to the themes. Smith et al. (2009) refers to this as advancing *textural and structural descriptions*. I began to mentally converse with the coded data, my own knowledge of the phenomenon, and what it might mean for the participants to have had these experiences.

Stage Four

I produced a summary table of cluster labels, subordinate theme labels, key words or quotes, and page lines and numbers (see Tables 3.5 and 3.6). This allowed me to develop a *gestalt* of the relationships and themes.

Stage Five

The final state of gestalt concluded the analysis with an exhaustive description of the essential invariant structure (or essence) of the experience (Smith et al. 2009) (see Chapter 4).

The Analytic Process Illustrated

I began the interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data at the level of the individual case, reading and re-reading, identifying first what seemed to matter to the participants, known in IPA parlance as *objects of concern* (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Following that, I inferred and interpreted the participants' *experiential claims* (Larkin & Thompson, 2012), which are the representations or meanings that the participants attribute to the objects of concern. Table 3.4 provides an example of how I worked on a specific case identifying objects of concern and experiential claims.

Table 3.4.

Farhan from Pakistan: Line coding, objects of concern and experiential claims:

| <u>Line-by-line Coding</u> | <u>Object of Concern</u> | <u>Experiential Claims</u> |
|---|--|---|
| 1/21 “I got my posting in Karachi, in order to be with my family.” | family; location of posting | life with family has meaning; family provides a refuge from the frustration felt when dealing with bureaucracy, bribes, lack of technology in the classroom |
| 1/21-26: “[In the United States] the students I had, most of them were very active, they were very modern, ah, very interested to learn the Urdu language. But when I came back to Pakistan, I find (sic) some difficulties, like in adjustment, because most of my students ... are narrow minded. They are not too (sic) much interested to learn.” 6/190 “We lack technology and we lack comfortable furniture, and lots of things...so whenever I teach...I miss [name of U.S. university]” 6/26-30 “Sometimes I wish I had a projector so I can (sic) show ...certain videos to improve speaking skills, to improve pronunciation, or how to write a good passage. So I miss in terms of technology and the advancement of the U.S.” | job satisfaction; students | re-entry adjustment would be easier if he could enjoy teaching more |
| 2/10-11: “They are happy whatever they have.” 2/23-26: “I tell them my story, like I’m from a poor background and | motivating his students to care about learning | sees acquired apathetic attitudes toward learning as a problem not only |

then I be grown (sic) and then I went to the USA and I do (sic) one of the most prestigious awards.”

for his students but for the country

Following the line by line coding, I looked for emergent patterns, or themes. These themes changed their form frequently as new material in subsequent data sets tested their flexibility. Table 3.5 shows a list of emergent themes before I consolidated them into superordinate themes.

Table 3.5

Initial list of emerging themes of re-entry adjustment

| <u>Emerging Themes</u> | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 | Empowerment and confidence upon return (feeling chosen and special; feeling able to make a change |
| 2 | Feeling acknowledged by others for being a Fulbrighter or for having won a grant to teach and study in the U.S. |
| 3 | Recognizing cultural schizophrenia – the tension between tradition and modernity |
| 4 | Heightened ability to see home culture as an outsider and ask “why?” (heightened critical sense) |
| 5 | Seeing home country environment through a comparative framework |
| 6 | Adopting a re-entry style |
| 7 | Being unable to relate to what is witnessed at home or being unable to communicate feelings to individuals |
| 8 | Operating between cultures and with two hats |
| 9 | Greater openness to difference |
| 10 | Comparisons with the US |
| 11 | Resisting pressure to conform and not complain |
| 12 | Altered sense of identity; what is salient has changed Fulbright has a place in alum’s identity |
| 13 | The sense of a lack of mutual respect in the home culture (exemplified by a lack of queueing, blocking pedestrian ways, touching, catcalling, hypocrisy and corruption) sometimes manifested in regret at having returned home |
| 14 | A clearer picture of what the home country could be like because of the US experience |
| 15 | Awareness of humanism – a sense that it is possible to be good outside of a religious framework |
| 16 | A feeling that development in the home country stood still while the participant had advanced; the participant feels advanced when comparing him/herself to former colleagues |
| 17 | Feels s/he can make a difference at least locally if not nationally: |

- 18 Home culture is judgmental
 - 19 Feelings and experiences are accompanied by emotions
 - 20 Religion is not the problem; the culture is the problem
 - 21 “Outgrown” home
 - 22 Relief at not needing to be a cultural ambassador to people who have orientalist assumptions
 - 23 Females’ decision to hold onto independence gained in the United States
 24. Reduced patience
 25. Less fatalistic
 26. Disappointment and some regret at having returned home
 27. The courage and ability to speak out or oppose
 28. Questioning norms
 - 29 Rejection of others’ assumptions about cultural identity
 - 30 Reverse homesickness and nostalgia for the US
 - 31 Positively reconnecting with elements of the home culture
 - 32 Critical observance – item irritation
 - 33 Emotions and feelings are part of the re-entry shock
 - 34 Navigating – knowing when and when not to complain; what and what not to say
 - 35 Mind and body seem to be in different places
 - 36 Hiding from questions
 - 37 Knows how to adapt what was learned in the US to the local context
 - 38 Objective culture is easier to reembrace than subjective culture
-

I then created a list of emerging themes starting with individuals and moving cross-case.

Table 3.6 shows how the emerging themes were consolidated as my readings and interpretations of descriptions advanced, resulting in superordinate themes, following the guidelines of Eatough and Smith (2006), who recommended providing an excerpt from the data to illustrate each theme or subtheme. To increase trustworthiness, I attempted to include only those themes that were common among at least seven of the nine participants. Finally, to strengthen my arguments, I asked the person responsible for transcribing the narratives to attempt to follow a path from my notes to my table to see if I had remained true to my participants. I refer to this step as an external audit.

Table 3.6

Clustering emerging themes to create superordinate themes with subthemes

| <u>No.</u> | <u>Superordinate Theme</u> | <u>No.</u> | <u>Sub-theme</u> |
|------------|--|------------|---|
| 1 | Increased self-confidence and sense of empowerment | 11 | Resisting pressure to resort to a former uncomplaining self and not complain IE: "If they are criticizing me ...or making me realize this is Pakistan. Don't be different; you have to follow what's going on in our country. [But] it doesn't mean that I have to be like them. Although (sic) will reject me from the community, but I have to be what I have learned. ... I cannot accept their demands that I have to be Pakistani" (Farhan, p. 27, lines 7-12;16-17). |
| | | 23 | Females' decision to hold onto independence gained in the United States IE: "I used to live with my family before going to the U.S. and when I came back I decided not to move in with them, and I just felt I am too free to be able to live with an Arabic traditional family" (Salma, p. 6, lines 22-25). |
| | | 17 | Feels s/he can make a difference at least locally if not nationally: IE: "At that time [before Fulbright] I wasn't in favor. If people were sending their girls, OK fine. But when I came back I saw it as my responsibility that if they are not doing this, I should motivate them, or I should assist them in a way that they should start sending their daughters" (Maryam p. 23, lines 10-13). |
| | | 12 | What was learned in the US is now a part of the re-entry experience; has altered the identity IE: "[My experience in the U.S.] is a part of me now.... I discovered what opportunity means in America. ... I had a chance to give a Ted X talk. ... I received two awards" (Salma, p. 9, lines 14-15, 17, 19). |
| 2 | Feeling acknowledged by others for being a Fulbrighter | | IE: "I think I'm more confident. There is, on a professional level, saying that I receive (sic) or I was |

| | | | |
|---|--|----|---|
| | | | awarded the Fulbright [grant]" (Nariman, p. 9, lines 26-27). |
| 2 | Seeing home country environment through a comparative lens | 27 | <p>Speaking out (as opposed to before)</p> <p>IE: "I'm very critical of it now, compared to before. Before it was just, I wouldn't really care. People making statements. I' don't agree with them, that's fine. It's OK. But now I would engage in an argument with someone just giving [shallow] assumptions" (Nariman, p. 13, lines 23-27).</p> |
| | | 30 | <p>A tendency to remember the United States in a very positive light and see the home country more negatively</p> <p>IE: "I was a little dissatisfied with the country before the Fulbright experience but it got worse when I went to the United States. Why? Because ...I saw how people, you know, would hold the door for other people, or how they'd smile at other people, or how they'd say hi, how they are organized. ... When I came back, there was this reverse culture shock, which I'm still suffering. I get angry sometimes when I see some third world behaviors, like littering spitting with a disgusting sound and other things that should have been over a thousand years ago" (Laith p. 2, lines 28-31; p. 3, lines 1-2, 5-7).</p> |
| | | 29 | <p>Feeling once again a part of the majority culture as opposed to a representative of another culture.</p> <p>IE: "It was such a relief [to be home] to be honest, because then I'm not being categorized all the time, Not being labeled. most of the time. ... I would always make sure what kind of things I'm giving on Islam in the States versus the kinds of statements and opinions I would give here [in Egypt] about Islam. Because like there I know that I'm representing someone, whether I like it or not, but here I'm not representing anyone. I'm just representing my opinion." (Nariman, p. 20, lines 14-15, 18-23)</p> |
| | | 18 | <p>Seeing the home culture as too judgmental; Perceived lack of judgment by Americans toward them</p> <p>IE: Sometimes when I walk down the street and I feel like I want to dance and ... [in the United States] people won't judge me or say, oh, she's crazy. They</p> |

would probably laugh. ... or maybe just ignore me. But here if you do it they will look at you first or all. They will judge you ... to say, you are crazy or respect your headscarf. You're wearing a head scarf. You shouldn't do that. Even once I was wearing lipstick. I love wearing lipstick. ... But I was in a taxi and the taxi driver was saying, 'You're wearing a head scarf. How come you are wearing lipstick?' ... I was really speechless" (Asma p. 19-28).

3 Questioning the home country environment with a heightened critical sense

32 Observing critically the habits and behaviors around them and being bothered by them even though these had always existed (e.g. by a lack of queueing, blocking pedestrian ways, touching, catcalling, bribery)

IE: "People don't queue in supermarkets [in Tunisia]. They don't queue anywhere. So, I always find myself getting into conflicts with people, try[ing] to point out to them what you're (sic) doing is so respectful" (Salma, p.13, lines 28-30). See also: (Mahdi, p. 6, lines 2-9) (Nariman, p. 3, lines 27-30) (Maryam, p. 10, lines 3-6; p. 33, lines 13-16) (Nariman, p. 9, lines 31-38) (Farhan, p. 22, lines 10-18).

33 Strong emotions and feelings are a daily part of re-entry adjustment

IE: "I feel irritated, angry, frustrated. I use bad words. I shout" (Misbah, p. 4, lines 9-10). (Referring to system at work of reward based on patronage and connections, not merit.) See also: (Laith, p. 3, lines 4-5,8-9) (Asma, p. 8, lines 30-P34)

3 Recognizing cultural schizophrenia – the tension between tradition and modernity.

IE: "We are culturally schizophrenic and ...our social behavior oscillates back and forth between modernity and tradition. ...So as a, as a male brother, or like a cousin, or a son [a male Moroccan] would approach dating like a, as a, like a (sic) *haram*. Ahm, but when it comes like to the same person talking to a friend, he switches totally to the other, like a, end of the spectrum, which is being modern, in a sense like: I got to hang out with this girl and like a (sic) this, this and that" (Mahdi, p. 2, lines 24-30). See also: (Asma, p. 29, lines 22-26).

(Note: haram (حرام) means religiously proscribed, forbidden, shameful)

- 26 Disappointment and some regret at having returned home
IE: “[Returning] was the worst reversal shock I had. Life for two to three months I used to remain angry and I used to, what do you say, ummm, I used to abuse government and the situation which is prevailing in Pakistan.” (Maryam, p.11, lines 20-23)
- 4 Adopting a re-entry style (actions) (active resister, discreet/detached resister, integrated, assimilated)
- 1,6 Active resister: Moving out of my parents’ home rather than trying to explain to them my need for personal space.
IE: “There was nothing new to how [my parents] interfered with my life. They really didn’t understand um, how I was living and how things [had] changed conceptually, and um, so, yeah, it was much harder to try to explain to them, trying to defend my own space ... [than] actually moving out” (Nariman, p. 5, lines 20-23). See also: (Farhan p. 27, lines 7-12).
- 34 Integrated: Disagreeing but knowing when to voice an opinion
IE: “I became more self-conscious of what opinions I can or cannot voice and where I can or cannot say them” (Soliman, p. 9, line 30).
- 21 Feeling as if one has outgrown one’s home
IE: “I feel as if I am too free to be able to live with an Arabic traditional family.” Salma, p. 6, lines 24-25).
- 35 Detached: Mind-body separation
IE: “I always have that sense of not belonging to my surroundings.... America is a good country, ... but Tunisia is a country as well., but it’s all about probably the mentality. That’s why I feel that [the United States] is my home more than here” (Asma, p. 10, line 17; p. 11, lines 8-9).
- 36 Detached: Hiding from questions
IE: “I deceived myself with an illusion of success and dragged it into a vicious circle of hide and seek.
-

I was seeking success but I couldn't (sic) neither maintain nor protect that success, and at the same time [I was] hiding from questions and doubts of why coming (sic) back (till now people ask me why did you choose to come back and not find another opportunity, and I have to hide from all these not questions but rather accusations" (Asma p. 7, lines 16-P28).

- 6 Detached: Passive resister
IE: "I have to cope with whatever situation I encounter, which does not mean accepting it but going with the flow. However, I always have that sense of not belonging as we don't have the same vision" (Asma, p. 10, lines 17-P36).
- 37 Assimilator:
IE: "I have to admit the realities of my province, my country, and my people. So like, I had a mindset, whatever I learn I have to adjust according to the realities of the national [norms]" (Farhan p. 9, lines 15-18).
- 38 Objective culture is easy to reembrace. Subjective culture is more difficult.
IE: "I come (sic) back to Pakistan and I was not shocked by the dresses (sic) of the people here ...-shalwar khamiz or hijab. ...I was shocked by (sic) the people behave and how they act" (Farhan p. 32, lines 28-31).
- 1,37 Operating between cultures and with two hats
Free spirit
IE: "People see me as more laid back, more chill, ah, someone, yeah, they keep telling me that my place, like this, in this expression: Your place is not here in Morocco, like you deserve a European or an American country. It's many things that make me different from people and it's positive" (Laith, p. 5, lines 10-14).
- 1,6 Active resister:
IE: "If I defend a group (which I do) for example people who identify as gay, I would be berated by some people. If I act in a nonjudgmental way towards scarf-wearing women who smoke or who

even drink [alcohol], people would think that I am faking it or that I am phony and [that I am] saying things just to sound different. So, I am resistance (sic) a strong stream. But I don't put [my] hands down. I defend myself and which my knowledge and authority coming from many fields of knowledge that I can cite, I usually come to shut people down. And again, I have to make them resist my revolutionary ideas. They are not revolutionary actually because they are what should be the case but to them the ideas are complete heresy. So, to them I speak heresy" (Laith, p. 4, lines 25-P4)

- 37 Integrated:
 IE: "You know Americans are characterized by being straightforward. If they are busy, they say they are busy. Here [in Morocco] you cannot say I'm busy. You have to explain what you are doing. Ah, so I learned that from Americans.: I'm busy, but I also can explain what I am doing and If I say I'm going to get back to someone, then I'm, I will. It's something that has to do with promises., which is not a Moroccan thing. ...Like people when they say inshallah, for example. it's not a promise. It doesn't mean that things will happen and you may [have seen this]. So, I think they have noted this thing in me. They have recognized it. They have said, like, I keep my promises." (Laith, p. 7, lines 5-13).

Note. IE = Illustrative example

Table 3.7 is an example of an across-transcript analysis for one theme in the style of Larkin and Thompson (2012).

Table 3.7

Across-transcripts Analysis for One theme and Sub-themes

| <u>Superordinate Theme</u> | <u>Participants contributing to this theme</u> | <u>Subthemes</u> | <u>Participants contributing to this sub-theme</u> | <u>Key cross references</u> | <u>Indicative quotes</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| Home culture, both objective and subjective culture in Berger & Luckmann's (1966) definitions, is compared to that of the United States | All participants | A tendency to remember the United States in a positive light and view the home country more negatively in comparison | All except Nariman | Farhan (p.16, lines 22-23) Misbah (p. 4, lines 4-5; p. 4, lines 11-12) Salma (p. 13, lines 27-30) Asma (p. 12, lines 24-30; p. 13, lines 1-8, 10-14, 19-22) Soliman (p. 9, lines 28-30) Laith (p.2 lines 28-31; p. 3, lines 1-2, 5-7) Mahdi (p. 6, lines 2-9) Maryam (p. 12, lines 13-18) | “You don’t have to give bribes [in the United States} so why should we do [this in Pakistan]?” (Farhan) “People [at workplace in India] are not coming to the office on time and it is fine with everyone. When I went to the US, [my previous belief in the value of hard work] was reinforced by the work culture I was exposed to there.” (Misbah) “In America, I can walk free in the streets with no one looking at me or harassing me or catcalling me. ... In Tunisia, in the first months [after returning] I wouldn’t even go out to buy a sandwich.” (Salma) | Nariman seems to have a love-hate relationship with the United States. While she enjoyed her relative freedom in the United States she also complained of being labeled and defined because of assumptions based on that fact that she an Egyptian female. Once back in the home country, she felt equally frustrated by the normative expectations of family and former friends. |

Goodness Criteria Followed

Identifying a definitive set of goodness criteria for evaluating qualitative research has been a matter of discussion for the past twenty years. Because a phenomenological study involves interpretation and therefore subjectivity, it was best, I believe, to use criteria that were grounded in the tradition of the phenomenological approach. Elliott, R., Fischer, C. T., and Rennie, D.L. (as cited in Willig, 2008) provided a useful set of criteria, as did Yardley (as cited in Smith et al., 2009), and Henwood and Pidgeon (as cited in Willig, 2008). There was healthy overlap among all three, and I borrowed from all to create a set that I believe acknowledged rigor, and, at the same time, reflected the epistemological position of IPA. My criteria also allowed me to evaluate how well I, as researcher, was able to provide a text that brings to life a rich, textured description of the phenomenon under study and to illuminate how my own perceptions and ways of knowing shaped the interpretations in the study.

Owning One's Perspective (Elliott et al., as cited in Willig, 2008).

This criterion relates to reflexivity and can be addressed through the phenomenological process of epoché, or bracketing of my assumptions, which I addressed in this chapter. I also keep a reflexive journal during the interview and analysis stages and noted thoughts that related to how my ways of knowing that precede the study may have unintentionally inserted themselves and colored my interpretations of descriptions.

Situating the Sample (Elliott et al., as cited in Willig, 2008)

Because I have stakeholders interested in the transferability of my findings beyond the limited number of participants in my study, I collected participant descriptives prior to the interviews. These descriptives served to describe the participants to the readers in sufficient detail to distinguish them from FLTAs from other parts of the world. I also highlighted more

details of the participant's personal circumstances as they arose from the interview texts. In retrospect, there were four main characteristics that all participants shared: their home countries were in a less advanced state of development than the United States, their obligations to their families were greater and could not be ignored, their societies appear more normative with regard to how genders should behave, and relations with strangers were governed by more conservative norms.

Grounding in Examples (Elliott et al., as cited in Willig, 2008)

I made explicit my process for labeling and categorizing so that my readers are hopefully convinced that the categories of analysis that I have chosen are a good fit for the data.

Credibility Checks (Yardley, as cited in Smith et al., 2009)

I first asked my participants to read my analysis and confirm or question my interpretations. I then added follow up questions that focused specifically on emotions and feelings associated with actions. I then shared my superordinate themes with other alumni who would have qualified for the study. The discovered superordinate themes were sent to approximately 125 other alumni who were in the same country and year cohorts as the nine selected for the study. Sixteen alumni responded, one of whom no longer lives in his home country.

The alumni responses revealed 100% concurrence with the first, second, and fourth superordinate themes. There was major concurrence (13 of 16 alumni with the third subordinate theme). However, for three alumni the comparison between the home country and the United States did not favor the United States. On the contrary, the home country was compared more favorably. This difference in favorability ratings may somewhat depend on the quality of the experience in the United States because two of the three who did not match the ratings of the

participants in the study mentioned having experienced challenges while living in the United States. This supports the literature with regard to host country experience as a situational variable in re-entry adjustment.

I also asked the transcriber in the role of “peer” to affirm or contest my choice of themes and interpretations of the data. My transcriber in general agreed with my interpretations. However, she also believed that I should have acknowledged in my assumptions that I had not only experienced a sense of loss from being separated from close friends overseas but also diminished economic privilege from the loss of professional and personal support staff to handle many chores and errands while overseas, resulting in less free time for me once I was back in the United States.

Finally, I compared my findings with the literature. In Chapter 5, I give detailed description of the relationship of my findings to the literature.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Brief Recap of Rationale

The goal of this study was to better understand the lived experience of home country re-entry adjustment of Fulbright FLTA alumni from North Africa and South Asia. Most re-entry adjustment research has focused on sojourners from the Global North returning to their home countries; fewer studies focus on sojourners returning to the Global South, which would include North Africa and South Asia. Much of the research on re-entry adjustment has taken an *etic* as opposed to an *emic* approach, and many studies do not question the equivalence of data across cultures. Few studies have assumed from the outset that experience is highly contextualized, transferable, perhaps, to similar situations or individuals, but not generalizable across cultures. This study focused only on returnees to an arguably homogenous population in terms of cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (2001) and referred to in Table 1.1.

Making sense of and reflecting on feelings toward re-entry adjustment is, I believe, both cathartic and empowering for the participants. Allowing participants within the context of their lived experiences to express their viewpoints, reflect on their feelings toward re-entry, and describe their strategies for continuing with their lives is important to understand meaning-making in the context of re-entry adjustment. Many of my interviewees thanked me at the end of what seemed like an exhausting interview. As they sat in open-windowed rooms in torrid pre-monsoon India or the hot Egyptian summer and conversed with me via audio and video over the Internet, I found that some of the participants became more energized as the interviews progressed.

The research was guided by the following research questions:

- Q1: What is the lived experience of re-entry adjustment of Fulbright FLTA alumni from North Africa and South Asia?
- Q2: What are the emotions and responses to these emotions that are associated with re-entry adjustment?

The Participants

The participants in this study came from North Africa or South Asia and had taught and studied for one year in the United States under the auspices of a Fulbright grant. At the time of their interviews, they had been back in their home countries for a period of one to three years. Some of them had returned to their previous teaching positions, others had changed careers, and others were at the time full-time students. All of them had made the decision to remain in their home countries for at least the short-term future.

Farhan (Pakistan)

At the time of the interview Farhan was 30 years old and married with two children. He identified as Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2015-16, he studied and taught at an elite private university in the northeastern United States. Upon his return to Pakistan, he resumed teaching at a secondary school, but a different branch from the one where he taught prior to his leave of absence to pursue a Fulbright grant. His described main challenge at work as having to instill an intrinsic motivation in his students, whom he said do not care much about learning. He cited unemployment and lack of openings as problems for his community, and favoritism and patronage in hiring as harmful to the interests of the country. At the time of the interview, Farhan was the sole breadwinner in his family. He indicated that he planned to pursue a master's degree abroad after completing his two-year residency requirement

in Pakistan but could only do this if he finds a scholarship. His description of re-entry adjustment revealed a strong sense of obligation to help his students further themselves in life.

Misbah (India)

At the time of the interview Misbah was 28 years old and single. He identified as Muslim. Of the nine participants, he was the only member of a religious minority, the majority religion in India being Hinduism. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2015-16 he studied and taught at a competitive public university on the West Coast of the United States. Upon his return to his home town in Northern India, he enrolled in a PhD program at his local university but had not yet found employment. He indicated in his interview that most of his challenges since his return had revolved around interpersonal relations with colleagues at the university. He stated that he lived with his parents and was not financially responsible for supporting other members of his family. In his pre-interview questionnaire, Misbah indicated that he found re-entry adjustment intensely challenging. His descriptions of being back home supported this.

Maryam (Pakistan)

At the time of the interview, Maryam was 27 years old and single. She identified as Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2015-16, she studied and taught at an elite public university on the West Coast of the United States. Maryam had completed an MA prior to obtaining a Fulbright and was employed previously as a teacher. Upon returning to Pakistan, she chose a different path, and became a small business owner and student adviser. As is customary for single women in her culture, Maryam was living with her parents and siblings at the time of the interview. She indicated that she had the major responsibility for

her family's support and considered herself the primary breadwinner in the family. Maryam stated that the first two to three months after her return to Pakistan were extremely challenging.

Salma (Tunisia)

At the time of the interview, Salma was 27 years old and single. She was born into a Muslim family but stated that she did not have a strong religious identity. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2015-16, she studied and taught at a public university in the southeastern region of the United States. Salma had completed an MA in humanities prior to obtaining a Fulbright, but upon her return to Tunisia, she became involved in an NGO focusing on women's empowerment. In a highly non-traditional move for unmarried women in her culture, she chose to move out of her family's home and live independently. At the time of the interview, she stated that she was financially responsible for herself. Salma had traveled twice for extended periods to Europe before going to the United States, which distinguished her from the other participants.

Mahdi (Morocco)

At the time of the interview, Mahdi was 30 years old and single. He identified as Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2013-14, he studied and taught at a public university on the West Coast of the United States. Mahdi had completed an MA prior to obtaining a Fulbright and was employed as a teacher. Upon his return to Morocco, Mahdi found different employment. At the time of the interview Mahdi lived with his parents but was also renting his own an apartment without his family's knowledge. He has completed his post-Fulbright, two-year home residency requirement.

Laith (Morocco)

At the time of the interview, Laith was 29 years old and single, but engaged to marry a non-Arab from a European country. He identified as Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2014-15, he studied and taught at a public, land-grant university in the western region of the United States. Upon his return to Morocco, he enrolled in a PhD program at a local university. At the same time, Laith returned to work for his former employer, but in a different location. At the time of the interview, Laith was living with his parents but was not financially supporting them. He has completed his post-Fulbright, two-year home residency requirement.

Soliman (Egypt)

At the time of the interview, Soliman was 34 years old and single. He identified as Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2014-15, he studied and taught at a public university in the east south-central region of the United States. Although he has not completed any graduate studies, he managed to find employment at a local private university teaching English upon his return from the United States. He indicated in the interview that a significant factor in his decision making had been the care of his ailing father, whom he had assumed responsibility for. Soliman has completed his post-Fulbright, two-year home residency requirement.

Nariman (Egypt)

At the time of the interview, Nariman was 27 years old and single. She did not identify with any religion although she was raised Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2013-14, she studied and taught at public university in the Midwestern region of the United States. Upon her return to Egypt, she changed careers and began advocacy work in

the area of women's rights. At the time of the interview Nariman was living alone, out of choice. She considered herself estranged from her family and was not contributing to their finances. As was the case with Salma from Tunisia, Nariman's choice to live outside her parents' home as a single woman is highly unusual and not culturally accepted. Nariman has completed her post-Fulbright, two-year home residency requirement.

Asma (Tunisia)

At the time of the interview, Asma was 30 years old and single. She identified as Muslim. As a Fulbright FLTA grant recipient for the academic year 2013-14, she studied and taught at a public university in the south-east region of the United States. Asma had completed an MA and was planning to pursue a PhD but as of the time of the interview had not been accepted into any doctoral programs. Asma stated that she worked in the capital but lived with her parents and sisters outside the city. She had financial responsibility for her parents and partial care of siblings. Asma has completed her post-Fulbright, two-year home residency requirement.

Findings

My interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data produced four themes that capture the essence of re-entry adjustment and reflect the affective, behavioral and cognitive processes that are part of this lived experience: *Increased self-efficacy and sense of empowerment* reflects the ways the participants described themselves as now being able to speak and act with confidence and conviction in the face of resistance and criticism from more traditional-minded members of the community. *Seeing the home country environment through a comparative lens* reflects the ways the participants described themselves comparing, in mostly unfavorable terms, occurrences in the home country with the same in the United States. *Questioning the home country environment with a heightened critical sense* reflects the ways the

participants described themselves noticing behavior, attitudes, and occurrences that they had thought of in the past as natural or inevitable, but now see as needing to change. *Adopting a re-entry style reflects* the participants approach to re-entry adjustment, and includes both active and passive reactions, with some resisting integration and others embracing it.

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of re-entry adjustment of Fulbright FLTA alumni from North Africa and South Asia?

Superordinate Theme One: Increased Self-confidence and Sense of Empowerment.

Many of the participants described a sense of confidence or empowerment at home that they did not have before traveling to the United States. Some participants described their newly found confidence as a response to feeling as if they were being treated with greater respect by others because they had been Fulbrighters. Others felt that while they were in the United States and far away from their families, they had had greater independence with decision making, and had grown accustomed to this freedom. Upon return to the home country, they described a desire to continue making their own decisions but recognized that this also required some financial independence.

Asma from Tunisia described her sense of greater independence having found employment in the home country:

When I started to work after [being back home] four months, I felt like I'm more independent financially and, um, and it (sic) all interrelated; when independence (sic) financially you can be more independent as a person. You have, you know, [a] stronger personality because I [have become] dependent on myself, not dependent on anybody else. You know, like years ago, I depended on my dad ... [when I was] trying to buy something. ... Now I don't have to ask anybody. (Asma, p. 19, lines 8-15)

Salma from Tunisia described her decision to hold onto independence gained in the United States:

I used to live with my family before going to the U.S. and when I came back I decided not to move in with them, and I just felt I am too free [now] to be able to live with an Arabic traditional family. (Salma, p. 6, lines 22-25)

Nariman from Egypt echoed Salma's sentiment when she described why she moved out of her family's home after she returned to Egypt.

[Moving out] positioned me in a place where I don't have to explain myself ... because I'm already having this authority within that very limited space to make serious decisions about my life. So, the fact that I'm not married somehow, at 27, other family members would be a little worried, talking about marriage all the time. ... [Living on my own] I don't have to explain to them why I don't want to get married. (Nariman, p. 6, lines 21-26)

Some also described their experience in the United States as having instilled in them the confidence to voice criticism of aspects of the home country. Farhan from Pakistan described being criticized for appearing critical of certain behaviors back home, but not being cowered into silence:

If they are criticizing me ...or making me realize this is Pakistan [by saying] 'Don't be different; you have to follow what's going on in our country' it doesn't mean that I have to be like them. Although [they] will reject me from the community, but (sic) I have to be what I have learned. ... I cannot accept their demands that I have to be Pakistani. (Farhan, p. 27, lines 7-17)

Maryam, also from Pakistan described how she now reacted to friends judging her behavior:

I used to wear [the] dupatta (*piece of fabric that is worn over garments, like a shawl*) but when I came back, I don't wear that and my friend used to say, What are you doing? Why are you not covering your head? And I said, Don't be judgmental. If you are judging me over covering my head, this is very bad. And they were like, No, you have to cover your head. But I don't do that. Someone if, if I feel [like covering] I do, but if I don't feel like covering my head, I don't do that. (Maryam, p. 23, lines 20-26)

For Soliman from Egypt, it is a confidence to speak out about things that matter in spite of criticism that he is violating social norms: "They should really let [same-sex couples] get married. ... They chose each other and what's wrong with that.?" (Soliman, p. 9, lines 8-9).

Soliman added that he believed that if his friends traveled to the United States and interacted with difference they would come around to his new way of thinking. But at the same time, Soliman described having become “more self-conscious about what opinions I can or can’t voice and where I can or can’t say them,” which demonstrates his intercultural competence and is arguably part of his integrative re-entry style, a topic related to another theme below.

Maryam described her own emotional growth in confident terms:

If I see people [before going to the United States], I used to like, if I see people, like they are not good. ... If I see people, I used to be judgmental before going [to the] US. I used to judge people by their appearance. ... But when I came back I totally changed my mind and tried to read their minds, rather than judging by their appearances. (Maryam, p. 10, lines 15-18)

New feelings of empowerment were described by several participants. Maryam described feeling that she could make a difference with the lives of other Pakistani girls at least locally, if not nationally:

At that time [before Fulbright] I wasn’t in favor. If people were sending [or not sending] their girls [to be educated], OK fine. But when I came back [from the United States] I saw it as my responsibility that if they are not doing this, I should motivate them, or I should assist them in a way that they should start sending their daughters. (Maryam p. 23, lines 10-13)

Asma described the feeling of coming back and wanting to make a difference. She published a book chapter in 2017 on vulnerability of the education system in her country: “There is an outrageous feeling that controls {me} when I think of these children and their struggle to get to schools. Some children don’t give up but most do” (Asma 6, comment [P26]). For Salma, feelings of self-efficacy upon re-entry were attributed to the United States’ experience: “[My experience in the U.S.] is a part of me now.... I discovered what opportunity means in America. ... I had a chance to give a Ted X talk. ... I received two awards” (Salma, p. 9, lines 14-19).

Nariman and Salma both felt empowered to reject their fathers' controlling personalities, and that meant moving out of their family homes. Said Salma,

"I could never abide by the norms of this culture anymore...." (Salma 9/32). "I moved out from my family's house. ...I felt that I am too free to be able to live with an Arabic traditional family" (Salma, p. 6, lines 22-25). "Travel definitely helped me a lot. ...I realized I could be a whole different person than the old [Salma]" (Salma, p. 21, lines 32-35 and comment [GM21]).

Mahdi from Morocco also described a newly found courage to speak out. "It is something I have always had that I couldn't talk about...but now I have the courage to talk about it." (Mahdi, p. 7, lines 11-12). Mahdi went on to relate this stronger conviction to having observed behavior in the United States. Once on a train in Morocco, the ticket collector would not accept Mahdi's credit card as payment for a ticket. "The cop came and was disrespectful to me, so I pulled out my phone and I made a video of him being disrespectful.... I think if I had not lived in the States I would not have done that." (Mahdi, p. 20, lines 9-10 and 22-23). He described another incident in which someone living in his apartment building stopped someone coming to visit Mahdi and asked her whom she was visiting. Mahdi confronted him and told him that it was none of his business: In retrospect, he added, "I wouldn't have had (sic) said the same thing before visiting the States, at least not as clearly as I am doing now" (Mahdi, p. 6, lines 8-9).

In summarizing the findings related to the first theme, the main objects of concern were personal freedom, continued independence to make one's own decisions, the acknowledgement from peers of the participant's international experience, and the desire to help others. The main experiential claim was that these objects of concern would help the participants attain personal goals.

Superordinate Theme Two: Seeing Home Country Environment Through a

Comparative Lens. There is a recurring pattern of comparison of the home country with the United States throughout the discussions with all the participants, without exception. Farhan from Pakistan compared his experience with students' attitudes both in the home country and in the United States. Farhan described his current students as follows:

They're not energetic to learn something. ...Most of my students are coming to attend my classes just because of the force of their parents. ...They say, if I learn English, what benefit will it give to me in my ...professional world? (Farhan, p. 4, lines 9-16)

Farhan also described his experience with his workplace in comparative terms:

We lack technology and we lack comfortable furniture, and lots of things: micro media, projector [sic], and other English class laboratories...so whenever I teach... I miss [the lab at my university in the States]. ...I miss (sic) in terms of technology and advancement of (sic) U.S. (Farhan, p. 6, lines 19-30)

I interpret Farhan's object of concern as self-improvement and continued growth, which has been inspired through this comparative lens. In his words,

I have a thirst to improve myself because I have seen the world from a different angle because of the opportunity of [Fulbright]. I have seen people who work hard, who do not stop, who they [sic] do professional goals, who do not just work for [a salary]. They work to improve their skills.... In my current position...I have no accountability, but still have a thirst to improve. (Farhan, p. 10, lines 20-28)

Farhan negatively compared the system of "business as usual" that he says characterizes his home country with a system in the United States that he describes as more transparent. He recounted having to wait six to seven months after returning to his home country to receive his placement in a public school as a teacher. He attributed the long wait to his refusal to pay a bribe and compared this to his experience in the United States. "You don't have to give bribes [in the United States} so why should we do [this in Pakistan]?" (Farhan, p. 16, lines 22-23).

Misbah from India compared his home country and the United States in terms of one of Hofstede's (2001) dimensions: power distance: "I could never talk to my [PhD advisor] the way I am talking to you ... He has that sort of dominant personality ... Here in India this power game,

this hierarchy is very strong.” (Misbah, p. 3, lines 3-4 and 16). Like Farhan, Misbah also complained about a lack of accountability in the workplace:

People are not coming to the office on time and it is fine with everyone. When I went to the US, [my previous belief in the value of hard work] was reinforced by the work culture I was exposed to there. (Farhan, p. 4, lines 4-5 and 12-13)

Laith from Morocco described behaviors he had observed in the United States and compared them with their equivalents in Morocco, displaying what La Brack (2006) referred to as *item irritation*, or focusing on familiar and recurring behaviors that serve as irritating reminders of the state of things to which a sojourner has returned:

I was a little dissatisfied with the [home] country before the Fulbright experience but it got worse when I went to the United States. Why? Because ...I saw how people, you know, would hold the door for other people, or how they'd smile at other people, or how they'd say hi, how they are organized. ... When I came back, there was this reverse culture shock, which I'm still suffering. I get angry sometimes when I see some third world behaviors, like littering spitting with a disgusting sound and other things that should have been over a thousand years ago. (Laith, p. 2, lines 28-31 and p. 3, lines 1-7)

Misbah stated that he believed that comparisons have made his life worse. When describing his sense of irritation with the way his taxi driver drove him home from the airport when he arrived in India, he said,

We were five people in the car but I was the one who was comparing. I was the one who was upset. It was worse for me than the others The way people drive in India, it's crazy. It doesn't matter whether you have a divider or not. If they feel like driving on the wrong side, they will...and no one is there to caution them If it would [sic] happen in America, the person who was driving in front of us would be in jail. (Misbah, p. 16 lines 17-20 and 35-36)

Maryam also commented on comparing her experience of the roads leading from the airport in her home country to what she had left behind in the United States: She described arriving home: “I didn't like the transport[ation] and the roads and everything was like there was rush on the road, ... and I told myself that this is my mistake that I had c[o]me back” (Maryam, p. 7, lines 26-28).

Nariman compared the two country experiences as well but using a different strategy. For her the comparisons point to similarities. The conservative Christian family she lived with in the United States reminded her of home.

It was quite patriarchal in my opinion, ... like how the father is sitting at the head of the table ...and you have to wait for him. He's leading the prayer before eating. And that was all for me just, quite the same. Like the father's role, that there's a curfew for girls.... Living in [name of U.S. city] was quite similar to my life in Cairo. (Nariman, p. 7, lines 23-27 and 34)

Soliman from Egypt also compared experiences but on a more superficial level:

I was a little bit ...surprised that I have to carry a lot of cash on me going around [in Egypt]. ... By the end of the year that I spent in the U.S. I was using my credit card, or my debit card almost everywhere. (Soliman, p. 12, lines 4-6)

I interpret Soliman's objects of concern as efficiency and convenience. He recognizes the advantages of cashless transactions and does not want to lose the experience of being comfortable with this lifestyle. His experiential claim is an association of technology and credit with development. I interpret his surprise at having to use cash in Egypt as his sense that Egypt is less developed than the West.

Mahdi from Morocco, upon returning home, identified one of his primary objects of concern as a need for personal space. He noticed upon coming home the lack of concern with privacy in his home environment.

[One of my neighbors] stopped [a female guest coming to visit me] and asked her, Where are you going? And then she responded, That's none of your business, which is pretty much what I said later. ... I wouldn't have said the same thing before visiting the States. ... In the States ... everyone is focused on his own space. (Mahdi, p. 6, lines 2-4, 8, and 11-12).

I interpret the experiential claim as a shift by Laith toward more individualist concerns that would be at odds with the dominant cultural norm, which does not see the affairs of others as private. This may be a temporary concern because while Laith may want others to be less

interested in his personal affairs, there is no cause for me to believe that he would show this same respect to his spouse or children.

Laith described an awareness with cultural differences in paralinguistic communication:

[In Morocco], you don't maintain the (sic) eye contact with people.... The fact that I [now] smile at people, that I look people in the eyes when I talk to them, ... I got that from the United States. (Laith, p. 6, lines 4-5, and 8)

Salma also identified her object of concern as personal space. But for Salma, the concern is about what she sees as violation of space based on gender. In other words, she feels harassed in public now that she is back in Tunisia.

In America, I can walk free in the streets with no one looking at me or harassing me or catcalling me. ... In Tunisia, in the first months [after returning] I wouldn't even go out to buy a sandwich. (Salma, p. 10, lines 1-3)

In contrast to the others, Nariman described an element of the re-entry experience in positive terms, possibly as a result of feeling once again a part of the majority culture as opposed to a representative of another culture:

It was such a relief [to be home] to be honest, because then I'm not being categorized all the time, not being labeled. Most of the time. ... I would always make sure what kind of things I'm giving on Islam in the States versus the kinds of statements and opinions I would give here [in Egypt] about Islam. Because like there I know that I'm representing someone, whether I like it or not, but here I'm not representing anyone. I'm just representing my opinion. (Nariman, p. 20, lines 14-15 and 18-22)

In this quote, Nariman's expressed objects of concern were identity and representation of identity. She returned to these concerns many times in the interview. The objects of concern, Western images of Egypt, Egyptian and Muslim women, and Islam in the United States, were part of the struggle of re-entry adjustment to not being a spokesperson for these issues now that she was back home. I interpret the experiential claim for Nariman to be the challenge of wearing two hats: one for dealing with the home culture and one for dealing with foreign cultures, and how this forces her to deal with questions of identity.

Others mentioned that they found the home culture more judgmental than the United States. Under another theme, I had reported Maryam's description of the judgmental reaction of a friend to Maryam's not wishing to wear the dupatta, a traditional piece of clothing in Pakistan. Asma also described a sense of feeling restrained by her home culture even though Hofstede (1981) described restraint as a common cultural dimension in the Middle Eastern cultures that he and his team studied. Asma described a sense of despair at her home culture's habit of overtly judging her behavior and her resulting inability to outwardly express her inner emotions in certain situations:

Sometimes when I walk down the street and I feel like I want to dance and ... [in the United States] people won't judge me or say, oh, she's crazy. They would probably laugh. ... or maybe just ignore me. But here if you do it they will look at you first or all. They will judge you ... to say, you are crazy or respect your headscarf. You're wearing a head scarf. You shouldn't do that. Even once I was wearing lipstick. I love wearing lipstick. ... But I was in a taxi and the taxi driver was saying, 'You're wearing a head scarf. How come you are wearing lipstick?' ... I was really speechless. (Asma, p. 28, lines 19-28)

Asma's sense of frustration at judgment of others as a cultural norm (Hofstede, 1981) would classify her as idiocentric (Triandis, 1994), an individual expressing individualist tendencies in a collectivist culture. One of my assumptions prior to analyzing the findings of my study was that an idiocentric individual in a collectivist culture might be pushed to travel abroad due to unmanageable feelings of pressure to conform to the home culture. Asma's decision to remain at home would suggest that other internal pull factors are at work.

In summarizing the findings related to the second theme, the main objects of concern were recreating the experience that the participants had left behind in the United States and finding opportunities to leverage knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained abroad. There was also a concern with not losing the international experience. The main experiential claim was that these objects of concern would help the participant and the home country progress.

Superordinate Theme Three: Heightened Critical Sense. Many participants described situations in which they felt more acutely attuned to what was happening around them, as if it had not bothered or bemused them before. They noticed the change and the connection to having been abroad. Nariman described being annoyed at observing familiar normative gender roles at home in Egypt.

I was really being annoyed that my Mom was washing the dish (sic) that I used.... I remember making [a] few comments on (sic) my brothers not cleaning [up] after themselves to my Mom. ... I felt it was, I'm, I'm, I started paying attention, maybe to the little details that were fine before. (Nariman, p. 3, lines 13-14, comment [L3], and 28-29)

Soliman recognized the phenomenon of credentialism in Egypt and, in retrospect, wished that his Fulbright program had offered a certificate of completion at the end:

Job prospects in Egypt very much depend on what you can prove. People ... say ... You spent a whole year in the U.S., ... teaching Arabic in one of the American universities, but then they ask you, 'Do you have anything to show for that?' ... Because not everybody is going to take your word for it. (Soliman, p. 22, line 28 and p. 23, lines 21-24)

Mahdi from Morocco noticed a difference in driving styles that he attributed to cultural space:

When I went to the States, I saw that the very extension of the notion of privacy is space. ... The way people drive is more like, I will do as much as I can so I wouldn't ... trespass [on] anybody's space. ... Here [in Morocco] it's more like...a communal society, so ... it's fine if I trespass [through] somebody's space. It's just gonna be, "Ok, I'm sorry, and then shake your head like a wave in the air, and ...that's it. ...It's something that I wasn't aware of [before]." (Mahdi, p. 8, lines 5-11)

Laith from Morocco described a feeling of resistance:

I'm resisting now. It seems that I'm resisting a lot of things. [Before] I was, I was content. I was kind of comfortable. I'm not comfortable anymore. ... If... I want to walk five minutes to the bank, ... I ... see at least 4, 3 or 4 things that I don't like, ...which was not the case before. ... It seems I'm going against a stream of negative thoughts, of negative people. ... The stream got stronger. (Laith, p. 10, lines 6-9, and 12-14)

Asma described her hometown more critically than before: "[It's] worse in terms of the infrastructure; worse in terms of ... behavior. ... People ... do not really understand each others

(sic). They do not work together” (Asma, p. 22, lines 27-30). When I asked her if the problem existed before she went to the United States, she replied, “It was, but it was not that obvious. ... It was not that vivid” (Asma, p. 22, line 34 and p. 23, line 1).

Salma, who had traveled before going to the United States, felt that,

new observations ... come up with every travel (sic), so [returning from the United States] was more concentrated on personal space, on mutual respect, especially public spaces because yeah, something, people don’t queue in supermarkets here. They don’t queue anywhere. (Salma, p. 13, lines 26-29)

Farhan asked the question of why he should have to pay bribes to get a posting to a school. He says in the United States, “You don’t have to give bribes, so why should we do? I’m not giving anyone a bribe because ... this is my legal system. This is my right and this is my legal right, and I’m in the right” (Farhan, p. 16, lines 22-23 and 27-30).

Misbah saw it in the different attitude toward education:

[To my family], education is to make [girls] marriageable. For me education is not a paper with a degree on it. It goes into the mind and heart of the learner. It makes a human being a human being. This was reinforced in the United States (Misbah, p. 6, lines 29-32).

For Maryam, the heightened critical sense resulted in feelings of frustration anger upon her return:

Obviously, we have to be more conscious of the security issues, and the terrorism. The conditions is (sic) really bad and um there was (sic) suicide bombings. So I used to say, what is going on? What the hell is it? Why is it so?” (Maryam, p. 12, lines 15-18 and 23).

To describe her feelings to this conscious awareness of Pakistan’s problem, she added,

“When I came back from [name of U.S. university] then this came in mind. ...It was like a really sad feeling and I felt sorry because I couldn’t do anything” (Maryam, p. 12, line 23 and p. 13, line 1).

Maryam also described having never seen a person beating a girl in the United States: “So I never observed this thing in the US and I said, ... the thing that is going on in my country, ... beating the girl, is really wrong. It shouldn’t be done” (Maryam, p. 33, lines 14-16).

Farhan described now requesting things from his supervisor that he did not previously. “I went to [name of his institution in the United States] and saw these technologies in language classes so I definitely set my mindset (sic) to ask the principal for [a desktop or other computer]. (Farhan 8/18-21). Farhan now believes he was “born to make a difference. ... I have to make a small opportunity to uplift my people to get them their dreams. ... I believe... I have something.” (Farhan, p. 12, lines 26, 29-31 and 33-34). Farhan also described feeling that his sense of what constitutes good management and professionalism were honed in the United States and that he clearly notices their absence now: “After traveling to [the] US ... now I have a very sharp sense. I can like evaluate mismanagement and lack of professionalism are (sic) the most major ... factors in [my] readjustment.” (Farhan, p. 22, lines 12 and 16-18).

Farhan inadvertently distinguished between *objective* and *subjective* culture (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Clothing and food exemplify objective culture when they do not require a non-member of a culture to compromise his/her values in order to accept or adopt these cultural symbols. Subjective culture includes cultural values and habits (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), and requires behavioral and attitudinal shifts on the part of non-members of a culture to accept or adopt them. Farhan mentioned that objective home culture was easy to reembrace while the subjective home culture was more difficult: “I come (sic) back to Pakistan and I was not shocked by the dresses (sic) of the people here ... *shalwar khamiz* or hijab. ...I was shocked by [how] the people behave and how they act.” (Farhan, p. 32, lines 28-31).

Misbah described his feelings in reference to system at work of reward based on patronage and connections, not merit. “I feel irritated, angry, frustrated. I use bad words. I shout.” (Misbah, p. 4, lines 9-10). Similarly, Maryam expressed her disappointment and some regret at having returned home:

[Returning] was the worst reversal shock I had. Like for two to three months I used to remain angry and I used to, what do you say, ummm, I used to abuse government and the situation which is prevailing in Pakistan. (Maryam, p. 11, lines 20-23)

Laith characterized it as both mental and physical: “Mental because I think about it and it makes me feel less content; ... physical because I see things that can make me shake. ... It manifests [itself] in my body too because I become sweaty and shaky” (Laith, p. 3, lines 4-5, and 7-8). Asma used the terms “despair, longings, bitter night prayers and whispers, wishful hopes, eyes watering even while writing this testimonial” (Asma, p. 8, comment [P34]), to describe her response to my follow-up question about her having not recovered from re-entry shock. Convergence among participants seems to come from a common heightened critical sense, which evoked in strong emotions and feelings, which seem to be almost a daily part of participants’ re-entry adjustment. However, there is divergence on the individual level in the type of emotion felt.

In summarizing the findings related to the third theme, the main objects of concern were home country behaviors and habits that were now seen as intrusive, backward, or wrong. The main experiential claim was that these behaviors and habits were a major source of re-entry shock and the participants were not re-adjusting to them.

Superordinate Theme Four: Adopting a Reentry Style. Pusch et al. (1998) described four reentry styles: *free spirit*, *detached*, *assimilator*, and *integrator*. The first style is typified by the returnee who wishes to behave as if he or she were still abroad, in another culture with

different norms. While this might be easier for someone in an individualistic society, it is arguably much more challenging for someone from a society that values harmony and conformity to societal norms. The second style is typified by someone homesick for the experience abroad but who does not wish to make waves in the home culture, and thus is reticent with regard to showing changes in oneself when interacting with others from the home culture. The third style is the “Dorothy of Oz” type who relays the message that there is no place like home and wishes to appear as if s/he had never gone abroad. The fourth style is the most balanced: the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained abroad are used strategically while sensitivity for the home culture is maintained. The fourth style arguably is arguably the most emotionally content,

Each of the participants in my study appeared to adopt a style or approach to handling re-entry adjustment. They each used words and conveyed feelings to express what might loosely fit into one of Pusch’s (2008) four styles of reentry although no participant was entirely one style. All were a mix with one style dominating. I would argue, however, that the styles my participants displayed do not neatly conform to Pusch’s (2008) descriptions. For example, Pusch’s (2008) *free spirit* style assumes a confident individualism, which is not necessarily something that my participants would be comfortable with, having been raised to value conformity. In place of the term *free spirit*, I will use the term *active resister* to describe the first subtheme of re-entry styles. The most common subthemes interpreted from the descriptions of the participants loosely categorize them as what Pusch (2008) calls *detached* and *integrated* returning sojourners, meaning they are either quietly struggling with readjustment or healthily integrating their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes with the best of the past.

Actively resisting re-adjustment. Nariman's description of moving out of her parents' home rather than trying to explain to them her need for personal space and privacy illustrates this style. In her own words:

There was nothing new to how [my parents] interfered with my life. They really didn't understand um, how I was living and how things [had] changed conceptually, and um, so, yeah, it was much harder to try to explain to them, trying to defend my own space ... [than] actually moving out. (Nariman, p. 5, lines 20-23)

Laith's description of his attitude toward judgmental Moroccans illustrates his adopting the same style:

If I defend a group (which I do) for example people who identify as gay, I would be berated by some people. If I act in a nonjudgmental way towards scarf-wearing women who smoke or who even drink [alcohol], people would think that I am faking it or that I am phony and [that I am] saying things just to sound different. So, I am resistance (sic) a strong stream. But I don't put [my] hands down. I defend myself and which my knowledge and authority coming from many fields of knowledge that I can cite, I usually come to shut people down. And again, I have to make them resist my 'revolutionary' ideas. They are not revolutionary actually because they are what should be the case- but to them the ideas are complete heresy. So, to them I speak heresy. (Laith, p. 4/ comment [GM4])

Farhan also displayed active resistance in his description of the pressure of the group for him to conform:

If they are criticizing me, or if they are inviting me, or making me realize this is Pakistan. ... [and they say] don't be different. You have to follow what's [the custom] ... in our country, it doesn't mean that I have to be like them. Although they will reject me from the community, but I have to be what I have learned [in the USA]. (Farhan, p. 27, lines 7-13)

Having stated that I find the term *free spirit* somewhat culturally aberrant, Laith described changes in himself that would classify him as a free spirit by Pusch's (1993) definition:

People see me as more laid back, more chill, ah, someone, yeah, they keep telling me that my place, like this, in this expression: Your place is not here in Morocco, like you deserve a European or an American country.... It's many things that make me different from people and it's positive. (Laith, p. 5, lines 10-14)

Reserved, but not yet readjusted. Asma's description of her avoidance of questions typifies this second style:

I deceived myself with an illusion of success and dragged it into a vicious circle of hide and seek. I was seeking success but I couldn't (sic) neither maintain nor protect that success, and at the same time [I was] hiding from questions and doubts of why coming (sic) back (till now people ask me why did you choose to come back and not find another opportunity, and I have to hide from all these not questions but rather accusations.) (Asma, p. 7, comment [P28])

Asma described her choice not to actively resist but to overtly behave more in accordance with cultural norms: "I have to cope with whatever situation I encounter, which does not mean accepting it but going with the flow. However, I always have that sense of not belonging to my surroundings as we don't have the same vision." (Asma, p. 10, comment [P36])

Asma showed her detachment in her description of her feelings of belonging to a country other than her own: "America is a good country, ... but Tunisia is a country as well., but it's all about probably the mentality. That's why I feel that [the United States] is my home more than here." (Asma, p. 11, lines 6-9)

Reassimilated and readjusted. This style was not embraced by any of the participants. No participant attempted to act as if he or she had not been impacted by travel to the United States. This finding is in agreement with my previous findings among 150 Egyptian undergraduate students who traveled to the United States for one semester between 2014 and 2018. Not one of these students identified with this re-entry style upon return.

Integrated and successfully readjusting. The final re-entry style that surfaced in the participants' descriptions is the integrated style. Soliman's descriptions exemplified this style, and Soliman appeared from the interview to be the most reintegrated of all the returnees. Soliman described his re-entry style as one of disagreeing but knowing when to voice an

opinion: “I became more self-conscious of what opinions I can or cannot voice and where I can or cannot say them.” (Soliman, p. 9, comment [MY14R13])

Laith also displayed the integrated style in his demonstration of successfully blending elements of both cultures:

You know Americans are characterized by being straightforward. If they are busy, they say they are busy. Here [in Morocco] you cannot say I’m busy. You have to explain what you are doing. Ah, so I learned that from Americans. I’m busy, but I also can explain what I am doing, and if I say I’m going to get back to someone, then I’m I will. It’s something that has to do with promises., which is not a Moroccan thing. ...Like people when they say *inshallah*, for example. it’s not a promise. It doesn’t mean that things will happen and you may [have seen this]. So, I think they have noted this thing in me. They have recognized it. They have said, like, I keep my promises. (Laith, p. 7, lines 5-13)

Farhan also described the need to admit the realities of his situation in Pakistan: I have to admit the realities of my province, my country, and my people. So, like, I had a mindset, whatever I learn I have to adjust according to the realities of the national (sic).” (Farhan 9/16-18)

In summarizing the findings related to the fourth and final theme, the main objects of concern were two: finding strategies to cope with home culture behaviors that were now perceived as undesirable and ways to effect change in societies that are traditionally resistant to change. The main experiential claim was that it was necessary to maintain some of the behaviors and attitudes acquired abroad even when they were perceived as in conflict with majority home culture values because these were now parts of the participants’ altered identities. My interpretation of this psychological need to retain aspects of the experience in the United States rather than discard them as problematic to readjustment is complex. First, I see a pragmatic strategy to adopting attitudes and behaviors seen negatively as “Western” by the majority: participants see themselves as having a global identity in addition to a local identity, and these behaviors and attitudes will serve them in that capacity. Second, from the perspective of a grieving process, discarding new behaviors and attitudes associated with their experience in the

United States can be translated as loss and separation, while maintaining these changes is equivalent to cherishing and celebrating memory.

Research Question 2: What are the emotions and responses to these emotions that are associated with re-entry adjustment?

In order to answer this question, I took several approaches: I either asked participants directly for their interpretations of their feelings and thoughts associated with experiences, or I interpreted feelings and thoughts from the language and paralinguistic employed to describe experience. By the term *paralanguage*, I am referring to the objectively measurable bodily gestures, paralinguistic sounds, such as sounds of exasperation, changes in intonation while speaking, etc. that participants employed in the interview, and which to me indicated expressions of emotion.

To clarify my own understanding of emotion, I referred to Robinson's (2008) summary of different types of emotions based on several criteria and his review of existing emotion theory. Robinson (2008) referred to six types of emotion, with positive and negative examples for each pair. I attempted to delimit my examination of the descriptions, observations, and interpretations of my participants' emotions to those included by Robinson (2008, p. 155), in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Pairings of Positive and Negative Emotions Grouped by Type

| <u>Emotion type</u> | <u>Positive emotions</u> | <u>Negative emotions</u> |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Related to object properties | Interest, curiosity Attraction, desire Surprise, amusement | Alarm, panic` Aversion, disgust revulsion Indifference, familiarity, habituation |
| Future-appraisal | Hope | Fear |
| Event-related | Gratitude, thankfulness Joy, elation, triumph, jubilation. Relief | Anger, rage Sorrow, grief Frustration |
| Self-appraisal | Pride in achievement, self- confidence | |
| Social | Generosity Sympathy | Avarice, greed, miserliness, envy, jealousy. Cruelty |
| Cathected | Love | Hate |

Note. Adapted from “Brain function, emotional experience and personality,” by Robinson, D., (2008), *Netherlands Journal of Psychology*, 64, p. 152-167.

The majority of described or inferred feelings from the audio and videotaped transcripts were of the following types: related to object properties and event-related. In other words, most emotion was clearly directed at that which Husserl (1999) referred to as the *noema*, or objects of intentionality.

Farhan’s descriptions of readjusting to teaching in Pakistan after having taught in the United States implied disappointment: “Most of my students, the students in [Pakistani province] are narrow minded. They are not too (sic) much interested to learn. ... They don’t have future plans. (Farhan, p. 3, lines 25-27 and p. 4, line 1). The disappointment seems clearer because of the comparison the United States:

It was very hard for me to readjust in my town or in (sic) my college [in Pakistan]. ...In the United States, ...I had lots of opportunities to teach ...classes with technologies...and the students I had, most of them were very active, ...modern...interested to learn Urdu. (Farhan, p. 3, lines 15-23)

For Farhan the language laboratory at his university in the United States is the object property to which the emotion of attraction is directed; this conscious action results in a sense of loss, which implies grief: “I miss [name of university] laboratory.... I miss (sic) in terms of technology and advancement” (Farhan, p. 6, lines 22-30). He then evidences what Robinson (2008) refers to as the future-appraisal emotion of hope, when he says, “If I had a projector right now, I would open my laptop and I’d show [the students] this video or I’ll (sic) show them this picture.” (Farhan, p. 6, lines 23-25). Farhan returns to the theme of hope and appears to justify his commitment to remaining in Pakistan with expressions of optimism for the future: “Since I’m a teacher, ...I have to work with them. I have to give (sic) ambition.... I feel optimist (sic). I give them energy. I motivate them. I try to teach them something new” (Farhan, p. 5, lines 12-17).

Misbah referred to his re-adjustment more than once as a “struggle” (Misbah, p. 2, lines 35 and 37). Like Farhan, he compared the mindset of his current students with those in the United States and experienced a similar sense of frustration. In terms of phenomenological intentionality, the emotion of frustration is directed toward the tendency of his [Indian] students to be late for class: “No one comes at 3:00. The earliest student is 20 minutes late” (Misbah, p. 2, lines 23-24). However, like Farhan, Misbah saw hope in this situation. He expressed social emotion and implied hope for improvement: “I empathize with them. It is not their fault.... I may frown. I look irritated.... After four classes they have started coming on time” (Misbah, p. 2, lines 24-28).

Cathexis is mental or emotional energy channeled into another human being, and according to McCullagh (1999) entered into the vocabulary of psychology when introduced by Freud in his *Project for a scientific psychology*, and is a translation by Strachey from the German word, *Besetzung*. Among several meanings in Greek, cathexis can mean *occupy*. While

no participant directly expressed love or hate for a particular person, Misbah clearly connected with individuals in the United States that had made his re-entry adjustment harder.

I'm a social kind of person; I'm extremely social. I have 300-400 friends in the U.S. right now. ...like my imam (name of imam) was from Egypt and he invited me...to Egypt. ...And for me, I think of my roommate and I cry, I still cry.... As strong as I have [ever] known and I experienced that special friendship towards my roommate, whom I consider my younger brother and he considers me his elder brother and we lived like real brothers for one year. He was Pakistani Shia and I was like Sunni Muslim. There were two vibes going on, and we lived peacefully, happily, lovingly. I am the happ[iest] about that. (Misbah, p. 20, lines 26-38)

The 'two vibes' metaphor is a reference to the two different Muslim denominations; Misbah's repeated use of the word 'brother' to me implies his amazement that two traditional enemies in South Asia would be able to have a loving relationship in the United States. This recollection is contrasted with Misbah's description of his current situation in his hometown, the object of negative emotion, "not going anywhere else, no other cultural experience. ...[It] is a very frustrating...discouraging experience" (Misbah, p. 21, lines 29-31).

He prefaced this with an explanation:

One of the biggest reasons I wanted to come back...was my family. ... [Another was to] complete my PhD. ...Right now my PhD is the strongest reason why I am still in India. And...certainly once it's complete, I'll leave. (Misbah, p. 21, lines 21-27)

Like Misbah, Maryam evidenced a strong sense of obligation to her family: "It's very hard to be the eldest [child] in the family because you sacrifice; you have to sacrifice" (Maryam p. 5, lines 14-15). As she spoke, many of Maryam's emotions were directed at her family. She invested mental energy in them:

I feel sad when I see them disturbed and try to solve their problem. I feel secure when they are around me. I feel happy when I see them getting happy on (sic) little things. I am always ready to lessen the pain of my parent (sic) when they are hurt from something. I take their problem as my own. (Maryam, p. 5, comment [GM1])

Maryam's collectivist sense of responsibility to her family, which she attributed to a societal obligation imposed on an eldest child, allows her to endure the frustration that she began to feel toward aspects of Pakistani society upon her return from the United States: In the beginning...for two to three months, I used to remain angry...I [would] abuse government and the situation which is prevailing in Pakistan" (Maryam, p. 11, lines 20-23). She added,

Here [the] WiFi connection is really slow, sometimes it stop (sic) and doesn't work...I didn't have this kind of problem [in the United States]. And security issues, ...and the terrorism....and um, there was (sic) suicide bombings. (Maryam, p. 12, lines 13-17)

But she is reminded, "Sacrifice demands compromises...to make others happy" (Maryam, p. 5, comment [GM3]).

Another object of social emotion for Maryam is perceived corruption in business dealings. Maryam displayed feelings of compassion for her people and her contempt for owners of private schools, who she believes exploit teachers by underpaying them while overcharging students. "It was a really sad feeling, and I felt sorry because I couldn't do anything. ...I was offered many jobs but... didn't want to be a part of that" (Maryam, p. 13, lines 1, 24, and 29).

More than any other participant, Nariman, through words, hand gestures, and sounds, connoted feelings of frustration, anger, grief, and sorrow. To understand to what her emotions were directed, it is important to consider an important event in Nariman's life: her break with her father. In a society where family needs are placed before those of an individual, an absence of harmony among family members can produce feelings of guilt and shame. As Nariman described it upon her return to Egypt,

When I decided to move out from (sic) my parents' house by lying to them, I stopped supporting my mother financially...as I used to do during Fulbright.... When I decided to move out, I prioritized my feelings over my mom and brother's financial needs. I felt compromised on many occasions and that had a grave impact on my mental status. (Nariman, p. 2, comment [L1])

Nariman was most willing to share descriptions that implied feelings of anger: “I am more hostile toward strange men in Egypt than strange men in the U.S.” (Nariman, p. 32, line 16). When describing feelings about living with her family immediately upon her return to Egypt, she said,

I was so angry most of the time and so outraged by the [smallest things] They really didn't understand how things [had] changed conceptually, and...it was much harder to try to explain to them, trying to defend my own space. (Nariman, p. 5, lines 19-23)

At the same time, Nariman associated feelings of relief with her re-entry experience. She attributed the sense of relief to not being reminded of her race and identity as a minority in the United States, and the feeling that she was the spokesperson for a race or religion to curious Americans:

[Coming back] was such a relief to be honest.... I am a Muslim, but [here I am in] the majority. It was much easier to live like this.... [In Egypt] it is easier to assume that this is my own opinion [about Islam] I am not representing ...what [all] Muslim women think. (Nariman, p. 20, lines 14-26)

Soliman's description of his re-entry experience is less overtly emotional than many of the others. However, social emotions surfaced in Soliman's conversation when as the sole remaining unmarried child in his family, he discussed his decisions to forego opportunities to leave Egypt because of his father's illness:

I felt that I had to stay with him out of loyalty to my father and belonging to my family. I think it is a societal value in general. I think I would have felt guilty and unhappy [had I left him and gone abroad again]. And a lot of people would have criticized me for being selfish and not being loyal. (Soliman, p. 13, comment MY32R31)

For Soliman, as with Nariman and Maryam, feelings of loyalty, obligation and sacrifice seem to be dictated by the norms of a collectivist society. When those norms are violated, participants feel remorseful and unhappy. Thus, re-entry means readjusting to these powerful behavioral regulators.

Empathy and sympathy are other social emotions that characterize Soliman's more accepting attitude toward the outside world post-return to Egypt. When reflecting on his experience abroad, he said,

I saw that all my fellow FLTAs from all over the world and I were similar and shared similar dreams and aspirations. So, my friends and I shared a feeling of belonging to each other and to where we come from, which is the whole world. (Soliman, p. 6, comment [GM4])

When other Egyptians criticized him for his "soft" stance on certain social issues post-return, such as his accepting stance on same-sex marriage, Soliman found the accusation that he had become too American "upsetting," (p. 9, comment [MY12R11] and interpreted this as an indirect way of their saying that he was now less loyal to Egyptian values.

Mahdi was one of the most critical of participants, questioning much of what he observed upon his return to Morocco. One of his first experiences upon his return was disappointing. He received a grade on his Master's thesis that did not allow him admission into a local PhD program and believed that it was because his critique of Moroccan society in his thesis was offensive to a certain religious member of his thesis committee. In reflecting on that experience, he said, "I would say it is ... disappointment. Academia is supposed to be universal and endorsing.... Instead she perceived my research as blasphemous or insulting" (Mahdi, p. 3, lines 3-5).

Mahdi used the word "appalled" (6/8) to describe his reaction to his male neighbor's questioning his girlfriend as she was coming into Mahdi's apartment building to visit him. When reflecting upon whether this feeling was part of re-adjusting to life in Morocco, Mahdi saw his strong reaction and his need to confront his neighbor as behaviors associated with a greater sense of self confidence, behaviors he might have repressed before he had gone to the United States,

but which could now surface: “Now I have the courage to talk about it ‘cause I know it’s right. It’s something in my head and body, but I try to stay calm” (Mahdi, p.7, lines 12-14).

Mahdi’s heightened sense of individual rights resulted in another confrontation, which he says was characterized by emotions of anger and rage. A police officer on a train attempted to search his bag without asking, and Mahdi recorded the attempt with his phone camera. Said Mahdi, “my attitude [since returning to Morocco] has become more aggressive in the sense that I do not want my rights to be taken” (Mahdi, p. 20, line 25).

I interpret this in the framework of grieving over loss. In Mahdi’s case, it is the loss of rights that he possessed in the United States, but which he does not retain in Morocco. Thus, rights are a metaphor for memories; Mahdi does not want to lose the memories of his experience in the United States.

Laith’s description of feelings included not only emotion but physical feelings. He described both mental and physical symptoms associated with grief: “think[ing] about it...makes me feel less content.... I see things that can make me shake....I become sweaty and shaky” (Laith, p. 3, lines 4-8). He continued to express negative emotions that parallel those of Mahdi: I feel unhappy living here. It is also a feeling of disappointment because I ...expect to see a few things that are similar to the way things are done [in the United States]. So, I am disappointed” (Laith p. 3, lines 27-29). As with Mahdi, I believe Laith wished to continue an experience that he had lost, and therefore his feelings of unhappiness and disappointment were symptomatic of a grieving process caused by a personal loss.

For Asma, the feelings of grief over loss were even stronger. She seemed consumed with regret over having returned to Tunisia. “I was literally crying at the airport” (Asma, p.7, line 22). Asma used words such as “despair, longing, bitter night prayers and whispers, wishful hopes,

eyes watering” (Asma p. 8, comment [P35]) to describe the realization that her United States’ experience was over and she was no longer there. In terms of readjusting, although Asma had been back in Tunisia for three years, she remarked, “I never recovered from my experience [in the United States] to be honest” (Asma, p. 8/14-15). She indicated that she did not feel fully resettled. She described it as having her mind in one place and her body in another.

Asma also described feeling both “angry and sad” (p.3, comment [P6]) because of the high rates of poverty and unemployment in her region in Tunis, to which she attributed the relatively high suicide rate. “We are the ...region in which young kids commit suicide [the most]” (Asma, p.3, line 6). Words she used to describe her government’s neglect of the region’s children included “inhumane,” and “betrayal.” She referred to the first verse of the Quran, which tells readers to read. Accusing Muslims of not obeying religious precepts carries great moral significance. Asma seemed to have intentionalized, in a phenomenological sense, an anger directed at the government for their abdication of responsibility, and she has cathected mental energy into the children she sees having to unsafely stand on the moving minibus that takes them to school. “There is an outrageous (sic) feeling that controls my feelings when I think of these children and their struggle to get to schools (sic). Some children don’t give up but most of them do” (Asma p. 6, comment [P26]).

Salma’s description of emotions associated with re-entry adjustment are somewhat similar to those of Nariman and Asma. Like Nariman, Salma moved out of her family home upon her return to Tunisia. Like Asma, Salma described feeling that “my body is in Tunis but my mind is in the U.S. and other places” (Salma, p. 5, comment [GM4]).

Similar to other participants, Salma's break with her family upon her return produced feelings of "disappointment and sadness" (Salma, p. 5, comment [GM5]), and "regret that my family doesn't understand me" (Salma, p. 5, comment [GM6]).

Feeling out of place was a frequent theme for Salma, who felt "suffocated whenever I realize that I don't belong with the public here in Tunisia" (Salma, p. 9, comment [GM8]. Salma had surrounded herself in with likeminded friends, who were other isolated Fulbright alumni. Together, according to Salma, they shared the same ideas and beliefs. These friends allowed Salma to feel "understood, respected, and appreciated" feelings that "I don't really feel in Tunisia" (Salma, p. 22, line 24) In contrast, feelings of "loss, disorientation, not belonging anymore, isolation, and not fitting into the society" (Salma. p. 12, comment [GM15] are how she described her re-entry adjustment experience in her home country.

In summary, my findings indicated that as with the Butcher (2002) study, my participants had conscious feelings of loss. Butcher (2002) referred to this as *disenfranchised* grief, meaning a grief with which others have difficulty empathizing because they cannot visualize the object of the grief. This may explain Salma's need to surround herself with other Fulbrighters who could empathize with her sense of loss.

A frequency count of sentient words used revealed that *change* and *changed* were the most frequently mentioned feelings or observations, with over 85 occurrences of the two words in the transcript texts. The word *miss* was mentioned 14 times. *Sad*, *sadness* and *not happy* combined for a total of 14 occurrences. Likewise, *anger* and *angry* combined for a total of 14 occurrences. *Happy* was used 7 times to refer to being home and 7 times to refer to a time in the United States. *Loss* and *losing* combined were used four times. The word *cry* was used three

times. *Laugh* was used twice, but both times negatively, with participant's referring to themselves as being laughed at by others for newly-acquired attitudes or behaviors.

The Phenomenological Essence of Re-entry Adjustment

The essence of a phenomenon is “what makes [it] what it is (Van Manen, 1984). Husserl (1999) claimed that a phenomenon should stand the test of eidetic reduction. That is, its essence should be comprised of universals and only universals. A universal for Husserl (1999), who used *redness* as an example, was something that could recur, be recognized repeatedly as the same thing, and not be classified as finite or context-dependent. In other words, a universal would be the same in all contexts. If one were to think about grieving, it would be grieving in all contexts. However, at the same time that Husserl (1999) talked about universals, IPA focuses on the idiographic. How re-entry adjustment is experienced is mediated by world context, and each individual's world is particular and unique, and not separable from the individual. The individual is in his/her world.

Emotion is universal and arguably part of the essence of re-entry adjustment, but at the same time, emotions described are subjective accounts, and the perceived objects of the emotions are individual and contextual. Using Robinson's (2008) summary of emotion types (Table 4.1), I identified participant emotional responses to re-entry adjustment as being mainly one of two types: related to object properties, such as aversion, disgust, surprise, alarm, indifference or familiarity or (b) event-related, such as anger, rage, gratitude, joy, sorrow and grief. I found fewer but clear examples of other emotion types identified by Robinson (2008): future related (e.g. hope, fear), self-appraisal (e.g. pride –notably Faisal), social (generosity, sympathy – notably Maryam and Asma), or cathected (love, hate – arguably Nariman and Salma evidenced cathected hatred for men who invade their personal space.)

Table 4.2 presents emotions as described by the participants and the perceived outward directions of these emotions (objects) for each participant in the study.

Table 4.2

| <i>Emotions described and perceived outward directions of these emotions (objects) for each participant in the study</i> | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|---------------|--|--|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| | <u>Farhan</u> | <u>Misbah</u> | <u>Maryam</u> | <u>Nariman</u> | <u>Laith</u> | <u>Mahdi</u> | <u>Soliman</u> | <u>Asma</u> | <u>Salma</u> |
| Emotion 1 | frustration | frustration | anger | anger | frustration | confidence to resist | love | sympathy | sadness |
| Object 1.1 | lab limitations | students | infrastructure and security issues | father | hometown | prying neighbors | parents | under- privileged children | break with family |
| Object 1.2 | corruption | hometown | corruption | gender norms | lack of privacy | violations of due process | countryside identity | | |
| Emotion 2 | hope | love | love | relief | love | respect | gratitude | sadness | suffocation |
| Object 2.1 | students | family | family | not being a token Egyptian female | family | family | U.S. experience | loss of U.S. experience | being in public spaces |

In describing re-entry adjustment, the feelings of *loss*, *gain*, and *change* seem to be present in all contexts and irreducible. Thus, I would also place them at the core of the phenomenon of lived experience of re-entry adjustment. *Gain* connotes positivity and may account for feelings of empowerment and self-efficacy that were interpreted from several of the themes. In Doka's (1989) theory, the words *loss* and *change* equate with grief. The grieving process connotes effort and struggle, but which, if handled properly, can lead to repair and strength.

The process of grieving is supported by a series of emergent themes around the impact of re-entry, and the higher order themes of "heightened critical sense," "using a comparative lens," and "adopting a re-entry style." These seems to be extra mental and emotional effort required to cope with the heightened awareness of the home culture after having lived in a foreign culture. However successful adjustment can lead to greater self-awareness and the ability to communicate to others the differences between the home and host cultures.

One way of conceptually looking at the essence of the phenomenon of re-entry adjustment is to ground it within the theoretical framework posited by Szkudlarek, 2010 (after Martin & Harrell, 2004). Figure 4.1 presents a heuristic conceptual framework of the process of re-entry, tying my findings of the phenomenological essence to the literature, my pilot study, and my own personal experience with re-entry adjustment.

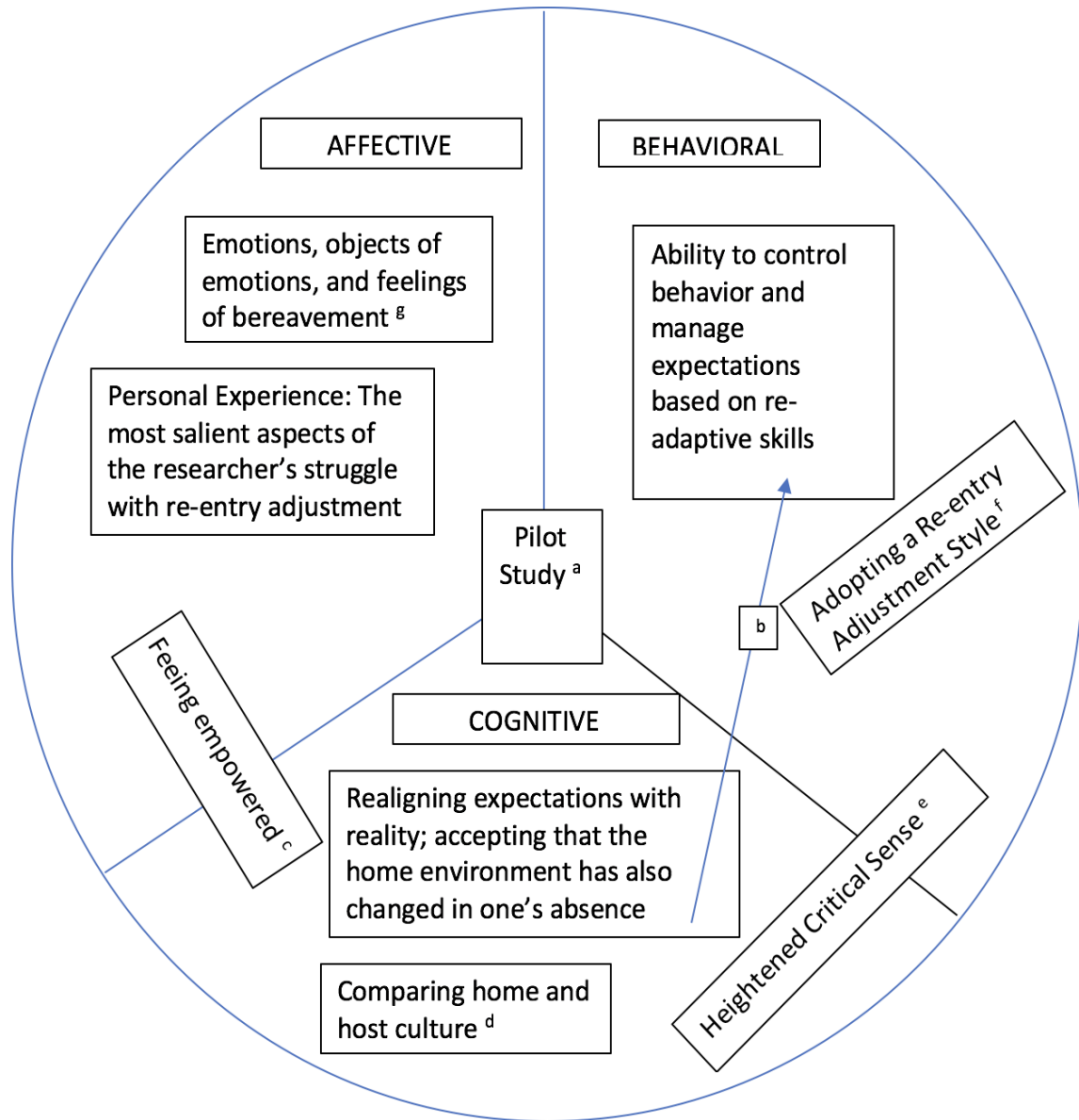


Figure 4.1. A conceptual framework of the process of re-entry adjustment (after Martin & Harrell, 2004, and Szkudlarek, 2010). Pilot study ^a = the researcher's own study in 2015, which found that alumni interviewed who lived in other parts of the world also had aspects in their essence of re-entry adjustment from all three theoretical streams, affective, behavioral, and cognitive. Arrow ^b = the cognitive challenges are associated with the behavioral challenges, and Black et al. (1992) advocated for preparing returning sojourners for the trip home while they are still in the host country. Feeling empowered ^c = Research question one, theme one of findings. Comparing home and host culture ^d = Research question one, theme two of findings. Heightened critical sense ^e = Research question one, theme three of findings. Adopting a re-entry adjustment style ^f = Research question one, theme four of findings. Emotions, objects of emotions, and feelings of bereavement ^g = Findings from research question two.

All participants in this study described experiences that spoke of conscious efforts to positively re-adjust to their home environment. However, they all felt in some way that their relationship to their world had fundamentally altered or changed as a result of their experience in the United States. This experience had created a comparative framework through which they now viewed their home environment with a heightened critical sense. This new way of viewing the home environment seemed to elicit more negative than positive emotion, with sadness and longing for renewed contact with the United States being intensely felt for some. These feelings could be conveyed through bodily expressions, such as crying, shaking, and sweating.

Leaving the United States was viewed as a loss. In very few ways did alumni now see their home countries in a more positive light upon return. They described having doubts about their feelings toward their home environment and of empathic failure from persons around them, who either could not understand the participants' continued attachment to the United States, or their changes in attitudes toward longstanding social and cultural norms of the home environment. At the same time, certain societal norms related to obligation to family remained strong and participants did not see contradictions to their having both a strong sense of loyalty to their families and a stronger sense of independence.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary

I answered the first research question, regarding the lived experience of re-entry adjustment of Fulbright FLTA alumni from North Africa and South Asia, by identifying four central themes among the participants in the study: *Increased self-efficacy and sense of empowerment; seeing the home country environment through a comparative lens; questioning the home country environment with a heightened critical sense, and adopting a re-entry style.*

In summarizing the findings related to the first theme, the main objects of concern that emerged from the discussions with participants were personal freedom, continued independence to make one's own decisions, the acknowledgement from peers of the participant's international experience, and the desire to help others. I interpreted the main experiential claim, which relates to why objects of concern matter to participants, as personal goal attainment. The participants saw their objects of concern as helping them attain personal goals.

In summarizing the findings related to the second theme, the main objects of concern for the participants were recreating the experience that the participants had left behind in the United States and finding opportunities to leverage knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained abroad. There was also a concern with not losing the international experience. I interpreted the main experiential claims as contributing to the progress of the home country and self-development. The participants believed that the objects of concern would assist with attaining progress in both areas.

In summarizing the findings related to the third theme, the main objects of concern for the participants were home country behaviors and habits that were now seen as intrusive,

backward, or wrong. I interpreted the main experiential claim as a mismatch between expectations and reality. These observed behaviors and habits were a major source of re-entry shock and the participants were not re-adjusting to them.

In summarizing the findings related to the fourth and final theme, the main objects of concern for the participants were strategies for coping with home cultures resistant to change and handling re-entry shock. I interpreted the main experiential claim as the participants' desire to maintain behaviors and attitudes acquired abroad in order not to lose the experience of having traveled abroad.

I answered the second research question, which asked about the emotions and responses to these emotions that are associated with re-entry adjustment, by focusing on the self-reflective nature of the participants as they questioned whether they had made a mistake in returning, or critically questioned some of the practices that they observed or perceived once home, such as institutionalized bribery, limited personal space and privacy, and men's desire to police women.

Participants shared conscious feelings of loss, and used such words as *despair*, *longing*, *bitter night prayers and whispers*, *wishful hopes*, *eyes watering*, *anger* and *change*. Some described physical symptoms associated with grief, such as *shock*, *sweating* and *shaking*. A word count revealed that *change* and *changed* were the most frequently used words connoting personal feelings.

Making Sense: The Interpretative Account

The second essential component of an IPA study is the interpretation that considers the social and cultural context in which the participants exist. The epistemological stance recognizes an "always-already" positioning of the participant in a context through which the participant

attempts to make sense of his or her world. This means that my interviews took place with my participants immersed in a world that acted upon their ability to make sense of their experience.

My understanding of the “linguistic, relational, cultural and physical world” (Larkin & Thompson, 2011, p. 102) in which the participants exist, is based both on personal experience in both the United States and the countries of my participants, as well as the approach to interviewing, observing the participants via video cam as they spoke, and allowing them to describe not only feelings, but those with whom they have been in contact, and the physical surroundings in which their experiences occur. This understanding will form the basis of my surrounding analysis, which positions me as an author (Larkin et al., 2006). My interpretation will hopefully shed light on what I believe it means for my participants to have had their concerns.

First, I argue that each of my participants returned from the United States to a home culture that is more restrained. *Restraint*, as a cultural dimension, is defined by Hofstede and his team (Hofstede Insights, 2018) as a strong attempt on the part of the society as a whole to ensure that individuals in the society control their *desires and impulses*. Whether they prefer to or not, the participants in my study would necessarily understand how to operate in a culture of restraint because they were raised with restraint as a cultural norm. However, in some ways, upon returning from the United States, all of my participants now questioned the norm of restraint. Why, for example, can't Laith smile at strangers, particularly those of the opposite sex? Why can't Asma publicly show romantic feelings toward whom she loves? Why can't Maryam show her hair in public? Why can't Mahdi have guests of the opposite sex visit him without neighbors stopping the guests to ask questions? Why can't Soliman's support for same-sex marriage quality

be seen as a valid argument rather than simply the influence of having spent time with Americans?

Re-entry adjustment for the alumni is made more difficult by encountering a home culture that is more restrained and normative. Having to once again exercise greater control of desires and impulses is necessary (Black et al, 1992) but difficult, considering that this effort was not anticipated (Adler, 1981) and because participants' cultural identity may have adjusted (Cox, 2004; Merrill & Pusch, 2007; Sussman, 2000).

Interestingly, the participants' newfound or heightened critical sense, which includes questioning the necessity of restraint, does not raise the question of the role of religion as a factor in the emphasis on restraint. My interpretation is that my participants do not wish to ascribe negative feelings to their religion. The combination of asking questions that challenge norms, but remaining uncritical of religion, shows to me the participants' struggle with modernity. They do not want to come to the conclusion that modernity is incompatible with the teachings of their religion. They view fundamentalist interpretations of religion, rather than religion itself, as selective, hypocritical, and patriarchal. Asma and Mahdi both hinted of that in their observances of others in the home country who wished to transgress conservative norms but at the same time criticized others for doing so. They viewed this as, at once, hypocritical and schizophrenic.

Second, the participants described feeling less judgment toward themselves in the United States regarding their appearance and behavior. I believe that now back home, participants are reacting to the more judgmental style of their home societies, which is also a common complaint among the many Egyptian students that I have interviewed who have spent time in the United States. For the participants, this might mean that they are likely more open to expressing

themselves as individuals and do not wish to be kept in check by the collectivist tendency of their societies to criticize non-conformity.

Third, what does it mean to not want to lose the international experience? I interpret this desire in two ways. The first is that to lose the sense of having gained new knowledge, skills, and attitudes is to exacerbate grief associated with loss. Loss of something loved should not need to entail a loss of memory. Memories can live on. The second is that new knowledge, skills, and attitudes are what might distinguish the participants when applying for jobs in a tight and competitive local market. My participants wanted to have opportunities to use what they had learned in the United States. This was most clearly expressed by Farhan when he complained about the lack of technology at his college in Pakistan. Many of the participants also referred to the cachet associated with having completed a Fulbright degree when applying for English teaching positions in the home country.

Professional issues were of concern to the participants inasmuch as alumni wanted to continue to grow from their experience in the United States and feel rewarded and recognized by their superiors in the professional domain for their efforts in attempting to better themselves. For the majority, financial obligations to families also meant that they needed to be gainfully employed within a very short period after returning home.

Whereas all alumni had taught English prior to going to the United States, some had now decided to pursue other interests. Two female alumni had made career changes, finding fulfillment in the area of NGOs that focus on the empowerment and well-being of women. One had started a consultancy after becoming disillusioned with the lack of professional standards at her former place of employment. Several others were pursuing graduate degrees. A minority had returned to teaching but were disappointed in the lack of motivation of their students, a lack of

accountability for teachers, and poor infrastructure. The limited infrastructure was a particular source of frustration because the alumni had returned with many new and innovative approaches to teaching that could not be implemented because the technology required was lacking. What served as the major motivator for remaining in the teaching profession was the desire to pass on to students what they had learned in the United States and to instill in students the belief that they, too, could pursue their dreams of traveling abroad to learn.

Placing My Work in a Wider Context: A Dialogue with the Literature

Host Country Adaptive Success and Cultural Distance

The literature (Black et al., 1992; Brabant et al., 1990) did not decisively conclude whether host country adaptive success correlated positively or negatively with re-entry adjustment. On the one hand, Black et al. (1992) concluded that it did, but Brabant et al.'s (1990) study concluded the opposite. However, neither study considered the specific home country environment or the cultural distance between the host and home countries. Weissman and Furnham's (1987) study focused on American sojourners in the United Kingdom and found that realistic expectations of what awaited returning sojourners facilitated re-entry adjustment.

My research findings draw more attention to cultural distance between the home and host culture environments as a crucial factor to consider when anticipating re-entry adjustment. However, this must be seen in combination with another possibility: participants have experienced a values shift as a result of living in the United States; their values are now somewhat at odds with the majority values of their home culture, and thus they have more difficulty readapting. My participants' descriptions of their surrounding home environment, with particular reference to cultural norms, were predominantly negative. The negativity was expressed in combination with positive references to the United States. Had the participants

returned to an environment with cultural norms much closer to those of the United States, they may not have reacted as negatively.

I have previously mentioned that participants did not focus on religion in their negative critiques of their home cultures, nor did they question the social tradition of placing family first, before individual needs. Even Nariman and Salma, who chose to move out of their parents' homes did not question this cultural norm. In fact, they expressed guilt at having made the move to leave home. At the same time, participants were critical of gender norms, male-female relations, power distance, lack of awareness of social responsibility, self-protective behaviors by superiors, and perceived corruption. This is significant in that it suggests that the participants were resisting re-entry adjustment where adjustment did not align with their altered values and behaviors, which may have become closer to those that they observed in the United States from their time spent there.

My findings also support those of Pritchard (2011). In Pritchard's study of Asian students relocating to their home countries, she found that tensions had emerged related to the five areas of cultural dimensions researched by Hofstede (2001). For example, the preference for individualism that Taiwanese students experienced in the United States created a tension for them when they returned to their more collectivist culture because in some aspects, they had become more accustomed to making decisions based on individual rather than collective interests. My findings also support Sussman (2001), who suggested that greater adaptation to the host culture resulted in greater difficulty readapting to the home culture. One interesting example from my study is that some of my participants, upon return to their home countries, now felt more conscious and protective of personal space, arguably an individualist concern.

My findings also find common ground with Şahin (1990) but not Kidder (1992). Şahin, studying returning Turkish students, found that the students held negative feelings about their home country upon return. Kidder (1992) found that returning Japanese sojourners had an unusually challenging time. Interestingly, unlike my findings, Kidder (1992) did not find that returning Japanese students were negative about their home country, Japan, or the Japanese. The problem was how other Japanese viewed them. Some mentioned having been bullied for not acting Japanese. However, like Kidder (1992), I found that my participants were criticized for demonstrating preferences that were seen as outside of cultural norms, such as marriage equality for same-sex partners. Such attitudes were labeled by others as foreign.

One possible explanation for the finding in Kidder (1992) that returning Japanese students did not express negative attitudes about their home country is that the level of economic development in Japan is closer to the United States than that of Turkey or the countries in my study. A second possible explanation is that the level of restraint in Japanese society, as indicated by Hofstede et al.'s data (Hofstede Insights, 2018) is closer to that of the United States, known as a high-indulgence culture, relative to that of the countries in my study, which are all characterized as low-indulgence or restrained cultures. In other words, Japanese students in the United States do not return to Japan to find that they must readjust to a different mindset regarding one's locus of control, how one conducts business with the opposite sex, or how an employee addresses dissatisfaction in the workplace. On the other hand, the participants in my study needed to readjust to more conservative norms, less freedom of speech, a greater sense that people are not in control of their own destinies, and less emphasis on happiness and personal freedom.

Realistic Expectation of Return

My findings would support the theory that successful re-entry adjustment, defined as contentedness with the home environment (Raschio, 1987), is not better guaranteed by being realistically prepared for it. My participants knew what they were returning to, but several of them described feelings of disappointment and anger shortly after arrival at their home airport upon recognizing familiar conditions of the developing world: poor sanitation, chaotic traffic, less personal space.

Raschio (1987) was one of the first to draw attention to the cognitive challenges facing returnees because of a mismatch between their expectations and reality. Raschio (1987) concluded that coping with cultural dissonance was positively correlated with successful re-entry adjustment. With few exceptions, such as Soliman, my participants did not appear to cope well with cultural dissonance, and if we consider Raschio's (1987) findings as a guide, my participants would benefit from additional counseling support at home to ease re-entry adjustment issues.

Economic Disparity

My findings corroborate those of Gama and Pedersen (1977), who found that the relative lack of economic opportunity in Brazil was a source of frustration for the returning Brazilian students. Gama and Pedersen (1977) had also suggested that students from developing countries might face greater challenges readjusting to their home culture than those whose economic standards of living were closer to that of the United States or another developed country.

My dissertation was not a comparative study of returnees to both the developed and developing worlds. However, when compared to my pilot study of participants from both developed and developing countries, I found that the participants in my dissertation study, all of

whom were from developing countries, experienced greater frustration because of the weaker economic conditions in their home country relative to those of the United States.

Individualism and Collectivism

Greater cooperation with members of in-groups, as characteristic of collectivist societies (Triandis, as cited in Hurteau, 2006), is also suggested by my findings. In particular, my participants had an unquestioning sense of obligation to their families, which those from an individualistic society might interpret as a lack of self-authorship. In my study, one participant's sense of obligation toward his ailing father overrode career decisions, another returned to the role of being the major source of financial support for her parents and siblings, and another spoke about the joy of being reunited with family. One participant who had split with her family, was still providing financial support for her mother and sibling when she could. Where alumni perceived themselves as not completely fulfilling their role as members of a family, it was a source of stress for them. Two female participants expressed feelings of guilt and remorse for moving out of their parents' homes. For one participant's family, it was a source of shame, something the family members were not able to discuss publicly, and for which they had to concoct an alibi to explain why their daughter wasn't living at home. Another male participant kept his own rented apartment secret from his parents. These examples would suggest that in-group collectivist obligations toward family cohesion in the participants' home cultures might override the alumni's own needs, impacting the decision-making process of re-entry adjustment.

Readjustment Support

Further research into the role of the Fulbright program in preparing for smoother transitions of returning Fulbright alumni is needed. Currently counseling support for alumni is nonexistent but seems especially appropriate considering the similarities in the participants'

expressed feelings and those associated with grieving. Because of the variety of re-entry environments (e.g., returning to a home campus vs. returning to a home country) and the different ways in which cultures seek emotional or psychological support, more research is needed surrounding the types of support systems that are effective, their availability, and their use. I believe that more counseling support is needed for returning Fulbright alumni to North Africa and South Asia in the first few years.

Other research has concluded the same for different types of sojourners. Gregersen and Stroh (1997) found that re-entry adjustment support was needed both for the repatriated employees in Finland and their spouses. Cave (2014) suggested that firms had a responsibility to help repatriated employees. Black et al. (1992), Cave (2014), and Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1987) recommended providing pre-departure training and counseling to increase the ability of returnees to correctly anticipate challenges to returning home. I intend to recommend to the Fulbright program a more robust pre-departure preparation training program before alumni return to their home countries.

Adjustment Styles

One area of strong corroboration of findings is in my participants' adaptive adjustment styles and the findings of Berry (1980) and Pusch (2008). Pusch hypothesized that returning sojourners could be categorized by one of four re-entry adjustment styles, ranging from healthy biculturalism to one of two less desirable styles: complete rejection of the foreign culture or rejection of the home culture. In Berry's (1980) multidimensional (2x2) model for sociocultural acculturation, the intersection of the extent to which a sojourner maintained or retained the native culture while abroad and the extent to which elements of the host culture were adopted resulted in one of four outcomes: "assimilation, separation/rejection, integration, and marginali[z]ation

(Klemens & Bikos, 2009, p. 724). The weakness of both Berry's (1980) and Pusch's (2008) models with regard to returning sojourners is the lack of empirical support. However, my study adds in support of their work.

My participants seem to have accumulated more self-authorship than before. Some examples were Nariman's refusal to live by her father's dictates and norms for Egyptian females, Salma's living on her own, Misbah's rejection of his mother's arranged marriage proposals, and Mariam's starting her own business and making her own decisions about dress in spite of pressure from her sisters and mother to conform to Pakistani norms. There are similarities to Alandejani's (2013) findings, which indicated that the Saudi Arabian women who had returned to Saudi Arabia after completing graduate degrees in the United States faced considerable challenges from their social and professional networks, who expected them not to have acquired any greater independence or self-authorship while abroad.

Epaminonda (2014) looked at the experiences of Cypriot students returning from the U.K. and the U.S. and concluded that support structures for assisting with re-entry adjustment were non-existent. My findings are similar, and I would agree with Epaminonda's conclusion that this might be the result of a lack of societal empathy for the types of re-entry struggles that involve struggling with re-conformity to norms. In my study, Misbah talked about the derisive remarks made by a former school colleague when he mentioned struggling with culture shock. His colleague ridiculed him for believing that such a thing as re-entry culture shock existed.

Contributions to the Knowledge Base

My findings support the frameworks that group theories into three categories: affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Martin & Harrell, as cited in Szkudlarek, 2010; Ward, Bochnam, & Furnham, 2001). In the cognitive area, my findings support the theory that the closer

expectations of life after returning to the home country are to reality, the easier the re-entry adjustment (Adler, 1981). Some of the FLTA alumni returning to North Africa and South Asia had negative reactions to returning home starting at arrival at the airport once the reality of traffic, heat, and road behavior confronted them. Females, in particular, had forgotten the more normative codes of behavior for genders and the roles that females are expected to play in relatively *tighter* (Gelfand, 2012; Uz, 2015) cultures, which are defined as having less tolerance for behavior that does not conform to social norms.

In the behavioral area, my findings contribute to literature on behavior control and the need to reduce uncertainty when changing environments (Black et al. 1992). Alumni expressed frustration at having to perform simple tasks, such as going to the supermarket or standing in line because they could no longer predict behaviors they would encounter and expressed surprise or shock when they did. Simple culturally mediated public behaviors, such as queuing, parking, giving way to pedestrians, staying in traffic lanes, holding a door for someone, or making eye contact, were all sources of confusion in the home culture environment. In one case, an alumna said that she would rather stay indoors than encounter behaviors she now felt were unacceptable. Alumni would likely need a period of time to readjust to behaviors that they had grown up with, but which they had dropped or forgotten while in the United States.

In the affective area, my findings support the sense that emotions play a strong part of re-entry adjustment and that emotional responses sometimes parallel those experienced by someone who is grieving the death of a loved one (Soeterik, 1998). My work should serve to bolster support for researchers who suggest that re-entry adjustment is a grieving process, exacerbated by feelings of disenfranchised grief, or grief that is neither shared nor empathized by others. My findings illuminate the experience through detailed descriptions of emotional struggles with

participants' having to re-adjust to norms that they had somewhat come to reject. The struggle is exacerbated because to a large extent there is no empathy from the home country community toward returning Fulbright grantees who profess a disdain for cultural norms that they had grown up with. Questioning norms and behaviors is threatening when it is initiated from inside the community, particularly in collectivist cultures.

My work also contributes to the growing base of studies (Alandejani, 2013; Roh, 2013) that focus on international, geographically-specific sample populations. My study will support those studies that find unique challenges to returning sojourners because of their home country environments.

Unanticipated Themes

I did not expect to find the amount of negative emotion that I experienced from my participants. I had expected that those who had remained in their home countries would have successfully readjusted or been optimistic about the re-entry process if it was not yet complete. I had expected that those who found re-entry adjustment difficult would have looked for opportunities to move abroad again, as I had done. However, I found participants in the throes of a grieving process and struggling with making sense of their situations, but at the same time, resigned to their lives in their home countries. In some ways, I believe I underestimated the importance of the relational world, specifically family ties, in North African and South Asian societies. I believe that my participants prioritize the needs of their families to a larger extent than I do, and thus more greatly consider the impact on their families of moving away from home again. As for their honesty in expressing negativity, the fact that the participants were so frank with me is perhaps an indication that they saw me as an empathetic insider rather than a clueless foreigner.

I had underestimated the importance of in-group relationships (Triandis, 1994). Triandis defined an allocentric individual as someone more likely to have affiliative tendencies, fear rejection from an in-group, and be less assertive of one's own difference. In the case of my alumni, the desire to have affiliative tendencies with an in-group seemed to remain, particularly at the family level; however, in several cases, particularly those of Salma and Nariman, the alumni wished to assert their difference. This would provide a logical explanation for their moving out of their family homes.

Finally, contrary to my assumptions, my participants did not consciously raise any issues of identity and identity conflicts. They did not talk about a new awareness of themselves in terms of gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexuality, or social class. In the interviews, the vocabulary associated with talking about one's identity seemed lacking. One question is whether identity awareness is socially constructed. While commonly appearing in educated circles, particularly classrooms, in the West, discussions of identity did not come naturally to the participants in this study. The lack of this discussion prompts me to question whether awareness of identity and intersectionality as essential to the understanding of one's condition is a (new) Western phenomenon rather than something more universal.

However, more than one participant said that in the United States, they found greater respect for Islam than they had anticipated, and that this respect had hastened the adjustment process in the United States and left them with feelings of admiration. On the other hand, one participant, Nariman, felt that her identity as viewed by others had changed for the better upon her return to Egypt because she was no longer considered a poster child for the oppressed Middle Eastern woman, which is how she characterized her experience in the United States.

There was also an unexpected lack of importance given to the economic disparity that exists between the United States and the two areas of study: North Africa and South Asia. Economic concerns among the alumni were related to the ability to remain independent, especially for females, and the desire to support parents and siblings. But family obligations overrode need for personal economic gain. Some disappointment with the limitations of infrastructure and technology were mentioned, but they were minimal in comparison with the amount of attention the participants gave to needing to regain control of uncertainty and rationalize home culture behaviors.

Lessons Learned

I was committed from the start to the research paradigm. I believed in a Heideggerian (1996) interpretative epistemology that posits a value-laden understanding of lived experience, in a specific context and time, influenced by my own historical understanding. To some extent, I was also influenced by Merleau-Ponty's (1962) epistemological belief that experience is interpreted through a lived body. At no point did I question my choice of approach, and I believe strongly that anyone attempting a phenomenological study should be clear about the epistemological perspective s/he espouses.

Because phenomenological interviews are so loosely structured and primarily interviewee driven, it is important for the interviewer to know how to prompt for thicker and richer data. This can only be clear if the researcher is clear about the approach. The researcher should be truly committed to avoiding explanations to questions, and not focused on finding common themes that can be nomothetically applied to answer general questions about a population. Phenomenology is about description from the standpoint of the interviewee. It is about interpretation of worlds and what matters to interviewees, albeit through the interviewer's lens.

In attempting this, one lesson I learned was the importance of the individual case, which cannot be seen as something whose value is confined to its contribution to a common theme. As IPA is idiographic, the individual case must be seen as valuable in its own right.

In the write up, it is also important for the researcher not to be satisfied solely with descriptions. I have read many phenomenological studies that described very well but which were short on interpretation. I learned that I had to consciously think about my own interpretations of descriptions based on my understanding of the context in which those descriptions were created. This was not easy, due to my reluctance to use my assumptions to interpret what I thought was best left to the words of the participant.

What Would Improve the Study?

I believe that my study has attended to most of the features recommended by Smith (2011). However, to improve this study, I might extend the triangulation to include more perspectives, such as participant journals or diaries, and increase the credibility-checking to include individuals who had observed the participants after their return to the home country.

How Has the Research Developed?

I believe the research has developed as a result of contributions to the knowledge base and unexpected findings. My findings suggest that Fulbright alumni in North Africa and South Asia make decisions based partly on self-realization but also partly on self-sacrifice, in the form of filial piety, due to their desire to prioritize their families' needs. Because this observation has been suggested elsewhere in studies of Chinese students (Bregnbæk, 2016), there are avenues for further international comparative studies.

The struggles evidenced in the descriptions of emotions experienced in re-entry adjustment also speak to a need for more research in the area of mental health and well-being

support for returning sojourners. This area has traditionally been the weakest in terms of research (Szkudlarek, 2010).

Finally, as I mentioned in Chapter Five's *Unrelated Themes*, I believe that there is much more to my participants' decisions to remain in the home country than economic factors, and that affiliative needs, particularly with the family play a very important role. I have reached a stage in the research where I would like to use the results of an IPA study to augment a larger, more generalizable study. I believe, contrary to my assumptions, that Fulbright alumni, and possibly others, make decisions about their lives in their home country that are not purely economically motivated or in their self-interest as we might understand from an individualist perspective. The participants' willingness to remain at home in spite of severe re-entry adjustment challenges speaks to a need for more research in the area of mental health and wellbeing for returning sojourners.

Implications for Practice

I believe my research has implications for practice at two levels. First, I would argue that IPA is a viable research model for the education profession, particularly student affairs, with its concern for student well-being, and scholarship management, which wishes to maximize value for money. Traditionally, IPA has been particularly suited for the health care professions because that field has a number of "bio-psycho-social theories" (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p.5) that are aided by findings in IPA research. As my review of the literature illustrated, these same concerns exist in the area of students' adjustment to new environments and their readjustment to the more familiar home environment to which they usually return.

The idiographic nature of IPA allows for unique and unexpected findings, not constrained by the assumptions of a deductive research design or limited perceptual field of the researcher.

IPA also allows for, albeit it in a less practical and costlier way, very detailed descriptions of a very narrowly defined sample of individuals. Thus, while it is not a practical choice of approaches for studies that wish to produce generalizable findings, IPA opens new avenues of research with its inclusion of interesting data that might have been discarded in a generalizable study for being outside of the normal range of responses.

Quality Issues: Validity, Rigor, and Trustworthiness

It is axiomatic that all research needs to meet rigorous quality standards if it expects its findings to be viewed credibly. Qualitative research methods normally advocate a number of validation strategies, such as member checking, audit, amalgamation of accounts (Larkin & Thompson, 2011), peer validation, sample validation (Larkin & Thompson, 2011), and repertory grids. Because of its interpretative nature, IPA does not favor member checking (Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Smith, 2011). Instead it prefers a triangulated strategy involving sample validation, peer validation, repertory grids, (Smith et al., 2009), and/or audit (Larkin & Thompson, 2011).

I employed three of the four recommended strategies. Sample validation involves asking individuals who would have qualified for the study but who did not participate to comment on interpretations of participant descriptions. I decided to share my superordinate themes and my assumptions with approximately 175 other informants who would have qualified for my study in terms of year spent in the United States and their home country. In addition to asking these informants whether they agreed with my superordinate themes, I also asked individuals to consider re-entry adjustment as a grieving process. As mentioned in Chapter Three, I received responses from 16 alumni. All of them attested to having experienced the first two themes (a sense of empowerment and the tendency to make comparisons between the United States and the

home country. All agreed with the third theme of a heightened critical sense but not all viewed the home country negatively nor felt that they had less patience with everyday happenings in the home country, what La Brack (2006) referred to as “item irritation.” The last theme was sometimes confusing for alumni to understand and I had to rephrase it for two alumni. All 16 felt that they could relate to one of the four re-entry styles and most were well-adjusted. This observation has led me to ask whether the participants who were chosen to be in my study were more willing to share their experience because they were in the midst of a personal struggle.

To peer-validate I shared my interpretations with the person responsible for transcribing the data. This person had lived in Egypt for three years and thus was somewhat familiar with the type of world that the participants were already immersed in and could understand the epistemological interest in the interpretations of understanding the relatedness of the participants to the world. Finally, as an audit check, I sent my analyses of individual interviews to participants and also asked them follow-up questions focused on their feelings toward how they related to their world.

In line with Smith et al. (2009), I ensured that my informants were appropriately selected. Each of the nine participants met the stated criteria. By not allowing the interview schedule to constrain conversation between the interviewees and me, I was able to maintain a greater “idiographic focus” (Smith et al., 2009), which I merged with the common characteristics of the multiple interviews. I also referenced claims to data (Smith et al., 2009) (see Tables 3.1-3.4).

To further add to the rigor of my study, I followed the recommendations of Elliott et al. (as cited in Willig, 2008). Elliott et al. named their technique *Owning One’s Perspective*. This criterion relates to reflexivity and was addressed by me in Chapter 3 through the process of bracketing of my assumptions. I took reflexive notes in the margins of my transcripts, which

referred to where and how an emerging theme occurred as I was reading. I therefore identified the origins of my interpretations, as recommended by Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008).

I also noted thoughts that related to how my ways of knowing that preceded the study may have unintentionally inserted themselves and colored my interpretations of descriptions. However, it is important to note that the concern with bracketing is not a strong feature of IPA in the same way that it appears in descriptive Husserlian phenomenology. IPA is interpretative and progressively relies to a greater extent on the researcher's experience and reflexivity to make sense of what the participants are describing.

Because I have stakeholders interested in the transferability of my findings beyond the limited number of participants in my study, I collected participant descriptives prior to the interviews. This is referred to in the literature as *Situating the Sample* (Elliott et al., as cited in Willig, 2008). It is similar to Smith's (2010) recommendation to connect claims to data. The descriptives served to describe the participants to the readers in sufficient detail to distinguish them from Fulbright FLTA alumni from other parts of the world.

I also highlighted more details of the participant's personal circumstances as they arose from the interview texts. In retrospect, there were four main characteristics that all participants shared: (a) their home countries were in a less advanced state of development than the United States, (b) their obligations to their families were greater and could not be ignored, (c) their societies appear more normative with regard to how genders should behave, and (d) relations with strangers were governed by more conservative norms.

I also made explicit my process for labeling and categorizing so that my readers would hopefully be reassured that the categories of analysis I chose were a good fit for the data. In this way I attempted to ground my conclusions (Elliott et al., as cited in Willig, 2008)

Chapter Three contained many examples of subordinate themes that clustered into superordinate themes. Using a cyclical process, I created themes for each transcript, and then tested these themes against the other transcripts, going back to previous transcripts to retest my interpretations and deductions. Finally, mindful that the frequency of occurrence of a theme was not a criterion for becoming superordinate, I relied extensively on the data to look at the Gestalt of the individual's account of the experience before selecting overarching themes. I would often read and reread the transcripts as novellas, and then move away from them and think about the interviewee, trying to picture the interviewee coping with re-entry adjustment. Often times this produced an impression such as *angry*, *sad*, or *frustrated*, leaving me feeling sorry for the interviewee. These impressions only surfaced in my mind once I had finished the transcript and moved away from it for a day or two. But this awareness of my positioning of self is a core part of the phenomenological process and truly defines reflexivity.

Finally, as mentioned, I first asked my participants to read my analysis and confirm or question my interpretations. I then added follow up questions that focused specifically on emotions and feelings associated with actions. I then discussed the findings with Fulbright managers who are familiar with the experiences of alumni from these countries. Finally, I compared my findings with the literature.

Limitations

Prior to implementing this study, I had envisioned two sets of limitations, one epistemological and one methodological. Criticisms of IPA are mainly from quantitative approaches, such as those used in cognitive psychology (Smith et al., 2009) and other qualitative approaches, such as discourse analysis, that rely on a different theoretical framework with a different set of assumptions (Willig, 2008). In adopting IPA, I subscribed to IPA's definition of cognition as

“subjective quality of experience” (Willig, 2008, p. 69). This is problematic for mainstream cognitive psychologists who operationalize cognition in a very different way, and who would no doubt have problems with IPA’s use of cognition in their conceptual framework. Thus, there are arguably greater limitations to my using IPA in a stand-alone study as opposed to my study being used to augment a quantitative study (Smith et al, 2009) in a mixed-method approach.

Another epistemological critique comes from post-structuralist emphasis on the power of discourse and its argument that language blocks direct access to the mind of the participant. They would argue that my transcripts of data are not primary sources, but secondary sources formatted and biased by cognitive limitations of the participants, who are limited by their vocabularies and descriptive abilities. This argument is stronger if one considers that my participants were using a second or third language to describe their experiences and identify their feelings. If one is to argue that a person’s reality is constructed by language rather than by the descriptions that are given, one could argue that I did not arrive at an essence of readjustment in my study but rather identified the linguistic style or preferences of a certain individual for describing a phenomenon (Willig, 2008). However, unlike that of discourse analysis, IPA’s epistemological stance assumes that through interpretation of data that is skillfully obtained and analyzed, it is possible to enter the “cognitive inner world” (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p. 5) of an individual. IPA places importance on meaning, but is theoretically aligned with symbolic interactionism, in positing that meanings can be accessed only through interpretation. Thus, from my epistemological stance, I did arrive at an understanding of the meaning of the descriptions of my participants’ experiences through my ability to interpret with reflexivity and cannot be faulted within my chosen paradigm.

Methodological limitations might include a lack of prolonged engagement with the participants that Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to as one of three activities that can contribute to credibility. I engaged with the participants for approximately 90 minutes each, face-to-face, over the internet. I also engaged in a written dialogue with each participant following the initial interviews in order to ask second-tier questions, and to clear up any questions related to the transcripts. Whether this was sufficient time for me to guarantee that the participants were being completely honest with me or that the data allowed me to sufficiently inform my analysis can never be completely ascertained. However, I am confident that I established a rapport with each of my participants through their awareness of my understanding of the culture, empathetic questioning, and lack of overt judgment.

A second methodological problem comes from limited data triangulation. I did not attempt to obtain diaries or other personal accounts of the re-entry adjustment experience. However, I did employ multiple investigator triangulation in asking both the transcriber for her input with regard to my line of questioning and interpretation, asking Fulbright managers for their own experiences with alumni from these same countries, and asking participants to review the transcripts, answer follow-up questions, and member-check my interpretations, as suggested by Smith et al. (2009). Thus, I believe my methods contributed to both data and methodological triangulation.

A third possible limitation is one from the literature. Bernardo and La Brack (2007) reminded readers that returning sojourners who self-report may be in a temporary state of psychological trauma. For this reason, I did not include anyone in my study who had been home for less than one year.

Finally, the fact that all my participants were non-native speakers of English but used English as the language of discourse in the study could have limited their means of expressing meaning. All of my participants were fluent in English; however, I did have moments in which I had to ask for clarification or repetition of phrases where I was not exactly sure what the participant was trying to say. This language limitation resulted in some rephrasing of questions in the interview schedule. On the other hand, my knowledge of Arabic and Islamic terminology, my understanding of cultural norms, and my experience in the participants' countries were quite useful in cases where place names or untranslatable expressions were used.

An additional methodological concern is my exclusive focus on description. Although this is consonant with my methodology, the exclusion of "why" questions leading to explanations may have limited the understanding of the phenomenon (Willig, 2008). Maggs-Rapport (2000), in a discussion of goodness criteria for qualitative nursing studies, remarked that "validity of meaning, understanding or interpretation of phenomena is concerned with reaching beyond description towards explanation" (p. 221). Thus, focusing exclusively on description may have been a limiting factor in making sense of the phenomenon of re-entry adjustment.

A final limitation may have been my outsider status. Although I am somewhat familiar with the cultures, countries, and backgrounds of my participants, I am still not 'of them.' Unlike me, all of my participants were Muslim, and their descriptions may have been crafted in a way that they thought would make more sense to me or seem less foreign. That said, several times my participants avoided stating what they thought was obvious to me, and made such remarks as, "You may have seen this" (Laith, p. 24, line 17).

Suggestions for Future Research

Because I believe that there is a need for returning Fulbright alumni to receive counseling support, I think that there is a clear need for studies to research further into the question of whether adjustment is a grieving process. I support both qualitative and quantitative designs that could contribute to this little-researched area and shed light on the question. Having a complete database of individuals who meet the criteria for a study of this nature, the opportunity also exists to interview others who did not have the chance to participate in the original study.

There are ample opportunities for researchers from various parts of the world to conduct their own similar studies because the interpretative nature of IPA results in more interesting analysis from researchers who are highly knowledgeable of the socio-cultural context of the participants. From the latter standpoint, comparisons of findings can be viewed through the lens of cultural dimension theory (Hofstede, 2001).

Finally, in line with Larkin and Thompson (2011), I believe that IPA could be used from a multi-perspectival approach, considering the overlapping needs of various stakeholders (alumni, home government ministries of education, Fulbright commissions, and managers of the Fulbright program). This approach would look at the same phenomenon from inter-related but singular perspectives.

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APPENDIX A: CONCEPT MAP OF THE LITERATURE ON RE-ENTRY ADJUSTMENT

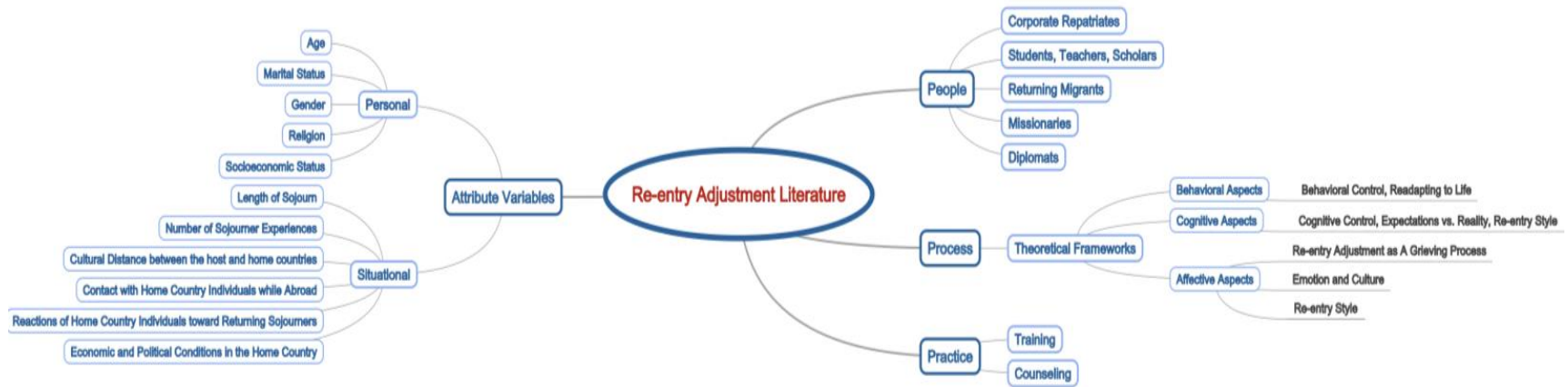


Figure A1. Concept map of the literature on re-entry adjustment.

APPENDIX B: TIMELINE

Table B.1

Researcher's Timeline for Completion of the Study

| Month | Year | Task |
|--------------------|-----------|--|
| February | 2017 | Proposal Discussion and Approval |
| April | 2017 | IRB Approval |
| May | 2017 | Identification of Participants and Obtaining of Informed Consent |
| May-August | 2017 | Interviews |
| June-September | 2017 | Transcription |
| September-December | 2017 | Data Analysis |
| December-February | 2017-2018 | Write-up of Chapters 3, 4, and 5 |
| April | 2018 | Submission of Dissertation |

APPENDIX C: BUDGET

Table C.1

Researcher's Budget for Completion of the Study

| <u>Item</u> | <u>Amount</u> | <u>Justification</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Transcriptions | \$2,000 | Transcriber is a retired law professor living in Mexico who lived in the Middle East for four years. She has assisted me in transcribing pilot study transcripts and her work is excellent. I have calculated that she requires approximately 3-4 hours to transcribe an hour interview. |
| Compensation for Participation | \$1,200 | This equates to \$50 per hour x 8 participants x 3 hours max. $\$150 \times 8 = \$1,200$. I feel that I will have more difficulty finding willing participants if I do not offer some compensation based on my pilot study. My participants are quite busy and also strategic with their time. I am also having them agree to follow up interviews. I discussed compensation in advance with Dr. Gene Gloecker, and although he said that the amount is normally considered excessive by IRB standards, he had informed Evelyn that I had provided him a justification. |
| Printing Supplies | \$50 | Paper, toner, etc. |
| N Vivo subscription | \$150 | analyzing text |
| Total | \$3,650 | |

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

Project Title: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived First-Year Readjustment Experiences of Fulbright FLTA Alumni from North Africa and South Asia

Principal Investigator (PI): Linda Kuk, PhD

Co-PI: George Marquis

You are being asked to participate in an interview that will attempt to understand how you experience readjustment to your home country after the completion of your Fulbright FLTA program.

The purpose of the research is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of readjustment of Fulbright FLTA alumni from specific regions of the world.

The procedures of the study include participation in an interview and possibly a follow up interview. Interviews will take place via the Internet but follow up correspondence may involve telephones or email. Interviews will be recorded (audio-video) in order for the researcher (George Marquis) to accurately transcribe the conversation into text form after the interview. The use of video recording is to help the researcher associate you with your words. The audio and video recordings will be in mp4 form and stored on the researcher's computer, password protected. The mp4 files will only be shared with a trained transcriber via a secure system. The method of transfer is password protected.

The expected duration of your participation is approximately one hour for the first interview, and if necessary, up to one hour for a follow up interview. There may also be some back and forth by email to clarify certain points. You may also be asked to review the researcher's transcription and analysis of the conversation. It is expected that your participation will require from 2-3 hours, including review time.

As appreciation for your taking the time to participate in this study, you will be sent \$50 **per hour** of your time, wired to you at the conclusion of the process. You can be compensated only if you complete the interview, including the follow-up if requested.

The findings of this evaluation research may be published as a dissertation in the ProQuest Database of doctoral dissertations at Colorado State University. Findings may also be included in the form of an academic publication. Other than your country of origin, nothing that could identify you, such as your name, FLTA cohort year, university, or place or residence will not be used anywhere in the study or in a publication. You will be referred to as an alumna/alumnus from x country. Other places will be referred to generically, as for example, "a large, public institution," or "a residence in a rural area."

There is no anticipated discomfort to you from answering the questions, other than the possible discomfort of talking about difficulties readjusting, and no anticipated risks.

For any questions related to this study, contact George Marquis at <geomarq@gmail.com>.

*Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate has no bearing on your status as a Fulbright alumnus/a, or on your future association with Fulbright or the researcher. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature of Consent to Participate _____
Date

*Note- if you wish to participate but do not wish to sign this form, you may waive the need to document your participation by sending me an email requesting me to Skype you for your oral consent to participate according to the conditions and information in this form.
Please return this form (signed or with a request for oral consent to this form) to George Marquis at geomarq@gmail.com

Figure D1. Documentation of informed consent for participation in a research study.

APPENDIX E: FLTA ALUMNI DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire collects basic demographic information in order to save us time during the interview and to ensure that you are a suitable candidate for participation in the research study.

For any questions, please contact George Marquis at the American University in Cairo at geomarq@aucegypt.edu

Please write your answers in the right-side column boxes. Please write as much as necessary to provide your answer.

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of country | |
| Name of city, town, or village | |
| Distance of where you live from the capital. If you live in the capital, write N/A | |
| Your age | |
| Year you were an FLTA | |
| Name of host institution in the United States | |
| Gender | |
| Religion (please state whether your religion is a minority religion in your country in terms of percentage of persons of that religion in your country) | |
| Highest level of education attained (bachelor's, master's, doctorate). If you are currently studying toward a degree, please state so. Please also state the name of the institution where you will receive your degree. | |
| Internet access – please state whether you will be able to conduct an interview with me over the internet using VoIP technology (e.g., Skype, GoToMeeting or Zoom. Please state whether we will need to talk by phone. | |
| Place of employment (please state whether this is the same place you worked before you became a Fulbright grantee). If you are currently unemployed, please write “unemployed.” If you are your own employer, (e.g., if you are heading an NGO or have a grant) please write “self-employed or self-funded.” If you are being funded by an organization, please explain which organization and for how long. | |
| Availability of employment for persons with your skills where you live. Here you can mention whether it is easy to find a job, approximate level of unemployment, etc. (If there is an unemployment problem and you feel that the problem is greater for one gender (male, female) or for a specific age group, please state your feelings.) | |
| Marital status (single, engaged, married) | |

| | |
|---|--|
| If you are married, how many children do you have and what are their ages? If you are not married, write N/A. | |
| Are you currently responsible for the care of someone related to you, like a parent, grandparent, brother, or sister? Please specify. | |
| Plans for the near future. Please indicate if you will be traveling abroad in the near future and for which purpose. | |
| Please state whether your personal goals have remained the same since you were a Fulbright grantee or whether they have changed. | |

Figure E.1. FLTA alumni demographic information questionnaire.